

In Jesus' name. Amen.

Dear Fellow Redeemed,

In 1863, when the United States was in the middle of our civil war,

Pres. Lincoln declared a national day of thanksgiving.

Amid all the struggle and difficulty, he recognized the importance and need for a day of rest to set aside the grind of everyday life to reflect on and thank God for His countless blessings.

Rest is not an idle thing. Rest itself is a blessing from God. And we see that from the very beginning.

As follows in Jesus' name:

Then God said, "Let Us make man in Our image, after Our likeness. And let them have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the heavens and over the livestock and over all the earth and over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth."

So God created man in His own image,
in the image of God He created him;
male and female He created them.

And God blessed them. And God said to them, "Be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth and subdue it, and have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the heavens and over every living thing that moves on the earth." And God said, "Behold, I have given you every plant yielding seed that is on the face of all the earth, and every tree with seed in its fruit. You shall have them for food. And to every beast of the earth and to every bird of the heavens and to everything that creeps on the earth, everything that has the breath of life, I have given every green plant for food." And it was so. And God saw everything that He had made, and behold, it was very good. And there was evening and there was morning, the sixth day.

Thus the heavens and the earth were finished, and all the host of them. And on the seventh day God finished His work that He had done, and He rested on the seventh day from all His work that He had done. So God blessed the seventh day and made it holy, because on it God rested from all His work that He had done in creation. ^(ESV)

This is Your Word, heavenly Father; sanctify us in the truth, Your Word is Truth. Amen. (John 17:17)

"What do you do?"

That's one of those common questions that people ask each other when they first meet.

It generally serves as a way to find common ground or like interests

or at the very least, it is a jumping off point for more questions or conversation.

To a certain extent, your job kind of defines you.

...

Imagine that first morning...

Adam and Eve wake up and decide to go for a stroll to find something to eat.

As they are talking and walking, exploring the garden and tasting the various berries and fruits,

God comes along and introduces Himself.

Adam asked Him, "What do you do?"

And God said, "I AM God the Father Almighty, Maker of heaven and earth."

(After all, that is what He had been doing that first week of the earth's existence.

For 6 days He worked.

He was busy creating, and forming, and filling and enlightening the new world.)

Adam and Eve stand in awe of Him and the wonder of their perfect home and garden.

And now, Adam and Eve have their question, "What do we do?"

And God responds, "Well, today, you rest with Me."

"What is rest? How do we do it?"

"Oh, you just spend time with Me. We will talk and discuss things.

You can ask Me questions. I will answer you."

And then God continues to speak with them about the other days,

and tells them that they are to tend the garden.

He tells them about the blessing of fruitfulness that He has blessed them with.

They will have children and multiply on the earth.

And speaking of the earth, they are to subdue it and have dominion over it.

He created all this for them. Everything they can see and smell and touch and taste and hear.

Everything, except for that tree over there, that Tree of the knowledge of Good and Evil.

That tree... that tree is not for them. On the day they eat of that, they will surely die.

And on and on God goes talking with them, telling them of the creation He made for them.

He answers their questions.

He talks about how the plants will grow and what seasons they will be harvested in.

How deep to plant the seeds and how much water to give them and how often.

There are a couple long-term projects that He would like to see done eventually, but not today.

How some of the animals need to be tended, how soon the sheep will need to be sheered,

how to help a cow deliver her calf, you know... things a greenhorn wouldn't know.

He smiles as they explore His creation and comment on how beautiful and delicious and lovely it is.

And before you know it, evening has come and the 7th day is over.

They have rested with God. Listened to Him. Sung His praises.

...And they thank Him for spending the day with them.

And enjoyed His company, without fear, without anxiety. They truly rested in Him.

... and they were eager to get to work the next few days, until the next Sabbath Day.

So we see that Adam's first 7 days started off very different from God's.

God's week started with work and then He rested.

Adam's week started with rest and then he worked.

Beloved by the Lord,

Our world today is a little different than Adam's first week, isn't it?

It doesn't seem to start with rest, but with work.

We work 5 days and then we have "earned" the "right" to rest.

Even our vacation marketers realize this and tell us that we "deserve" a vacation.

We have worked hard for our money so now we "deserve" to spend it with them.

And there is certainly work to do.

The ground no longer yields its strength; instead thorns and thistles come up uninvited

(I believe God was especially thinking of the blackberry bush).

All the children Adam and Eve raised and that multiplied, are all corrupted... us included.

And so family strife, criminal behavior, and civil and international wars fill our lives and the news.

Our knowledge and experience of evil has totally corrupted us.

Guilt and shame, fear and anxiety overwhelm us, some only for a time, others constantly.
Viruses, cancer, bacteria, injuries, old age all bring suffering...
and finally death, just as God had warned about eating from that tree.

We work to find cures, keep peace, curb society, keep ahead of inflation, reduce stress, & calm our fears.
But dear fellow redeemed, there is no work that you can do to fix these problems.
The best we can do is mask the real issues, put a bandaid on them... or make the problems worse.

But there is one thing that you can do, one good work that is truly good: find your rest in Christ.
(It is good, not because you work at it, but because Christ works on you.)
You can rest, as Adam and Eve did on that first Sabbath, in conversation with Your Maker.
It isn't just a rest for your body, a cessation of work and play,
but a rest also for your mind and soul as you hear of all the work that He has already done for you.
And that conversation is especially focused, not so much on the week of creation,
but on the week of redemption which He had done... which He had finished.
It is the Holy Spirit work and passion to tell you about one of Eve's Offspring
who took the thorns away from you and put them on His own head as His glorious crown.
He loves to invite you to eat the fruit from the Tree of Life that took the shape of a cross,
as the Lord feeds you the Body and Blood of His Son, Jesus Christ.
And He invites you to reflect on the rest that Jesus took as His body was laid in the tomb
that Sabbath day after all that work of redemption which He had done,
and before He rose from the dead to continue to work for your salvation as He rules the world.

You see, you were created to rest first, to give to the Lord your firstfruits of time,
so that He may work on and for and in you.
Rest is not something that you do when you don't have work,
it is something that you need to do, especially when you have work.
You need to have time from the daily and weekly grind to return to your Maker and Redeemer,
to hear again what He has done and is still doing for you.
And to have and take time to bask in His work and thank Him for His blessings.

And you know, that opportunity for much needed rest really is how the week starts.
We don't work first and then rest.
The first day of the week is the Lord's Day,
The Lord's day to forgive you of your anxiety and fear.
The Lord's day to encourage and lift you up.
The Lord's day to nourish and strengthen you for the work ahead.

Thanks be to God.

Soli Deo Gloria