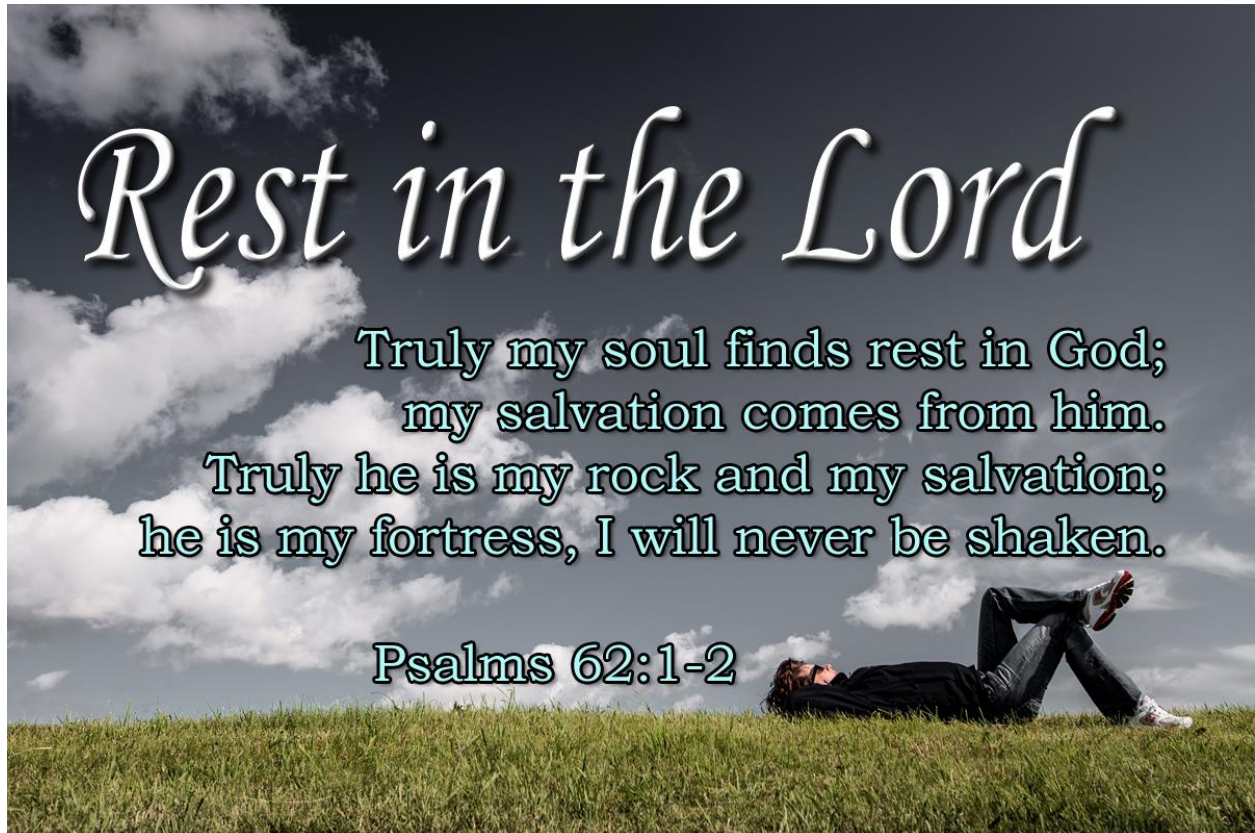


Spiritual Essentials



Psalms 62:1-2

1 Truly my soul finds rest in God;
my salvation comes from him.

2 Truly he is my rock and my salvation;
he is my fortress, I will never be shaken.

Special Music: Rest In You - Hillsong

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jMTND0AUjCs>

We started out this series talking about the essentials that are necessary so that we can continue to have physical life on this planet. We learned that as physical beings, we have five essential needs:

Air

Water

Food

Shelter

And Rest

We also learned that these five essential needs for physical life can translate to five essential needs for our spiritual life.

The first week we learned that God breathes life into our very being, giving us direction and filling our hearts with His purpose.

Week two gave us insight into Living Water and how that water is Abundant, Satisfying, Refreshing and Free.

Next we talked about the Bread of Life and how God thinks of us as more glorious than any other creature. If he takes care of the birds of the air how can we believe that he won't meet our physical and spiritual needs? And by feeding us the Bread of Life, God gives to us in abundance expecting us to feed those around us.

Last week we talked about the Shelter of God and how that shelter is always with us, protecting us when our way might seem dark. We learned that the Shelter of

God travels with us as we go about the work of God giving us peace of mind so that we are able to focus on ministering to others. We see that in the second verse of our scripture today:

**“Truly he is my rock and my salvation;
he is my fortress, I will never be shaken.”**

Today, let’s talk about what it means to Rest in the Lord.

I will let you know that I have struggled with this sermon. It is a very apt and appropriate conclusion for our study on Spiritual Essentials, but I have to admit that it is difficult to work on sermons where I know that I fall so short on the subject. If you ask anyone that knows me in the Southwest Region of the Disciples of Christ, they will tell you that I am the worst when it comes to self-care. I have a tendency to push myself well beyond my physical, mental and spiritual limits thinking that doing this is what God expects of me. Nothing could be further from the truth. But do know that I am a work in progress and with God’s patient instruction I am getting better at self-care.

There are stories that have circulated for years regarding cars abandoned in the deserts of Egypt. It seems that when the royal family realized how wealthy they were due to the oil fields they had the tendency to buy the best products on the market. That included vehicles. They would buy high end cars like Rolls Royce’s and Bentleys and they would drive them on long trips in the desert heat.

Automotive maintenance seemed to be unknown to them. Many of these vehicles

died in the desert, mostly from lack of oil. Often the vehicles were just abandoned in the sand.

Nobody is going to argue that Rolls Royce or Bentley do not build excellent automobiles. They are superior in every way. But even the best built vehicles on the market have to be maintained or they will become worthless pieces of junk. Maintenance is key to keeping these automobiles in top shape and up to performance standards.

This is the way it is with our bodies, minds and spirits. Our lives are in constant need of maintenance. We need to be conscious and alert to what our bodies, minds and spirits are telling us in order to keep our lives in top shape and up to performance standards. Nutrition, exercise and rest are all part of this routine. Even those like me with low end bodies need constant maintenance so that we can continue to function. How can we go about God's work if we don't take care of the bodies that house our spirits?

Now, I will tell you up front that no matter how much we maintain our bodies, most of us will never have an artist want to capture our physical prowess. But, in truth, God doesn't expect that of us. He does expect for us to maintain the bodies that He has given us so that we can go about His purpose effectively.

Eating right, getting exercise and making sure that we get enough physical rest are all integral to keeping our bodies and minds fit. And yes, rest is a key factor. A body and mind without rest becomes less functional

Several weeks ago I mentioned that the longest recorded time for an individual human to go without sleep is eleven days. That is phenomenal to me. I once went without sleep for 6 days and I know what a wreck I was. I was so sick, running a fever; barely able to move much less function in any capacity. I accomplished what I had to accomplish but the price was horrendous. I know that I could not have gone seven days. So, when I think about someone going eleven days without sleep, I am mortified.

God does not expect us to function at peak levels without rest. We want to believe that He does but that just not the case. We impose unrealistic deadlines on ourselves and then complain because we are tired and worn out. God never wanted it that way, which is why He gave us the Sabbath.

Let me ask you a tricky question for you to think about. When God created the Heavens and the Earth, did He rest on the seventh day because He had to or because He wanted to? Let's go read about it in Genesis 2:2-3

“By the seventh day God had finished the work he had been doing; so on the seventh day he rested from all his work. Then God blessed the seventh day and made it holy, because on it he rested from all the work of creating that he had done.”

Now I ask you again. Did God rest on the seventh day because He had to or because he wanted to? Are we willing to imply that God may have limits and thus get tired? Or do we want to believe that God knew the nature of His creation and the limits of these mortal bodies, and in knowing this provide an example as well

as a mandate for us to follow. When the ten commandments are laid out in Exodus 20 and Deuteronomy 5, God spends more time on the Sabbath than any other commandment.

8 “Remember the Sabbath day by keeping it holy.

9 Six days you shall labor and do all your work,

10 but the seventh day is a sabbath to the Lord your God. On it you shall not do any work, neither you, nor your son or daughter, nor your male or female servant, nor your animals, nor any foreigner residing in your towns.

11 For in six days the Lord made the heavens and the earth, the sea, and all that is in them, but he rested on the seventh day. Therefore the Lord blessed the Sabbath day and made it holy.

And the penalty for not observing the Sabbath and keeping it holy, was death.

But Jesus turns around and says in Luke 14:5 (NIV)

Then he asked them, “If one of you has a child or an ox that falls into a well on the Sabbath day, will you not immediately pull it out?”

God knew from the beginning that if He didn't set some boundaries, we would work ourselves to death. Not only that, we would work everyone else around us to death. By nature, we are driven to acquire more than we have and often at the expense of personal relationships. We are also disappointed at times when we feel someone else is not living up to their potential or meeting their obligations by

committing themselves to overwork. Too often, we feel it is our place to judge them.

It is also true that when we start comparing the Old Covenant to the New Covenant, the rules regarding the Sabbath seem to be the ones that are so very rigid when it comes to other but so flexible when it comes to ourselves. Maybe that is because the commandment regarding the Sabbath was the one that the Sadducees and Pharisees constantly accuse Jesus of violating.

It was also the commandment with the most additional constraints attached to it and the Jewish leaders seemed to work hard at finding ways to avoid the laws regarding the Sabbath rather embracing the Sabbath. Let's face it. If your child fell into a well on the Sabbath and you did nothing to rescue the child because it violated the law of working on the Sabbath, and the child died, does that raise you up in the eyes of God for following the law or does that make God a bad God for coming up with such a law that would force you to make a decision on whether to spare your child or obey the Sabbath. Or possibly, our perception of the Law of the Sabbath is warped and needs further examination.

The Law of the Sabbath is the only commandment that does not seem to be related to action either towards God or our fellow human beings. It seems to be directed intentionally at us as individuals regarding our needs. God found it imperative that we find time to rest. He knew that without rest, our bodies would wind up like those Rolls Royce's in the desert, dead and abandoned. Just because we have a New Covenant does not mean that we can just ignore the purpose behind the Old Covenant, as convenient as it might be. There is wisdom

and truth in the Old Covenant that suggests that maybe there is intent and purpose there beyond our comprehension but begging for our attention.

We want to rest on Sunday, but we also want to go out to shop, eat and play. We truly want to rest but there is so much that we did not get done during the week and it's a great time to catch up on the chores. There are things that might be considered work but are actually relaxing for us. For instance, are we working on the car because we find joy in working on the car or are we working on the car because we won't be able to get to work on Monday if we don't get it fixed? How much of it is work and how much of it is pleasure? Are we working in the yard because we like working in the yard or because the lawn has to get mowed and Sunday afternoon is the only time that we can get it done? And how much of the work we do on Sunday is due to the fact that we just didn't get around to it earlier in the week even though we had the chance? Is the work we are doing relaxing and pleasurable? Does it relieve stress in our lives?

But in truth, it is not about Sunday. It's not about Saturday. It's not about the Sabbath. We think that it is because we are trying to base it on law rather than intent. It's about rest and our realization that God not only wants us to rest, He demands it. And when He demands it, He's not talking figuratively.

He also expects for us to get our spiritual rest. What is spiritual rest?

Because of the nature of our humanness, we pick up baggage on a regular basis; Spiritual Baggage. This baggage comes in a verity of forms, but it is as heavy as the physical baggage we carry when we don't take care of our bodies. Spiritual baggage comes to us in the guise of grief, guilt, shame, loneliness, peer

pressure, abandonment, put downs, depression, self- pity, heartache, feeling unappreciated or under-appreciated, feelings of worthlessness and so many other others. Anything that weighs you down spiritually; that burdens you. So many of us feel we have to carry that around with us, that it is a part of who we are. These spiritual burdens can make us feel tired and worn out physically and mentally. They can make us sick. It is extremely hard to let go of these things because we feel that we are entitled to carry them. They are heavy chains that bind our feet and take their toll on our minds and bodies. They also make us feel distant from our creator and cause us to ask questions like “Why would God ever love me?” and “Who am I that the Creator of the Universe could even care about what’s going on in my life?”

But God knows never intended for us to have to carry all that baggage around constantly. In the old testament, David addresses this in Psalm 55:22 when he says:

“Cast your burden on the Lord, and He shall sustain you; He shall never permit the righteous to be moved”

When Jesus came into the world, one of His main purposes was to help each and every one of us deal with those burdens, to help us find rest from constantly having to carry worry, guilt and depression around with us. And so, He gave us a way to deal with it.

Matthew 11:28-30 states:

28 “Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest.

29 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.

30 For my yoke is easy and my burden is light.”

Jesus never states that we will be burden free while we walk this earth, but He does give us a way to deal with those burdens. Burdens are much lighter when you allow someone to help carry them. These verses are not just for the unsaved. They are for all of us because each day brings the possibility of a burden that will overwhelm us. We must daily, even as Christians, bring our burdens and concerns and lay them at the foot of the cross and leave them there. These verses are not just about forgiveness even though sin can make us tired and heavy. They are more about the love and compassion that Christ has for us and how He will take those burdens and concerns off of our shoulders so that we can find rest for our spirits. This message to all people reminds us that Christ stands in the gap for us, that God has used Him to build a bridge that doesn't just provide a path for us but also allows us to find Joy on that path. The universal message is that Jesus Christ is always there to help carry our burdens; a message that we need to not only take to heart in ourselves, but to share with everyone around us. And because Christ does this for us, He expects us to follow His example and do the same thing for those around us.

When we read our scripture for today, we understand how God wants us to perceive rest:

1 Truly my soul finds rest in God;

my salvation comes from him.

We know that God will give us rest because of our relationship with Him; the graciousness of His salvation; the ever present nudging of the Holy Spirit. But I want to close with a passage from Galatians that compels us to take that message to the next level.

Galatians 6:2

Carry each other's burdens, and in this way you will fulfill the law of Christ.

In other words, if our goal is to follow Christ and live by His example then we must become like Him by sharing the burdens of those around us. By carrying each other's burdens, we provide rest for them as well.

How can we do that? We are only human! We must take the time to remember what we have been looking at for five weeks. God will breathe into us to sustain and invigorate us. He will provide us with Living Water that is Abundant, Satisfying, Refreshing and Free. He will nourish us with the Bread of Life and will make our table overflow so that there is plenty for us to nourish those around us. He will provide shelter and protection no matter where we are so that we too can shelter others. And He encourages us to let Him carry our burdens so that we can carry the burdens of those around us.

Jesus set the example. Now let us lean into Jesus; rest in the Lord so that it becomes second nature in our lives to reach out with that same promise of abundance, love and to everyone we meet.

Amen

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