

RESET- WEEK 3-

Passionate Commitment to Rest

<< Scripture Reading >>

Opening Conversation:

- New Normal:
 - Uneasy, uncomfortable. We don't like what we're experiencing.
 - A common refrain that I hear repeatedly, and even one that I have said a time or two, has been, "I can't wait to get back to normal."
 - We established last weekend that normal wasn't working. It isn't working.
 - This season has proven to us that our normal, when faced with a global pandemic, falls apart, leaving us anxious and frightened.
 - Normal wasn't healthy. Normal wasn't sustainable.
 - **Don't pine for normal when normal wasn't working.**
 - **God is giving us an opportunity to define a new normal, to hit the reset button on our lives.**
 - What kind of life will we build for ourselves?
 - **Will we allow God to reform our lives around him or will we settle for a lesser substitute?**
 - God invites us to find a new life, a better life, one that sees us healthier, thriving, and in the center of his will.
- And after laying some foundation for a couple of weeks it's time to begin looking at specific areas of our lives that God is looking to challenge us to reset, to embrace a new normal.
 - And this week we focus on one of the greatest threats to our

spiritual health, one that if left alone will consume us.

- **This week God wants to bring us face to face with our addiction to hurry.**
 - John Ortberg, in his book, *The Life You've Always Wanted*, writes, ***“Hurry is the great enemy of spiritual life in our day. Hurry can destroy our souls. Hurry can keep us from living well. As Carl Jung wrote, ‘Hurry is not of the devil; hurry is the devil.’”***

- I am in one of the smaller percentage of professions that has not slowed down in the midst of the pandemic. If anything, my life is busier and more complicated now.
 - Early thinking: more free time, read, get projects done. **WRONG.**
 - Digital-only shift, tweaking approaches, editing videos, connecting remotely, endless Zoom calls, comforting people from afar, confronting people from afar, monitoring and measuring weekly performance analytics, worry about finances and continuity, trying to plan for the future while focus on today, accomplishing all of this on with a skeleton crew creates a perfect storm that leaves plenty of room for anxiety, worry, and sleepless nights, but leaves little time for taking care of yourself.
 - Some of you know what that's like. You're working more. You're overburdened. You're underappreciated. You're tired. You're cranky.

- For others, you've been forced into this hiatus. You didn't choose it. Maybe you're like my wife who was furloughed when they closed down the mall. Maybe you were not considered essential, even though your employer was. Perhaps you're an independent contractor whose client base dried up in the chaos and turmoil of COVID.
 - For some of us we only wish we could be busy.
 - We may even look back with fondness and wish we could

go back to that time when we had stuff to do.

- The danger in this time of pause is that it's been long enough that we have romanticized our busyness. We miss rushing from work to soccer. We miss the kids from practice to school to practice to home to eat to a game to home to homework. We miss the endlessly packed schedule.
 - **We crave normal. And for too many of us, normal equals busy. And we embrace the lie that hurry buys us more time.**
- As a culture we have fallen prey to hurry sickness. Meyer Friedman defines hurry sickness as, “[**Hurry sickness is**] **above all, a continuous struggle and unremitting attempt to accomplish or achieve more and more things or participate in more and more events in less and less time, frequently in the face of opposition, real or imagined, from other persons.**”
- For decades technology has promised us a release from hurry sickness by giving us the beautiful promise of productivity. In fact, back in the 60's, experts testified before a Senate subcommittee on time management, suggesting that within 20 years Americans would be able to radically cut back on the number of hours that they worked, enabling them to work less, but accomplish more. Americans would be able to retire younger. The great challenge, they said, would be what we would do with all of this newfound free time.
 - But that's not how it's worked. With each great technological advancement, instead of allowing it to free us, it has enslaved us.
 - Great technological revelations like computers, the internet, and smartphones promised us freedom and ease, but have warped us into their images.

- Tech companies, often lauded for being great places to work, often demand the most of their employees, frown on their use of vacation, and expect longer hours each day.

- **We are slaves to productivity. We are slaves to busyness. We are slaves to doing.**
 - We have believed the lie that we are only valuable as long as we don't stop.
 - So we don't. We don't take days off. We don't take vacations. We often don't take lunch breaks.
 - Because we have to keep going.
 - It's all we know.
 - It's no wonder we're fried crispy.
 - It's no wonder we're burnt out.
 - At a board meeting not long ago, my vice-chair, Jim Jock, asked if I had been using my vacation... a rhetorical question that he and I both knew the answer to. Because while the church generously gives me 4 weeks of vacation each year, I've probably only averaged about 2 weeks a year...in a good year when everything goes right.
 - Plenty of excuses are used. We all have them.
 - Mine seem noble, even spiritual to me, but that's all they are: excuses.
 - **If we aren't careful we will become martyrs to the cause of busyness.**

- The even deeper problem is that in our busyness, we tend to miss on the things that God is drawing us to because we are so fixated on all that needs to be accomplished.
 - Our busyness is robbing us of intimacy with God and with others.
 - When we hurry, we always lose more than we gain.
 - Walter Adams, the spiritual advisor to C.S. Lewis, put it well

when he said, **“To walk with Jesus is to walk with a slow, unhurried pace. Hurry is the death of prayer and only impedes and spoils our work. It never advances it.”**

- Hurry puts us into an upside down world as described by the Red Queen in *Alice in Wonderland*: **“Now here, you see, it takes all the running you can do, to keep in the same place. If you want to get somewhere else, you must run at least twice as fast as that!”**

- **Busy isn't God's hope for you.**

- Jesus didn't redeem you so that you can become a slave to your schedule.
- He doesn't love you for your productivity. He doesn't call you for what you can do for him. He calls you because he loves you.
- But hurry impedes love.
- Think of how you are when you're in a hurry. How do you treat the people around you?
 - Parents, when you're rushing out the door with your kids, how do you interact with them?
 - Gentlemen, how do you react when you're ready to leave, but she's still getting ready? Ladies, how do you respond when you're ready to go and he says there's just 5 minutes left in the game?
 - When you're stuck in traffic, how do you respond?
 - When you're stuck in line at the grocery store?
 - When you're on hold?
 - When you're in a meeting?
- **What if God wanted to use this time to reform how we live ourselves so we can be redeemed from the lie that busier is better?**

- Jesus modeled a better way, a way to forcefully, intentionally say no to the life of busyness that our culture has embraced.

- Busyness is not new. There have always been demands on time. Jesus was used to this.
 - In the Gospels, Jesus had constant pressure to perform: to teach, to heal, to travel.
 - Thousands of people flocked to him and his closest followers from all over the countryside
 - Even when he tried to limit his exposure, Luke 5:5 tells us: ***““Yet the news about him spread all the more, so that crowds of people came to hear him and to be healed of their sicknesses. 16 But Jesus often withdrew to lonely places and prayed.”***
 - Jesus didn't allow the pressure to perform, the busyness of life, or the hurried demands of the crowds fundamentally alter his life.
 - Jesus was committed to finding rest, to taking sabbath.
 - Jesus relentlessly removed himself from situations so that he could rest and commune with God.
 - He knew that without a rugged commitment to withdrawal that the demands of the world would overcome him.

- Jesus invited his closest followers to join him in his pursuit:
 - Mark 6: Jesus sent his disciples out to preach the Kingdom of God and to heal the sick (a monumental task).
 - They came back with incredible reports.
 - And crowds were forming, people were coming and going, and Mark tells us that they didn't even have time to eat.
 - Hear Jesus' response: ***“Then, because so many people were coming and going that they did not even have a chance to eat, he said to them, ‘Come with me by yourselves to a quiet place and get some rest.’”***
 - People followed persistently, finding them in their place of retreat.

- But again, Mark tells us, ***“Immediately Jesus made his disciples get into the boat and go on ahead of him to Bethsaida, while he dismissed the crowd. 46 After leaving them, he went up on a mountainside to pray.”***
 - Jesus modeled a commitment to pursue rest and sabbath-withdrawal from the demands on his life and communion with God, because he knew that his disciples would be called to follow in his footsteps.

- In one of the Jesus’ most famous statements that we love to use, especially at prayer times, Jesus cries out to those who are tired, those who are weary, those who are overburdened, those who are stressed out, those whose life has become defined by what they have and haven’t done, those who lose sleep at night because of an upcoming due date, those who reach for another cup of coffee just to make it through the day, those who haven’t taken a break for years not because they aren’t allowed to but because they won’t, those whose lives feel like they’re stuck in traffic, desperate to escape.
 - Jesus offers hope. Jesus offers something better than slavery to busyness.
 - Jesus speaks in Matthew 11:28-30: ***““Come to me, all you that are weary and are carrying heavy burdens, and I will give you rest. 29 Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me; for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. 30 For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light.”***
 - Some of us have never read verses 29 & 30. We hear verse 28 all the time, but the rest of it seems...odd... talk of yokes and burdens are confounding and even seem antithetical to rest: how can I rest if you’re giving me a burden?
 - Well, let’s talk about it for a moment.
 - What is Jesus getting at here? How are Jesus words addressing the epidemic of hurry?

- What's a yoke?
 - If you grew up on a farm, you might know. Yokes are often used for manual plowing. An animal would be yoked to a plow to drag it through a field. Sometimes two animals would be yoked together if the job was too big.
 - But Jesus wasn't a farmer, he was a teacher- a rabbi more specifically. So in Jesus' day a yoke was a common idiom for a rabbi's way of teaching- his teaching on the Scriptures, his interpretations, and his example for how to live.
 - Following a rabbi was at times onerous.
 - Rabbis had specific ways of living, so you were expected to model your life after his. This applied to all of the weights of life: money, marriage, prayer, generosity, cleanliness, how you walked, how you spoke, how you interacted with foreigners, with the government, with your enemies.
 - Rabbis had disciples who were not only taught to think like him, but to live like him. They would dedicate their lives to be with their rabbi, spending their days and nights close to him, learning what he knows, but living like he lives.
 - In some instances, disciples would adopt their rabbis physical mannerisms.
 - Disciples were students, but they were apprentices. They were called to become like Jesus.
 - Rabbis offered their disciples what they believed was the best way to live, the best way to know God, the best way to be fully human. The disciples would take their yoke upon them
- So when Jesus speaks to a tired and weary people, people who were under the yoke of oppression (a common term for the burden of being under the occupation of a foreign power), people who may have been followers of other rabbis who gave endless rules and regulations, who demanded much and sometimes gave little, to a people who were tired, Jesus offered a chance for rest.

- ***“Come to me, all you that are weary and are carrying heavy burdens, and I will give you rest. ²⁹ Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me; for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. ³⁰ For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light.”***
- Eugene Peterson paraphrased it well in *The Message* when he wrote, ***“Are you tired? Worn out? Burned out on religion? Come to me. Get away with me and you’ll recover your life. I’ll show you how to take a real rest. Walk with me and work with me—watch how I do it. Learn the unforced rhythms of grace. I won’t lay anything heavy or ill-fitting on you. Keep company with me and you’ll learn to live freely and lightly.”***
- I know very few people who AREN’T worn out. Even in this time of forced hiatus, we’re tired because, of course we are. We are being forced into rhythms that are unnatural and unsustainable. This won’t last and we don’t know what to do with this.
 - Whether you’re working from home or you’ve become a full-time parent, whether your job has become twice as hard or you haven’t worked in three months, there’s a good chance that you recognize your weariness. We’re tired. We’re burnt out.
 - Burnout is real. And younger and younger people are experiencing its effects.
 - In an article for BuzzFeed, Anne Petersen wrote, **“Pundits spend a lot of time saying ‘This is not normal,’ but the only way for us to survive, day to day, is to normalize the events, the threats, the barrage of information, the costs, the expectations of us. Burnout isn’t a place to visit and come back from; it’s our permanent residence.”**

- But instead of burnout, Jesus offers rest. Instead of the tyranny of the demands of life, he offers to light burden.
 - Jesus modeled a life that has great impact- who can argue the impact of Jesus- but this life of impact is one that empowers us life differently.
 - Dallas Willard wrote in his book *the Spirit of Disciplines*, ***“And in this truth lies the secret of the easy yoke: the secret involves living as he lived in the entirety of his life—adopting his overall life-style. Following “in his steps” cannot be equated with behaving as he did when he was “on the spot.” To live as Christ lived is to live as he did all his life. Our mistake is to think that following Jesus consists in loving our enemies, going the “second mile,” turning the other cheek, suffering patiently and hopefully—while living the rest of our lives just as everyone around us does. This is like the aspiring young baseball players mentioned earlier. It’s a strategy bound to fail.”***

- Jesus offers us rest, but not just a break from our normal so that we can resume with that normal after our break.
 - One of the reasons that so few of us genuinely take breaks is that our normal doesn’t have the margin to allow for it.
 - Jesus offers us rest, but it’s not as simple as saying, “I’ll come to church every Sunday...well, when I can...and I’ll pray when life gets tough.”
 - Jesus’ solution isn’t easy because it challenges us to reorient our lives around him.
 - John Mark Comer reminds us that, ***“Your life is the by-product of your lifestyle. By life I mean your experience of the human condition, and by lifestyle I mean the rhythms and routines that make up your day-to-day existence. The way you organize your time. Spend your money.”***

- **And Jesus invites orient our lifestyle around him so that our lives can reflect him.**
 - Jesus doesn't want to give us symbolic rest, but rest that changes us, rest that reorients ourselves around him, that embraces his template for living.
 - Jesus didn't model a pattern of rest and withdrawal for his sake, he did it for ours. And he invites us to do the same.
- When Jesus offers to have us take his yoke on our shoulders, he invites us to model our living around his priorities. Scholar and commentator Frederic Bruner put it well in his commentary on Matthew, *“A yoke is a work instrument. Thus when Jesus offers a yoke he offers what we might think tired workers need least. They need a mattress or a vacation, not a yoke. But Jesus realizes that the most restful gift he can give the tired is a new way to carry life, a fresh way to bear responsibilities.... Realism sees that life is a succession of burdens; we cannot get away from them; thus instead of offering escape, Jesus offers equipment. Jesus means that obedience to his Sermon on the Mount [his yoke] will develop in us a balance and a “way” of carrying life that will give more rest than the way we have been living.”*
- Jesus offers us a new life, a renewed life, one that is free from the tyranny of chasing after busyness, that frees us from the finding our completeness in scheduler.
 - He offers us more than token time off, where, let's face it, too many of us turn real time off into working time off. How many of us have worked from the beach before? I know I'm guilty.
 - **Jesus invites us to find rest for our soul by embodying the kind of life that finds rest in God.**

- INVITE TEAM BACK

- **SOUND OFF:** How have you struggled with an addiction to busyness or hurry? What impact has that had? What has the end result been in your life?
- God has something better for us than the relentless life of hurry.
- The author of Hebrews promised that ***“So there is a special rest still waiting for the people of God. ¹⁰ For all who have entered into God’s rest have rested from their labors, just as God did after creating the world. ¹¹ So let us do our best to enter that rest.”***
- God, though the author of Psalms, invites us to, ***“Be still, and know that I am God...”***
- You might be asking the question, “OK...where do we begin? It seems like this is an overwhelming task? I can’t just dump my life out?”
 - Well, it begins with making a plan. This won’t happen by change. And it won’t happen overnight.
 - You’ve got to create a plan, and stick to it. You have to ask God to reveal ways that you will
 - ***A wise man thinks ahead; a fool doesn’t and even brags about it!*** Prov 13:16
 - So the place to start is to say, “Here is how I will embrace rest.”
 - Craig Groeschel suggests a two-pronged attack: A defensive plan and an offensive plan.

- Your defensive plan is choosing three things that you **won't** do, three things I refuse to do.
 - Could look like:
 - No phone during meal.
 - Taking a break from social media.
 - No screen time after 8PM.
 - Refuse to work after 6PM? 7PM?
 - Turn down overtime for a week.
 - But your defense is only the beginning. If you create space without intentionally filling it, it will no-doubt get filled with the wrong kinds of things.
 - So that's where your plan of attack comes in, your offensive plan:
 - Commit to reading the Bible every day- even for 10 minutes.
 - Commit to spending 10 minutes with God in silence.
 - Engage in consistent prayer and worship
 - Look for ways to love on somebody else.
 - Spend time in creation without your phone.
- **SOUND OFF: What is one thing that you will do this week to ruthlessly create space to find your rest in God?**
- God invites you to find rest in him. Critically examine your life, and commit to walking in the way of Jesus. You'll find that your life will never be the same.
- *¹⁶ This is what the Lord says: "Stand at the crossroads and look; ask for the ancient paths, ask where the good way is, and walk in it, and you will find rest for your souls. Jer 6:16*

- ***“Come to me, all you that are weary and are carrying heavy burdens, and I will give you rest. ²⁹ Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me; for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. ³⁰ For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light.”***