

## **“Sabbath: Rhythm”**

**2 Kings 5:1 – 14 & Luke 10:1-11, 16 - 20**

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Wayne Muller notes in his book Sabbath that there is rhythm built into the tapestry of creation.

The pulsing light and dark, expansion and contraction, the seasons and tides, the cycles of growth and dormancy, of life, death and regeneration are unmistakable characteristics of all living things, from the smallest microbes to the largest galaxy.” Is how he puts it.

Our lives have seasons; our days have tides: times when we are full and can offer ourselves and our gifts and times when we are spent or overwhelmed and we need to allow ourselves care; times when we are strong and centered and times when we are fragile and off-kilter and need space and support to find ourselves again. Healing and flourishing are possible only as we support each other in the seasons and tides of our lives and our days, as we notice and attend to the varied needs and gifts these seasons bring.

But so much of what we are about as a culture works against these rhythms. There is little time to breathe and make space for the rhythms of life in the endless, relentless struggle that is such a part of our lives. We are conditioned in the ways of self-reliance and competition; ways that project positivity and perfectionism and that allow no room for fragility, or rest or ready access to the balance and goodness that comes from paying attention to the seasons and rhythm we need to be well.

This weekend is the US’s celebration of our independence. We have to be careful beloved, with notions of independence. If we are not careful our celebration of independence can support this culture of self-reliance and striving, it can underwrite the idea that we are on our own and don’t need anyone else. If we don’t remember the story fully then our celebration of independence can play a part in fomenting a culture of competition and distrust.

But that is not what independence means in this country’s story. Independence in this country’s story means helping each other to resist tyranny and its desire to exploit and extract from the people of this land.

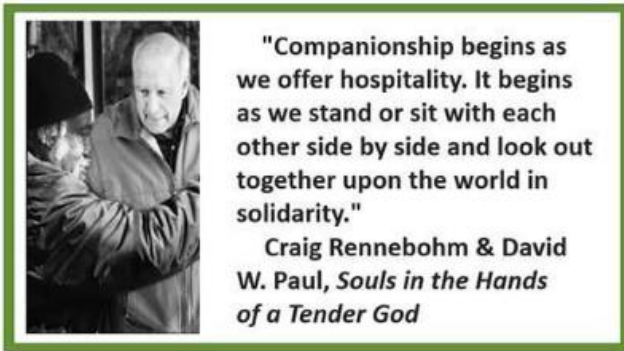
I am an immigrant and the thing I love most about this country, the thing that makes it beautiful, is the ideal of equality and fairness claimed in its declaration of independence even as those who wrote these words lived, just as we do, in ways that were deeply unfair and unjust. This declaration of independence was a declaration in support of human flourishing. And flourishing comes as we attend to others, as we attune to the rhythms of creation and as we make space for the weak as well as the strong.

These texts we have today demonstrate the healing and the liberation God offers us as we move out from behind our notions of independence and self-sufficiency and pride, and as we make space for each other, for the needs we bring and for the sharing of the gifts that God has placed amongst us.

Namaan was a man of status and power. He is convinced by his servants to put aside his pride and receive healing through a person and in a place where his status and expectations would simply not allow him to imagine was possible. And Jesus' disciples are vessels of remarkable healing as they leave behind the things they would normally rely upon to keep them self-sufficient.

They are sent to be with the people without money or a bag or even shoes. This leaves the disciples vulnerable and dependent on others. It demands they open themselves to the welcome and support from strangers. They are not called to open themselves to those who would not welcome them, but in removing the conditions for self-reliance and separation, discernment must happen around where relationships can be entered into, there is a leveling and an equality created that allows trust to be built and the pace of the work must go a little slower in these conditions. This slowing down allows us to notice the real contours of our shared lives, the real stories and needs, and the real and powerful gifts we might offer each other.

I think I have mentioned to you before that I was fortunate enough to intern with a chaplain in Seattle called Craig Rennebohm.



Craig was a leader in living and teaching companionship or accompaniment - the intentional practice of coming alongside others slowly and gently and openly – in ways that set us up to listen and to look at the world. This way is built on the teachings of Jesus that as we put down our defenses and make room, make room for deep and honest community we will find the healing we need.

My internship was based at the Community Lunch on Capitol Hill.



When I arrived Craig told me he wanted me to put aside as much as I possibly could the things that might separate me out from those who ate at lunch. Until you learn how to come alongside people, you are not to serve food or clean tables or hand out supplies. There should be nothing between you to keep you from sitting beside someone and learning how to listen and notice how a healing community gets built.

So, for the next few quarters you are to do what the people who come here hungry do and that means simply getting in line, accepting food, and sitting with people to eat and build relationships. Take care, he said, not to start with your role, just listen and share story, see where you are welcome and where the Spirit is inviting you in.

Now the line at lunch was long. There are a lot of hungry people in our communities. There was a lot of time in that line to notice my own discomfort at the assumptions I figured others were making about me, but as I stuck around and I got to know people, I began to see the assumptions I was making about other people too.

There was time and opportunity to build some trust, and, in that space, I got to hear the real stories, the complex stories that brought people the meal, stories of loss and rejection. Stories that defy the assumptions we make in this culture that are said to be poor mean you did not work hard enough. There was a lot of time to see and feel the exhaustion and but also experience the resilience and the joy we carry, the potential to forgive, and the healing that comes, real healing, as we stop to build community and make room the death and new life that is the rhythm of this creation.

Beloved we are commanded to take sabbath – to slow down, to put aside the things that normally protect us and to take some time to pay closer attention to ourselves, our neighbor, the creation on which we rely. It's not that suddenly as we do this the complexities and difficulties of life are all worked out. And it's not particularly easy to choose to do this in a world that is always striving but as we practice we will we start to see the rhythms we are made for, we start to get a sense of what we need in order to bring things into balance, we start to see the offerings of love and joy that will hold us and bring us through.

So beloved resist the idea that we can never stop, even if it's just for a minute or too. Muller has a couple of suggestions to help you practice slowing down to notice the rhythms that hold us.

Take a sabbath walk, a time to let your soul catch up with you. Give yourself 30 minutes to just wander where you will. Let your senses be drawn wherever they please. Trust your sense of when you want to linger and notice and when you are called to move along. At the end of 30 minutes notice what has happened to your body, your mind, your sense of time.

Or Muller suggests taking five minutes to notice your breathing. Sit comfortably and close your eyes and let yourself notice your breath, feeling the shape and texture. Don't change or rush, just notice. When your mind wanders, just notice

and return to your breath. Do this for 5 minutes at first, longer as you practice, and see what you notice about your breath and the rhythms of rest in your breathing.

I would add to these practices the practice of sitting beside someone. Putting aside all that you carry – your role, the places you need to be or the tasks you need to do. Just carve out a little time to sit and look out at the world together, hear and see what the other sees and notice the rhythms of their life, the places they see hope and the places they need renewal.

Whatever you do beloved however you practice, remember the command to sabbath – a sabbath that does not check out but moves further into all that it means to be human and a sabbath that trust that in it is in our humanity, in our really noticing and caring for each other that we will find the healing God wants for us.