Series: **Recover Your Life**

Series Text: Matthew 11:28-30 MSG

January 6, 2019

Message 1:

**Recover Your Life**

Matthew 11:28-30 MSG - “Are you tired? Worn out? Burned out on religion? Come to me. Get away with me and you’ll recover your life. I’ll show you how to take a real rest. Walk with me and work with me—watch how I do it. Learn the unforced rhythms of grace. I won’t lay anything heavy or ill-fitting on you. Keep company with me and you’ll learn to live freely and lightly.”

Are you tired? I have been tired.

Are you worn out? I have been worn out.

Are you burned out on religion? I, the pastor, have been burned out on religion.

Religion and relationship are two different things. Religion is what we do to try to connect with God instead of simply accepting what He has done to connect with us.

Religion is trying to keep up with others in what appears to be success in their walk with God - in their ministry - I have been guilty of this.

**We lose the relationship when we focus on the performance of religion.**

What does Jesus say to those of us who are tired? Worn out? Burned out on religion - doing so many things that appear to be religious, but in the end our relationship with Him is not what it should be?

He says,

(back on screen but no need to read) Matthew 11:28-30 MSG - “Are you tired? Worn out? Burned out on religion? Come to me. Get away with me and you’ll recover your life. I’ll show you how to take a real rest. Walk with me and work with me—watch how I do it. Learn the unforced rhythms of grace. I won’t lay anything heavy or ill-fitting on you. Keep company with me and you’ll learn to live freely and lightly.”

“Come to me. Get away ….. with me - and you’ll recover your life.”

Have you ever felt like you need to recover your life?

I have - I do.

If we can get away with Him - He will show us how to take a real rest.

“Real rest” - this is often looked down upon in American culture.

“Rest?” Why I worked 60 hours this past week! I worked 80 hours the week before that!

“Can you believe there are some people only working 40 hours a week? Some less? What about those people who don’t have jobs!

“Look at me! Look how busy I am!

“Even after my 60 hours a week - I give 10 hours to my church work and probably 10 more hours to community service - Little League - coaching - helping at school!”

All those things are good - but then we look at family time. “Family time? I’m doing that while I’m yelling at my kid at Little League! Aren’t I helping my family by being involved in the school community events?”

What about devotions? “Devotions? I really don’t have time for devotions! I’m too busy doing too many good things to really take time …. But I do give a few minutes - [literally - a FEW minutes] some mornings reading a couple of verses of Scripture and a paragraph from a devotional on my Bible app - or I listen - yeah - that’s what I do - I listen to something from the Bible or a devotion while I’m driving to work!”

Do you ever just stop - stop to really read His Word for yourself? Stop to hear what He might be saying to you?

Stop to rest? Jesus says He will show us how to take a real rest!

I don’t think most of us know how to do that - and when we see others doing it - we condemn them as lazy - privileged -

Maybe it’s because we’re envious - we wish we had the courage to just stop - slow down -

I wonder how many grandparents are here who wish they had more time to spend with their kids - but the time is gone - the kids are grown - grandkids are here now. And you’re looking back wishing you had said NO to something - because time is one thing you can’t get back.

You never took a real rest.

Mickey Davis when I went to the District Office - never took a vacation - “You’re stupid!”

Even with that - I get tired, worn out, and burned out on religion, and I need to stop and go to Jesus, and let Him show me - and I want Him to show all of us this year - how to take a real rest.

**Big Idea: How can I recover my life?**

How can I recover - or discover for the first time - the kind of life Jesus intended for me?

**> Get away with Jesus.**

*"Get away with me and you’ll recover your life.” - Jesus*

If we are going to “recover our life” - not the life we are living now - but the life Jesus intends for us -

Are you living the life Jesus intended for you? Do you really think you are living the life Jesus intended for you?

I’m not talking about job - bank account - not even talking about family -

There is a life Jesus intended for you that involves Him! A way to live life -

Are you living a life with Him that He intended for you? Is your relationship with Him where it should be? On a daily basis?

I’m not just talking about being forgiven and ready for heaven … but the kind of ongoing relationship He wants with you today, right now, and in the days going forward.

Are you living that kind of life Jesus intended for you? Or is there something missing?

I think for many of us, we could say, even though we are ready for heaven - involved in church - in ministry - family good - all seems well - but are we in the day to day intimate relationship …

Remember when you were first married … Couldn’t be together enough …

That’s the life Jesus wants with us -

We’re too busy - we need to recover our lives.

If we are going to recover or discover the kind of life Jesus intended for us - we are going to have to get away with Him -

Get away -

What are your vacation plans this year? What about considering a vacation where you’re not running from activity to activity to activity - busy schedule - everything planned out - lots of money spent - and in the end you come back even more tired and need a vacation from your vacation!

What about taking a week or your vacation and doing nothing -

* Off social media
* Off the tv
* Off the computer
* Don’t go anywhere unless it is a cabin or hotel room where you can really get away from everything
* Shut out all the noise of this world
* Get quiet before God so that He can really speak to you -

Not Him speaking to you about what someone else needs … your family … your spouse … your kids … the church … the pastor -

But just speak to you about you - Maybe He just wants to love on you!

What if you took a vacation like that?

It sounds to me like this is what Jesus is asking from us - getting away - taking a real rest - recovering the kind of life He intended for us.

**> Take a real rest.**

*“I’ll show you how to take a real rest.” - Jesus*

What is a real rest?

I think it’s obvious in the context of what Jesus is saying here - that it has to be with Him.

First, He says, “Get away with me.”

Then, He says, “I’ll show you how to take a real rest.”

He gives us just a little bit of insight on this:

* **Walk with me.**
* **Work with me.**
* **Watch how I do it.**

If you’re going to walk with Him, you’ve got to change some habits. You’ve got to work some things out so that there are less demands.

This is not talking about taking a walk in the afternoon - or evening - or morning - and spending “quiet time” with the Lord -

I think He is talking about something continuous -

He’s not looking for 5 minutes in the morning - He’s looking for you to walk with Him at all times!

“Work with me.” - Have you ever heard someone say, “”Work with me here!”

They’re trying to get you to understand something - they’re trying to get you to learn something by participating.

Do this - I’m not going to do your homework for you - work with me here! Work it out for yourself!

**“Watch how I do it” - then do it yourself - with me.**

**“Watch how I do it” - then do it yourself - with me.**

What did Jesus do?

Got up early in the morning ….

When the crowds came to Him, sometimes He went the other way …

Stayed up all night in prayer …

“I can’t do this - I have obligations” - Yes - some of them you can’t get out of - work - school -

Some of your obligations you can get out of.

I challenge you - what are some important and meaningful - but not really necessary - obligations that you can cut out of your life so that you can spend more time with Jesus -

And - I challenge you - consider planning part of your vacation this year - AT LEAST A WEEK IF NOT MORE - to simply looking at what Jesus did … then asking Him how He wants you to do that in the rest of your life - for the rest of your life.

**> Learn the unforced rhythms of grace.**

*“Learn the unforced rhythms of grace.” - Jesus*

What does this mean?

There are so many aspects of our “Christian lives” that are forced.

There are so many aspects of our “Christian lives” that we are participating in … without Jesus.

We are doing our Christian thing - out of duty - not out of delight - and not in combination with Jesus!

* Church attendance - I believe in it - important - we should be together … Hebrews 10:24-25 …

But are we attending church without Jesus? Just out of obligation or duty? Are we attending church looking for something particular on the menu?

I went to an Italian restaurant that didn’t have spaghetti with meat sauce… I was frustrated rather than just enjoying the experience with some family I don’t get together with much.

Are you doing church just to be doing church - and expecting everything on the menu that you want? Or are you just coming to be with Jesus and to be with others who are with Jesus?

Sometimes being with Jesus is not even in our minds when we come to church!

* Ministry - I believe in it! Every Christian … Ephesians 4:12 … gifts …

But are we serving out of duty and obligation - or are we serving alongside Jesus? Is Jesus serving with you - or are you just doing it yourself?

Because it’s demanded … expected … we’ve hammered you about it …

I’m not saying we shouldn’t minister - ceasing ministry is not the answer - but ceasing ministry out of obligation and duty - and rather getting away with Jesus - recovering our lives with Him - spending time with Him - hearing from Him - then not just going to do our ministry or community work - bur realizing that when we go, Jesus is with us - and we are serving alongside Him -

That’s the unforced rhythm of grace -

The rhythm continues … music … doesn’t stop .. but it’s not forced. It’s not obligation. It’s life - relationship - joy -

It’s not heavy - it’s not ill-fitting -

It’s not like Cinderella’s sisters cutting off their toes to fit into the glass slipper …

It’s like Cinderella … it fits perfectly …

*“Keep company with me and you’ll earn to live freely and lightly.” - Jesus*

If we are not living freely and lightly, then we are not keeping company with Him.

This is going to be very personal for me this year - and since I’m the leader of this family - when things change in my life, it generally affects the entire family.

I think you need a pastor that is healthy -

***On full screen again without point on top and without reading:***

Matthew 11:28-30 MSG - “Are you tired? Worn out? Burned out on religion? Come to me. Get away with me and you’ll recover your life. I’ll show you how to take a real rest. Walk with me and work with me—watch how I do it. Learn the unforced rhythms of grace. I won’t lay anything heavy or ill-fitting on you. Keep company with me and you’ll learn to live freely and lightly.”

I think you want and need a pastor who is not tired - is not worn out - is not burned out on religion.

I think you want and need a pastor who goes to Jesus - who gets away with Jesus - who is not too busy doing “pastor things” and even not too busy doing “church things” to get away with Jesus.

I think you want and need a pastor who recovers the kind of life Jesus intended - so that he can be an example for you in how to live this kind of life with Jesus that we are talking about.

I think you want and need a pastor who knows how to take a real rest - and can show you how to take a real rest - the kind of rest that connects us with Jesus - that Jesus is talking about here -

I think you want and need a pastor who walks with Jesus - works with Jesus - whose ministry is not a drudge and a duty, but a delight -

I think you want and need a pastor who realizes that he is not just coming here on Sundays or through the week to do the ministry he is supposed to do - but has spent enough time with Jesus to know that Jesus is here with him and is working here alongside him - and they are working together.

I think you want and need a pastor who has spent time with Jesus to watch how Jesus did it - so that you can watch your pastor as an example and see how it’s done.

I’m not sure that is happening now - I’m not sure that has been happening for a long time.

I think you want and need a pastor who has learned the unforced rhythms of grace - so that together we can live in the unforced rhythms of grace - not the high demands of legalism.

I think you want and need a pastor who has realized that Jesus won’t lay anything heavy or ill-fitting on us - so he doesn’t lay anything heavy or ill-fitting on you.

I think you want and need a pastor who has kept company with Jesus and learned how to live freely and lightly - so that we can all do the same.

For those of you who think that this is all a prelude to an announcement of resignation and a pastoral change - I’m sorry to disappoint you - that is not what I’m talking about!

I’m not resigning. I believe God wants me here for several more years - but I do think He wants you to have a new pastor. I just need to get away with Jesus to try to become the Pastor I believe God wants you to have.

This April will mark 30 years for Sharon and I - and for all of those years we’ve been in full-time ministry, 25 of those years as Lead Pastors - never taking what some people call a “Sabbatical.”

This May will mark 35 years for me in full-time ministry - and for 30 of those 35 years as a Lead Pastor, never taking what some people call a “Sabbatical.”

Paul talked about all the difficulty he faced - beatings, stoning, shipwrecks, cold, heat, sickness, weariness, hunger, weakness … but more than all of that was his burden for the churches.

2nd Corinthians 11:29 MSG - When someone gets to the end of his rope, I feel the desperation in my bones. When someone is duped into sin, an angry fire burns in my gut.

I know that feeling. I’ve been carrying that for 35 years.

I hear the Southwest Airlines commercial in my head: “Wanna get away?”

***Insert pic found at the end of these notes here -***

Oct 2014 - Next Generation

Oct 2015 - Pastor’s Retreat

Feb 2016 - Pete’s heart

Took 1 1/2 years

Pastor Steve also stirring

Two years of transition - key leaders being led to leave.

6 mos in 2017 I was wearing 3 hats...

Toward the end of that summer, I had what is commonly referred to as a nervous breakdown.

I had heard of an offering by Lilly Endowment & Christian Theological Seminary called a “Clergy Renewal Grant” - and knew some people who had taken advantage of the grant - for the Pastor to take a period of time away for REST - REFLECTION - RENEWAL - RESEARCH -

Oct 2017 -Pastor Sharon informed me there was going to be a meeting about the grant … We went to the meeting - felt led to apply for the grant - came back and shared the opportunity with the Deacons and they agreed 100%.

Dec - 2017 - Sharon and I went to Emerge Ministries in Akron, Ohio where they specialize in counseling people in ministry - who have suffered a variety of effects of stress caused by the ministry - We spent a week there - we desperately needed it! It was very helpful for us. They counseled us that if we received the grant this period of REST - REFLECTION - RENEWAL - RESEARCH - would be a great thing for both us and the church family.

Continued to pursue grant - put a team together that represented all the various areas and generations of ministry in our church. We decided that part of this grant would help us pursue the vision God has given us of

**EMPOWERING ALL GENERATIONS TO REACH THE NEXT GENERATION.**

Only 35% of those who apply for the grant receive it - and everyone I knew who had received it was turned down on their first try - didn’t get it until their 3rd application, so we felt like if we received the grant it would be a confirmation from Jesus that it was His will and purpose for us.

I’ll be talking more in the next couple of weeks about the Biblical principle of Sabbath for all of us - but the idea of taking a Sabbatical has always been difficult for me. Difficult for me to have the faith that everything would be ok if I took time off -

I have to trust Jesus - Jesus got away...

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Jesus retreated...

Bottom line - we received the grant on our first try!

We proposed a vision - they affirmed our vision - we believe this is confirmation that this is the will of God -

Again - I’m not resigning - I believe I will be the pastor here for several more years - but after 35 years of ministry without a Sabbatical rest, it’s probably time and healthy for me and you both for me to have this period of

**REST - REFLECTION - RENEWAL - RESEARCH** -

This summer - Sharon and I will be gone for a season - and unreachable - we will be resting - we will renew - we will also visit churches that are pursuing this same vision to have their church be healthy into the next generation - With thousands of churches closing all across the nation - it is quite a challenge - but it is our commission from God.

Part of the grant will fund a conference we will host this fall - with an author and speaker from Fuller Institute - one of the leading church training institutions in the country - and this conference will focus on helping us keep and reach more of our students and young adults in our community.

Part of the grant will fund our pastoral team to be in a year-long study group with Fuller Institute and other pastors from September of this year to September of 2020 where they will help train us for this focus.

I put it all in God’s hands... don’t let me miss....

Received... will of God... for all of us…

I’ve prayed come kingdom of God... don’t let me miss.... for years … this is part of that!

I want to finish strong - not limping - I ask you to pray for me & support us in this - this could be the greatest year ever for New Life & set the stage for years to come.

Some may say… I was in another church where this happened once and it was horrible!

This is not that church. Deacons when they come on should not bring bad experiences on this board. This is a different board. This is a different church. This is a different Pastor. This is a different time. This is a different experience. Don’t let bad experiences of the past create fear for the present and the future.

The next couple of weeks I’m going to be talking about what the Bible says and what the Bible means when it talks about Sabbath -

Not legalism … books in the mail … Saturday only or you’re going to hell …

That’s not the unforced rhythms of grace -

I want to talk about the unforced rhythms of grace - I want to talk about us recovering our lives this year - the life Jesus intended for us - and what that means for me and for you - and for us as a family.

Not just about me - moving forward in the focus God is giving us as a church family - Empowering All Generations to Reach the next Generation!