

Sabbath for the Busy Season
Ecclesiastes 3: 1-15
Matthew 6: 25-34
September 2, 2007

The Rev. Patrick Day
First Presbyterian Church Lake Forest
22nd Sunday in Ordinary Time

I remember the first time that I felt it. It was the fall semester of my junior year in college; I had just started the first of four semesters of Classical Greek and it was unlike any class I had taken. One night I was walking back to my room and I ran into a couple friends of mine. They were getting ready to go out and invited me to come along.

I said, “No, I don’t think so, I have a test tomorrow in Greek and I’m really not feeling that well.”

One of my buddies said, “What’s wrong?”

“Well, I didn’t sleep that well last night, and all day today I kind of feel like my heart’s racing and I’ve been real fidgety and everything.”

He started to laugh.

I said, “What’s so funny?”

He said, “That’s stress.”

I said, “What?”

He said, “It’s stress, you’re feeling stress.”

I said, “Ooh, I don’t like it.”

And so I decided I wasn’t going to feel that way anymore, and it worked, it felt good. Even all through seminary I was fine and graduating from seminary. I graduated and still didn’t quite have a job, which worried my parents a little bit, but I wasn’t worried.

Since it was just me, I applied to churches from Anchorage, Alaska to Nassau, Bahamas. Jesus said go and baptize the nations, right? Why not start on the beach? I wasn’t worried.

God brought me to Chicago and it was great! I was at a great church, met great people, and met a wonderful woman. We got married and about a week after our honeymoon I remember waking up one morning and thinking, “Oh my gosh, it’s not just me anymore, I probably look at this pension thing. I probably check into that 403b and, oh my gosh what if we decide to have kids? This condo is so small, how in the world are we ever going to raise kids in this place? How are we going to teach ‘em to ride a bicycle in a parking lot, what if someone backs out and doesn’t see them? AHHHHH!!”

Then it occurred to me, I thought, “You know, Patrick, Katie’s pretty awesome; if God took care of you when it was just you, don’t you think you’re in a little better hands now? And it was great. I thought, you’re right, Lord you’re going to take care of us.

I would love to say that was the last time that I ever worried or I ever felt stress. I also have to say that parenting was so much easier before I had kids. I could sit in my office and think about the families and the churches that I was serving and think if they would just this then this would happen and everything would be fine. If they would just tell their coach, ‘I’m sorry, we don’t play on Sundays because we go to church,’ then everything would be right with the world.

But I have to tell you, we have now entered that time in our lives, we are scheduling time to talk about our schedules. We are getting ready to get up on Saturday mornings with two uniforms and four changes of clothes fully prepared to eat at least two meals in the car. I get it. We worry and we stress.

This summer we had a series through the entire summer talking about Sabbath. Different ways to approach it, different ways to recognize it, to embrace it, different ways to take that time to simply be with God and enjoy God’s presence in our lives.

What do we do now? What do we do now when regardless of what stage you are in your life things crank up a notch come September. What do we do now?

Remember, the Sabbath and keep it holy. Remember it may have been easy to hear and apply some of the things we talked about this summer when our schedules fed into that anyway; just as it was easy for me to be a great parent when I didn’t have any kids of my own. Now is the time when it is important to remember the Sabbath.

Ecclesiastes says that there is a time for every purpose under heaven. There is a time to rest, and there is a time to work.

What we need to remember is that God is sovereign over all those things. When we throw ourselves in any of those things, even the good ones can lose their meaning if we forget the reason we are doing them to begin with. Remember the Sabbath, keep it holy.

Remember that you have this place, remember the ways that you can walk with God, here and anywhere else; and enjoy God’s presence.

Remember that you have people here who love you and who support you, who can help bring back your life into some kind of focus; that can help bring yourself back to that Sabbath time. Whether you find those people in the groups of which

you are already a part, or whether you find those people in one of the small groups you are going to sign up for this fall; they're there. Remember them.

Remember grace. Remember that when you worry and when you get stressed and when it all falls apart because you are so wound up that you don't know whether to go left or right, at those times, remember grace because it is ever present with our God. Remember that grace that is here in this place; remember that grace that is offered so freely when we gather around this table; remember that grace that is offered just as freely from your God who has already provided everything you need.....your God who is reaching out to you every single day.

Remember.

Amen.