

Discipleship Moment

Text: Luke 10:38-42

This week we heard the fifth part of our Sacrifice series. We have been exploring teachings about the power of sacrifice. Pastor Ben, yesterday, taught us about the power of sacrifice our agendas for engagement. Giving up being productive for being present. We as Americans are addicted to productivity and to-do lists. We are addicted to gaining and being seen as "successful," which we define as someone who has made a lot of money or become the highest performer in their field. We wake up in the morning ready to jump into our to-do's and tasks. And we work hard until the end of the day. We see another way in Scripture:

In the Biblical world, the evening is actually the beginning of the day. This can be seen in Psalm 3, "I lie down and sleep; I wake again, for the LORD sustains me." The psalmist lies down first, and then wakes up. Psalm 4 and 5 (Psalms 3-5 are a unit, they belong together) go on: in Psalm 4, the psalmist ends the prayer, "I will both lie down and sleep in peace;" then Psalm 5:3 the psalmist writes, "O LORD, in the morning you hear my voice; in the morning I plead my case to you, and watch." Throughout Psalm 3-5 we see this worldview coming out: lying down and sleeping goes before waking up and doing (or even praying!).

We in the Western world (Europe and the Americas) view the sun rising as the beginning of the day. But this is not the case in the Biblical world (the Ancient Near East: Palestine, Israel, Egypt, Syria and the surrounding region), the beginning of the day was evening. As the sun was setting, the new day was beginning. They started their day with night time, and sleep.

Let's think about the implications of this. When I wake up in the morning, I have the impression that the action is just getting started. I wake up, get cleaned and dressed, then I go about my to-do lists and my job. This creates within me a belief that the world doesn't go on, the world doesn't get better or change, it waits for me to wake up and get going. But this just isn't true. In fact, most of the work of the world goes on without us: animals are out hunting, burrowing, and procreating; men and women are out manufacturing, cleaning, and doing maintenance; and my sons are growing (in fact, studies have shown that children develop more in sleep than awake, and most of our children are not sleeping enough!). And, most importantly, God is working, crafting, empowering, and stretching out his grace to me during my sleep.

The Biblical person, the person who listens to God and meditates on the Word, begins to recognize that it is God who acts first, it is God who is the primary cause and mover; and I am simply jumping into what God is already doing in the world when I wake up and start my to-do list. The grass is growing, the world is spinning, the sun is producing energy and radiance, my body is growing and recharging, all without my effort. Most of the world's work and goodness happens without my effort. It goes against every cultural impulse to see the world this way. We are a culture obsessed with productivity, busyness, and gaining more. But God wants us to rely on him, to trust in him, to have faith in him.

The spiritual practice that we can do to develop this spiritual muscle (trust, or faith) is Sabbath. Sabbath is the act of setting aside a day and disconnecting from the world. Getting off email, getting off social media, spending time with our family, with God, and with nature. It is a day to work out, eat with your family, and not worry about work.

The Sabbath doesn't have to be Sunday (if you work on Sunday, that can't be your Sabbath). It must be a day that you can disconnect from your work. Leave your cellphone on your night stand, put away the laptop, and spend time being present with your spouse or family, or being present with God, or being present with yourself. Read Scripture, spend time in prayer, eat well, and take care of your body. This practice forces us to give up our addiction to productivity and rely more fully on God.

The text this week invites us to Sacrifice our agenda, so we can engage relationally with those around us. And Sabbath is the practice that we can do to make this a more natural habit. We can be free from the addiction of productivity, we can be free from the guilt of not doing enough. Let us rest well, and rely on God.

Going Deeper

Use this resource to start conversations about this week's sermon for your personal devotions, with your family, or with your Life Group. You can use one question per day or all at once

1. Do you have a to-do list? How do you feel about your list? Does it give you joy? Distress?
2. What do you think about the Sabbath? How have you understood it in the past? How has this devotional changed the way you think about the Sabbath?
3. What time do you go to bed? Do you stay up and try to get things done? Why or why not?
4. Do you struggle with need to be busy or productive? Do you often feel guilty about not getting enough done?
5. How can you rely more fully on God? What are some things you can give up that will challenge you to rely on God?
6. Plan your next Sabbath, if it is Sunday or any other day. Schedule it, dedicate yourself to putting away technologies that connect you to work, and plan your time to connect with God, and your family. Spend time outside on a walk, or go to the gym and work out. Keep yourself accountable to not look at your emails or work texts or to-do lists.