

MESSAGE FOR YOUTH SUNDAY 2017

NARRATOR 1: Good morning! We have been talking a lot this morning about how busy our lives as teenagers are these days. We ARE busy-crazy busy- but we know that we are not the only ones feeling like the hands on the clock just keep moving faster and faster. We know that you feel it too, no matter your age! So this morning, we want to take a few minutes to take you away to a magical place where everyday people with everyday lives and everyday problems learn how important it is for everyone to find time to rest. To rest in prayer. To rest in God.

NARRATOR 2: So sit back, get comfortable, and enjoy this little escape brought to you by the Rocky River Presbyterian Players...think of this as a creative mishmash that might best be described as "Into the Woods Meets the Holy Spirit..." or maybe not. You be the judge!

Our story begins in the deep forest...in a tiny cottage at the edge of a clearing. A young woman who goes by the name of Snow White is running around, sweeping, cleaning, doing laundry and hanging up 7 very tiny sets of overalls on the clothesline. Suddenly, a mysterious wind comes upon her...

NARRATOR 3: A quiet stranger approaches her, walking very slowly. He says to Snow White, "Why are you rushing around, taking on so many tasks at once? Don't you know that you won't do anything well if you don't take things one at a time! Not to mention, you have bags under your eyes, look like you haven't slept in days and you have the worst case of dishpan hands I have ever seen!"

NARRATOR 4: Snow White looked at the stranger and started to cry. She said "Oh kind stranger, you have no idea how busy my life is! I have these 7 little guys running around all day demanding things! They want breakfast, they want clean clothes, they want attention, they want to play, they want, they want, they want! I never have a minute to myself to rest or do anything that I want to do. It's just all too much!"

NARRATOR 1: The stranger looked at her and said, "Snow White, you have to slow down! You need to take time for yourself! Do you even notice the beauty of the woods around you? Do you ever pray?" Snow White shook her head. "I don't have time!" she said. The stranger smiled at her and said, "Come and sit with me a while. We can rest together!"

NARRATOR 2: Now imagine another small cottage, deep in the woods. The scene is quite similar! This time a young woman named Cinderella is on her knees, scrubbing a filthy floor with soap suds to her elbows. She has a scowl on her face. Suddenly, a mysterious wind comes upon her... A quiet stranger approaches her, again walking very slowly. He says to Cinderella, "Why are you working so hard, scrubbing that floor when you have all the beauty of Creation around you to spend the day in?" Cinderella

answers him, "Oh strange person, I have an awful step-mother and two evil step-sisters who do not give me a minute to myself! I have to do absolutely everything for them!"

NARRATOR 3: The stranger said to her, "Cinderella, you are worth so much more than scrubbing floors and waiting on selfish people! You have a God who loves you and wants you to spend time just being in prayer and rest! Come and sit with me a while."

NARRATOR 4: One more time, imagine if you will...a young girl named Dorothy holds her dog Toto. She is running and running across a field of poppies, trying and trying to get to a giant green tower. She thinks that someone who lives in that tower will be able to help her find her way home. She collapses, exhausted, in the middle of the flowers. Suddenly, a mysterious wind comes upon her...Once again a quiet stranger approaches her and sits beside her. He asks her, "Dorothy, why do you keep chasing after something that never gets any closer? You are wearing yourself out and not getting to where you want to be!"

NARRATOR 1: Dorothy hugs her dog and answers the stranger, "Oh kind stranger, I just know that if I can get to that tower, there will be someone there who can tell me how to get back to my home! I'm lost and lonely and I just don't know what to do!" The stranger smiled at her and said, "Oh Dorothy, sometimes the things we want are right in front of us, but we never take the time to actually see them! Just close your eyes, breathe deeply and ask God to help you decide what is best to do. God will make sure you are safe and find your way home!" Come and just sit with me a while.

NARRATOR 2: Now, we have taken certain liberties with these very familiar stories, but we hope that you got our message loud and clear. Snow White just could not bring herself to take time to care for herself. Cinderella would not stand up to her step-mother and step-sisters. Dorothy was so busy trying to get to an unachievable goal that she missed the obvious solution right under her nose. None of our characters were taking care of themselves-they were busy all the time, but not accomplishing much of anything.

NARRATOR 3: These problems do not just exist in the land of fairy tales and classic movies. We all have a hard time carving out time for resting in prayer with God. When we had our retreat last December, we spent a weekend at Camp Aldersgate. We were able to spend time enjoying God's creation and each other without the intrusion of soccer games, music lessons, homework, television, or the internet. Let me say that NONE of these things are bad-in moderation, they can all contribute to our lives, but it is important to sometimes take a step back and just rest.

NARRATOR 4: Let's look back at this morning's Old Testament reading. It's the very familiar passage from Genesis that details Creation. ***God looked upon all he had made and saw that it was good. So God finished his creation on the seventh day, because on the seventh day, God created rest.***

And this “rest” echoes throughout the entirety of creation. Just like a measure of rest in music, this pause in the rhythm of creation does not mean that the song of life has ended. No, indeed this time of rest creates a rhythm to our existence. We work and we rest; we work and we rest. Our lungs breathe in and out, in and out. Our hearts beat in steady time. We sleep and we wake. This rhythm is a sign of life. If you think about it, we are kept alive by rhythm, so much so that we even call them “biorhythms,” quite literally “rhythms of life.”

NARRATOR 1: But our biorhythms don’t have to stop completely for us suffer. No, we can have this thing called “arrhythmia,” when our bodies literally exist out of rhythm. I bet many of you have suffered from a spiritual arrhythmia. You devote too much of your time and energy to producing, working, and doing, and too little to peace, rest, and the enjoyment of God’s creation. What we don’t realize is that our obsession with work and our inability to rest does not make us some sort of superhuman. It actually in some ways makes us less than human. When we neglect rest, we are neglecting a central part of what it means to be fully human.

NARRATOR 2: We humans are not created to spend every waking moment working. I understand how that can be confusing. We read the song of creation in Genesis 1 and it says we are made in the image and likeness of God. Well surely that means that we are created to be creative and productive creatures, right? I mean, after all, God spends all of Genesis 1 creating and working. If we, then, are truly created in God’s image, surely we too must be known by our work.

NARRATOR 3: But you see the ancient Jewish rabbis had another way of reading the text. They believed that the purpose of each creature of creation was revealed by what they did first – fish for the water, birds for the sky, and beasts for the land. But what do human creatures do first? Well, humans were created at the end of sixth day so one could presume that the first thing human creatures did was sleep through the night and then wake up to enjoy a day of rest in the full presence of God their Creator.

NARRATOR 4: We were created for rest. Sure there is virtue in our work. But the fullness of our humanity, the purpose of our existence is found in our rest from that work. This is God’s Good News for God’s people! This is God restoring the rhythm of rest in God’s good creation.

NARRATOR 1: While we were on our retreat, we discovered that spiritual rest and renewal came in many forms. Obvious forms that we are all familiar with are worship and prayer. We also discovered the joy in games, music, exercise and creative expression. It is about discovering the kingdom of Heaven in our midst as we let go of our baggage, schedules, commitments and worries. Time to sing and dance and play-living in the moment and enjoying the wonder of laughter, spontaneity and joy.

NARRATOR 2: Time to develop a deep, personal relationship with God. Author and activist Parker Palmer said this: “Self-care is never a selfish act- it is simply good

stewardship of the only gift I have, the gift I was put on earth to offer to others.” It’s hard to do much of **anything** if you don’t take care of yourself.

NARRATOR 3: And we heard a great quote from author Anne Lamott, “Almost everything will work again if you unplug it for a few minutes...including you.” Unplug from the world. Plug in to God. Set aside a little time each day to keep that connection strong. Light a candle and spend a few minutes emptying your mind while you look at it. You might be surprised to hear what God has to tell you.

NARRATOR 4: So what can you do? Take a walk in nature. Tune in to the sounds around you and listen for the voice of your Creator in the birds, wind, crunchy leaves, and even the dog barking at you. It is amazing what you will hear if you just take time to really listen.

NARRATOR 1: When you come to church, open your mind to the whole experience. Don’t sit in the pew, mentally making your grocery list or figuring out how you will get everything done in the coming week. Really listen to the music and let it move you. Listen to the prayers and scriptures and see what they might be saying to you. Pick one thing from the weekly sermon that you will think about daily in the week to come. Look around you and really notice those around you. Make a point of talking with someone new after worship.

NARRATOR 2: Remember our friends up front here...Snow White, Cinderella, and Dorothy. Don’t be like they were! Look at them now...so much happier when they made space in their busy lives for Sabbath time.

NARRATOR 3: It’s all a balancing act. The busy stuff is important...at least most of the time, but the rest is just as important.

NARRATOR 4: God calls each of us into a deeper relationship. When you quiet yourself, you may just find yourself hearing God more often, and THAT is the best reason we know of to make the time! Amen!