

## Being or Doing?

Readings: Genesis 2:1 – 4, Matthew 11:25 – 30

During a conversation with someone from our church at the beginning of a day, they told me, it would be a busy church day. They listed the things they were doing – some were ministry related and some were recreation. It was productive and fun day for them and they were pleased about that.

Some church members rarely get the opportunity to sit through a whole service as a worshipper because they are contributing in some way to the service. Perhaps we accept this is the way it is but I am not pleased about this at all.

Some parents take their children from one activity to the next every weekday after school and weekends too. Some paid employees frequently work 50 or more hours each week. Are these good things?

I have had two compulsory rest periods recently:

A few days off recuperating from a tiny operation under general anaesthetic. I walked, read, listened to a talking book and had lots of intimate time with God.

Last week I went to Lake Rotoiti for the Bishop's retreat. The Bishop's team served us. We had Bible teaching, food prepared for us, watched a hilarious movie, had time alone with God and prayed for each other. It was very productive and meaningful time.

In order to have those rest periods (and spend some family time yesterday) I worked flat out either side of those periods, and a lot of things that should be done, remain undone. At the moment life is very busy for me - Kay is on leave til July and Owen has gone. (Praise God for the rest of the staff team and volunteers here.)

What is it that makes us so busy so much of the time? Productiveness is good – but not all the time. We need some down time to revive our strength, worship God and just be.

Most of us have become human doings rather than human beings. Why are we all so busy?

Take a moment to think about your own life:

How busy are you?

Does this busyness bring you satisfaction or does it sap your energy?

Jesus says “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.” Mat 11:28 – 30

Who remembers the saying that did the rounds a while back; “God says it; I believe it; that settles it.” That is really annoying. It’s meant to be an affirmation of truth but can it be that simple when Jesus says “I will give you rest”? It might have been true in first century Israel. But Jesus didn’t live in the West in 2015. Can we believe what Jesus said?

We’ve been considering Genesis during our sermons lately. Genesis lays out God’s original plan for humanity and all of creation. It also reveals a great deal of God’s character.

God was very busy making all of creation. He did a great job don’t you think? God could look back with great satisfaction on the handiwork! It was good. Not all of us are so sure about the excellence of our work. Apparently Dame Judy Dench never watches her own movies because she sees all the things that could be improved. Anyone else identify with that?

In ‘Genesis for Everyone’ John Goldingay points out that God didn’t really stop work completely. When Jesus was accused of working on the Sabbath, his justification was that his Father was always working. (John 5:17) However on the 7<sup>th</sup> day, God rested from his creation work and blessed the Sabbath.

While we don’t have to completely stop any kind of work, there is something very significant about the Sabbath day. Over work is so common in our Western world. The questions I raised in my newsletter column a couple of weeks back, about where we get our significance from are worth considering here.

Where does our sense of who we are come from?

Do we get our sense of self-worth from doing good things for others?

While I was away last week I felt the Lord raise a question:

As a church, how can we be more organic?

That question came from my growing concern about our busyness – often imposed by our culture; we must constantly be doing more and getting better at the more we do. I’m reminded of Carl Jung’s saying: “Busyness is not of the devil; busyness is the devil.”

Some busyness is good and healthy. We wouldn't get much achieved if we sat around on our butts all day long. A bit of pressure keeps us organized and motivated.

But too much of anything is unhealthy. Too much busyness robs us of all that is good in life – intimate relationships with God, others and ourselves; peace; enjoyment of life in general.

The church, our church ought not to be adding to our busyness. Rather church ought to be critiquing the cultural norm of busyness. Church ought to be a place that provides us a community of rest as well as productivity.

The Sabbath ought to bring rest and re-creation for at least some of us. For most of us, a good proportion of Sunday services ought to be refreshing and equipping us for the rest of the week. We ought not to be working so hard on Sunday that we are exhausted afterwards.

If that is the case, we need to reduce our workloads on Sundays or find other ways to have Sabbath rest, perhaps on other days.

Rather than pose any solutions today I want to leave us with questions and ask you to think and pray about them.

Let's take some time out now to rest in God and allow the Holy Spirit to minister to us.

**Play** Per Crucem from Songs of Taize Volume 3 (Disc one, Track 6)

The words mean:

Through the cross and passion	deliver us O Lord
By your holy resurrection	deliver us O Lord

Jesus says "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."

Let's ask the Lord what it means for us as a church and feedback our thoughts and impressions to our leaders so that we can become more as Christ intends us to be.