

According to Mark . . . July and August 2017

Summertime is upon us, and for many folks at our churches, it's a time to retreat to the lake or other summer retreats for some or all of the summer. I am grateful to be witness to this tradition, because for me, it represents something that is not just Holy intended by God, but wholly intended by God ... rest and reflection.

In theological circles, and when I was in Seminary, we called those moments "Sabbath". Our lives are hectic and busy beyond belief, and the days of my youth when stores were closed on Sundays are a distant memory. It is sometimes the only day we have to catch up given the demands on ourselves and shuttling or appearing with children, elders, neighbors, at some shared event. Don't get me wrong, it's important to participate in each other's lives, but we feel sometimes more scheduled than participating, and that can feel draining and leave us empty.

So summer is that time where work slows down a little, school is out, and we can re-think what we do with our lives. Let's remember, God gives us three things: time, relationships, and a body in which to live both of the former in this world. So how can we better use our time for sanctity rather than schedule?

Greek philosophy had two distinct kinds of time, with two faces, two natures. The first is Chronos, that time we know of clock and calendar, as in chronology, chronicle, and chronic. It is the driving force that marches us on through our lives and tells us that we must now dawdle but do, not rest but achieve, not work smarter, but work harder. But the second is Kairos, and this nature asks not 'what time is it?' but 'what is this time FOR?' Kairos is the servant of holy purpose, of restoration, of satisfying the longing for which we all yearn. Each moment in Kairos has significance in itself and beyond itself. It looks at things beautifully, and purpose can start to take shape out of the smallest, simplest things rather than the drumbeat of achievements in a 10, 12, or 14 hour day.

Ecclesiastes 3 is our roadmap here: there is a time for everything under the sun. Look at the dual natures of each of these phrases, focusing on the first part of each. Be born, plant, embrace, search, keep, love, and listen. When we start to realize the eternity of our soul, to appreciate Kairos, we begin to sanctify some of our time. This is the gift of God, experiencing the sacred among the commonplace.

One of my favorite web sites is Alibris, the world's largest online bookstore for used and out-of-print books. I found this one by Mark Buchanan years ago called *The Rest of God: Restoring Your Soul by Restoring Sabbath*. I highly commend this book to each of you for your summer reading list. It includes the above concepts and many others that I hope will allow you to slow down this summer. Play. See. Walk. Notice. And most of all, take time to simply Be.

This is hard work, doing Sabbath. But I hear in that phrase the words of my professor, "Sabbath isn't about DOING, Mark. Just Be". So, OK, this is hard work, where do I start doing Sabbath? My professor again shakes her head in my minds eye.

I take parts of days and just remove my watch and spend time in nature, or with my dog, or friends with a beer and a good cigar, and at those moments, I can begin to glimpse Kairos. So for this summer, I wish each of you less doing and more of you more being. Because THAT is what God intended for us in the beginning. We have to be the ones who think whether that ends.

Think ... I'll need to add that to the Kairos list, indeed. Have a peaceful and blessed Summer,

Pastor Mark