

Sermon: 'A Rhythm to your life'

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Methodist Central Hall, Westminster

Sunday 1st August 2010 6.30 pm

LESSON: Ecclesiastes 3:1-8 & Mark 1:35-39

I wonder how many of you have been out on a lake or on the sea in a rowing boat?
I can remember being out with some friends and one friend, who was a big strong man, was on one oar,
whilst the very smallest of our group was on the other oar,
and the end result of this was that we just went round and round in circles!
We would have been all right if we had had two big men rowing.
We would have been all right if we had had two size 10 women rowing.
But as it was we were out of balance and we got nowhere.

Tonight I want to talk about the need for rhythm and balance in our lives if we are to be healthy,
for if we have our lives out of balance we not only will end up just going round in circles,
but we also might find ourselves smashing into either the bank or someone else.
You see not having a balance and rhythm in our lives can in fact make us sick.

This is not some abstract idea,
it is a very practical set of principles which will work alongside the God given properties of our body to keep us in good health,
so first let me suggest how you get rhythm and balance into your life.

Crucially we need to make sure we take time off.
Some people seem to almost make it a point of pride to say that they have not had a day off for months,
but as Christian people that is a totally unacceptable attitude.
in Genesis,
however we want to understand it,
we are told that God worked for six days and then rested on the seventh day,
why should we think that we can do better than God!

Then on a bigger year long scale we need to take holidays.

What we do on those holidays does not matter,
in fact I think that going away is sometimes far more stressful than just
staying at home and taking life easy,
but a holiday gives our bodies and minds a real break which means that we
are better able to face the challenges when we return.

Next on a far smaller scale what about going to bed?

You feel tired but you think you will do just one more job,
or just see what is on the TV,
or just sit and read the newspaper or a book.
There is no problem with any of those things but there is a problem if they
take you from your sleep.
Sleep is a God given restorer,
but sleep needs time to work.

If we then look at this from what we might call a more spiritual point of view, many
Christian people think that because they are working for God they either do not need
time off or that they should not take time off.

The problem here is that Christians can be so busy on the work of the
Kingdom that they leave no time to spend with the King.

Make space for prayer,
for Bible reading,
for sitting listening to God.

Also let me just add here that saying no is OK for the Christian.

You can do it graciously of course,
but if you feel that task you are being asked to do really isn't for you than
say so,
even if it is the minister who asked you personally,
for in fact in the long run if you end up not doing what you feel you are
not cut out to do that is probably better for the Kingdom of God
anyway!

Then may I ask you if you have a hobby?

I love to go fishing and I love to buy, work on and sell antiques.

A day in the shed working on an old chair and listening to the football is
heaven on earth to me.

If you have a hobby it is a great help to your being restored physically and
mentally,

with the added bonus that you get out of the Christian gold fish bowl and
meet other people who are not yet Christians.

That's stimulating and good for you as well as for them!

So beware,

not tuning in to the rhythms of life,
not creating a balance in what you do,
can make you sick,

and as Christian people whose bodies are temples of the Holy Spirit that is not a good thing.

Then Second, acknowledging these rhymes in life gets you in tune with God.

This idea of a rhythm in life being within the intention and heart of God is set out so beautifully in Ecclesiastes chapter 3 and verses 1 to 8.

This I think is one of the most stunning passages of poetry in the whole bible, but much more than being wonderful poetry it holds a very deep truth,

there is such realism about it,

and if we apply it this evening to this ministry of healing we have to say that

there *is a time to die,*

a time to weep,

a time to mourn.

Sometimes death comes out of time;

that makes us angry and rightly so,

sometimes even angry with God.

That's no problem for God can cope with your anger.

But death is not always out of time,

and when folk have lost many of their faculties and lie in a forlorn world of

their own perhaps the right prayer is not that they should be healed,

but rather that they should be released to die and thus find ultimate healing.

Many times as I have visited members of my various past Churches who lay gravely ill at the end of their lives I have prayed with them prayers of release,

prayers offering confidence that they can let go and be held in the love of God,

prayers that fear may have no hold on them,

and too often for it to be a co-incidence they have slipped away from this world soon after.

it may seem an odd thing to say at a service of healing but there is indeed

a time to die.

But we are also told here that there is *a time for laughing,*

for dancing even,

for healing.

Perhaps sometimes in our particular ministry here we are so keen not to

falsely build up expectations that we can seem as if we hardly believe in

healing at all,

that is not so,

we believe in healing but we believe in offering healing with realism and

integrity.

Thus we are honest as to the fact that most are not healed,

but we could perhaps trumpet a little more that some are healed,

for after almost every service here people will write in or phone in or talk

to us and tell us of how they have been blessed and healed through this

ministry.

Praise God for that,

and I wonder perhaps if the task of the ministry team here is somehow to ask the Holy Spirit to guide us into knowing which season we are in for the people we pray for.

For some the answer to prayer might be healing,
instant healing,
and I always remember a lady bursting in to my room one day waving her stick and telling me she had been healed and no longer needed it,
and I think of a lady just weeks ago healed of deafness as we prayed.
For others there might be the relief of pain or discomfort and folk are so grateful for that even when the root cause is still there.
For others what is given is strength to go on.
For some even what is given is the courage to face death.

If we are to keep this balance that the scripture talks about here we need to be open to God and open to other people.

So try to live as balanced a life as you possibly can,
our bodies are in fact excellent sounding boards for lives out of balance,
so be aware of your body and respond to it in the way you live your life and live out your faith.

Then third, a balanced life reflects the life of Jesus.

In that gospel passage the verses just before tell us of Jesus calling the twelve,
then driving out evil spirits,
then healing his friend Peter's Mother in law.

It must have been an exhausting day and he must have slept so soundly,
but in the morning Jesus is up and off and praying on his own before he returns to the so very draining work of healing.

You see it is because Jesus has done the first thing that he is able to do the second!
It is because Jesus has spent time in prayer drawing upon the vast resources of God that He is able to be so in tune with the Holy Spirit that He knows just where healing will come to others.

In fact when we look at the life of Jesus we see a life with a rhythm to it and a life in balance.

We see Him silent in prayer before his Father and we see Him the life and soul of the party.

We see Him working in detail with his twelve disciples but coping so well with vast hoards.

We see Him with the rulers and we see him with the marginalised.

We see Him apart from his family and we see him commending his Mother in love.

We see Him flexible as to where He might go and what He might do and we see Him setting His face to Jerusalem and no one turning him aside.

In Jesus we see the one who was truly God and who was truly man,
we see Jesus modelling the balanced life to us as a healthy way to follow.

So where does that leave us tonight,
you and me?

It may be that you sense that this is the time to ask for help through the laying on of hands for healing and wholeness,
if that is what you sense make sure that you ask for prayer.

It may be that you are not sure what God wants for your life,
well that is a good reason to seek prayer as you seek God's way forward.

Or it may be that there is some lifestyle change you know you need to make and my sermon this evening just confirmed it for you,
then why not ask for strength and self discipline to make that change in your lifestyle,
in your commitments,
or in your pattern of sleep and eating.

It may be that it is your priorities which you know need to be sorted out,
and that is as if God needs to be taken off the sideboard and placed at the very centre of the house of your life.

Whatever it is that you sense God has said to you this evening be positive,
seize the moment for it is a moment God has given you.
God's will for you is good,
you don't have to battle with God or argue to convince God,
God wants the very best for you,
and perhaps part of that best is nudging your life more towards a balance,
more towards that balance which brings greater health and happiness day
by day.

Think of that boat with which I started,
but this time it is just you rowing,
and if you don't want that boat going round and round in circles you have to
keep a balance on the oars of your life,
may God give each of us the good sense to do just that.

Amen.

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