

## **Busy: Preparing a Table - Psalm 23**

This week was warmer, the sun was out, and we took to a walk around Gray's Lake. The water still frozen, the trees still bare, but the snow was melting, the eagles were soaring, the geese were honking. It was soothing I had read Psalm 23 just that morning. With the sun on my face and a deep breath in my lungs, I was beginning to feel connected to the earth, to these other living things that inhabit this planet. From the grass, to the water, to animals, to the birds. I could see why this text is read at so many of our hardest times. Those hard times are when we need to get away for a moment and connect to God. Those hard, often dark, times in our life are when we need to unplug and reconnect to who we are.

Each summer I get two weeks where I can unplug. I get one week where I direct Rustic Chi Rho Camp. The middle school campers sleep in non-electrical cabins. I sleep in a tent. Trust me, the tent is nicer. Every year we have kids thinking they're going to die without their typical online presence. They think they're going to starve because they have to cook their own meals over a fire that they start, rain or shine. It takes a few days for them to go through withdrawal before they begin to fully embrace life without all the distractions. Before they remember how to interact with others without technology. To speak to people, to make eye contact, to hear others. Some of the basic things we do, such as wash dishes by hand, they've never had to do before. And it might sound silly to say that washing dishes helps them to slow down, but it truly does. During the week the kids learn to look at nature, to be in nature, and to reconnect with God and God's people. There's a reason why so many campers connect so strongly to Chi Rho camp. It's the only one that is unplugged. The only one that fully embraces the idea of slowing down, of rest.

The second week I get to unplug each summer is with my family. We started a family camping tradition bc it was an affordable vacation. We fell in love with it because it made us slow down. We have yet to find a state park where we have cell reception. So there's no point in being glued to phone while there. We are forced to rest, to interact with others, to stop and listen to nature, to take a hike, a walk. We enjoy our week away. It refreshes us in a way we can't find other places. It's our sabbath of the year so to speak. Our time to rest.

This week I learned a little about Entrainment from a fellow pastor, Karen Millard Sumalileng. She said, "When our heart forms in the womb, a special cell called the "pacemaker" cell sets a beat. Every new cell connects with the rhythm of the first cell and begins beating in time with it.

This is called "entrainment." It's an energy.

Laboratory experiments show that if one cardiac cell is removed from the body, it will beat erratically and die. If two cardiac cells, from different hearts, are set side by side they will take up one beat and survive.

Not only do millions of cells entrain with one another in our heart. The heart itself creates an electromagnetic field. It will entrain with other nearby fields; the hearts of two sleeping together entrain and beat together, the heart of a caregiver and patient entrain.”

Our bodies are amazing things. Our connectedness undeniable. Leonard Sweet asked this, “Got some conflicted relationships—people who have attacked you and hurt you, whose very presence causes gruff intestinal rumble? The table reduces fighting. It has been proven that one of the secrets to a successful marriage and loving family is to eat before you argue. Blood sugar levels correlate with irritability and annoyance; low glucose levels escalate tensions and heighten tempers. The same goes for the body of Christ. The secret of a loving, forgiving church is to commune before you argue. In feeding you, I forgive you.”

Leonard goes on to tell this story, “More recently, Magic Johnson and Larry Bird faced each other on the basketball court as arch-competitors—first in high school, continuing through college, and culminating in the NBA, with Johnson playing for the LA Lakers and Bird playing for the Boston Celtics. The rivalry of these two champions became legendary—as did their dislike for one another, which seemed to grow in intensity with every passing year. Somewhere along the way Converse paid each of them to shoot a shoe commercial; they faced each other on the court, Bird wearing white shoes, Johnson wearing black. Bird insisted that they film the commercial at his farm in Indiana. The shoot began icily, with both superstars circling each other, but when they broke for lunch and started to go their separate ways, Bird’s mother announced that she had made lunch and invited everyone to the table. In Larry Bird’s words, “It was at the table that I discovered Earvin Johnson. I never liked Magic Johnson very much. But Earvin I like, a lot. And Earvin didn’t come out until I met him at Mom’s table.”

Have we left space at our table for the unexpected guest? For the person that isn’t currently represented within our church, within our board, within our committees, within the life of the church? Have we left space in our homes for the unexpected to still not simply find room, but find it a safe place, where they can interact and become one of the family?

According to Jewish law, especially during festival times, the table is the center of their daily life. Christianity was built around tables. Not pulpits or altars, around tables. In the gospel according to Luke, 20% of the book accounts for meal times. If you’re not hungry when you get through reading to gospels, you’re not paying attention. Our times of prayer, our times of worship, our times of study, our times of togetherness, should always lead us here, to Christ.

You prepared a table for me, in the presence of my enemies. I was taught the same as you, when someone has invited you to eat with them, you eat with them. You eat whatever they serve and you tell them thank you. The Lord prepared a table for me, in the presence of my enemies. This week our world cried in hearing about the Noor and

Linwood mosques mass shootings that killed men, women, and children. Many look at Muslims as being our enemies, but they are God's children, made in God's image. They are just as human as any of the rest of us. When we sit at table with people, when we eat with people, we get to know them. They are no longer our enemies. They become friends. We learn from them and expand because of them. We create more room, more space, for all of humanity to join us.

So let's join Christ and many others this morning, at this blessed table.