

Theme: God created us with a need for rest, which the curse and our culture have magnified, and we should use Thanksgiving as a chance to receive God's gift of rest.

I. Intro - Satisfying Vs. Productive

- A. Article in NY Times "The Morning"
- B. One of many articles about how hard it is to truly rest
- C. We do not understand rest and we have undermined practices that help us rest!
- D. Today we will look at how we might practice rest this Thanksgiving - and into Advent!

II. Our Need For Rest

- A. God creates a very good universe
God saw all that he had made, and it was very good. And there was evening, and there was morning — the sixth day. ¹ Thus the heavens and the earth were completed in all their vast array. Genesis 1:31-2:1
 - 1. The conclusion to the creation account in Genesis 1
 - 2. The summary includes all creation - the whole universe
 - 3. God pronounces the whole creation 'very good'
 - 4. God is the Maker of heaven and earth - and humans created in His image are workers and makers, which is good!
- B. God 'rests' on the 7th day
By the seventh day God had finished the work he had been doing; so on the seventh day he rested from all his work. Genesis 2:2
 - 1. God 'rests' - not a physical rest but a ceasing from further work in creation.

- 2. 'Rest' is not just physical (for God does not have a physical body and does not tire) - it is a ceasing, a time to observe and enjoy the goodness of creation

C. God does this as a pattern for creation

By the seventh day God had finished the work he had been doing; so on the seventh day he rested from all his work. ³ And God blessed the seventh day and made it holy, because on it he rested from all the work of creating that he had done. Genesis 2:2-3

- 1. God did not need 'rest' - He does this as a pattern for us.
- 2. This is why God blesses the day - He has set a pattern for us.
- 3. This is the basis for a weekly Sabbath day of rest
Therefore the people of Israel shall keep the Sabbath, observing the Sabbath throughout their generations, as a covenant forever. ¹⁷ It is a sign forever between me and the people of Israel that in six days the LORD made heaven and earth, and on the seventh day he rested and was refreshed."
Exodus 31:16-17 (ESV)
 - a. Sabbath rest is a covenant sign between God and His people
 - b. They are to rest just as God did in Genesis 2!
 - c. God did not need rest - but we do!
 - d. Notice that God was 'refreshed' - this is the purpose of rest: it refreshes us in every area of life!
 - e. This rest and refreshment is more than just physical - it is a time to cease labor, to rest physically, emotionally, spiritually, and relationally, and to celebrate and enjoy God's good gifts to us.
 - f. This is critical for us because of our nature as created beings. Our very nature is created with a need for regular rest and refreshment.

D. The curse: the need for rest intensified

1. In Genesis 3:14-19 we read about the curse that comes as a result of sin. The curse introduces conflict into every area of human existence:
 - a. Spiritual conflict (Genesis 3:15)
 - b. Relational conflict (Genesis 3:16)
 - c. Vocational conflict (Genesis 3:16-19)
2. Humans are still to be fruitful and multiply, and to work and develop the earth, but this will now include difficulty, frustration, sorrow, pain, and death.
3. We not only need rest because of our created nature, but this need is intensified because of the curse resulting from sin. Thus, we have a double need for rest and refreshment.

E. Our culture: Booth Tarkington

1. The problems of the curse have found specific applications in our culture, which is restless and always desires that which is newer and bigger.
2. Booth Tarkington, who won the Pulitzer prize twice, strongly critiqued these growing tendencies in American culture:

Underneath the growth, one began to feel a powerful unrest, a movement of enterprise, of determined and adventurous optimism, a spirit iconoclastic toward whatever was old or delicate or lacked size - a spirit immensely set upon newness and bigness. "I will build a new city here upon this old one," it seemed to say. "I will build a noisy city upon this quiet one. I will build a dirty city upon this clean one. My new city may be as ugly as sin, as black as coal, as noisy as ten thousand boiler factories; but it will be beautiful to me, because it will be big—big—big!" (America Moved)

Give me of thyself, O bigness
Power to get more power
Riches to get more riches
Give me of thy sweat
That I may sweat more
Give me bigness to get more bigness to myself
O Bigness, for thine is the power and the glory
And there is no end but bigness, ever and forever
From "A Hymn To Giantism

3. If a people ever needed to re-learn the importance of true rest it is us!

III. God's Call and Gift of Rest

A. The Sabbath pattern in God's Covenant

1. This need for rest is so critical that God instituted a Sabbath pattern for His people in the Old Covenant:
 - a. Weekly Sabbaths (Exodus 20:8-11; Deuteronomy 5:12-15; Leviticus 23:3)
 - b. Regular festivals/feasts (Leviticus 23)
 - c. Sabbath years (Leviticus 25:1-7)
 - d. The Year of Jubilee (Leviticus 25:8-22)
2. This is why God blesses the day - He has set a pattern for us because rest is essential to our well-being and flourishing as humans.

B. God promises us rest in His Presence

The LORD replied, "My Presence will go with you, and I will give you rest." Exodus 33:14

"Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest. Matthew 11:28

1. The Presence of God is where we find true rest!

2. Jesus gives rest to us as we walk through this early world - and we need this in our restless culture!
3. This is why true Sabbath rest always includes drawing near to Jesus - there is no rest apart from Him!
You have made us for Yourself, and our hearts are restless until they find rest in You. Augustine

IV. Applying the Word

A. Receiving God's gift of rest this Thanksgiving season

1. God gives us the gift of rest each week as we gather to rest, celebrate, and receive from Him in corporate worship. I encourage you to strengthen this habit during the Advent season, for weekly worship is a cornerstone to receiving God's rest!
2. Similar to ancient Israel, we also have special times of celebration, feasting, and rest - and Thanksgiving is a key one.
3. I encourage everyone to set aside Thursday as a day of celebration and rest if at all possible!
4. This is the only one that is poetic in form

B. Areas to practice rest this Thanksgiving and Advent

1. Rest covers every area of human life!
 - a. Physical - from work, physical labor, projects
 - b. Emotional - from stress, worry, regret
 - c. Material - from greed and desire for newer, better, and more! GIVE THANKS AND REST FROM BLACK FRIDAY GREED!
 - d. Mental - from worry about tasks, current problems, and the future

- e. Relational - from problems and ruptures in relationships - and things that lead to them!
2. Which area is the Spirit saying I need rest?
3. Receive from God's Presence and rest!
 - a. In the coming days give this area to God in prayer and the Word asking Jesus to give You the rest of His Presence in that area.
 - b. Consciously take time to recount the blessings of God in your life - gratitude is an incredible antidote to a restless spirit that always seeks more!
 - c. Take Thanksgiving (or another day if necessary) to receive the rest of Jesus in that area, and to specifically give Him thanks for His blessings in your life.

C. The Table of Rest

1. God has prepared this Table so we can come to Him to receive rest!
2. Even in the presence of our enemies - we can come and receive rest
3. Come and rest in His Presence!

Thanksgiving Rest

Genesis 1:31-2:3
November 24, 2024
Communion
Numbers 6:24-26

Teaching keywords: Sabbath and rest; gratitude and thanksgiving; culture

The LORD bless you and keep you;²⁵ the LORD make his face shine upon you and be gracious to you;²⁶ the LORD turn his face toward you and give you peace.

God saw all that he had made, and it was very good. And there was evening, and there was morning — the sixth day. ¹ Thus the heavens and the earth were completed in all their vast array. ² By the seventh day God had finished the work he had been doing; so on the seventh day he rested from all his work. ³ And God blessed the seventh day and made it holy, because on it he rested from all the work of creating that he had done. Genesis 1:31-2:3