

Finding rest in a restless society

Values Day 2017

Passages for meditation

Psalm 62

Verse 5: Yes my soul finds rest in God; my hope comes from him.

⁶ Truly, he is my rock and my salvation; he is my fortress, I will not be shaken. ⁷ My salvation and my honour depend on God; he is my mighty rock, my refuge. ⁸ Trust in him at all times, you people; pour out your hearts to him, for God is our refuge.

Matthew 11

²⁸ "Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest. ²⁹ Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. ³⁰ For my yoke is easy and my burden is light"

The Problem

In our society we meet people whose lives are filled with tension and restlessness. They live lives which are full of hurry and worry. Indeed, it may be our own experience. Doctors urge us to "slow down and rest", but it is easier said than done. How many of us regularly enjoy a good night's sleep, or have to resort to the help of sleeping tablets? Some people join Sports Clubs, others plan holidays which quickly come to an end, and sadly many resort to drugs, tranquillisers and alcohol. These all lead to a temporary quietening of the spirit, but the inner restlessness soon returns.

It was Saint Augustine who famously said "Thou has made us for thyself, and our heart is restless until it finds rest in Thee". True rest is not found in places or pills but in a person, the Lord Jesus Christ. In Matthew 11v 28 he says "Come to me all you who are weary and burdened and I will give you rest". Perfect rest and peace are not a human achievement but a divine gift and they come to us when we allow Christ to harmonise our lives.

So where is the problem?

There is no rest for the bored!

I see "boredom" as a state of frantic, uncomfortable inactivity. We have an over-stimulated society frightened of silence and boredom! If it's not the high caffeine and sugar intake, it is the blue light radiating from mobile phone screens and the non-stop stream of messages. Any single teenager could well be receiving messages from Twitter, Snapchat, Instagram and Facebook all at the same time, and that is as well as text messages from parents and grandparents. How do they manage to do all this while watching TV, eating a meal and doing their homework? Why do they do it? Because they are frightened of missing out on the latest gossip or event. They chase the buzz of getting 50 or more "likes" (or endorsements) from their peers for a comment or photo which they posted up. In effect

they are desperate to be liked, valued and loved. To them it is nearly the end of the world if there is no WIFI or phone signal! “What NO WIFI” It is then that they complain that they are “bored”. I saw a teenager who was being taken out for a family meal, sitting with his headphones on listening to music. It seems that our society has lost the ability to hold a conversation with one another or even worse, the ability of enjoying their own company in silence, with no distractions. Have we lost the ability to walk in a park or a wood with no music or distractions? Can we sit quietly and think?

There is no rest for the high achiever

Our young people are urged to get a good education and then a good career. Nothing inherently wrong with that, but the pressure is on, the work is addictive and the “TO DO” list is growing. Who is it that sets us such high expectations? Our parents; peer groups; Government statistics; teachers; the Boss; older siblings or worst of all, yourself?

People’s identity can get caught up in this when they need to work longer hours to buy a better house or a bigger car, or want to impress their friends. Or maybe it is the pressure from children who demand the latest phones, the fantastic holidays or the latest TV Games Console. We wrestle with these dilemmas.

Further study .Consider Jacob in Genesis 32. Jacob wrestled with everything and everyone. It was not until he wrestled with God by the river that he realised who he’d really been fighting against all his life. It was only after that final encounter that he was blessed and found rest.

There is no rest for the house-proud.

Sadly some people see their house as an idol and not a home, and frantically clean all day and every day. It becomes an obsession with them. Theirs is not a house in which to relax or rest. They are never satisfied with what they have and regularly want a new kitchen or the latest bathroom.

Consider. Should your home’s appearance and hospitality be of such a high standard that it intimidates those who you have invited round for a meal? They may never invite you back to their house, or even come back for a second visit.

If you hesitate to have people round to your house for a coffee, or refuse to have the visiting preacher for lunch, then maybe you should re-evaluate your priorities and consider the purpose of your home. Hospitality should be a priority for Christians. Remember Mary and Martha? When Jesus visited their home what kind of hospitality did he receive? Consider what rest meant for each of the sisters?

There is no rest for the wicked.....or is there?

Well the Good News is that there is rest for the wicked! It is a gift of complete GRACE from the only one who could truly say at the end of his life on earth “It is finished!” Jesus is the only one who ever satisfied the Judge of all Judges. Who when the Judge spoke about him from Heaven said, “This is my Son in whom I am well pleased” In trusting in Jesu’s finished work on the cross, and accepting Him as our Saviour, we can find TRUE REST. He gives us

rest and peace in the midst of the most stressful and difficult situations. A peace that passes all understanding. Not that we deserve it, but because the Great Judge, when he looks at us, sees only His Son, the Lord Jesus and smiles on us with grace and mercy.

Considering the Sabbath Rest

It seems to me that God teaches us a discipline and regular practice of weekly rest. This Sabbath rest not only points back to the Garden of Eden, a place of perfect rest, but also forward to the place of perfect rest in heaven. We know that this rest can only be found in Jesus, but by enjoying and practising the Sabbath Rest each week, it should not only be healthy for our body, mind and soul, but also help us to focus on Jesus and the heaven he is preparing us for. Look at Exodus 16 and the collecting of manna, then compare this with the Feeding of the 5,000 (Matthew 14:13-21).

What do our Sundays look like? Worshipping together with God's people, possibly making a point not to do house work, shopping, washing of clothes, surfing the net, social media, computer games etc.? Instead spending time with real people face to face, going for a walk, sitting down to a meal, writing a letter or reading a book.

Ideas to get you talking

Ask those in the congregation to turn to the person next to them and describe a time when they thought they were in heaven

1. A time of incredible peace/rest
2. A great banquet or meal
3. Accommodation - possibly on holiday
4. A spectacular view
5. A time of friendship or community
6. Music event or time of worship

Further considerations

How do these differ from the Christian's hope of heaven?

How do we find rest in a busy life?

How do we avoid boredom and restlessness in retirement?

May you be blessed and challenged as you study this material

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