

Sermon for Trinity Sunday – Genesis 1:31-2:3.

Resting in God

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Some years ago I had a businessman in my congregation. He was a guy about my age. He was an energetic fellow and highly motivated. He was always at work on some new venture or project. We were discussing life one day in the car on our way to a district meeting and he said to me 'I am on 24-7'. I didn't understand.

I said 'What?'. He said 'I never stop. If you want to get ahead you have to just keep going 24 hours, seven days a week'. 'Really?' I asked. 'O yes' he answered 'I am always switched on, even in my sleep! I never stop thinking about how I am going to get things done, how I am going solve this or that problem so things can move ahead'.

I thought for a while about this. What he had said quite disturbed me. I said after a while 'Are you busy on Tuesday evening?'. He said 'No, what have you got in mind?'. I answered 'I would like come around to visit you to you're your funeral!'. We both laughed, but I think the point was made.

24-7? Not even God does that! After six days of creating the world, with all its creatures and plants, on the 7th day he rested. He had completed his work on the sixth day, and looked at it with great joy and saw that it was good, very good. And on the 7th day He rested to celebrate this amazing work of creation being accomplished and to enjoy it. God knows how to rest.

We human beings on the other hand, seem to have trouble with this. We tend to be *restless*. I see it all the time. I see it in others and in myself too. I was speaking to a man recently who runs his own business, who felt he was on a treadmill – everyday, all the time. If he wanted to survive he told me, he just had to keep it up.

But it is not just our work-lives that keep us restless and busy. We can be totally focussed on *doing* all the time at home too, always trying to get things done, trying to get things to turn out the way we want them, in our family, our house, even our garden.

'If I don't do it, nobody will' people say. 'There is no rest for the wicked', 'God helps those who help themselves'. Yes, we do need to work, *some* of the time. We do have commitments and tasks and vocations that God has given us to fulfill. But not 24-7. He did not create us to be *restless* beings. He created us, as we read in verse 26 of

this reading, in his own image. He created us to work, to have dominion over the world, but he also created us to rest, just as he does.

However, as we know things went badly wrong here. Two chapters later, Adam and Eve start getting busy and going to work on their own future ventures. They see fit to take things into their own hands, to become independent of God, indeed like God themselves.

And human beings have been restless and troubled and unable to stop ever since, '24-7'. Our sin-broken souls can lead us to think that it *all* depends on us. We have to keep working because we think if we stop to rest life will stop. Our work then becomes not only constant and unyielding but ever more self-focussed and self-serving.

Work is necessary, but we need to be very careful here, that it does not become our god. That is an idolatry which our world has turned it into a virtue: 'She is amazing. She never rests'.

It is not a virtue. It is a terrible mistake.

We are created in God's image. He calls us to work yes, but he also invites us into *his* rest. Do you remember that beautiful passage in Genesis 2, where God places the man and woman in the garden, where they are surrounded by creation's beauty as they live in God's presence? That was the place God created for them, and he invites them not only to work in the garden, but to enjoy it, to enjoy *his* completed work, just as God himself did on the 7th day, which he set apart and made special for that very purpose. And as we know, God later gives this as a commandment to Israel at Mt Sinai, telling them to keep the sabbath day, by resting from all their work. God regards resting as a holy activity, an activity that brings people in tune with him and his will. It is necessary and indispensable – we are made in the image of God, who not only works but rests. This was the case in creation, and then for God's people Israel in their life with God, and it's God's will for us today, as his people in Christ.

This is not just a physical thing. Our minds need rest too. Our Spirits need rest. We need rest from trying to make it all happen, from being self-sufficient and self-motivated. We need rest from being committed and dedicated and reliable and consistent and all those other wonderful qualities. Even from the our work for the church (which is so important), we need to rest. In fact I would suggest to you that as Christians, resting in God is the most important thing we do.

Why? Because of our God who rested on the 7th day, and who sent his beloved Son into this restless world, says to us:

Come to me, all who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light. (Matthew 11:28-30).

God the Father sent his Son to complete a greater work even than creation. Christ came to do what we could not do, no matter how hard or long we worked. He lived a perfect life of obedience to his Father, a life of serving others instead of serving himself, a life which ended with the greatest work of all: he died that we might be saved from our self-justifying, self-saving and self-serving. We could not save ourselves. We could not complete that work ourselves. God our loving creator knew that he had to do it *for us*. ***There remains then a true sabbath rest for God's people*** says the author of Hebrews (4:9) – the rest that comes from simply trusting in Christ's life-changing work *for us*. This is what our Sunday worship, *our sabbath rest day*, is all about.

We come here to rest in Christ, who has completed his work of salvation. Just as God looked at his finished creation with satisfaction here in Genesis 1, so Christ, as he completed his great work for us on the cross said 'It is finished' or perhaps more accurately 'it is completed'. Yes, it *is* completed – your salvation is a completed work, delivered to you with love, through your baptism, through the Word and through Christ's crucified and resurrected body and blood, given and shed for you and offered here for us to eat and drink. The work we could not do, has been done for us by grace through faith.

Come to me, Jesus says: ***my yoke is easy. My burden is light. Learn from me to find rest for your souls***. Nobody else can give us rest like this.

Yes, God *has* given us work to do. As Paul says in Ephesians 2:10, ***we have been re-created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do***.

Yes, we have been saved *for* good works, not *by* good works.

This is why God, who created us and redeemed us also calls us to rest and enjoy *His* completed work, both in this life and in the eternal rest he has prepared for us in heaven.