

Rector's Column

He said to them, "Come away to a deserted place all by yourselves and rest a while." For many were coming and going, and they had no leisure even to eat.
Mark 6:31

Dear Friends,

It is said that April showers bring May flowers, so this month should bring us many blooms! With the turning of the year to spring, we know that the summer months will soon follow. May will hold the conclusion of Trinity's Sunday School year, the last Sunday of which will be held on May 18th with the restart planned for the end of August. In between, I suspect many of our congregational members and staff will take some much-anticipated and well-deserved vacation. For instance, in June and July I'm looking forward to spending some time in Canada on visits with friends and family.

Rest and relaxation is an important and vital aspect of our spiritual practice as people of faith. While workaholism may be valued in American dominant culture, it does not constitute a moral good within our faith tradition. Jesus worked hard and long hours during his years of developing his mission and community, but he valued the deeper meaning of keeping Shabbat (the Sabbath) and setting aside all labor in order to truly rest. Religious law included the land itself as being in need to rest from cultivation and harvest in order to be fully restored and made fertile with nutrients for supporting crops once again.

There is a kind of labor that requires the critical need for rest that is not often included in inventories of "work" that one engages, and that is "emotional labor." When someone works all day with a jack hammer or on building a house or working long hours in an office or on staff at a busy hospital, it's easy to understand the need for rest from the intensity of these examples of work. Yet, when it comes to emotional labor, we can often expect ourselves or others to overcome emotional challenges or traumas quickly. We can downplay our emotional experiences and minimize the impact of significant events through by using verbal flags to wave people off such as, "I'm fine!" or "It's no big deal" or "I'm over it" when in truth we are far from fine, it is a big deal, and we are definitely NOT over it.

Emotional labor can be physically and emotionally draining, especially if our genuine feelings are masked by a need to act as if we are okay in order to navigate through a workday or within family relationships. A common form of emotional labor is that of coping with grief or loss; another source of emotional labor occurs with sudden changes in health, including new diagnoses that can radically affect lifestyle; and then there are changes in social status such as graduation, getting married, retirement, moving a household, or immigrating to a different country – all instances that can require substantial emotional labor in order to adjust our self-concept and plan for the future.

Jesus calls us to rest, even as he would call aside the apostles in order for them to take a break from all that pulled at them. They were creating something new together, living into a new way of being in the world, processing grief after Jesus' crucifixion, followed by processing the shock of resurrection. Talk about emotional labor! Those folks had a genuine emotional workout. My hope is that as we turn from spring to summer, you will each plan for times for rest with as much dedication as you may schedule work or special events. Remember that you ARE a special event and need some intentional time to just be you, exactly as you are and as you feel, free from the need to please anyone else. Sabbath doesn't happen unless it's on the calendar – it is the sacred time and space for holy rest, and all beings in God's Creation require it as an integral aspect of holistic wellness.

In Christ's Peace,
Pastor Rachel+

