

## Genesis 1:26-2:3; 2:15, 3:8-9

### Rest

June 5<sup>th</sup>, 2016

Summer vacation and the rest that it promises inspired me to address the Biblical topic of rest. The theology of rest was brought to my attention through my work with 3dm and Rev. Mike Breen. The topic of rest and actually the practice of rest has grown to fascinate me, because I have been so bad at resting and taking time off. Just ask my wife. On a couple of occasions in my life I have worked myself into almost complete physical, spiritual and emotional exhaustion. I had to learn the hard way I am a “human being” not a “human doing.”

This passage speaks of the creation of human beings and the relationship, the union that exists between God and creation and God and human beings.



They speak of rest and work of being fruitful and multiplying. They tell a story of humans abiding in the presence of God and being made in God’s image. There are a lot of things in here that are tied together and this morning I want to help you see not only a thread between these themes but a strong rope.

First of all I need to stress that what we are reading here is not a scientific explanation for the Created Order and Human Beings, but a theological affirmation that God created it all, including us, and through this established a relationship with creation and humanity that nothing can break. This passage was a direct argument against the fertility cults of the ancient world that were saying that unless you worshiped at their temple you would be infertile.



No, the Bible is very clear here that when God created us, and all the plants and animals, that he gave them the power to be “procreators” without any outside influence of a fertility god. It is why God made us male and female. God the Creator was declaring that human beings were to be “procreators” to be fruitful and multiply.



God instructed us to have “dominion” or “rule over” all the earth” in other words to take care of and nurture creation. And when God gave the command to “**subdue**” the earth he was declaring that we “**till it and keep it**” as it says in verse 2:15 **not destroy it!** The idea is that God created this earth and our first work was to “till it and keep it” to nurture and take care of it, not destroy it and exploit it.



And after all that was created on the 6<sup>th</sup> day, the pinnacle of which was the creation of human beings, God rested and called all of his creation into rest. **Humanities’ first act after being created was to rest.** In that act God showed us that He had built into the fabric of the universe and into the fabric our lives a rhythm of rest and work, abiding with God and being fruitful through our labors.

Now I want you to observe the first commandment God gave to human beings after creating us in God’s image. This is in verse 1:28 which reads, “**God blessed them, and God said to them, ‘Be fruitful and**

*multiply, and fill the earth and subdue it (and remember here to subdue the earth is to till it and keep it.)* That is the first commandment of God to physically, sexually increase in numbers, but to also be fruitful in terms of work.

God wants us to be fruitful and have an increase. Think of the parable of the talents. Those who increased what God gave them got more. The one who simply hid his talents and did nothing was declared a wicked and lazy servant and what he had was taken away. God wants us to work, to labor and be fruitful. It is part of the rhythm God has built into creation.

In the New Testament the robes that the saints wear at the Wedding Feast of the Lamb in heaven at the end of time are the good works they did here on earth. Here is a scripture that is often used at memorial services and committals it says, *“Blessed are the dead who from now on die in the Lord.” “Yes,” says the Spirit, “they will rest from their labors, their works shall follow them.”* (Revelation 14:13) In heaven, we are literally robed with our good works, our labors for God that we have done here on earth.

Now one of the most striking features of this passage is that it says that we are made in *“the image of God, according to God’s likeness”*. Now this passage says “our image, our likeness” and this plural reference to God is fascinating, but that’s the subject of another teaching sermon, because here, for today’s purposes, we need to look at what it means to be made in God’s image.

One thing is pretty clear we are made to create. Specifically we are made to be pro-creators in the image of our Creator to “be fruitful and multiply.” We are also to take care of the world as God does. God has delegated that responsibility to us. And we, being made in God’s image, holds the connotation and meaning that we bear the imprint of God.



God's fingerprints are all over us. Within us there is figuratively a hole that only God's hand can fit in like the imprint our hand leaves in a memory foam mattress, or a child's clay handprint Christmas ornament.

That imprint says we belong to God and God is in relationship with us. This hole, image, imprint or impression "is the picture of God leaving his handprint on us when he fashioned us from clay." Building a Discipling Culture p. 102



I have some old pottery shards that are about 1000 years old. They are from a pinch pot. A pinch pot is made by pinching coils of clay one on top of another. The creator of this pinch pot left his/her finger prints that are still visible 1000 years later. (You can see them in the slide.) Pottery like this lasts for about 10,000 years. But the imprint of God's hand in our lives lasts for eternity if we let it. There is a God sized hole in each one of us that only the handprint of God can fill.

In terms of work and rest, as I said, **God has built into the created order a rhythm of rest and work.** The first thing God did after creation was rest, not that God needed to, but we needed to rest before we got to work procreating, tilling and taking care of God's earth.

The important teaching here is the importance of rest.



And we are so bad at resting. Some had to go to work this past Tuesday so that they could rest up from the events of this past Memorial Day weekend.

**You know rest is so important and we are so bad about taking it that God had to command us to rest, to take a Sabbath to rest and abide with him.** If you don't get enough rest it will kill you. During the Euro 2012 soccer finals a poor soul named Jiang Xiaoshan from China stayed up 11 days straight following the games. When he finally laid down to rest his body was so exhausted he died.

You literally can work yourself to death, or be so deprived of rest you die. There needs to be a rhythm in our lives of rest and work. And again we are so bad at resting that God had to command it in the 10 Commandments. Rest is so important it is up there as an important thing to do along with important things not to do like murder, lying, stealing and adultery. Rest is very important.

Now when we read these first several chapters of Genesis one story is that of God walking in the evenings with Adam and Eve just to catch up with them. Take this story whichever way you want, literally or metaphorically, but the meaning is the same, God was taking a timeout with his beloved humans to just catch up. **God was resting with us; the biblical term is "abiding" with us.** God was doing what is necessary in any healthy relationship and that was spending time with the beloved.

If you can hold an image in your mind of God simply abiding with the first couple you can see the utter tragedy of the final verses today where Adam and Eve are hiding from God.



They have fled from God's presence in shame. They avoided abiding with God. They in essence denied God's imprint on them. They disobeyed God and broke the relationship, and that was lived out by

hiding from God. They put aside their time of abiding, or resting in God's presence and in essence got lost in the forest.

In the end God calls out to the man and said to him, "Where are you?"



Not that God didn't already know where Adam was, but it was time for the man to reflect on what he had done, and it is time for us to reflect on our relationship with God in the rhythm of life God has created for us.

Are we working too much? Are you working too much? Are you being too lazy? Both are extremes in the rhythm of life. By doing either we are in essence denying the imprint of God in our lives. And if we are, then our lives go from good to bad and we find ourselves hiding in the bushes from we know not what, because we have gotten so out of touch with God we don't know God anymore.



And when we don't know God we don't know who we are, so we don't know what to do and where we are. We are lost.

I began by saying there was a strong rope between the themes of rest and work and being fruitful and multiplying. Resting, abiding with God, walking with God in the garden gives us the strength to bear God's fingerprints, God's image to the world. It is out of our abiding, resting, walking with God that we can work, that we can be fruitful and multiply in a vast array of meanings and ways.



So this summer, rest. Abide with God in worship, prayer. Wander with God in the wonder of his creation. And as your hearts and minds and bodies are stilled from the busyness of life may God speak to you of where you need to work, be fruitful and multiply. Next week we pick up the theme of working out of our rest.



In Jesus' Name Rest.