Check Availability: Making Room When Life Feels Restless!

Week 1: In the Beginning God….. Rested?

I. Hey there and welcome to Tab! It's great to be back with you this weekend as we kick off a new series! We've got an exciting summer in store and although we're a few weeks away, we're not going to let a technicality get in the way. We're declaring summer today! Kids make sure you go to school tomorrow. To kick off summer, we're going to be in a series of messages that we might dismiss as soon as I say it. It's one of those topics that we're well versed in giving reasons as to why it's not applicable. Me too! So here we go:

[Slide]: Check Availability: Making Room When Life Feels Restless!

A. Running full throttle has become so engrained in our culture that it's become a badge of honor. I'm sure right now people are engaging in conversation somewhere and it's probably going something like this: "Hey, how are you these days?" and the response most often: "Oh, you know, good, it's just so busy!" It's as if any sign of margin in our lives is a sign of insignificance. As tasks become more efficient, we've not created extra space but taken on more tasks, and our culture is feeling the brunt. Anxiety, depression, cardiovascular disease, are at all-time high levels and I'm convinced it is in large part because we've bought into the lie that life was designed to be rest-less. To be clear, this isn't a call to laziness. Some of you need to start showing up to work on time. What I am saying is that we tend to go through life at full throttle trying to meet cultural expectations and we can easily find ourselves in a position we're unavailable for the very things that matter most. Again, God help me too. I'm right in the same boat. I pack my life fuller than Bryant Denny Stadium (Alabama) on a fall Saturday.

B. Could there be a better way? What happened to front porch swings and neighborhood BBQs? I hear that way back when gas was .50 cents a gallon people would do a thing called a Sunday drive. Probably not on I-64 or I-10 though!

1. I've been reading a fascinating book called The Sabbath by Abraham J. Heschel. He was a Jewish scholar that wrote extensively in the 1940's and 1950's and this short book was an attempt to challenge what he saw as the Jewish Assimilation into American Culture at the expense of key Jewish practices. We'll look at what the New Testament has to say about the Sabbath which Heschel does not, but the principles he outlines in the book are very insightful for our culture today!

Consider this quote:

[Slide]: "Technical civilization is man's conquest of space. It is a triumph frequently achieved by sacrificing an essential ingredient of existence, namely, time. In technical civilization, we expend time to gain space. To enhance our power in the world of space is our main objective." - Abraham Heschel

2. An intrinsic part of being human is our God given mandate to subdue the earth. To be God's supervisors or caretakers of the rest of the created order. But as we'll see today there were God given parameters to this mandate. What Heschel is speaking into is this relatively new reality we now experience through technology (Industrial Revolution) to pursue the ongoing conquest of building bigger, buying more, expanding our influence 24/7/365 at the increasing expense of:

[Slide]: Time

3. And as profound as the words of Heschel are, as I've looked through the Old and New Testament recently pondering this idea of time, I've been amazed at just how much the Scriptures speak into this issue!

a. Something about Scripture might be so glaringly obvious it's easy to miss. Most of the Scripture isn't propositional, it's narratival. In other words, it's in story form.

b. That's extremely important for us as Christ followers because we obey the commands of Scripture, but we also make it our aim to model the lifestyle of our Lord Jesus. Jesus said that if we've seen Him, we've seen the Father, so our template for a successful life is found in the Word.
Consider these words of Christ. Write them down. Memorize them over the next few weeks.
These are words we desperately need to hear in our rest-less lives:

Matthew 6:33 (CSB) [Slide]: 33 "But seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things will be provided for you."

Matthew 11:28-29 (CSB) [Slide]: 28 "Come to me, all of you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest. 29 Take up my yoke and learn from me, because I am lowly and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls."

John 15:5 (CSB) [Slide]: 5 "I am the vine; you are the branches. The one who remains in me and I in him produces much fruit, because you can do nothing without me."

4. **Jesus never gives the impression that He was rushed when reading the Scripture. Sometimes His pace can be frustrating for us as it was to those in the original context. Jesus's friends were upset when He didn't show up on their terms. But Jesus lived out His ministry in submission to the Father and to do that, Jesus prioritized His relationship to the Father and operated from a place of rest not restlessness. Jesus, Lord of Lord and King of Kings, with a life purpose to fulfill the greatest mission possible, lived every moment of His life out of the overflow of His connection to the Father.**
   Jesus had:

   [Slide]: Breathing Room!

5. **Why did Jesus live that way? It wasn't just a good idea; it was a God idea. Rest or breathing room was baked into the fabric of creation from the beginning. Over the next several weeks we'll be looking at some patterns of Jesus's life, but Jesus's life is a reflection of the Father, and we see all the way back in the creation account that we weren't designed to operate at full throttle.**
   In the beginning, before sin marred the world, in the perfect design God set forth, He rested!
   So, I want us to start our series in Genesis 2 looking at the God ordained idea of:

   [Slide]: Sabbath

C. **What is the Sabbath? Why does it matter? What should we do regarding the Sabbath today?**
   Those are some of the questions we'll be considering. Jesus has something to say regarding the Sabbath and we'll consider His words as well. So here we go, Genesis 2:1-3:

Genesis 2:1-3 (CSB) [Slide]: 1 So the heavens and the earth and everything in them were completed. 2 On the seventh day God had completed his work that he had done, and he rested on the seventh day from all his work that he had done. 3 God blessed the seventh day and declared it holy, for on it he rested from all his work of creation.

1. **There are many things left wanting in reading the creation account. How God went about creation is where we focus a lot of our questions, but the text doesn't focus on that question. The creation account puts us on a need-to-know basis and focuses on 1) God is the Creator God. He brought forth the heavens and earth ex nihilo (out of nothing). Something happened between verse 1 and 2 and in verse 3 God begins His creative work of bringing forth order over chaos. Maybe the challenge of new and old earth is in verse 2? Regardless, we get to the seventh day of creation and there is something unique and special about this set apart period of:**

   [Slide]: Time

   a. **If Bethany wants to ensure that I've grasped something, what she often does is repeat it several times. She'll ask me to go to the grocery store for milk and what will she repeat often, "do not go down the snack aisle." Once again, "do not go down the snack aisle." There is something unique about the seventh day that's different from the others because it's the only day that's mentioned multiple times. Three times in just a few verses God repeats the fact that the seventh day is uniquely blessed. It's been set apart. Repetition in the Scripture is God's way of putting flashing lights on something He doesn't want us to miss, and three times signals the seventh day's importance. What occurred on the seventh day? God rested, He blessed it, He declared it holy, and for good measure, He rested (all outlined in 2:1-3)!**

b. Isn't it interesting that rather than looking down over creation and zapping a temple into existence, or looking out over His most perfect mountain, or even the declarations He makes over Adam and Eve (which He declared very good),
it's not a spatial "thing" God sets apart and declares holy, it's a designated period of time!

2. That's what the Sabbath is: a designated period of time that God rested and declared to be holy. The Hebrew word:

[Slide]: שׁבת (Sabbath)

is the word we translate "rested" in Genesis 2:1-3. "Rested" is a pretty mild way to translate the Hebrew word "Sabbath" that could also mean: to cease, to refrain, to interrupt, to eliminate. I enjoy listening to football games on the radio and periodically through the course of a game there will be a pause for station identification. "You're listening to Alabama Sports Radio brought to you by the Deerfield Sports Network." It's a purposeful interruption from the game for what purpose? To remind you that the game is being brought to you by a provider.
That's not a bad way to think about what God was declaring on the seventh day.

3. The Hebrew word for holy or sanctified is the word:

[Slide]: קדשׁ

Kadosh gets to the idea of setting something apart or cutting away. It's an intentional act of declaring something to be different from something else. Again, all this was declared by God in reference to the seventh day.

D. What did Jesus have to say and teach about the Sabbath? That's an important question for us to consider as Christ followers? Jesus lived out His earthly ministry in an interesting period of Jewish History known as Second Temple Judaism. Second Temple Judaism was the time between the building of the second temple (515 B.C.) to its destruction in 70 A.D. Particularly toward the end of the period when Jesus lived there was ironically a heightened expectation that the coming of Messiah was imminent. Not only was it imminent, the coming of the Messiah (think Kingly, Warrior, Priestly Messiah) was in some way dependent on Israel's adherence to the Torah (First 5 books of the O.T). God was looking to Israel to prove as a nation their commitment to God, and their worth, and as a reward, God would send the Messiah.
That's why so many of the Jews missed the Messiah because Jesus wasn't what they expected Him to be.

1. The major point however is that over the course of Second Temple Judaism, the religious leaders had developed an extensive commentary on the Torah of what adherence to the Torah actually meant in practical application. As a result, the Sabbath morphed from what was intended as a gift of God and time to commune with God, into a day of such heightened restriction it became an added burden.

2. Jesus took liberties on the Sabbath in a way the Pharisees despised. They took Jesus's actions as an affront to the holiness or set apartness of the day. Jesus, fully God and fully man, says these words in response:

Mark 2:27 (CSB) [Slide]: 27 Then he told them, "The Sabbath was made for man, not man for the Sabbath."

3. Going back to the original design before sin entered the world, God rested and set aside a period of time on the seventh day to commune with humanity in a unique way. It's not that God wasn't in our productivity, but He didn't declare a temple or a distinct place, no "thing" from a spatial or created standpoint, was set aside or consecrated, it was a designated period of:

[Slide]: Time!

a. An invitation from God to join Him in rest to replenish our souls and delight in the holiness of God in time. Jesus declares that God didn't designate this time as a burden but as a gift.
An invitation to experience a taste of the eternal delight of resting in His presence.

b. I was driving down the highway this week and I saw a sign off the road. Maybe you've seen some of these? This particular sign said, "There is only one Sabbath - Saturday." I'm not arguing with the sign, but I do think it's misplaced in its intended meaning. But it's an honest question, "should we as Christ followers still adhere to the Sabbath day?" I would say "yes", and I would say "no." Was that helpful?

(1) (Yes) The early believers according to Acts 2 gathered on the first day of the week to commemorate the Resurrection. I find it significant that Jesus was resurrected on a Sunday (the first day of a new week). The Bible speaks of resurrection in terms of new creation and those who are believers as new creation people (2 Corinthians 5).
Paul also mentions in Romans 14:5, "One person judges one day to be more important than another day. Someone else judges every day to be the same. Let each one be fully convinced in his own mind."

(2) (No) Here's why I would say the significance of the Sabbath day has shifted for the believer, but do not take this to mean diminished in any way.

Hebrews 4:9-11 (CSB) [Slide]: 9 Therefore a Sabbath rest remains for God's people. 10 For the person who has entered his rest has rested from his own works, just as God did from his. 11 Let us, then, make every effort to enter that rest, so that no one will fall into the same pattern of disobedience.

The Book of Hebrews is such a crucial book in the New Testament because it serves as a bridge between the Jewish World Jesus inhabited and the relationship of the Law under the New Covenant of grace.
In Christ we've entered a Sabbath rest in which we are no longer enslaved to this world's systems. We've been given entrance into a Sabbath rest and yet we (just like the world around us) go to:

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and there's none to be found! We're never called to be lazy in the Christian life. There are strong words against that, but we do everything now as those in Christ from a position of:

[Slide]: Rest.

(3) What does that mean? It means our identity is secure in Christ. He has declared us holy and blameless in God's sight. We live our lives to the fullest, but we never lose focus on our final destination. We work hard but we trust God to provide. We serve those around us, but from a position of already having given our lives to the Lord.
And yet the majority of how we spend our time, what we make ourselves available to, gives us the true meter reading on where our treasures are being stored. Sabbath rest for the believer is a way of life, but that should materialize in to how we spend our time
and we have bought into the lies of Satan. If we're in Christ, God has laid claim to our souls, but we so often sell our bodies and well-being, even our families and most important relationships, chasing after the rotting pursuits of this world, just like everyone else around us.

E. As we kick off the summer and new series, I want us to see that God values time. It's the first thing that He declared to be holy! God is a big fan of rest and those of us in Christ are called into a lifestyle of Sabbath rest. That should be the foundation by which we orient our time.

1. This summer I want us to make progress on this as a church family. I want us to challenge one another to set aside intentional time each week to enjoy our relationship with God, by doing something life-giving by yourself or in relationship with others. Sabbath rest doesn't have to be you in a closet all day reading your Bible and praying (although those are great things to do!) Let's turn our phones and emails off and be intentional about connecting with God and our friends and family. Sitting down over a meal and listening to one another and celebrating God's goodness in our lives. There's a better way!

2. We live in a rest-less world, but it doesn't change the fact we serve a God who unapologetically declared time to rest, reflect, even relax, to be holy!

a. Some of us haven't entered that rest because we're not Christ followers. Today is the day. There's a better way and Christ is inviting you to lay your burdens at His feet.

b. Others of us are Christ followers, but we've bought into the lies of Satan that we've got to go, go, go or our kids are going to suffer, or our careers are going to stall.
That's a sin we need to repent of today and I invite us to do so.