

Sermon for Sunday, September 24, 2023
Seventeenth Sunday after Pentecost
“Time Enough”
Reverend Amy Zalk Larson
Good Shepherd Lutheran Church
Decorah, Iowa

[Click here to read story for the day.](#)

Beloved People of God, grace to you and peace in the name of Jesus.

I will give you enough food for each day, God tells the Israelites. *On the 6th day, there will be enough for two days, so you can rest on the 7th day.* Imagine how strange that sounded to the Israelites. For generations, they lived with a harsh **daily quota**: the number of bricks they had to make if they wanted to eat. In the wilderness, God gives them a new **daily quota**: the amount of food they'll be provided each day. The Israelites left Egypt with a distorted relationship to time. Each day they had to produce what their task masters demanded so that they could consume enough.

In the wilderness, God works to heal their pressured, productivity-focused relationship with time. God helps them receive the gifts of each day. God teaches them how to rest. God does the same for us, for us who also have a fraught relationship with time. When I worked at Luther College, I remember many days that were entirely filled with meetings. Those days, just looking at my Google calendar would fill me with dread. I knew I'd leave each meeting with even more tasks on my to-do-list, but when would I have time to do them?

What do you feel when you look at your calendar, planner, or date book? Do the days feel too empty? Too full? Or maybe both? Empty of what brings meaning and full of drudgery. Sometimes we feel enslaved by our calendars and lists, like they are unrelenting task masters with demands we can never satisfy. I've been learning about this lately from Tricia Hersey, a black woman who says that rest is resistance to our capitalist, consumeristic system that is based on a plantation system of production. Hersey has developed a nap ministry to help us resist being enslaved to production and consumption.¹

Our calendars can also become a source of pride or despair, a way of measuring whether or not we are valued, worthy, loved. Calendars train us in a certain way of viewing time. We begin to see time as a sequence of little boxes, each waiting to be filled. We start to think, *I own my time. My role is to manage it wisely and determine what goes where.*

A wise teacher, Dorothy Bass, writes, “Making good use of the time we are given is important, to be sure ... But when our emphasis on using time displaces our awareness of time as a gift, we find that we are not so much using time as permitting time to use us.”² We are not slaves to time. We are not masters of time. We are beloved children of a generous creator, a creator who gives us the gift of time so that we will serve creation and rest. Time is like manna. It's given to us fresh each

¹ Learn about Tricia Hersey and the Nap Ministry here: thenapministry.wordpress.com/about/

² Dorothy C. Bass *Receiving the Day: Christian Practices for Opening the Gift of Time* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2000), 2.

new morning as a gift. Listen as I read an adaptation of our story today, substituting the word *time* for the word *manna*. This adaptation is offered by Dorothy Bass.

Then the Lord said to Moses, “I am going to rain hours, time from heaven for you, and each day the people shall rise up and have time enough for that day . . . On the sixth day, when they gather up time, it will be twice as much as they gather on other days.” Then Moses said to Aaron, “Say to the whole congregation of the Israelites, draw near to the Lord, who has heard your complaining about lack of time.” The Lord spoke to Moses and said, “At twilight you shall eat with plenty of time, and in the morning you shall have your fill of time stretching out before you; then you shall know that I am the Lord your God.” In the evening time came up and covered the camp, and in the morning there was a layer of time upon the camp. When the Israelites saw it, they said to one another, “What is it?” Moses said to them, “It is the time that the Lord has given you. This is what the Lord has commanded: Take as much time as you need for the day.” Those who had too much time on their hands measured it in hours and had nothing left over, and those who had little time discovered they had no shortage, they gathered as much as each of them needed. And Moses said to them, “Let no one leave any of the time over until morning.” But they did not listen to Moses; some used up the hours of the night until morning, and the time became to them foul; for they were tired and irritable. The house of Israel called it “time”; it was a new gift every day. (Adapted from Exodus 16:4—31.)³

What would it look like to receive time as a gift? To begin each day by giving thanks for the time God has given you and asking God to provide the energy and rest you need? Would this remind you that your worth is not dependent on how much or how little you produce? Would this help you pay attention to the wonderful creation that is your body, to know we have a good and gracious creator who works to set us free?

In the book of Deuteronomy, God’s people are told to rest on the seventh day as a reminder that God saved them from slavery. In a culture where we can feel oppressed by time, the command to rest is a form of liberation. Today this commandment can work as God telling us, *I have set you free from the tyranny of time, of work, achieving, producing*. This command also calls us to ensure we’re helping others to get time to rest.

In our 24-7 culture, when do people in lower income jobs get to rest? When a mom must work three jobs to feed her family, when does she experience time enough? Our rest is never intended simply to serve our own needs, it is to invigorate us for service in God’s way, for the work of liberation and justice. We also may have to say no to certain things in order to rest. It may be that God’s to-do list for us is shorter than the one we have for ourselves. As we sit with our calendars, lists, and date books, it’s wise to ask what brings energy, what drains energy, what is mine to do, what can be let go?

Beloved of God, you are not a slave to time.

You aren’t called to master time.

You are the beloved child of a creator who gives you the gift of time so that you can live out Christ’s way of love in a hurting world.

³ Dorothy C. Bass, Lani Wright, and Don C. Richter *Receiving the Day Guide for Conversation, Learning and Growth* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2001), 17-18.

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