

Come to Me All Who Labor Rev Brigid Beckman
Meditation and Message 9-4-22

28 Come to me, all who labor and are heavily burdened, and I will give you rest. 29 Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. 30 For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light.” Matthew 11: 28-30

As we come into our time of meditation, feel free to close your eyes if that's comfortable, or simply let your gaze soften.

Sense the places where the back of your body rests wherever you are sitting and let your body surrender into that support... notice if there is a place in your body holding weariness or tension, and invite that place to ease and soften...

I invite you to gently bring to mind a situation in your life that may feel like a heavy burden... a decision or a relationship... a sorrow... and in these next few moments in the Silence that holds the presence of everything, feel your burden carried with compassion and let your soul find rest

Breathing in, I come to my Source...
Breathing out, I lay down my burden...

Breathing in, I rest in this moment, just as it is...
Breathing out, I rest in this moment, just as it is...

Breathing in, I come to my Source...
Breathing out, I lay down my burden...

Breathing in, I rest in this moment, just as it is...
Breathing out, I rest in this moment, just as it is...

Gently come back to the room...

In the past six weeks since my house was upended by flooding, I've packed and settled into temporary homes 6 times. With no end date on the near horizon, it's probably not surprising that "finding rest for your soul" seemed like a timely theme for this Sunday before Labor Day, a day that was founded to "recognize the many contributions workers have made to America's strength, prosperity, and well-being. :-)

The synergy of Divine Mind and Divine Timing!

On Friday I had the pleasure of sermon writing at the same time as my dear friend Rev Sue, who was in town for a reunion. As we sat in my brother's kitchen, and talked each other through our messages, she shared an amazing resource with me, one she used a few weeks ago in a sermon about taking Sabbath time-- the Green Sabbath project. That same morning, I received an email from another soul sister-- Starr DiCurrzio, about a retreat she's leading, inspired in part by a book she's reading by the theologian Walter Brueggemann, ***Sabbath as Resistance: Saying No to the Culture of Now.***

Divine Mind, Divine Timing, Divine Guidance...

Thomas Merton once stated: "To allow ourselves to be carried away by a multitude of conflicting concerns, to surrender to too many demands, to commit oneself to too many projects, to want to help everyone in everything, is to succumb to violence."

It's certainly not only my current slightly nomadic lifestyle that calls out for rest! The call for recognizing the rhythm of work and rest, of night and day, of inhale and exhale-- that call to the holiness of stillness, the holiness and grounding of rest is as ancient as the threads of our humanity-- and our divinity: *Genesis 2: 3 So God blessed the seventh day and made it holy, because on it God rested from all the work that God had done in creation.*

Our souls and spirits, our bodies and minds and hearts cry out for time when we awaken to the presence of the Holy One in us, and in all of creation. We can affirm "I have unlimited energy and inner strength." But they are only words if we don't link that

affirmation to our *practice* of time in stillness, time in the capital S-Silence, or as Gordon Hempton, an acoustic ecologist who records natural soundscapes, put it: “Silence [that] is not the absence of something but the presence of everything.”

“Come to me...”

God is constantly inviting us into that stillness! Come to me, you who are weary. Come to me...and your soul will find rest. What struck me as I dove into the [Green Sabbath Project website](#) that Sue shared was the reminder that *our* rest not only heals our bodies, minds, and spirits, our rest also offers healing to the earth. From their homepage:

Is there *nothing* you can do about the environment?

Nothing may be one of the best things you can do.

One day every week. Do nothing.

Take a weekly day of rest. Make it a real sabbath. For you. For earth.

Don't drive. Don't shop. Don't build.

Take a walk. Eat with friends. Play or read with your kids. Sing. Meditate.

Celebrate contentment.

One of the realities of our days in lockdown from covid was the worldwide lowering of greenhouse gasses, the return of birdsong in cities, the clouds of smog that lifted... we had a stark reminder of how our human activity has impacted our mother earth, and how our actions can save her as well.

One third of Pakistan was covered in floodwaters this week. In Jackson Mississippi, residents were told to shower with their mouths closed as the city reels under the effect of flooding that destroyed a water treatment facility. Kentucky towns are still recovering from the floods there. On the other end are the fires and drought and record breaking heat waves that rage in the west. And even here on the east coast, Sue got an alert on Friday about water restrictions in Gloucester because of drought conditions.

Jonathan Schorsh, a founder of the Green Sabbath movement, offers this:

“Imagine if most of the world’s monotheists, those who come from traditions that profess to observe a weekly Sabbath, along with anyone else who cared to, chose for one day out of seven to essentially eliminate their own harm to the environment on a consistent basis. This could prove to be one of the cheapest environmental solutions at humanity’s disposal. In theory, more maximal Shabbat observance could produce a 14.3% (one-seventh) reduction in carbon emissions without additional spending, new technologies, or unintended environmental consequences...”

As a whole society, we do harm to ourselves, and harm to our earth with our endless, relentless cycles of consuming, of doing; of scrolling through messages; of answering emails; of wearing “I’m so busy!” like a badge of honor.

Here is the quote from Brueggemann that Starr shared in her email:

"I have come to think that the fourth commandment on sabbath is the most difficult and most urgent of the commandments in our society, because it summons us to *intent and conduct* (emphasis is mine) that defies the most elemental requirements of a commodity-propelled society that specializes in control and entertainment, bread and circuses... along with anxiety and violence."

We can affirm our intent that “Beholding God in every circumstance helps me know ease.” But we are called to *conduct, to practices* that awaken us to God within, and God without, to the holy Silence that holds everything.

Thich Nhat Hanh puts it like this in “Living Buddha, Living Christ:

“In the Psalms, it says, “Be still and know that I am God.” “Be still” means to become peaceful and concentrated. The Buddhist term is *samatha*. “Know” means to acquire wisdom, insight, or understanding. The Buddhist term is *vipasyana* (insight or looking deeply) “Looking deeply” means observing something or someone with so much concentration that the distinction between observer and observed disappears. It inter-is with everything else in the

universe....When we see the nature of interbeing, barriers between ourselves and others are dissolved and peace, love, and understanding are possible Whenever there is understanding, compassion is born.

Be still and know that I am God. Come to me, you who labor, and I will give you rest. Do nothing. Bless the day, and make it holy. Or bless the hour, or 20 minutes, or the walk, or the nap, or the deep listening to a loved one and make it holy. Over these past few weeks, as I walk my journey visibly from this podium-- I've been called to let go of my illusion of control, and rest in God. Called to choose JOY, a joy that comes from resting in my Source. Called to come home to that deep awareness that God is everywhere present as LOVE-- and that I am called to be the hands and heart of God. And as I listen to that call, I am most able to lean into gratitude, into calm, into ease... when I remember that I am walking home with you, my beloved community.

Notice those burdens you felt as we began our meditation, and perhaps with compassion, an area of the world that is suffering now-- all of those areas I mentioned where climate change has wreaked havoc. The children in Ukraine going back to school, often online, because of the war still raging. The burdens and losses we carry close to home.

Pema Chodron offers a simple form of “tonglen on the spot” -- a Tibetan practice: Tong means “sending out” or “letting go”; len means “receiving” or “accepting.” As we breathe in and out, may our hearts breathe in chaos and breathe out peace. May we know that our hearts are yoked in compassion to the eternal and the holy housed within us.

Breathing in, I come to my Source...

Breathing out, I lay down my burden...

Breathing in, I receive your heartache...

Breathing out, I send you peace...

I'll end, as I often do, with a prayer/poem, this one from Jan Richardson titled Blessing it the Chaos. As I read it, perhaps breathe into where you find chaos, and breathe peace into those hidden places.

Blessing in the Chaos

To all that is chaotic
in you,
let there come silence.

Let there be
a calming
of the clamoring,
a stilling
of the voices that
have laid their claim
on you,
that have made their
home in you,

that go with you
even to the
holy places
but will not
let you rest,
will not let you
hear your life
with wholeness
or feel the grace
that fashioned you.

Let what distracts you
cease.

Let what divides you
cease.
Let there come an end
to what diminishes
and demeans,
and let depart
all that keeps you
in its cage.

Let there be
an opening
into the quiet
that lies beneath
the chaos,
where you find
the peace
you did not think
possible
and see what shimmers
within the storm.

~ Jan Richardson,

May it be so. And so it is. Amen.