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Navigating Life – Take Sabbath

“The Sabbath was created for humans; humans weren’t created for the Sabbath. This is why the Human One is Lord even over the Sabbath.”

Words of Jesus
Mark 2:25-28 (CEB)

A friend told me he spent one day alone at home trying to find something good about the year 2020. My question: “Well what did you discover?” His reply, “The year had almost three hundred consecutive days of Sabbath.”

Honestly, it was near impossible to argue against his point. My mind went to those days of total shutdown when we could drive the city streets and meet two to five others on the road. It caused me to consider the time Sandy and I had alone together in our home...resting. All those days were filled with too much information about the virus, sickness, death, and the promises of a cure...soon.

For a while it felt good to stay home and rest. Good until “restless” set in. To “rest less” in a time of total quiet was traumatic. Then along came notice that friends and family members were infected by that “COVID thing.” In March, we checked our temperature daily, turned the news on and off over and over, called our sons and the Grands, and I even talked to people who generally disagree with me. The walls closed in and drove me into a state of bad mood and a bit of withdrawal.

Somewhere along the consecutive days of lock down, I began to recall something important I learned in Kingsmill Community Church. The lesson was taught to me in my child through teen years (0—18). Every Sunday was “something special” for me. I know it was because my mother said it was “special”. She always reminded me that Sabbath/Sunday was an important day for relaxing and restoring strength to my body.

You can believe that if you want to, but the actual amount of relax and restore was severely limited around our rural property. I recall a number of Sunday's when I was awakened before daylight to help dad "work the cows" (you don't want to know), or load some hay bales on the trailer. It had to be done before the 9:30 bell called us to Sunday School classrooms. Yes, occasionally the smell was atrocious, and how does a "get it done now" stress level reduce anxiety when you worry over being late for church...bath or not.

When I learned that Jésus didn't lounge around on the Sabbath, but went about the tasks of healing and picking grain for the disciples and him. I knew the time is ours to build relationships, feed, give drink, clothe, visit the sick or jailed (with much caution), because *"The King will reply, 'Truly I tell you, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers and sisters of mine, you did for me.'"* Matthew 25:40

I think there is a keen sense among many people that we did in fact lose a religious and cultural treasure when Sunday became just “one more day for progress.” The line is from a “Rascal Flats” song, “Mayberry.” The full line of that song is, “*Sunday was a day of rest, now it's one more day of progress.*” I would like to help others begin to receive the gift that Sabbath is, not only just for themselves, but for my benefit, for your benefit, and for all people living near us.

Trying to determine a way to nurture relationships with people is high on my priority list. I think you might have noticed that I need people in my life. Give me a class full of college students, church small group, or any audience, and I'm in high spirits. It is difficult indeed to find non-Zoom audiences or expand relationships in the “COVID thing.”

Attempting to reason through it caused me to think of another verse in the song that begins “I miss Mayberry.” It is something I miss from my little town. “*Sittin' on the porch drinkin' ice cold cherry coke...Pickin' on a six string...People pass by...And you call them by their first name.*” We could actually do that in Kingsmill.

All this brings up the question, how do we get to know others when we are required to stay away? So, walking my neighborhood with my dog at least two times per day...morning and evening, I see people come and go all the time. Some are like me and strike up a conversation, but I'm saddened by the fact that I know their dog's name and don't know theirs.

A plan was fashioned in my mind to increase conversations with the very people I should know well. My plan? I start it!

The chat begins by me standing in the street and increasing my voice several decibels to get sound through the mask filter. I say, “My name is Ted, and my dog's name is Shaggy. We walk by here all the time and I simply want to say “hi’.” Then I stare and make my eyes smile as big as I can. If no sound comes from the person, I say “Great talking to you.” I walk away.

I'll let you know if the strategy works over time.

Good Sabbath and Peace always,

Ted