



## Doing Life Well – Learning to Rest With and in Jesus

Date: Sunday 11<sup>th</sup> February 2018

Speakers: Ruth Page & Jess Munson

Key Verses: Matthew 11: 28

### Summary

- To do life well, we need to follow the instructions in Matthew 11 - to come to Jesus and learn to live life at his pace and with his perspective on our spirit, body and soul.
- In our current culture life can be like the chaos described in Psalm 46. Although we may not live in the midst of a physical storm, it can sometimes seem like the pace of life is overwhelming. For some us, our daily life can feel another type of more mundane storm: busy, busy, busy. And this doesn't necessarily just apply to the business of life in the workplace. It can apply to the day to day activities running a home. We can schedule too much play (sport, going out with friends) for ourselves and keep ourselves too busy - sometimes doing what appear to be very good things, but are wearing us out.
- Biblical principle: Work is good! But so is rest. "Rest" is 'anapauo,' which means "to refresh, rest up," but also "to cease from labour."
- What was the Sabbath? Jewish 'Shabbat' - meaning to stop. The Sabbath was and is a regular practice, that on a weekly basis, on the 7th day of the week, Jews stopped their work for a 24-hour period. God commands us to practice the Sabbath, these instructions for living life well are in fact given twice in the Old Testament. Once in Exodus and then again in Deuteronomy. (Exodus 20:8-11, Deut 5: 12-15)
- We are not designed to operate 24/7. God worked and he rested, we are made in his image, so we too must work and we must choose to rest. The kind of rest God is recommending here actually makes us more fruitful and creative!
- An important aspect of the Sabbath is not just stopping. The Sabbath practices introduce joy - in fact, Eden means delight. That the Sabbath is an invitation to rest in a way that consciously brings God into the things that refresh you. Delighting is linked with gratitude, so practising the Sabbath offers the opportunity to slow down and give thanks. It's a chance to reflect and contemplate the goodness of God - like when you get to the end of a delicious meal, or a good book, or you see the natural world shining with beauty, or we enjoy time on our own (peace and quiet) or with people we love.

- Sabbath also restores our perspectives. We need to do this because for some of us at least, we need some regular help to respect our God given limits. The myth that you can do it all and have it all, is exactly that - a myth. Celebrating the Sabbath is about surrendering our own agenda to get things done in our way.
- Celebrating the Sabbath is about remembering that God loves for who we are - not what we can do for him.
- The command to celebrate the Sabbath is also an invitation to rest in our souls. Jesus offers us peace much deeper than the surface of physical rest. He offers us freedom from inner chaos and restlessness. We might be afraid of stopping and of being quiet, because if we did that we might have to listen to what is going on under the surface. Sometimes the bigger reasons we need to practice the Sabbath rest are not about what we do, but related to our soul and our spirit. The kind of inner restlessness that might be inside us, under the surface can be all kinds of things - repeated patterns of thinking or addictions that have us trapped in the same cycles over and over again.
- The trouble with all of these drivers is that they offer only a false reward. You might feel good temporarily, and they might offer some temporary respite from the storms of life. But they can't really give you rest. And in fact, they can open the door to fear, guilt, anxiety and shame. All things that keep us separated from God and restless on the inside.
- No matter how much we strive, we cannot break our inner slave drivers just on our own. Sabbath is an invitation to stop and remember who God is and to let him bring healing to those places of restlessness in us.
- If we focus only on the external changes to our rest and especially if we approach this legalistically, i.e. we restrict what we \*do\* alone we can actually turn this into a heavy burden - the kind of legalistic rule-keeping that Jesus said was wearing people out.
- Jesus invitation to us in Matthew 11:28 is in fact stronger than an invitation, it's an instruction to Come to him. Jesus' offer is to take that burden - of all our sin (whether that's ignoring him and trying to do life on our own, or whether that's turning the stuff around us into idols that enslave us) and he shoulders it for us - that's what he did when he died on the cross for us. He cuts us free from the burden of all the rubbish we carry around and gives us freedom.
- You cannot have peace - rest on the inside - in your heart and in your spirit when you are fighting with God or with yourself. And we on our own simply don't have what it takes to deal with that stuff. But there is good news - God has made it possible in Jesus. Jesus is our peace.

## Questions for Reflection:

- What can you do to integrate Sabbath or mini-Sabbaths like the 'Daily office' in the rhythm of your life?
- What kind of rest do you need for the work that God has called you to do?
- What things help you to be refreshed and how could you do them in a way that consciously invites God to be part of them?
- What can you be grateful for and delight in right now?
- What do you need to do, intentionally, about how you organise your activities so that you can take God's perspective on rest? (Think about this on a daily, weekly, seasonally/termly basis)
- What is your greatest fear of stopping for 24 hours?
- What are your slave drivers? (not Who!)
- Who is one person with whom you could share the steps you have taken towards becoming free from your slave drivers?
- Why is it important to remember Eden and to remember Egypt?

## Some Useful Resources:

- John Mark Comer (2015) *Garden City: Work, Rest and the Art of Being Human*. Zondervan
- Peter Scazzaro (2006) *Emotionally Healthy Spirituality*. Zondervan
- Will van der Hart and Rob Waller (2016) *The Perfectionism Book*. IVP
- Nothing Hidden Ministries <http://nothinghidden.com/>
- Abide Christian Meditations <https://abide.is/>