

THE HOPE JOURNAL

LEARNING TO LOVE, TOGETHER

July 21, 2024



REST

it isn't optional

by Drew Downs

Rest is often treated like the opposite of work—and we're encouraged to work all of the time. And if rest is *not* working, and working hard is virtuous, we treat rest as unvirtuous, slothful, a sin.

It doesn't seem to matter that Sabbath is a commandment: that rest, not work, is commanded of us. Nor are we terribly inclined to treat rest as virtuous, redemptive, or a source of genuine opportunity.

To say that American culture is mixed up about rest and work is an understatement. It is our sense of rest as *optional* or other *from* work, however, that causes the most confusion. Because there is no either/or here. We don't get to work every hour or take pride in our overwork when others struggle. We mustn't pretend that these two oppose each other. They commune with each other. They dance together and reflect a harmony of a common life.

ORDINARY TIME

2024

WHAT'S GOING ON

*"You know we've got to find a way
To bring some loving here today".*

-Marvin Gaye

Disciples, Apostles, and Saints!

Rest / Time

Reflecting on the concept of rest this week, I'm reminded of a book I read last year: *Saving Time* by Jenny Odell is a brilliant meditation on time, life, and purpose. She breaks open our understanding of time as something linear, physical, like a commodity that we can buy and sell, make or spend. That time exists outside of our lives. That it is something that can be measured, othered, and ultimately separate from us. From what we do.

All of it is fiction. But our language itself compels us to think this way. We cannot make time like it is a sandwich. Or spend it like cash (or credit). Time is.

And once we free ourselves from this view of time, as something unrelated to our living, that measurable other, then we can start to take agency for our lives, our decisions, our way of being.

When we "make time" in our schedule for rest, we are hoping to invent a pocket in the cosmos that allows us to keep pretending as if work is most important, as if doing is what we are made for, and that all of that can somehow continue as normal, but this extra pocket over here—that is for rest. This is as insane as it is pervasive. And this thinking is also anti-Christ.

Following Jesus means rest is as much a part of the deal as work. We don't "make" time for work. Or "spend" time that way. We must stop deriding and insulting rest, *Sabbath* by treating it as inferior—as a "waste" of time. It is essential to life.

With love,
Drew

ORDINARY TIME

2024

FOR SUNDAY

Proper 11B

July 21, 2024

Collect

○ Lord, mercifully receive the prayers of your people who call upon you, and grant that they may know and understand what things they ought to do, and also may have grace and power faithfully to accomplish them; through Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever.

Amen.

Reading

Mark 6:30-34, 53-56

The apostles gathered around Jesus, and told him all that they had done and taught. He said to them, "Come away to a deserted place all by yourselves and rest a while." For many were coming and going, and they had no leisure even to eat. And they went away in the boat to a deserted place by themselves. Now many saw them going and recognized them, and they hurried there on foot from all the towns and arrived ahead of them. As he went ashore, he saw a great crowd; and he had compassion for them, because they were like sheep without a shepherd; and he began to teach them many things.

When they had crossed over, they came to land at Gennesaret and moored the boat. When they got out of the boat, people at once recognized him, and rushed about that whole region and began to bring the sick on mats to wherever they heard he was. And wherever he went, into villages or cities or farms, they laid the sick in the marketplaces, and begged him that they might touch even the fringe of his cloak; and all who touched it were healed.

ORDINARY TIME

Reflection

When Jesus took his disciples with him to Nazareth, with the intention to preach and heal in his hometown, he found the people unwilling to listen to him. They were famously distracted by who they thought he was. But it is from there, from that experience of rejection, that Jesus sends his disciples out into the world as apostles. They take his message of love, joy, and hope in repentance out, and if the message isn't heard, then they are to keep going.

They return to Jesus, surprised, excited, grateful. Because it worked. What Jesus sent them to do—it worked. They shared, healed, proclaimed, exorcised, redeemed and now they come back, exhausted and fulfilled.

And Jesus tries to give them rest. But something gets in the way. [Something is always getting in the way.] There is need. An enormous crowd: thousands of people. They're just aimless and confused, fearful and unprotected. Jesus invites the disciples to feed them — a miracle they can, do.

There are brief moments of rest. They take them and make them. None of it is easy. And the need is always there. The temptation to serve is constant.

What we see, however, is that Jesus doesn't allow them to stay. To reside within the need or to protect from every need. This isn't a comment on the needy growing long enough bootstraps or the inevitability of poverty (so why bother?) but of the persistent existence of discipleship. That we always are needed. That our work will never end. It is up to us to rest.

And it is up to us to command each other to rest.

That is the part of the Sabbath command we most refuse ourselves: to make each other rest. To provide for one another the safety we need to stop when we need to stop—which is regularly.

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