

Check Availability: Making Room When Life Feels Restless!

Week 2: Rhythm in the Blue

It's Memorial Day weekend and having lived in Norfolk a few years, Memorial Day has taken on a different tone for me. Hearing the personal stories of our veterans, many who have the experience of losing a fellow soldier, it makes war real, and the cost involved. There's only been one ultimate sacrifice and that was Jesus Christ on Calvary, but we experience the freedom to worship and so many other freedoms in our country because of the countless sacrifices of brave men and women. I would like for us to take a moment and prayerfully honor those who have lost their lives in service to our country today. Moment of silent prayer.

I. We're in a series of messages about a topic we've all figured out by now, right?!?! It's about time! Not that it's about time you figured it out, it's literally about:

A. [Slide]: Time

and more specifically our availability to God and the relationships that matter most in our lives.

1. In the LifeGroup I attend, we talked last week about how it seems time is speeding up. The demands of life seem to be increasing and yet the amount of time we all have continues to stay the same. There's nothing that can change the reality that we all have 24 hours in a day.

We can't trade for more time, but wouldn't that be nice!

This very thought popped into my head the other day when I got behind the coupon queen in Walgreens. I'm not knocking frugality; I just personally place more value on speed and efficiency. So, I'm in the checkout line and every item has a coupon and it's like a competitive game between the costumer and checkout person. I had a conversation with the lady in my mind and I offered her the \$10 she would save just to get the line moving again!

Can you imagine if there was a time exchange where people could go and trade for more time? That's not how it works though. Time is the great equalizer and the most priceless commodity. We can pay for efficiency, but time doesn't stop for anyone.

2. That's a dilemma for some of us today because we live in a culture that prioritizes tasks and getting things done. Humanity in the western culture, through the means of technology, has learned to manipulate our environment in radical ways, but that's come with a cost. Namely, we've lost our regard for time. We can communicate globally instantly. Amazon or Wal-mart will deliver an order of groceries to your door by day's end. We could be in Europe in 7 hours.
3. As cool as all of that is, time hasn't changed one bit. It still takes 24 hours for the earth to revolve around its axis. In our ability to do things efficiently, we haven't gotten better at creating margin in our lives. I believe a strong case can be made that we've done the opposite. If we can accomplish tasks more efficiently then let's just fill our schedules with more tasks. We see everything else that others are doing, and we mix in a degree of F.O.M.O. (fear of missing out) and we find ourselves on a never-ending treadmill.

B. We go to:

[Slide]: Check Availability

and there's none to be found. We have no breathing room, and we wonder why life feels restless?

1. Last week we looked at time more generally and the idea of Sabbath. Sabbath is the Hebrew word that means to "rest." Even though we're not under the Old Testament restrictions of the Sabbath Day, we've entered a Sabbath Rest for those who are in Christ. Revelation 21 speaks to the consummation of the new heavens and new earth but throughout the New Testament those who are Christ followers are identified as new creation people.

2 Corinthians 5:17 (CSB) [Slide]: 17 Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; the old has passed away and see, the new has come!

2. We're no longer subject to the kingdom of this world once we're in Christ. We're under a new authority! That does not mean we're released from the pull of sin. Unfortunately, if we're in these physical bodies we will be. However, through the empowerment of the Holy Spirit we're now capable of experiencing the

freedom that comes with following Christ. That freedom isn't a personal right, do what you want, kind of freedom. Freedom in the Spirit is made evident through our obedience to Christ.

3. We will fail forward on this until we physically die or Jesus returns, but our goal doesn't change.

As Christ followers our goal is to:

[Slide]: Model Jesus!

- a. Not to prove we're worthy or to earn our salvation. Our relationship with God in Christ is a gift of grace. But in Christ, we've been freed from the bondage of sin. We follow Christ into abundant life in response to the grace we've been given. Following Christ isn't something we've "got" to do. It's difficult and challenging for sure but it's something we "get" to do! It's a privilege.

When Jesus lived out His earthly ministry, He didn't randomly do "pop up's" to pass out paradise passes.

- b. The invite was always:

[Slide]: Follow Me!

- c. When we read the Scripture, we prayerfully consider how Jesus lived His life. Discipleship is about modeling our lives after Jesus and helping others model their lives after Him too. If we look at most passages within the Gospels one aspect of Jesus's life that's clear is that He seemed to be:

[Slide]: available.

- (1) When we think of leaders today, we might even say Jesus spoiled people. We know He had crowds of people following Him at certain points that may have exceeded 20,000+. That's massive! Many leaders today reach a certain following, and they give their spiel on stage and are whisked away before anyone gets to them. The demands on Jesus must have been inundating. While Jesus was God in a bod Philippians 2 tells us that Jesus emptied Himself by taking on the form of a man. The analogy I've used before would be as if Luka Doncic and I played a basketball game together with our legs tied. Luka is still the incredible athlete he is but now with a limitation having taken me on.

- (2) So, Jesus was available. He was available to the Father's direction, and He was open to what we might view as a disruption. He didn't blaze through life with no margin. He was always focused on the mission but not at the expense of healthy rhythms in His life. He got alone with the Father. He rarely passed up a meal with friends. And apart from the Garden of Gethsemane, with His crucifixion imminent, Jesus was a hard sleeper. When Jesus passed out, Jesus passed out!

- (3) Even as a baby, Jesus was a solid sleeper. Parents wouldn't that be amazing!

Wait a second! How do you know that preacher? Because Christmas was a:

[Slide]: Silent Night!

All was calm and all was bright!

- C. But on a serious note, turn with me to Matthew 8:24-27. We're going to consider a short passage today that's sandwiched in between other passages that tend to get more press. Jesus is healing a bunch of people followed by the passage we'll discuss today. On the other end of the passage is the healing of the demonic. Jesus casts the demons into pigs.

1. It's a busy season for Jesus! But even amid a hectic schedule Jesus models rhythms in His life.

The Son of God had to recharge just like us and

He does so in circumstances that we look at and might scratch our heads.

Let's dive in:

Matthew 8:23-27 (CSB) [Slide]: 23 As he got into the boat, his disciples followed him. 24 Suddenly, a violent storm arose on the sea, so that the boat was being swamped by the waves- but Jesus kept sleeping. 25 So the disciples came and woke him up, saying, "Lord, save us! We're going to die!" 26 He said to them, "Why are you afraid, you of little faith?" Then he got up and rebuked the winds and the sea, and there was a great calm. 27 The men were amazed and asked, "What kind of man is this? Even the winds and the sea obey him!"

2. Let's consider this passage from a few perspectives today.

We'll look from the perspective of Jesus and also the disciples.

a. When I say check availability, the picture in my mind is when you pull up your calendar or maybe you're going to book a flight and the first step is checking the availability. In the case of our calendars that's our availability to commit to something. In the case of the flight, it's checking to see if there's a seat available on the plane.

3. Here's my theory on how Jesus managed His "calendar:" He was very disciplined.

He got up early in the mornings before everyone else to connect with the Father.

But, after long days and difficult stretches of healing and preaching to the crowds Jesus would leverage:

[Slide]: The Sea of Galilee.

a. We see this multiple times in the gospels where Jesus would cross the sea. If we think about it, it would have been a very strategic approach to Jesus getting some breathing room. The Sea of Galilee wasn't a huge body of water (about 13 miles north to south and 10 miles west to east) so not an unreasonable distance to cross. And the Sea split Galilee to the east from a region of 10 cities (Decapolis) to the west. Galilee was a Jewish region and the hub of Jesus's ministry. He would have been more recognizable in this region, hence the crowds.

The Decapolis was more Gentile. The ministry demands would have been less rigorous.

4. On this day, Jesus and His disciples are crossing the sea and Jesus is sound asleep. The Sea of Galilee is notorious even today for its violent storms. It's a body of water you must be skilled at navigating.

Just to the west is an area known as the Golan Heights and as you may suspect a mountainous region.

The sea on the other hand is located in a steep valley giving the Sea of Galilee the claim of the lowest freshwater sea on earth and second only to the Dead Sea (saltwater).

This was a recipe for strong winds and violent storms.

a. This one must have been next level though because the disciples, mostly trained fishermen, were: [Slide]: Afraid.

b. But Jesus was sound asleep. Now I don't believe this storm caught Jesus by surprise. He wasn't shocked to find Himself in the middle of the storm. He was sound asleep. To the disciples it felt like Jesus needed to check his availability because it seemed as though He was checked out! This is an interesting thought, Jesus who created the heavens and earth through the authority of His Word was sleeping through this violent storm. The same storm that the disciples were screaming through, Jesus was sleeping through because He knew that no matter what was happening circumstantially, He was confident in the authority and power the Father had given Him. Nothing could override that.

(1) Jesus hasn't changed. He still gets the final say. In the restlessness that is often associated with our culture today and in our lives that feel chaotic like a storm-tossed boat, let the image of Jesus solidly sleeping be a reassurance to us. In this chaotic situation it's as if Jesus reminded these guys through a peaceful sleep that the situation was in control. It's like Jesus is saying, "If I'm here, you've got nothing to worry about. Grab a cushion and get some R and R."

(2) If our lives feel out of control and we're anxious and stressed, maybe our focus is on the wrong place. Have we drawn near to the Lord? Even during a storm, we know we're drawing near to the Lord because that is always accompanied with:

[Slide]: Peace.

c. In verse 25 the disciples go and wake Jesus up. These are trained fishermen and they're crying like babies. This is a serious storm! As Jesus is getting up from the bench and knocking the sleep off His eyes, Jesus says the most bizarre thing anyone could say in a moment like this. It isn't time for a question and yet Jesus goes there. He doesn't respond to the demand of the disciples, nor does He respond to the storm before He asks them this question:

[Slide]: Why are you afraid, you of little faith?

(1) Now isn't that a piercing question. The disciples were looking out over a literal seascape that was restless while Jesus was in the boat asleep.

In response to their lack of faith (or little faith) He asks them, "why are you afraid?"

5. There are all kinds of storms in this life,
but when Scripture depicts a storm in conjunction with a sea it's a depiction of:

[Slide]: Restlessness.

a. Restlessness takes many forms. Some forms are brought upon us and others we bring upon ourselves,
but in the face of restlessness the same question still applies today. "Why are you afraid?" This
might feel like an unusual direction to go in a series of messages on availability to God, ourselves, and
those most important to us, but I would argue today that hiding behind our chaotic schedules and busy
culture is the underlying root of:

[Slide]: Fear.

(1) Jesus does rebuke the wind and waves and they listen to Him!

But Jesus doesn't release the tension of this restless situation without looking the disciples in the
eyes and making them consider "why it is they're afraid?"

b. I'm aware of what life is like when the circumstances around me are restless.

May I confess to you that most of my restlessness is derived from the underbelly of one of my greatest strengths.

I can only hyperfocus on just a few things but when I commit to something I Go All Out and whatever I'm focused on has the potential to consume me. I have two speeds, zero or one hundred.

If I commit to something I will give it everything I have and that's a great thing, sometimes.

God

has given me a passion for excellence and

when I'm operating from a place of contentment in the Lord that can be a powerful thing.

But when I'm not in a good place spiritually that same pursuit of excellence comes from a place of fear.

Mostly a fear of failure and the lies of Satan that say I must prove everyone wrong.

That brings up so much baggage that I have to repent of often.

D. This week, I'd like us to do some serious evaluation of our lives. Restlessness doesn't always show up in our
schedules but often it does because we live in a culture that is consumed with fear.

1. The restlessness often originates from a posture of fear that goes something like this:

[Slide]: If I don't _____, then ___[something bad]___ is going to happen.

Fill that in this week as many times as you need to.

You can do the opposite as well.

If I do _____, then ___[something good]___ won't happen.

2. Honestly evaluate by spending time with the Lord.

3. When we have no margin in our lives and we're restless, think about Jesus on that boat sleeping.

When He wakes up His response is to ask the disciples why they are afraid.

Fear is a powerful motivator, but it isn't a godly one! And there's a better way:

[Slide]: Trust!

4. Trust that Jesus is who He says He is, and He will do what He promises us to do!

We Bend Our Lives to the Book by following Him. The more we focus on Jesus the more fear erodes
because fear can't coincide with peace and peace is always found in His presence!