**DEC 27 Sermon: *<Slide 1> REST IS BEST***

**Begin** with a moment of contentment (Iceland).

 In 2012 Emily and I had the opportunity to go to Iceland with two of our closest friends! **<Slide 2>** Now Iceland is a beautiful country to explore! There is hot stuff bubbling out of the ground everywhere; there are caves, lava flows, glaciers, ice bergs and waterfalls! So, naturally one of the things that we wanted to see was the Puffin! On the third day of our trip we went to an island called Heimi! This was a fantastic day, we had already climbed to the top of a volcano and drove around the town. And in the afternoon we did an ocean walk and to our delight we found a whole colony of puffins!! **<slide 3>** Hundreds if not thousands of them! It was a successful day! Now I remember shortly after seeing our puffins we were sitting on a ledge over looking the oceans and puffins and I remember just feeling completely at rest! **A moment of contentment!**

 Now a moment of contentment to me is when everything (for at least a moment) is alright in your world! You feel a peace in your heart and an overwhelming sense of joy within you! A moment when all the worries of this world fade away! I believe that as followers of Jesus we are to have moments like this that are gifts from the God! I believe Jesus wants to give us moments where we are completely at REST to give us a glimpse of our eternal future!

* ***<Slide 4>*** *Give a few mins for people to turn to those around them and share a moment of contentment with their neighbour!*

**<Slide 5>** Some definitions of REST are:

* Relief/freedom from anything that wearies, troubles, or disturbs.
* A period of inactivity, or solitude.
* Refreshing ease or inactivity after exertion or work!

I have found in NV culture; many people seem too busy to actually slow down and experience a moment of contentment! I have talked to a few people who say when they go on vacation they need 2 weeks off because they need the whole first week to unwind and actually relax! This should not be!!

**<Slide 6>** ***What is Godly REST or SABBATH?***

1. *CEASE—FIRE!! (2) life –giving (3) eternal hope!*

***(1) CEASE—FIRE!!***

If we look through the Bible we can see a pattern of REST or SABBATH (The word "Sabbath" means "to rest from labor") throughout the old and new Testaments. The First place we see it actually comes in Gen 2:1-3 **<Slide 7>**

🡪 READ – God built a day of rest right into the fabric creation!

God creates a rhythm for humanity by blessing this day and setting it apart as holy. Adam’s first full day on earth was God’s day of REST!

**<Slide 8>** In Ex 20 God gave Israel the 10 commandments. The 4th commandment calls the Israelites to keep the Sabbath day holy as a special sign between God and Israel! This day of rest was for the whole family; as well as servants and animals!

Few chapters later in Ex 23 more Sabbath commands are given: give your fields a rest every 7 years! After that, God commands Israel to take time off for 3 different holiday festivals!!

**<Slide 9>** Then in Lev 23 God commands another Festival! The Festival of tabernacles or Booths! Essentially God commands the people to go to the wilderness for 8 days and built make-shift shelters (aka tents)!! God commands His people to go camping!!! Now this was to remind them of the time they had in the dessert after being miraculously rescued from Egypt. But the application to me is crystal clear: that next week long camping trip with friends and family, oh ya its biblical idea, so don’t feel guilty about it!! ***<have kids draw their favourite camping experience!! OR moment of contentment.***>

For the people of Israel the idea of Sabbath and REST is ingrained in them even to this day! As follower’s of Jesus we too know that rest is an important biblical value. However, the NT does not call Christians to take a specific day of the week off! **<Slide 10>** Romans 14:5 says, “One man considers one day more sacred than another; another man considers every day alike. Each one should be fully convinced in his own mind. He who regards one day as special, does so to the Lord”

But this biblical idea of having a rest day is still relevant. Its purpose is to recognize God is in control and the one who brings rest and stability to the world. It is God who provides for us and our time here is His gift to us!

But how many of us practise a form of this spiritual discipline regularly? I find this practise of Sabbath so difficult even though I know that scripture tells us to take time to rest in God!

Contemporary knowledge and science are clear that a good nights sleep and proper rest is key to mental and physical health.

*Rest is so important to life that the vital organs are designed with built-in rest periods. The heart rests between each heat, and the lungs between each breath. The stomach rests between each meal if it is given time. The nervous system is recharged during sleep.*

 So it is no wonder that those who regularly practice a day of rest are happier, healthier, and often, live longer!

 Yet, we so often ignore the Biblical call to Sabbath!

 And there are many reasons or excuses why: **<slide 11>**

* The season of life you are in!
* Finding a day in your schedule that could actually work consistently. Those who practice a regular Sabbath say finding a day and then the need to actually plan your day is difficult but very important!
* **Too busy**!! We live in a crazy busy culture! One of my leaders told me that when North Van people aren’t busy they get anxious! They don’t know what to do!
* we don’t believe that the benefits will outweigh the cost of not being able to ‘get things done’!!!
* Maybe we even hate the idea of being alone in silence! **Never in any age have we been able to burry our emotions and hurts like today - the thought of being alone and quiet for even a few mins could actually be scary…**

So lets look at Jesus’ life. I think its pretty safe to say that he was a busy man!

Once the word got around that Jesus was a miracle worker people could not get enough of him! They would hang on every word he said and couldn’t wait to see what he would do next!

So how did Jesus rest through a busy ministry season?: **<slide 12>**

Jesus had a Rhythm! Rhythm is arguably the most important part of music. It's what drives the music, keeps it going, and keeps musicians playing together! (my “rhythm”)

Jesus’ rhythm was to engage people and then retreat and find a quiet place to pray!

* Luke 5:16, Jesus often withdrew to lonely places and prayed.
* Luke 6:12, One of those days Jesus went out to a mountainside to pray, and spent the night praying to God.
* Luke 9:28, Jesus took Peter, James, and John with him and went up onto a mountain to pray – the transfiguration
* Luke 21:27, Each day Jesus was teaching at the temple, and each evening he went out to spend the night on the hill called the Mount of Olives.

Jesus had a rhythm of work and regular rest!

“Generally, people today are busy, out of rhythm, and so often unable to experience the peace of Christ.

Busyness robs our hearts and steals any chance of knowing the God who meets us in quiet and solitude. .. In the Chinese language the pictograph for “busyness” is a combination of two others—the pictographs for heart, and killing. In being too busy, we kill our hearts!” Buch.. We Need to Rest because..

 **<slide 13>(2)it is life-giving!** In **Luke 6** Jesus changes the way we see Sabbath

**<Slide 14>** 6:1 One Sabbath Jesus was going through the grainfields, and his disciples began to pick some heads of grain, rub them in their hands and eat the kernels. 2Some of the Pharisees asked, “Why are you doing what is unlawful on the Sabbath?”

3Jesus answered them, “Have you never read what David did when he and his companions were hungry? 4He entered the house of God, and taking the consecrated bread, he ate what is lawful only for priests to eat. And he also gave some to his companions.” 5Then Jesus said to them, “The Son of Man is Lord of the Sabbath.”

* **(1st part)** Jesus like David is the anointed King whom both had not yet received His kingdom! Luke is telling us that Jesus is the rightful King! Therefore Jesus is implying that He is the only one who can truly define what the Sabbath is for!
* In **Mark 2** Jesus adds *“Sabbath was made for people, not people for the Sabbath!”* ***God made us and knew we needed rest, knew we would be busy! it is a gift!***
* But the teachers of the law had come up with all sorts of rules: pebble + baby … Jesus is showing that they missed the whole point!
* **(2nd part)** drives Jesus’ point home, which is this: **What really matters for the Sabbath is ultimately that God is honoured!!**
* This story is a bit weird to me!! Jesus doesn’t even touch the man!! He simply asks him to hold out his hand!! And as the man raised out his hand it transformed infront of them all from being shrivelled up to completely healthy and normal!! AMAZING!! …

God gave us Sabbath for our own good! God ALSO, created us to be in relationship with Him! Think about this! The God who created the universe wants to hang out with you!! But, ahhh, sorry God, I am too busy, or maybe something better is coming up!! ... Really too busy for God..

Isn’t the best thing we can do with each day is to spend time with God!!??

Sabbath isn’t just about resting, praying, and reading scripture (which it is), but about doing something that is life-giving to you! Its about PRAY and PLAY!

Be creative! do whatever will reflect your love and appreciation for God! **<Slide 15>**

* go for a hike—play sports—make/eat some really delicious food—spend time with those who you cherish—play/listen to music—have a good coffee—read a good book—take a nap—sit by the ocean—dance—write or journal—help those in need—for those of us with OCD cleaning our house can be deeply satisfying—babysit the youth pastors kid—etc. etc.!!
* Taking a regular day or REST can and should teach us to be present and fully aware of God’s presence in each moment of our lives!

**<Slide 16>** **(3) And Finally;** when we take a Day of REST we are acknowledging that Jesus has promised to return and make all things new! Our small periods of REST now are pointing to our **eternal hope** that God will give us new life, and glorious new bodies in the new age that is to come!

We can rest in that now, each day of rest, and in every day because we look ahead to a greater Sabbath, our ultimate and final Sabbath in the presence of God the Father.

**Hebrews 4:1**tells us that the promise of entering God’s rest still stands, because of Jesus’ life, death, and resurrection!

The apostle John got to receive an amazing glimpse of this eternal rest in vision that he wrote down to the church called the book of Revelation! Near the end of this vision; God the Father will himself dwell with us and He will personally wipe away every tear, every pain, and every hurt!. This is the ultimate hope we hold dear to in Jesus Christ and the hope we need to remember when we take time out of our busy lives and REST in Jesus Christ!!

Let’s PRAY!