

Since we began this series at the new year, we began by discussing resolutions. More specifically, we explored that fundamental desire to change that's behind our resolution-making. And this series has grown out of our real desire for a better world, our real desire to be better people. Along the way, Genesis 1-2 have shown us a powerful vision of the life God calls us to, the life God created us for.

We saw in the first week that Genesis 1 is a story of God imposing order on the chaos of uncreation. That as we move through Genesis 1, the world takes on more and more order. It makes more and more sense. We learned from this that we too have a way, an order our lives are to follow if we want them to be full of meaning.

We saw that that Order, that Way, is not a path, but a person. Jesus is the incarnation of God's light, God's way. So when we look at Jesus, we see God's will for our lives.

That's important because we are constantly being told stories of who we are. Like the so-called ugly duckling, we are swans living in a culture that tries to convince us we're nothing more than ugly ducks. We need to cling to the story of Genesis: that we are created in God's image to live like Jesus. And the story Jesus shows us, the story Jesus invites us into is "Love God. Love People."

Over the last two weeks, we explored false stories our culture tries to sell us. First, the story of individualism. We learned that God designed us to thrive not on our own, but in a community. And second, that we are basically machines, that we all ought to follow the same formula of spirituality.

Today, we conclude this series by exploring one final story our culture tells, one last story that is radically contrary to the vision of humanity Genesis 1-2 establishes for us. And that story is Stephen King's *The Shining*.

In *The Shining*, we meet Jack Torrance, a dad who's failing as a father and as a man. He can't overcome his own shortcomings to provide for his family. Jack escapes with his family to the Overlook Hotel to work on writing - hopefully he can produce a novel that will provide for his family.

But if you know the story, you know that things only get worse for Jack. He's slowly driven insane by his inability to work, to provide, to achieve and succeed.

And one classic scene is so creepy we almost overlook the truth its teaching. Jack's wife, Wendy, finds his manuscript and begins to read it out of curiosity. To her - and our - horror, she finds that far from writing a novel, Jack has been typing one sentence over and over and over, for hundreds of pages.

All work and no play make Jack a dull boy.

All work and no play makes Jack a dull boy. It's an old proverb given terrifying new meaning by King's insight. And it's easy to write *The Shining* off as just a story (and one Jesus wouldn't read!). But the reason good horror works is because it magnifies reality. It takes something in the ordinary world that *ought* to terrify us and blows it up big, makes us see how scary it *should* be.

In this case? It's the myth of productivity. It's the American obsession with Work, our pathological need to produce, to do just a little bit more.

The myth of productivity tells us that we're just *this far* from having what we want or being who we want to be. That what it takes to succeed, to live a full, meaningful life, is hard work and all you need to get yours is just a little bit more.

Put in a few more hours. Go to a few more practices. Give a little bit more blood, sweat and tears. Because what's admirable, what's good and noble and true is work. We want to be valuable to society. We want to be the most productive, the craftiest, the hardest worker and have the house, the kids, the stuff to show it.

But the truth of that story is that it's crazy. It *should* horrify us, how the demands of our life steal away our humanity. How the way we live actually makes us less human.

Which of us hasn't felt ourselves going a little bit crazy trying to keep up with the Joneses? No, we don't go postal. We don't turn into crazed ax murderers. But we lose ourselves. The busier we get, the less connected we feel to who we really are.

We feel ourselves being reduced just to a role, a function. We're a driver. Or a bread-winner. Or a kid-deliverer. Or an employee, a task-doer. A house-cleaner. A food-cooker.

The more we work, the more we put in, the more we lose ourselves.

King was right: All work and no play makes Jack a dull boy.

But he's not telling us anything new. His warnings about the lure of productivity echo what the Scriptures told us way back in the beginning. A simple truth we find in the heart of the Creation Story: we weren't made to work work work.

Let's return one last time to Genesis 1-2, to listen to the vision of humanity we find there. As we've seen throughout this series, Genesis 1 gives us a progression. God is gradually bringing order to chaos. As each day progresses, we get more clarity, more order. Everything makes more and more sense.

As we progress from day to day, we get the sense that it's all building toward something. That it's all going somewhere. That by the time we get to the end of day 6, we're braced for something really cool. Genesis 1 ends with the close of day 6, and chapter 2 opens with Day 7, the last day, the thing we've been waiting for:

So the creation of the heavens and the earth and everything in them was completed. On the seventh day God had finished his work of creation, so he rested from all his work. And God blessed the seventh day and declared it holy, because it was the day when he rested from all his work of creation. -- Genesis 2:1-3 (NLT)

The whole point of creation is the Sabbath Day, the day of "rest". If you need any more evidence that our culture values productivity over all else, consider that even in the Church, we talk about "6-Day Creation". We consider the 7th Day, the Sabbath day, an afterthought at best. We don't know

what to do with a day where you're not being productive, where you're not doing anything "important".

Important, of course, meaning valuable. Productive. Worth-while. Are you making? Are you doing? Is this going somewhere?

If not, we're not interested.

And yet Genesis tells us we were *made* for Sabbath. That the whole point of creation was this "rest" we find at the end of the whole process.

And Genesis isn't the last time we hear about Sabbath. The 10 commandments are the Cliff's Notes of the of God's Way. Think of them like the Top 10 list that encapsulates God's whole way for humanity.

And the fourth commandment, the fourth aspect of God's way for us is Sabbath. Beginning in verse 8, God says,

Remember to observe the Sabbath day by keeping it holy. You have six days each week for your ordinary work, but the seventh day is a Sabbath day of rest dedicated to the LORD your God. On that day no one in your household may do any work. This includes you, your sons and daughters, your male and female servants, your livestock, and any foreigners living among you. For in six days the LORD made the heavens, the earth, the sea, and everything in them; but on the seventh day he rested. That is why the LORD blessed the Sabbath day and set it apart as holy. -- Exodus 20:8-11 (NLT)

Rabbis and Christian theologians alike have noted that everyone rests on the Sabbath. Everyone from kings to slaves puts down their work. They take a break from the myth of productivity. They set down the thing that can so easily control and define them. For one day, every week, there are no doctors or airmen or housewives or stay-at-home-dads or mechanics or accountants or pastors or customer service reps or engineers or cashiers or students or managers or anything.

We're all just people. One day a week.

One day a week where we stop building our lives and just enjoy them. Live them with the people we love.

One day a week where Jack stops working to play.

God says, that seventh day? The whole purpose of creation? That sacred resting? That's not just a thing I did one time. It's for you, too. And to keep that in front of you, to help you remember how important it is, you need to pause. Every week. You need to put down the things you do, take off your productivity hats and just exist with me and with your community.

Why is that so hard for us to see? Why is it so hard to *do*? Every person in here is thinking right now, Sure that sounds good. But I can't. Each one of us already has a list of excuses ready to go for why we can't afford to "rest" a whole day every week.

There're a couple of reasons for that. First, we misunderstand what it means to "rest". When we think of rest, we think of inactivity. But that's not what the word meant in the ancient world. In the first sermon in this series, I used a quote from John Walton's excellent book *The Lost World of Genesis One*. He explains the difference between our understanding of rest and the ancient world like this:

"In the ancient world rest is what results when a crisis has been resolved or when stability has been achieved, when things have "settled down." Consequently normal routines can be established and enjoyed... **[Rest] is more a matter of engagement without obstacles rather than disengagement without responsibilities.**" -- John Walton, *The Lost World of Genesis One*

Rest is "engagement without obstacles". Work is what we have to do to get to the place where we can do what we want to do, what we were made to do. If you were here during the first week of our series, the difference between work and rest was the difference between the work of putting the train track together and the work of playing with the train.

The difference between work and rest is the difference between the work of practice and the work of game day. Can you imagine being part of a sports team that always practiced and never played? Crazy!

The point is: rest isn't mindless inactivity, disengagement without responsibility. Rest is the wholeness of a life where you're doing what you were created to do. It's the fullness of life lived the way it's meant to be lived. It's the "play" we know we were created for.

Now to the other reason Sabbath is so hard for us: We don't actually believe God that this is best for us. We're all children of our culture. We're taught not to value play. We're taught to value the process, to always keep working, to do more, to need more, to keep at it. Everything has to have a reason, a purpose. Everything has to move forward. You can't even buy a ball for a toddler these days unless it teaches them to read in Latin and do calculus while they're playing with it.

We feel guilty, wrong, if we're not producing. When I was in graduate school, I was working full-time as a youth pastor and doing school full-time. I usually had about 400 pages of reading a week, plus weekly papers and an end-of-semester article. So essentially, when I wasn't working, I was at home, working.

I didn't dare take a break, because any time I did, I felt that sense of *wrong* deep down. That voice whispering I should get back to work.

The semester my thesis was due, I wrote like a machine. Every day, I went home from work and typed and typed and typed. For the last three weeks before my thesis was due, I typed and edited and typed 40-50 hours per week.

And then, I turned my thesis in. I didn't have any other classes. And I had to wait three weeks before I defended my thesis. So I literally had three weeks where I had nothing to do. Nothing I could do.

I came home from work... and just sat there.

I remember the first night after I turned in my thesis. I thought to myself, Wow! I'm free! I can do whatever I want! I can play video games or hang out with some friends or...

And then the guilt hit me. I felt an overpowering need to work. To sit at my computer and produce. I got up to do just that... almost like I was on autopilot... and then I stopped.

Because I didn't *have* anything to do. I literally didn't have anything I *can* type.

I was forced into a period of rest. I was forced to take a kind of Sabbath.

And I hated it. I felt guilty. I felt lazy. That voice was still whispering that I needed to get back to work, even though I didn't *have* any work to get back *to*.

Here's what that guilt taught me: I had been programmed to be a producer. I had organized my life in such a way that I didn't have room for resting.

But that whisper, that voice of productivity, is a liar. God created us and God knows what will bring us life. According to God, we need rest. According to the voice of productivity, we need work.

Which one are you going to believe? Because the truth is something my mom always taught me: You have time for what's important to you.

You'll make time for the voice you're giving your attention. If you value rest, if you value your full humanity, you'll listen to God and make it happen.

If you value productivity, if you value work and no play, you won't find time for Sabbath.

You are not a machine. You were not created to work and work and work. That story will destroy your humanity, and you will miss the life God created you for. Stop. Figure out a Sabbath.

It doesn't have to be a whole day to start with. Maybe it's just a half day, an afternoon. And I don't know what it looks like in your life – like we talked about last week, we're not machines. There's no program for this.

My wife Amanda and I are both extroverts. So our Sabbath looks like shutting off our phones, leaving them in our bedrooms and having some friends over to make a meal together and play games. Or spend the afternoon reading at a coffee shop.

Maybe for you it's going for a hike or a run or playing with your kids. Watching a good movie or building something in a workshop. Or sewing or scrapbooking.

In a few moments, we're going to use a Prayer of Examine to reflect on what Sabbath looks like for us.

I know the struggle you're having within yourself. I know the objections. It's not possible. I don't have time. It sounds nice but... Maybe once _____ is over.

These are the voice of the myth of productivity. The story that says Work is now. Play is always later. Play is always maybe tomorrow. Maybe tomorrow. Maybe eventually. But now, I *have* to _____. I have to work. I have to do. I have to make. And living that life is more terrible than any horror film.

You are not a slave. You were created in the Image of a God who rests, who ceases his labors. You were not created for endless work. As *The Shining* reminds us, all work and no play will drive you crazy. It actually steals away your humanity.

Sabbath is God's Way for your life. Rest is the reason we were created. Without it, we're less than we should be. For a fully human, vibrant, excessive, exciting life, Sabbath is not optional. It's necessary.

Take this time to prayerfully consider what Sabbath looks like in your life. Take this time to consider what you need to change to make this happen.

Examine

1. Where does the myth of productivity define your life?
2. How much margin do you have in your life?
3. What excuses most often keep you from taking a break?
4. When do you feel the most fully alive?
5. What can you do this week to create margin?

Benediction

Go and enjoy the life God has given you. Don't fall back into the lie that you were made to work. Go play, in the name of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit!