

Sermon Text for May 3, 2015

By Rev. Robert K. Bronkema

Mark 1:32-39, Genesis 2:1-4

“Take a break”

Over this past week we were visited by the President of the church council of the church that we served in Russia. It was so great to see him, and a number of you know him from the trip to Israel that we took together as a church about a year ago. He had worked in Russia for 25 years. Moscow is one of those places that you just need a break from every now and then. You just need to get away from the congestion, the traffic, the mentality, the freneticness, and the busyness of life. So he came to Strasburg. It was exactly the medicine that he needed, a place to get away and just take a break. C.S. Lewis in his Screwtape letters describes one of Satan’s greatest weapons is our innate desire to be busy because often we equate busyness with productivity. Have you ever noticed that, we equate running from one place to another as being a person on the go and we place enormous value on people whose lives are so full that we don’t have time for anything. The excuse for the 21st century is: “I’d love to, but I can’t, I just don’t have time.”

I have come to realize that we all need to take a break. So, I’m going to help us out today by providing an audio that maybe we all know, as well as a snack that might be appropriate for our break.

We all need to step back and reflect upon our work, upon our life and most importantly upon our relationship with Jesus Christ. Let’s look at Scripture today and read about how important it is to take a break. If God did it, then why can’t we?

We really can’t begin a conversation on taking a break without covering in detail the understanding of what it means to work. We only covered 3 verses this morning in Genesis, and yet in these very few verses work is repeated three times. God had finished, completed his work. It was done. He didn’t stop in the middle, there wasn’t anything left over for the next day, he was done, completed. And so he rested, took a break from his work. In these verses, actually the emphasis is more on the work that God does than the break that he takes after his work is complete.

So if we are going to talk about the 7th day of creation today, and we are, then we have to understand all that took place before that seventh day. We get a summary of all that took place: the heavens and the earth were finished. Then the 7th day of creation

takes place and it one where we see in verse 2 that God finished the work that he had done on the 7th day. In the Hebrew the implication of the words: and he finished what he had done, gives the impression, not that he did the work on the 7th day, because it had all been done on the days before, but rather that he inspected to see and make sure that it was all to his liking. That it passed muster and made the grade.

Look what else we read about the 7th day in these verses. It was the day that God blessed out of any of the days this was the only on that he blessed. God blessed and hallowed the day because he rested from all the work that he had done during the other 6 days which we have just finished going over. So God took a break.

I hope you understand that if you are going to understand what it means to take a break in the way that God took a break, you need to have the work ethic and the days put into the work before you can take that break. Today is not a call to loaf around, it is not a call to be lazy and just take a nap, it is a call to take a break in the way that God took a break. A break that came about as a result of the work that had already been poured into it.

Next week there is going to be a day of prayer for Baltimore in Lancaster city. We will be lifting up our first responders, all of them, the police and others. If the world ever needed a time of reflection, if the world ever needed a time when its leaders and its citizens stopped what they are doing and look at what is happening around them and learn from it, it is now. We have done what we are so good at doing in this country, we have taken sides. That is Satan's desire, to separate us and to put us on opposing sides. We need a break, if for nothing else, a sense of clarity of what our priorities and our real crises are.

I feel that God is calling His creation, the world, to take a break. We need to reflect upon our actions and the pain and the suffering that they cause to people around us. All of us need a break in order to step back see what God has in store for us as Christians and here in this present context as Christians living in Strasburg, in the United States, in a culture that values busyness while overlooks some of the basic fundamental lessons that Jesus taught us in valuing all people.

Well, what do I mean when I say we need to take a break? We read today what I call God's amen to all that he has accomplished and done. The 7th day, this last day of creation God rests. We find in Genesis that God does not spend the 7th day in exhaustion

but rather in peace. His conscience was clear because his work had been done very well and everything was good.

You know what it's like going away on vacation for a week and then when you get back you are more worn out and exhausted than when you left. Some families need two weeks to recover from their week's vacation. This isn't what I mean when I say we need to take a break.

How does God rest on the 7th day? Most people when they think of their day of rest they envision a big screen TV, a comfy chair, and some snacks in front of them and maybe the Cowboys playing on TV. All we read in Genesis is that God rested from all the work that he had done.

If we want to know what exactly God did do to rest after all of the work of creating the heavens and the earth where could we find the answer? We need to look to Jesus for a better understanding of what it means when we hear the command that we must rest. With the background that the work that was done previously in some ways gave him the permission to rest, work that was focused upon God's kingdom. This is the same context in which we find Jesus taking a break in Mark.

In our first reading in Mark today we find a very familiar scene in the life of Christ. He has just been mobbed by people who want to be healed. Jesus worked through the night curing people of their diseases and casting out demons. Jesus was tired, he needed a break, and we read in vs. 31 words that we find again and again in Scripture: "In the morning, while it was still very dark, he got up and went out to a deserted place, and there he prayed."

This is what rest means for Jesus. We read time and time again that after he has worked especially hard or before an important decision or action Jesus rests, he goes off by himself, allows himself to focus and keep concentrated on his relationship with God. He hands over what comes next into the hands of his father. He gives up the control that he may want to keep for himself and allows himself to rest, thereby creating an attitude of submission to His Father. This is what rest means for Jesus. And Jesus needed a break from time to time and the Gospels aren't shy in mentioning the times that he does rest.

Did you notice what he did when he rested? He didn't go and watch gladiator fights, Ancient Rome's earlier version of football, he didn't fill his schedule with activities that he hadn't been able to do during the week. No Jesus' rest is marked by

prayer. “He went out to a deserted place and there he rested.” In times of stress, temptation, decision, and even exhaustion Jesus turns to God his Father for strength and guidance. This is what rest means for Jesus.

This is such a foreign concept to us. The rest that we see Jesus take, even the rest that we see the Father take, was then, and is now, an assertion that life does not depend upon our feverish activity. The rest that we take has to proclaim that we are comfortable in recognizing that the world is ultimately in God’s hands. We have to be confident that if we stop our efforts, as we are commanded to do, then the world will not collapse around us. The truth is that the world relies upon God’s promise and not our efforts.

My Christian family Hebrews 4:16 tells us “Let us therefore approach the throne of grace with boldness, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need.” Our world is in a time of need right now. We are in a time of need on so many fronts.

How are you living your life? How balanced is it? Maybe you need a time of rest as an individual. Maybe you do need to take a break, step back, refocus upon your own relationship with Jesus, upon your priorities, where you are spending most of your time and energy and resources. If God is not one of the top time getters then you need to re-evaluate. Maybe you feel that you have to control your life by yourself and so you can’t take a break. One of Satan’s strongest allies is after all, busyness. Brothers and sisters stop and take a break in prayer to ask for God’s guidance in your life, in the church’s life, in our country, and in the world. Amen.