

**“Rest from the Wrestling Match”**

**Luke 10:38-42; Hebrews 4:6-16**

*Sermon Series: Soul Care Week 2. Rest and Restore Your Soul*

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Maria Brunner reached the end of her rope. Her husband was unemployed and in no hurry to find a job. So Maria supported and cared for their three young, demanding children by cleaning other people’s houses. To add insult to injury her out-of-work husband accumulated \$5,000 in unpaid parking tickets. Being a caring spouse, Mr. Brunner didn’t trouble his wife with this problem so he kept the tickets a secret from her. Unfortunately, since she was the actual owner of the car, Maria was responsible. Frustrated and flat broke, Maria could not pay the fines. Her sentence? Some time behind bars in her town of Poing, Germany.

But when the police came to arrest Maria something unexpected happened. Instead of hiding her head in shame, Maria smiled and welcomed the officers. “She seemed really happy to see us and repeatedly thanked us.” “I’ve had enough of scraping a living for the family,” Maria told the reporters, “As long as I get food and a hot shower every day, I don’t mind being sent to jail. I can finally get some rest and relaxation.” Then she smiled and waved as she was driven off to prison.<sup>1</sup>

Have you ever been so tangled up in busyness that a night behind bars seems like the only way to break free, that “doing time” is the only way to find time for yourself? Prison is no joke. But neither are our overstuffed schedules. All of us are busy. Even retired people say to me, “I’m busier now than when I worked.” Maybe you feel like Tattoo the basset hound. Tattoo didn’t intend to go for an evening run, but he had no choice when his owner shut the dog’s leash in the car door and took off for a drive with Tattoo still outside the car. Motorcycle officer Terry Filbert noticed a passing vehicle with something behind it: it was “the basset hound picking up his feet and putting them down as fast as he could.” The policeman got the car to stop and rescued Tattoo.

Some of busyness is unavoidable. But strange as it may seem, there are times when we also brag about it. Michael Carroll, a Philadelphia lawyer, writes,

I really am tired of people flaunting the busy badge of honor. Look, I get too busy; you get too busy; most of us are too busy too much of the time. But do they have to brag about it? To me, it’s like being proud of not seeing your kids or your friends or not having a life outside your job. Some bragging rights. They worship busy. We are usually blind to what being too busy steals from us. Even if you are doing great things for the world, you need a life. There are people you

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<sup>1</sup> “Family of the Week,” [www.timesonline.co.uk](http://www.timesonline.co.uk) (5-15-05); “I’m Ready; Let’s Go.”

need to spend time with. You may need to search for them if you have been too busy too long.<sup>2</sup>

Why brag about being too busy? In our culture, busyness means I'm valuable, worthy, important. Yet like most boasts and brags, can it cover an empty soul? Chuck Swindoll says busyness "substitutes shallow frenzy for deep friendship. It feeds the ego but starves the inner man. It fills a calendar but fractures a family."

Technology was supposed to free us from all this busy work. In 1970 we were the only family in town that had a computer in our home. It was three, floor to ceiling machines that took up a corner of our basement. It had a Teletype instead of a video monitor and paper tape instead of disks. It was a *whiz* at addition. Multiplication took a little longer. My Dad worked on it all the time. They said one day computers will make our lives easier and give us more leisure time. Over fifty years later, the computer you hold in your hand is an interactive, multitasking, wireless wonder that is a thousand times faster than our old workhorse. So where's all the free time? It's not the computer's fault. Whatever time technology freed up, we filled up with more tasks. Through the miracle of multitasking, you can probably squeeze 48 hours of activity into a 24-hour day. Whoopee! The most interactive generation in history has no time to interact with God, ourselves and important people in our lives. This is nothing new.

As Jesus and his disciples were on their way, he came to a village where a woman named Martha opened her home to him. Luke 10:38

Imagine how busy it is for Martha. She has no microwave, refrigerator, bread maker, food processor, range, or dishwasher. There are no grocery stores, Costco, BJs or Amazon. When Martha invites Jesus to her house, He shows up with a multitude of disciples. It feels like she is feeding thousands without the five loaves and two fish. Jesus is not lifting a finger to help. Even worse – her lazy sister Mary is just sitting around.

She had a sister called Mary, who sat at the Lord's feet listening to what he said. Luke 10:39

The fish needs to be fileted, the pita bread is burning and this shish is not going to kebab itself. Martha is frustrated and furious.

But Martha was distracted by all the preparations that had to be made. She came to him and asked, "Lord, don't you care that my sister has left me to do the work by myself? Tell her to help me!" Luke 10:40

Who can blame her? There's a lot to do. I identify with Martha. Yet the word "distracted" means to be drawn or dragged around. All these duties are dragging her around the

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<sup>2</sup> Michael Carroll, "All Work and No Play," [The Philadelphia Inquirer](#), October 25, 1997, p. A13.

kitchen like Tattoo the basset hound on a leash. The phrase “she came to” Jesus means she stood over Jesus and gave the Lord an order like He was Alexa. Then she asks Jesus if He “cares.” Of course the Lord cares. What He cares about more than meals is Martha and Mary. Jesus cares more about attitude than appetizers, more about peace than pita. To get her attention and break the spell of her distractions Jesus calls her name twice.

“Martha, Martha,” the Lord answered, “you are worried and upset about many things, but few things are needed—or indeed only one. Mary has chosen what is better, and it will not be taken away from her.” Luke 10:41-42

Jesus says Martha is worried and upset – her mind is divided in a multitude of directions and stirred up like the turbid water we had a few years ago. Martha you are being dragged around, distracted, divided and disturbed by all the things on you’re to do list. Focus on a few things and, above all one thing: taking a break and listening to Me. Make no mistake, the Lord wants us to do things for Him but above all, He wants us to take a break and be with Him. That’s how He cares for us. He wants us to rest so He can restore our souls.

God offers you a simple gift: rest. The book of Hebrews reminds us,

There remains, then, a Sabbath-rest for the people of God; for anyone who enters God’s rest also rests from his own work, just as God did from his. Let us, therefore, make every effort to enter that rest...” Hebrews 4:9-11

The word Sabbath originally means to be separate, to step away from work and the world for a bit. Even God the Master Worker took a rest from creation on the seventh day. One day, when Jesus returns to rule on earth as He does now in heaven, there will be an eternal Sabbath-rest for God’s people. In the meantime, between the beginning and the end of the world, the Lord offers us frequent gifts of rest, small tastes of heaven on earth.

Rest, in God’s dictionary, is not just a vacation or down time in front of the tube. It’s far more rejuvenating. It does involve a break from our work. In fact, at first, taking a rest will be harder than work. Notice how Hebrews challenges us to, “Make every effort to enter that rest” (v. 11)? It takes effort to rest since we’ve been trained to rush.

First, let Him *Refresh* you. Three times the preacher of Hebrews says: “Today, if you hear his voice, do not harden your hearts” (Ps 95:7-8). We don’t hear God’s voice or receive His rest because years of busyness have created a crust, a coating, a callus over our hearts. We need God to re-freshen us, to soften or break open our heart if necessary.

It must be done “Today.” Sabbath rest is not something that happens tomorrow, next week or when you get around to it. I listen to many people who are haunted by the ghosts of yesterday or churned up about the anxieties of tomorrow. They live under a cloud of regrets, grudges and might-have-beens from the past. They think the good stuff is always off in the future. Either way, they miss the joys of today. God gives you “Today” (see v. 7). That’s all you have. It’s all you will ever have. Remember the past. Plan for the future. Just don’t try to live at either of those addresses. That makes your

heart hard. Margaret Storm Jameson says, “The only way to live is to accept each minute as an unrepeatable miracle. Now is the time of your life.” Let Him refresh your heart. Take some time Today, every Today, to open your heart and hear His voice.

But how do you hear His voice? You must let God *Refine* you. A hardened heart needs surgery. The disappointments and desires, the resentments and regrets, the worries and fears, the guilt and shame must be surgically removed by the Great Physician. The sharp scalpel Jesus uses, according to Hebrews, is the Word of God.

For the word of God is alive and active. Sharper than any double-edged sword, it penetrates even to dividing soul and spirit, joints and marrow; it judges the thoughts and attitudes of the heart. Hebrews 4:12

The Scriptures are not a dead document, but a living, powerful, double-edged blade that slits the invisible division between soul and spirit. It penetrates into places where no medical doctor can reach to bring cleansing and healing. You don't merely read Scripture, it reads you. When you study the Bible, it studies and examines you. It exposes the thoughts and attitudes in your heart so God can heal them.

The healing comes when we listen for His voice in Scripture and look at our problems through His eyes. Don't let your Bible sit like a trophy on the shelf. Use it every day. It's a sharp, double-edged scalpel. Let God do some heart surgery on you each day. Let Him daily cut away the infections and diseases in your soul and spirit. The advice Leonardo Da Vinci gives to painters can apply to all of us.

Every now and then go away, have a little relaxation, for when you come back to your work your judgment will be surer, since to remain constantly at work will cause you to lose power of judgment. Go some distance away because then the work appears smaller, and more of it can be taken in at a glance, and lack of harmony or proportion is more readily seen.

Here is a rhythm to refresh and refine your soul.

- Dialogue Daily – Like Mary, spend time at the feet of Jesus every day. Talk to Him in prayer. Let Him talk to you through the Word and the Spirit. Check out last week's message for suggestions on how to do this.
- Worship Weekly – Whether you do this in person or online, morning, afternoon or evening, Sunday or during the week, worship reminds us God is in control and God is bigger than our problems. Pause weekly to praise God and it will put everything in its proper perspective.
- Meditate Monthly – Take a little longer on the first day of the month to ask God's will for the coming month. Write down what the Spirit wants you to do and what He wants you to let go.

- Seek Him Semi-Annually – I get my teeth cleaned and checked every six months. Why not dedicate a half or whole day to get away and listen to God, to let Him clean your soul and set your course for the next six months?

It may take time to get into this rhythm but it will refresh, refine and...

**Refuel** you. The preacher of Hebrews proclaims,

Therefore, since we have a great high priest who has gone through the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold firmly to the faith we profess. For we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but we have one who has been tempted in every way, just as we are – yet was without sin. Hebrews 4:14-15

The high priest is the one who stands between God and His people. Jesus, who is fully God and fully human, is the Great High Priest. He is the only one who can reconcile us to God by His cross. When we lay bare the thoughts, attitudes and weaknesses in our hearts before God, we find not a harsh Judge but an understanding Savior and Friend. Why? He is able to sympathize with our weaknesses since He was tempted in every way just as we are – yet did not sin.

I spoke with a woman who twice went through the pain of losing a husband. When her first husband died she wisely and courageously reached out for help in a grief support group. It was a tremendous blessing, she said, because the group leader lost her husband. She understood. When my friend's second husband died she again found a support group. But this time the leader had never lost anyone that close. My friend said it wasn't much help because the group leader didn't understand her pain.

Jesus understands. He experienced our weaknesses. Yet even more, He's the only one who took all our weaknesses upon Himself. His Cross opened the door for us into the throne room of heaven. Hebrews says,

Let us then approach the throne of grace with confidence, so that we may receive mercy (forgiveness) and find grace (acceptance) to help us in our time of need" Hebrews 4:16

Go to the throne of God in prayer every day. You don't have to bring your badge of busyness, your list of achievements, your proof of importance. Instead, bring your weaknesses, your pain, your emptiness and let Him fill you. Let Him refuel you with His mercy and grace, His forgiveness, healing, acceptance and peace. Do it "Today" – every "Today." It's the only way out of the prison bars of busyness.