

Drawn In: Living Out the Creative Life with God

REST

July 18, 2021

WELCOME and ANNOUNCEMENTS

We welcome you to this time of worship and as we do so, we acknowledge that McClure United Church stands on treaty 6 territory and homeland of the Metis Nation. We pay our respect to elders both past and present, wherever we find ourselves today. We also acknowledge our commitment as an Affirming Ministry of the United Church of Canada as we strive to be an open-minded, inclusive and welcoming place of worship. It is our hope that no matter your age, race, class, ability, gender, gender identity and sexual orientation, you will feel the warmth and blessing of God's love today. And we give thanks to God for this opportunity to gather together for worship, reflection, song and prayer. May you feel the God's blessing upon you today.

Good morning everyone and welcome to the worship of God with McClure United Church.

See this smile on my face? Yes.. its because I love what I do and I feel joy in worshipping together with you... but today its mostly because tomorrow means the return of Debra from her time of sabbatical and holiday.

I can't wait to welcome her back... and I'm so happy about how many of you dropped off or mailed in your notes for her. She has a nice little stack on her desk for when she arrives back.

Debra and I will have one week together in the office to catch up and do some planning and then I will be off on my vacation time and I'm very much looking forward to connecting with family we haven't seen since last year.

Now if you'd like to say hi to Debra in person, you are welcome to join us for our in person coffee time on Friday morning at 10am. Please bring a chair and your own beverage and come to the shady part of the parking lot. We do have a few chairs to offer you if you don't have one to bring and we are able to move it into the multipurpose room if the weather doesn't cooperate.

I also want to let you know that the church office is now open for summer hours. Doors are open Tuesday thru Thursday from 9am to 3pm if you are wanting to stop by. We are still asking everyone to mask up and sanitize when in the building and there are masks just inside the door if you forget to bring your own.

There are a number of announcements from Eden and Brooke, the Community Engagement Workers as well and you will find details for those in separate posts on our website, Facebook page and Instagram... but I will quickly remind you that there is a Vacation Bible School program for 5-11 year olds happening online every Wednesday beginning July 21, on July 24th @ 2pm you are invited to join Cree author Randy Morin as he shares one of his stories with us on Zoom. Sunday, July 25th beginning at 10am there will be a donation drop off for the OPG Patrol Group... please drop off any non perishable foods and hygiene products at McClure on that day and.. fun fun fun... there

will be a Disney Trivia night for everyone on Friday, June 30th at 7:30pm – also on Zoom.

And that is all I have for announcements today... please take a moment to take a peek at your weekly email for more information and details about upcoming events.

So lets just take a moment then to take a breath... feeling God's love.. God's peace move in and through us as we ground ourselves now for this time of worship.

OPENING

(music begins)

Sung:

In the world of the driven
Let us be drawn in
Let your love be a given
Let us be drawn in
To imagine, to dream, to create, to redeem
For the sake of the livin'
Let us be drawn in

(music continues)

Something grossly overlooked in the creative process is the place of effortlessness and play. In the story of creation, God rested. And this was very “good” as well! Staying too focused on deadlines and how every moment can be “productive” robs us of an important feature of what it means to be humans made in the image of God: rhythm. Pushing through is non-sustainable, and creativity suffers if we constantly labor. Celebration is necessary along the journey. God's creativity is ongoing, so while the story said God was “finished” and then rested, really it was simply a pause to reflect, to observe, and to celebrate, and then God continued God's creative work among us and with us.

Sung:

In the world of the driven
Let us be drawn in
Let your love be a given
Let us be drawn in
To imagine, to dream, to create, to redeem
For the sake of the livin'
Let us be drawn in

Let us pray:
Active and Restful God,
your heart is our heart, your rhythm is our rhythm.

Open us to the place of rest and celebration in the rhythm of our lives.
Draw us into delight.
Give us the courage to breathe deeply.
Amen.

OPENING SONG: Here I Am Lord – Tom Powell and Jennifer and Adam Brookman

SCRIPTURE – Emiley Hugo

Exodus 20:8–11

“Remember the sabbath day, and keep it holy. Six days you shall labor and do all your work. But the seventh day is a sabbath to the Lord your God; you shall not do any work—you, your son or your daughter, your male or female workers, your livestock, or the alien resident in your towns. For in six days the Lord made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that is in them, but rested the seventh day; therefore the Lord blessed the sabbath day and consecrated it.”

REFLECTION

We’re going to start this morning with a little trivia....

It’s a commandment trivia. You know... those commandments written on stone tables that Moses brought down the mountain with him?

I know that I, for one, tend to focus on the other commandments... the ones Jesus said was the top two... first – “love the Lord your god with all your heart and soul and mind strength and second – “love your neighbour as yourself”

But the others... those 10 commandments are foundational to the old testament, also known as the “Hebrew Scriptures”. And when I was a kid in Sunday school, we had to memorize them... with all their thou’s and thy’s.

But do I still remember all of them today? Do you?

I’m going to give you a second or two now to pause this video and write down how many of them you are able to come up with... without the help of google, of course.

(pause)

Okay.. how many of the 10 were you able to come up with?

When I did this, I was able to remember 8:

1. Don’t have any other gods before me
2. Don’t speak the Lord’s name in vain
3. Honour your father and mother
4. Don’t murder
5. Don’t steal

6. Don't commit adultery
7. Don't lie about your neighbour
8. And don't covet your neighbour's belongs

The ones I missed were:

1. Don't make a graven image (which, as it turns out, means a carved image)
2. And remember the sabbath and keep it Holy

If you weren't able to name them all... don't worry – you're not failing as a Christian. I suspect many of us aren't able to easily list them all.

I find it curious though that one of the ones I missed was the one commanding us to "remember the sabbath and keep it Holy". I think I missed the graven image because, to be honest, I never really knew what that meant so just it didn't stick.

And again... if I'm honest, I suspect I didn't remember about keeping the sabbath holy because.. well.. it just hasn't been much of a priority to me.

So all of the other commandments seem to be either about how we act on our love for God or how we act on our love for our neighbour.

This sabbath one.. which is the 3rd on the list in the story of Moses and the 10 commandments is a bit different from the others... I seems like the only one on the list that might be taken more as a suggestion, than a command.... it is also the only one on the list that takes the time to explain that God also keeps the sabbath.

We aren't told that God doesn't commit adultery or murder or steal... we aren't told that by obeying any other commandment we are following God's example.

The Sabbath commandment is unique in that way. It explains to us that God kept the Sabbath... "for in six days the Lord made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that is in them, but rested the seventh day; therefore the Lord blessed the sabbath day and consecrated it."

I suspect I'm not alone in not prioritizing this one...

But I know that this must change... that I need to prioritize it if I'm going to live into the full promise of our creation.

So far in this series we've talked about Dreaming, Hovering, Risking, Listening, and Reintegrating.. all of which are vital parts of our creative process when God is calling us to something new. Now, in this last week, we explore something that is just as critical but is frequently overlooked in our culture of hurry and worry:

And that's Resting.

And it's also incredibly challenging for many of us to do.

Especially so since the Lord's Day Act was struck down in 1985. The Lord's Day Act had been around since the 17th century and it made it an offense to do business on Sunday. No doubt this Act was an attempt to make into law the commandment to keep Sabbath. I remember growing up that nothing happened on Sunday... stores were closed and there really weren't any sporting events or practices... especially not on a Sunday morning. I don't think for most that this was necessarily a "holy" time but it was a time set aside for family and rest.

And its definitely become much more difficult to find that time, especially for rest, when its not legislated – stores are open 7 days a week, Sunday morning is full of all kinds of extracurricular activities... and for some it's the only day when they can find the time to run all of the errands that they haven't been able to do throughout the week.

I do think that weekends tend to slow things down a bit... but I don't think that many of us treat any single day of the week with the kind of reverence intended in the sabbath commandment. No day is dedicated in its entirety to connected with God. On Sunday we may pause for an hour or so for church, but then its off we go. So many things places to be and things to do.

And why not? Didn't Jesus say that "the Sabbath was made for us, not us for the Sabbath"?

Yet... many of us, I think, seem to take this saying as a license to do anything we please on the Sabbath because God made it for us.

But, was this Jesus' point?

I don't think so... it seems like the part of sabbath-keeping that Jesus was challenging was the petty legalism around it – he was being criticized for teaching and for healing on the sabbath.

In Jesus' time, Sabbath-keeping had more to do with rule-keeping than connecting with God. The rules sort of crept in through "the fence"—not a literal fence but a figurative one the rabbis built around each of God's laws. Building a "fence around a particular law" meant that a series of requirements were created that were even stricter than the law itself so that if you broke one of the added requirements you were not at risk of breaking the actual law itself.

Sound strange? Think of it this way. When my daughter was little I told her she wasn't to come anywhere near the stove when I was cooking or she'd get burned. So the whole area around the stove was off limits. This way.. if she broke the boundary and moved in a foot or so... she'd still be safe.

I think that the original intent behind Sabbath-keeping was pretty simple: it was a time for being and not doing. And though a fair bit has changed from Jesus' culture to our own, the intent of the Sabbath remains the same: disconnect from our daily busyness in order to reconnect with God... with our families.. our neighbours... the earth.

This dis-connection and re-connection ensures that each week we all have a chance to glimpse the forest from the trees— to step out of the fray... to pull back a bit; to become more aware of life's rhythm and to start flowing with it rather than against it.

It also helps make sure that we don't hold on to some notion that the world revolves around us and what we do. Instead, we might be able to grasp the truth that the world can (and does) move along just fine without our constant involvement... without us doing anything.

So for 24 hours we're commanded to do just two things: we pray and we play. Connect with God's love... and allow ourselves to bask in that love. That's the basic principle! We are to rest... reflect... give thanks to God, and have fun.

Who would ever guess that God puts such a high value on chilling out? When I look around – when I read Facebook and Instagram posts – when I chat with those around me... and, lets be honest, when I look at my own life... I often get a sense of too tired, overworked, overwhelmed. If I were to try to understand God by watching God's people – I'd think God was a severe task master who's greatest joy is watching us suffer under the pressure of it all.

But that's not God! That's not the God of abundant love and life... the God who finds deep joy in all of creation.

According to the Ten Commandments, resting on the Sabbath is just as important as the rules we tend to give more weight to, like not murdering someone or stealing or committing adultery. Have you noticed that there is differentiation given to the Ten Commandments? There is no order of priority, no relative importance of one over another.

What this should tell us is that each commandment protects us equally from a life of misery. Each prevents us from tearing ourselves apart by attempting to serve competing loves.

If we think that failure to keep the Sabbath could not possibly do damage equivalent to murder, we may want to consider who that excessively busy person is hurting, starting with themselves.

And we may want to consider the harm being caused right now to the world's most vulnerable people because of our excessive need to produce and consume. Not only do we tend to turn a blind eye to the world's sweat shops, but a clear majority of scientists are telling us that we're changing the earth itself... in a not good way. Failure to keep the sabbath is doing much more damage that most of us are aware of.

I guess to put it bluntly, we can break the Sabbath all we want and of course we won't find God coming after us with a lightning bolt... in fact we might go a long time without experiencing anything really except satisfaction. But after a while, we WILL find ourselves on a collision course with your own temptations. Our hearts begins to believe that we are defined by what we do... by what we produce and by what we consume. And before long, the weight of the world feels like it's on our shoulders. We begin to get lost in the trees and lose a sense of the beauty and majesty of the forest.

To put it even more bluntly: each week that we fail to set aside a full day for playing and praying, we essentially send out a signal to God, to the Universe... to Life itself that we consider ourselves and what we're doing to be more important than God and what God

is doing. And since the Commandment is really about accepting God's love and blessing.. not about rule-following... we're also sending a signal that we're not really interested in receiving God's blessings for us.

I know this isn't the message I want to send! I also know I need to make some significant changes in my life to be sure I'm sending a message that is inline with what I say my values are.

Ignoring the Sabbath really impairs our ability to follow all the other steps in this creative process: Dreaming, Hovering, Risking, Listening, and Reintegrating. When we are burned out, we can't dream even small dreams, let alone God's life-changing dreams. We can barely tread water and keep up with the status quo. Loving and honoring the Sabbath helps us to dream bigger, to hear the Spirit's call, and to develop the energy reserves we need for taking risks. It gives us patience for deep listening and patience to fix our mistakes along the way.

Just because we're at the end of our six steps doesn't mean we can just skip this last one. Really... this process is circular, not linear. As a child of God, as one of God's beloved people... formed in God's image, we are always called to create and to expand our vision of what is possible. Once we've reach the sixth step in this process and catch our breath by taking this time... by Resting on the Sabbath... once we've done this, we've come full circle and it is time to begin the Dreaming time again.

God's dreams never end, and neither should ours.

I'll end with a quote from one of my favourite authors... Brené Brown says, "It takes courage to say yes to rest and play in a culture where exhaustion is seen as a status symbol."

Sometimes hidden or not-so-hidden expectations, even and especially the ones we put on ourselves, drown out our own gut feeling that it is time to take a break.

But listen!

God's love does not depend on our productivity. And our energy for the work of helping to serve the needs of the world is fed when we dare to give ourselves what we need as well.

You are beloved.

Rest! Celebrate! Amen.

PASTORAL PRAYERS/LORD'S PRAYER

Holy One,

draw us now to be with you as you are always with us.

As we prepare our hearts for this sacred time of prayer, may we feel your love surround us, giving us what we need right now to be fully present to you... for the sake of our community, our world, and ourselves. In opening ourselves to

your creative power, strength and wisdom – we open to live your dream... to be channels of your passion for the world.

And we hold your dream now as we take a moment in quiet to give thanks for all of the blessings you have shared with us... in gratitude we pray: *(silence)*

And now with hearts touching gratitude, we are ready to offer our prayers of care and concern for the world... for our friends, families and for ourselves.

We hold before you, O God, those who are in need of our love, our kindness, and our compassion... those in need of our prayers:
the ones who are struggling right now – with worry, fear, sadness, loneliness, anger

the ones who are living with health concerns...

the ones who are grieving...

the ones who are addicted...

the ones facing loss and change and uncertainty...

and we pray for the ones who care for them – for the support workers, family members and friends...

We pray for all the painful places of injustice in our world and in our communities...

For the ones who live with trauma... the trauma that comes from discrimination, rejection, violent words and actions...

We pray for the ones struggling to be good allies, friends and neighbours.

We pray God for all the places of brokenness in your world...

We pray for your healing love and light to reach into those places, offering even a moment.. even a glimmer of hope to those who most need it.

And knowing that we all have our own places and people where brokenness exists, we take another moment now in quiet to hold our brokenness before God – opening even further to the love that is within and all around us.

(silence)

O God, hear our prayers, receive our hearts and from your deep love may we find the healing and hope we need... today and every day.

And now, we share together the prayer that Jesus taught his friends and disciples:

Our Father/Mother/Creator...

HYMN: Guide Me, O, Thou Great Jehovah – Tom Powell

BLESSING

I invite you to consider one thing you might do this week that will make your heart sing and your creativity soar.

This is not an end to focusing on creativity, this is a beginning—
the beginning of infusing this joy and agency,
play and delight
work and ingenuity
dreaming, hovering, risking, listening, re-integrating and resting:
applying the creativity already given to us as our birthright and nature
into every day of our individual lives and every endeavor we do together.
And so...

May you see the unfolding of each day,
as an opportunity to be a Co-Creator with God.

As a Jesus-Follower, may you feel his company leading you
toward creating more kindness, justice and mercy.

SUNG BLESSING: Sent Out in Jesus' Name – Elin Sletmoen