



Going Deeper - Weekly Sermon Discussion Guide
Reimagine: A New Normal Series - Week 4
May 17, 2020

I had never experienced all four seasons until I moved to Idaho 5 years ago. My first year here, I was baffled by how much the weather dictated what I did, what I wore, and where I spent my time. I hated that I could not sit outside with a cup of tea on a December afternoon, or that rain/ hail/ mighty gusts of wind seemed to blow in from nowhere and send me back inside in the fall and early spring. One more confession: when I moved to Idaho, I did not own a pair of actual socks. I do now. Because winter is coming even as I watch the trees in my neighborhood come to life. My dad jokes that Boise is the City of Leaves every autumn as he bags at least 29 leaf bags full in preparation for the coming winter season. This cycle of hibernating in order to come back alive again is something I never knew I always needed. This cycle is also something that is rarely practiced in our Western culture. To slow down or take a time out is tantamount to quitting and we are a lot of things, but we are not quitters. A couple years ago, I had a job where I was salaried and everytime I requested to use the vacation days I had earned, I was asked if I still wanted to work there. The leadership took it as an attitude of not caring about the work anymore. I no longer work there and this has probably saved my life. But, maybe you can relate? Are we really telling ourselves that taking a break to catch our breath means we no longer care about the work we do? This is madness.

Sabbath rest is this week's discipline. As we read through the Gospels, we learn that Jesus practiced this and asks us to do the same. Sabbath has been a contentious subject for centuries. Pastor Bill took us through Exodus 16 and we pick up with the Israelites who are now free, wandering in the wilderness, and complaining to Moses. They would have rathered returned to known bondage than step into an uncertain future after 400 years in slavery. Like many of us, they wanted to return to "normal." In the midst of this Pandemic, especially early on, it felt like my life was suddenly cancelled. I normally work remotely, but I was usually spending my evenings on the NNU Campus taking classes. Suddenly the campus was closed and graduation dates were uncertain. All my plans, all my big ideas, all the things that were keeping me "busy" were swept aside and no longer important. I complained. It felt unfair. I wanted to get back to normal. And, at the same time, I had been struggling with my health and this sudden break in the action allowed me to take a real rest and work on getting my health back in a more lasting way. When I chose to lean into this call to rest, I started to experience a complete reset in my life and in my work and in my body. I have never been so grateful to have every single one of my plans cancelled. And I'm in far less of a hurry to get back to my pre-pandemic life.

What does a Sabbath rest actually involve? A 24 hour block of time to stop, rest, enjoy, and remember. This is meant to reorient our lives around the Living God. This is revolutionary because our world does not stop. Deut 5:12, 15 asked the Israelites to "remember that you were slaves in Egypt and that the Lord your God brought you out." Today, we are slaves to a culture that devalues the fact that we are created in the Image of God. We accept (buy into) busy-ness as a status symbol. These days we work for rest - and rarely find it. But, what if rest was the starting point not the end goal? What if the Sabbath's goal is to serve us? When we risk it and really take a Sabbath, we are practicing eternity, a divine intersection between heaven and earth. We are designed to rest from work and learn to work from a place of rest. So, what stops us from seeking and practicing rest as a Spiritual discipline?

- Truly believing that God is a provider and Good Father. Why is this so easy to forget?
- Fear of how others will view us. We don't want to be thought of as lazy.
- Fear of feeling unproductive, ineffective - in our homes, at work, in the world.
- Fear of legalism - We feel we must earn our rest and follow the rules.
- Fear of weakness - If we take a break, will we fall behind or lose our edge?
- Lack of preparation - Will God take care of us in this restful place? Are we willing to trust Him in this?

When we rest, we honor the humanity that God has instilled inside us.

So Consider:

1. How have you noticed the culture of "busy-ness as a status symbol" creeping into your life in recent years and how has it changed with the quarantine? Or has it changed?
2. How would your life be different if you worked from a place of rest rather than working for rest?
3. What does true rest look like for you?

Take Action:

Can we commit to truly taking a full sabbath rest this week? Can we plan ahead enough to get the chores done, the errands run, the meals prepared so that there is a 24 hour block of time where we are free to enjoy all that God has for us? I hope so. And, I hope you find a way to share what happened during your Sabbath in your community groups!

Blessings to you this week, Amie