

Lift Up Your Hearts: Rest for Your Souls

Intro

Don't you know how busy and important I am?

I've got so much to do

Ask me out to dinner on a Friday night

I can't go, I've got too much to do

Oh, I'm too busy to finish this song

I'm too busy to dance

Too busy to cry

Too busy to die

Too busy to see my chance

Don't you know how busy and important I am?

I've got so much to do

Ask me to the disco on a Friday night

I can't go, I've got too much to do

Oh, I'm too busy to see the sky

I'm too busy to know

Too busy to fly

Too busy to die

Too busy to rest my soul

Those are lyrics from “Busy and Important” by Tom Rosenthal.

Scripture

- Can any of you relate to feeling this busy? I know I can!
- The song is funny -- and it's grim at the same time
- And when we look at Scripture, Jesus never commands us to operate at such an all-consuming, breakneck pace.

- In fact, in Matthew 11:28-30, Jesus says:
“Come to me, all you who are weary and are carrying heavy burdens, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will **find rest for your souls**. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light.”
- Do you hear the difference? Tom Rosenthal was “too busy to rest [his] soul.” But Jesus beckons us to come to him and **find rest** for our souls.
- Doesn’t finding rest for your soul sound much more appealing than bemoaning an inescapable state of busyness?

This Year

- Let’s be honest here. We could all use some rest.
- We accomplished *a lot* this year – we have all been very busy
 - We welcomed a new class of 3,300 freshmen.

- We educated and served over 15,000 undergraduate students and almost 5,500 graduate students.
- We hosted parents, families, friends, dignitaries, guests, and neighbors on our campus.
- We hosted hundreds of athletics and arts events, hundreds of dinners, and thousands of meetings.
- We became one of America's top Fulbright-producing institutions.
- We installed statues commemorating our first two Black graduates.
- Next weekend, we will graduate the class of 2023 – 4,000 students.
- And that doesn't even take into account the mental health challenges of students that each of you helped navigate or the family and personal issues you may be dealing with.
- I have to admit – it can make me tired just thinking about it all.

As we close out a hectic spring semester and approach summer, when the pace on campus slows down a bit – how can we find rest for our souls?

Introduce Sabbath

- In that spirit, today, I want to invite us into a sacred practice—
Sabbath rest.
- I'll admit that I wish I did a better job taking time to rest. In fact, I am really bad at it. When Brad heard what I was speaking on today, he said, "I hope the Holy Spirit convicted your heart!"
- People often ask me about work/life balance and when I find time to rest. I am honest with them and tell them that it is really difficult!
- At our President's Council retreat last summer, we decided to focus on Sabbath rest and we've worked hard to incorporate the

Sabbath into our regular routines and to have some accountability with each other within President's Council.

- While we certainly haven't been perfect at it, this emphasis has borne fruit among much of our team.

So, what do we mean by “Sabbath rest”?

- I *don't* mean enforcing Blue laws or taking unwanted naps on Sunday afternoons (although the First Gent fully affirms Sunday afternoon naps – his philosophy is – “if it worked for Jesus, it works for me!”), or even having a 24 hour Sabbath on Sunday.
- I *do* mean carving out intentional time for rest and renewal in the presence of God.
- Author Judy Henderson Prather writes, “[Sabbath] is an attitude that applies to living all our days. [...] Sabbath keeping cannot be limited by the clock or calendar. We may encounter sabbath in brief moments of prayer within a workday, or during a season

when we lie dormant for weeks, silently drawing from God’s deep wisdom before another period of productivity begins.”

So, why should we care about Sabbath rest?

1) Well -- Sabbath rest matters to God.

- When God created the world, He instituted a time of rest.
- On the seventh day of creation, God **finished** what he had been doing and **stopped working**. (Genesis 2:2-3)
- He blessed the seventh day and **made it holy**.
- Weekly rest became a regular practice for the children of Israel throughout the Old Testament.
- And it was something that Jesus took great care to practice Himself.
- In all four gospels, we see examples of Jesus choosing solitude, rest, and prayer over activity.
- Luke 5:16 says, “Yet [Jesus] **frequently withdrew** to the wilderness to pray.”

- In Mark 6, Jesus' disciples visited with Him before the Feeding of the Five Thousand. Scripture says,

“The apostles gathered around Jesus and reported to him all they had done and taught. Then, because so many people were coming and going that they did not even have a chance to eat, he said to them, ‘Come with me by yourselves to a quiet place and get some rest.’”
- The disciples had just returned from extensive travel. Two by two, they'd preached the gospel and performed miracles on the way.
- But when they returned, Jesus didn't immediately assign them more work. He instructed them to join Him and rest.
- Today, I believe God offers us that same invitation. To join Him and rest.
- Rest matters to God. Resting is an act of humility.
 - It is a recognition that we cannot accomplish everything on our own.

- And it is an act of faith that teaches us to trust God with the things we cannot accomplish.

2) Sabbath rest is also necessary for our souls.

- I was challenged by a quote from Dallas Willard.
- He was a Baylor graduate and a longtime professor of philosophy at the University of Southern California.
- In the 1990s, the pastor of a large church asked Willard what he needed to do to stay spiritually healthy. After a long pause, Willard replied, “You must ruthlessly eliminate hurry from your life.”
- The pastor said, “Okay, I’ve written that one down.” He was getting a little impatient. “Now what else is there?” he asked.
- After another long pause, Willard said, “There is nothing else. You must ruthlessly eliminate hurry from your life.”
- Our daughter Shelby tells me we should all read “The Ruthless Elimination of Hurry” by John Mark Comer if we really want to be convicted about this. So, it is now on my reading list.

- In our culture, hurry and busyness have become status symbols.
Like the song says – we are busy and important!
- But hurry is a great enemy of spiritual life in our day.
- Hurry is an obstacle to walking in the love, peace, and joy of God.
- Hurried people aren't thinking about nourishing their souls.
- And in their busyness, they can lose sight of God's abundance and sufficiency.
- We work in an industry that stays busy.
- There's always something going on campus:
 - New events
 - New classes to prep
 - New research projects
 - New initiatives
 - The list is endless!
- But without rest, our efforts are unsustainable in the long term.
- A 2022 Gallup poll found that educators reported the highest level of burnout of any industry, and 35% of college and university

workers reported “always” or “very often” feeling burned out at work.

- Soul rest is at the heart of our effectiveness.
- Most importantly, soul rest is crucial to our wellbeing as individuals – in addition, it is critical to fulfilling our mission as a university. If we as individuals aren’t healthy spiritually, Baylor will not be a spiritually healthy place for students, faculty and staff.
- To be good educators, good researchers, and good disciples of Christ, we must be replenished. We must rest and allow the Lord to refresh our souls (Psalm 23:3).

So, how can we give God space to restore our souls?

- I would suggest one way is to spend time with our **Soul People** – people who know us deeply, who we trust fully with our deepest secrets and who hold us accountable to finding rest for our souls.

- If you think about it – many of the great stories we all love have at their heart – Soul People
 - Frodo and Sam
 - Harry, Hermione, and Ron
 - Woody & Buzz
 - Uncle Phil and Aunt Viv
 - Winnie the Pooh and Piglet
 - And, in honor of “May the 4th be with you” yesterday, we can’t forget Han Solo and Chewbacca!

- April 18 was my mom’s 93rd birthday. I called her that morning to wish her a happy birthday and to find out how she was spending her day. She was headed to a meeting at the church when I called. That evening my younger brother, Jim was coming by to take her to dinner.

- But the most interesting thing she said was that she was having lunch with her Soul Group. At first, I thought, “Is my mom taking a Soul Cycle class?” At 93 I figured that probably wasn’t it!
- When I asked her what a Soul Group was – she said, “It is a group of my friends from church that get together to check in on how our souls are doing – to share life together.”
- What a beautiful picture – a group of senior adult women sitting around over lunch making sure each of them is doing well and that their souls are at rest.
- One of the women in my mom’s group said that the Soul Group saved her life after her husband died. She didn’t know how she would have coped without them.
- At the end of each Soul Group, they say together these words from the Hymn “Christ Beside Me.”
- Christ beside me, Christ before me, Christ behind me, King of my heart; Christ within me, Christ below me, Christ above me never to part.

- I expect having a Soul Group that checks in regularly with each other would be good for all of our souls!

Another way can we give God space to restore our souls is to spend time

in Soul Places.

- Places where we can step away from the busyness and hurry of everyday life and spend time with God in prayer and reflection.
- We know that Jesus often times went to Soul Places
 - He went up on the mountain to pray
 - He rose and went out to a lonely place, and there he prayed
 - He went to a place called Gethsemane, and said to his disciples, “Sit here while I pray.”
- One of Brad’s Soul Places is in the Allbritton House in what we call the “Piano Room” – because it has a piano in it, not because either of us actually plays the piano. Every morning he gets his

cup of coffee, our dog BU curls up at his feet, and Brad spends time listening to scripture and praying over his prayer list.

- One of my favorite Soul Places was at a summer camp where I was a counselor for 3 years in college – Camp Soaring Hawk. I remember so clearly driving through the hills of Southwest Missouri and as I drove into the lane leading to camp, I could feel the stress and worries of everyday life lift.
- Camp can be a very busy, hurried place between hanging out with campers, teaching classes, managing the dining hall – it is not a natural, quiet place for resting our souls.
- My Soul Place at Camp Soaring Hawk, though, was Inspiration Point. The camp was on a hill that overlooked a valley. Inspiration Point was where we would hold worship services in the morning or evenings. It was a quiet, spiritual place with a beautiful view. The perfect place to spend time in prayer and reflection with Christ – a perfect place to find rest for my soul.

- Some of my favorite memories of Inspiration Point were when we would sing worship songs together in the evening as the sun was setting. You could truly feel the spirit of the Lord in that place.

Conclusion

As we close out this semester – I encourage us to reflect on how we can find rest for our souls this summer.

- Who are the Soul People that we can spend time with, sharing life together?
- Where are the soul places that we can spend time in prayer and reflection with God?
- Let's commit to not being too busy to rest our souls this summer and to develop or strengthen soul rest practices that will carry over into the busy fall semester that will begin before we know it!

To conclude, let's join in a moment of rest for our souls as we listen to one of my favorite choruses that we often sang at Inspiration Point –
“Sweet Sweet Spirit.”