

Season 01.Episode 08

TITLE: And, It's Been a Long Maycember

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Welcome to MomenToUs! I am Pastor Rebecca Grate, the Pastor Mission Developer for MomenToUs and the host for our weekly podcast.

At MomenToUs, we believe that God is present with us in each and every single one of our moments.

We believe that our stories are connected to God's story and to one another's stories.

We believe that this connection and relationship changes our lives and our entire world.


Before we begin, I invite you to take a deep breath in, hold it while you count to three, and then slowly release that breath.


For most of my entire time of serving in leadership in the church, be that as a college student, a seminary student, a chaplain, an intern, or as a pastor, I have consistently been involved in leading or coordinating youth ministry. This means that I can reliably predict that the months of

August, September, and May will be completely bonkers - May, in particular.

But, this year was the first year I heard the month of May accurately described as: Maycember.^{1,2} And, if you go to our website for the transcript of this episode, I've linked the YouTube videos that introduced me to this label.

Between all of the end of year concerts, plays, and musicals, tournaments to end the school sport year, applications and fees turned in for summer camps and traveling teams, vacation planning, school years ending and having end of year potlucks and carnivals, graduations and moving up ceremonies, on top of all of the regularly occurring things like work, school, doctor's appointments, lessons, and practices. And somewhere in the midst of that is everything springing to life in our yards, if we have them, and needing to be tended back. Because if you aren't able to stay on top of it during the month of May, you know exactly how much work you will need to invest for the rest of the warm months. Ask me how I know.

¹  MAYcember Medley: How to survive end of school year (2019)

²  Welcome to Maycember - "September" Parody (2023)

In the midst of all of these things, one other piece that was on my calendar was a Friday night and all-day Saturday retreat with a few congregations in the area. We covered a lot of really great things about discerning and communicating our beliefs and how those shape the ministries and activities that occur through the congregation. And during the presentation, one sentence jumped out: Busyness does not equal faithfulness. I laughed very loudly inside my head as I read and emphasized that sentence; it seems preposterous for that to be spoken in the midst of the month of May.

I have always, always, always been a person who loves naps. I do have a friend who has dedicated time in their calendar for a daily nap; I aspire to this. Most days don't have the opportunity for a nap, but on the days I get one, I am a much happier and kinder person.

Occasionally, there are times my body tells me that I must nap; there is no other option. And, typically, that comes at times when I'm incredibly anxious or busy or I've been around other people who are incredibly anxious or busy. It's like my body's built in response for how to reintegrate and recover some of the energy that has been expended. There have been multiple days over this past month that I have had the luxury of a

nap, but it has been as a response to the busyness and anxiety I had been around. My body was telling me to recharge and rest.

There is a faith word surrounding the concept of resting: Sabbath. This is not an idea that is specific to Lutherans or Christians; this is a spiritual practice embraced by the Jewish faith - the Muslim faith, as well as other faith traditions also practice sacred rest, though the specific name for this practice may not be 'sabbath'. For the sake of this podcast, when sabbath is mentioned, we are going to be using the understanding I know the best: as a Pastor serving in the Lutheran Church of the Christian faith. There will likely be differences from those who follow other denominations or faith traditions, and that is okay. But, I don't want it to be construed that I am speaking for all traditions who have a belief or practice of sacred rest.

For us, this is rooted in two different stories from the Bible, but we're only going to focus on one of them for this podcast. This story is the very first story in the entire Bible, found at the beginning of the Book of Genesis. This is the story about how creation came into being.

I'm going to read this story to you, but if you are familiar with this story, it might sound different. This version of the story has been adapted from The Message Bible, which was published in 2002 and is a paraphrased version of the Bible, written in language that sounds closer

to how we talk in our everyday conversations rather than being a true word for word translation from the original languages into English.

[By the way: Did you know the Bible wasn't originally written in English? More on that at some point.]

A reading from the book of Genesis:

^{1:1-2} First this: God created the Heavens and Earth—all you see, all you don't see. Earth was a soup of nothingness, a bottomless emptiness, an inky blackness. God's Spirit brooded like a bird above the watery abyss.

³⁻⁵ God spoke: "Light!"

And light appeared.

God saw that light was good
and separated light from dark.

God named the light Day,
[God] named the dark Night.

It was evening, it was morning—
Day One.

⁶⁻⁸ God spoke: "Sky! In the middle of the waters;
separate water from water!"

God made sky.

[God] separated the water under sky
from the water above sky.

And there it was:

[God] named sky the Heavens;

It was evening, it was morning—
Day Two.

⁹⁻¹⁰ God spoke: "Separate!

Water-beneath-Heaven, gather into one place;
Land, appear!"

And there it was.

God named the land Earth.

[God] named the pooled water Ocean.

God saw that it was good.

¹¹⁻¹³ God spoke: “Earth, green up! Grow all varieties
of seed-bearing plants,
Every sort of fruit-bearing tree.”

And there it was.

Earth produced green seed-bearing plants,
all varieties,
And fruit-bearing trees of all sorts.

God saw that it was good.

It was evening, it was morning—
Day Three.

¹⁴⁻¹⁵ God spoke: “Lights! Come out!

Shine in Heaven’s sky!

Separate Day from Night.

Mark seasons and days and years,
Lights in Heaven’s sky to give light to Earth.”

And there it was.

¹⁶⁻¹⁹ God made two big lights, the larger
to take charge of Day,

The smaller to be in charge of Night;
and he made the stars.

God placed them in the heavenly sky
to light up Earth

And oversee Day and Night,
to separate light and dark.

God saw that it was good.

It was evening, it was morning—
Day Four.

²⁰⁻²³ God spoke: “Swarm, Ocean, with fish and all sea life!

Birds, fly through the sky over Earth!”

God created the huge whales,
all the swarm of life in the waters,
And every kind and species of flying birds.

God saw that it was good.

God blessed them: “Prosper! Reproduce! Fill Ocean!

Birds, reproduce on Earth!”

It was evening, it was morning—
Day Five.

²⁴⁻²⁵ God spoke: “Earth, generate life! Every sort and kind:
cattle and reptiles and wild animals—all kinds.”

And there it was:

wild animals of every kind,
Cattle of all kinds, every sort of reptile and bug.

God saw that it was good.

²⁶⁻²⁸ God spoke: “Let us make human beings in our image, make them

reflecting our nature

So they can be responsible for the fish in the sea,
the birds in the air, the cattle,

And, yes, Earth itself,

and every animal that moves on the face of Earth.”

God created human beings;

[God] created them godlike,

Reflecting God’s nature.

[God] created them.

God blessed them:

“Prosper! Reproduce! Fill Earth! Take charge!

Be responsible for fish in the sea and birds in the air,

for every living thing that moves on the face of Earth.”

²⁹⁻³⁰ Then God said, “I’ve given you

every sort of seed-bearing plant on Earth

And every kind of fruit-bearing tree,

given them to you for food.

To all animals and all birds,

everything that moves and breathes,

I give whatever grows out of the ground for food.”

And there it was.

³¹ God looked over everything [God] had made;

it was so good, so very good!

It was evening, it was morning—

Day Six.

^{2:1} Heaven and Earth were finished,
down to the last detail.

²⁻⁴ By the seventh day

God had finished [God’s] work.

On the seventh day

[God] rested from all [God’s] work.

God blessed the seventh day.

[God] made it a Holy Day
Because on that day [God] rested from [God's] work,
all the creating God had done.
This is the story of how it all started,
of Heaven and Earth when they were created.³

In this Bible story, this telling of how all of creation came to be, there was time and space given for the necessity of rest. Rest, restoration is a literal part of this creation story, not an appendix or a collection of endnotes tacked on at the end that we can consult and engage in if we want to learn more about the things that occurred earlier in the story.

Sabbath is a day - a time - of rest created so that we could dwell with God and God could dwell with us.

A day - a time - of rest created so that we have the strength, energy, and creativity to work with and for others who need help living lives that are fruitful and thriving.

A day - a time - of rest created so that relationships and connection can be restored and healed.

Because here's the thing about the sabbath:

It's not about planning another vacation.

³ [Genesis 1:1-2:4a](#) (The Message, edited)

It's not about getting rest because we have overworked and overextended ourselves.

It's not about getting rest so that we can then go back out and overwork and overextend ourselves all over again this week.

It's not about being a reward for getting everything marked off your to do list or finishing a big project at work.

Sabbath, at its core, is about life:

Sabbath was created for rest, for rejuvenation, for restoration, for relationship between God and everything that had been created to dwell together.

Sabbath is about pausing to listen to what God is calling you to do for the sake of the world and your neighbors.

Sabbath is about coming together and deepening our relationships with God and one another so that we can know we are not alone and that we work together to bring about peace and wholeness in God's world.

Sabbath is about living a completely different rhythm to our lives than one that expects productivity for the entire 16 hours we are awake, regardless of the fact that a typical work day is 8 or 9 hours and there's some debate in how effective that schedule is.

Spending an entire 24 hour day resting from all things that even sniff of work seems inconceivable. And, for those of us who weren't raised in households that even have a few minutes of rest, this is a completely new idea. Holding sacred space and honoring a sabbath day is an intentional practice, which means it's not something that you can instantly do and never look back. Each week offers a chance to try again and sabbath for a little longer, a little freer from work, a little more connected to God.

Our theme for this summer is: Sabbath Stops.

For so many of us, summer means a shift in our schedule. The way our calendars look from June through August is much different than September through May. And, for many of us we will be traveling, either to places nearby or places far away. If you have ever traveled on a road trip, you know one of the biggest points of concern is: Where is the next Rest Stop so we can get food, something to drink, move around, tend to whatever our bodies need, breathe some different air than the air inside the car. We can't wait to see you at our first Sabbath Stop next week!

A Prayer for Slowing Down

God, who included resting in creation,

Sometimes it feels like there isn't time to stop.

Won't the world end if I don't work on 5 projects simultaneously?

Won't everything be terrible if I don't wake up and immediately start working until I close my eyes for sleep?

Won't you love me less if I'm not productive all the time?

Help us find space to connect with you.

Remind us that you already love us the most possible amount you can ever love us; we don't have to prove our worth through completed to-do lists.

Help us sabbath with you.

Amen.

Thank you for joining us for our weekly MomenToUs. We are looking forward to growing with each of you and are so grateful you are a part of the MomenToUs community.

Thank you to our Mission Partners, the Southern Ohio Synod and the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America. Their financial contributions and prayer have been instrumental in bringing this new ministry into existence.

And, I want to say thank you to Advent Lutheran Church in Columbus for calling me to preach and lead worship this morning, yes THIS morning, while their pastor is taking a much needed vacation. If you want to join us for worship, to learn more about a story where it is

glaringly obvious that God has shown up in our midst, they will be livestreaming their 11 AM worship service on [Facebook](#) and [YouTube](#). You can find them on both platforms using the handle: @AdventELC. I've also direct linked their Facebook and YouTube channels in this podcast's show notes, which are located on our website: www.momentous.social.

If you have noticed God this week, either through something that happened or through something you experienced through our podcast, we would love to know about it so we can give thanks for God's presence with you. You can do that in several different ways:

You can send us a direct message through our Facebook, Instagram, or Twitter accounts.

You can send us an email using dailymomentous@gmail.com

Or, you can leave us a voicemail which may be featured in an upcoming podcast episode. To leave a voicemail, you may record a voice memo on your phone and email that to us. There are some tips and tricks located on our website, as well.

However you are engaging with MomenToUs, we hope that it means you are growing in your faith and noticing God's presence with you. When a podcast or social media post resonates with you, we hope you share it

on your social media or directly with someone you know, to help them grow in their faith.

If you want to support the ministry of MomenToUs, know that engaging with us online is one way to do so. If you are able to give financially, you can visit our website and use the donate link. Each one-time or recurring gift ensures the MomenToUs Community continues to grow.

We give thanks for every single one of you, for being a part of the MomenToUs community, for listening to God's call to try something new, and for beginning to notice God's presence even more frequently in your life, in our communities, and in our world.

Until our next podcast, remember to breathe deeply and to remember that God is present with you every single moment.

Music:

Best Moment - Music by [SoulProdMusic](#) from [Pixabay](#).

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