

**Christ Presbyterian Church  
Edina, Minnesota  
February 18 & 19, 2017  
Dee McIntosh  
Your Time | Ephesians 5:15-17**

Good morning! It's good to be with you guys this morning. When I came last night, I got several "Welcome homes" and it felt amazing being in the service last evening. I'm Pastor Dee McIntosh. I'm the lead pastor and church planter of Lighthouse Minneapolis. I remember many of you; I recognize some of your faces, and it is good to be with you all again. I feel like Lighthouse is an extension of CPC because members of our launch team are from this community. We have received emails, phone calls, letters in the mail from members of this community encouraging us on the journey as we attempt to build a new faith community—which is incredibly difficult. The one thing that I didn't realize when I was here is that when you are an associate pastor, nothing is ever your fault. It's always John's fault, right? So if I messed up, if I made a mistake, no one ever said anything to me about it, they would go to John. When you become a lead pastor, everything becomes your fault, so whatever mistake happens, whether its really your fault or not, you're the one that receives the emails. So John, I don't know if this is possible, but if you ever wanted to be like a Bishop or a presiding lead pastor over Lighthouse, we would welcome you. I will demote myself to be Associate Pastor/Church Planter, and you can receive all of those emails. That would be fantastic.

So this morning I was asked to come and talk about time. How do we spend our time? What ways can we spend our time differently in 2017 than maybe we did in 2016? What I want to do is, I want to make a case for the Sabbath and why I believe that we should begin to incorporate Sabbath rest into our lives if we don't already. I want to look at the apostle Paul's life as a reason for why I think we need to partake in the Sabbath. You guys with me? You guys remember me, right? OK. Just checking, because you know I like the feedback.

So, at Lighthouse we have this community time where we ask a question to set up the sermon, and last Sunday we asked the question, "If you were stranded on a tropical island and you could pick one person from the Bible to be with you, who would you choose?" Now, I'm not going to make you guys actually discuss with your partner, but I want you to think about this. You're stranded on a tropical island—tropical because we are still in wintertime—who would you choose? One person from the Bible. How many of you would choose Jesus? Show of hands...you're all disqualified! That's like the easiest answer, right? We asked this question at Lighthouse and someone said Lazarus. Now I'm still trying to figure out why you would choose Lazarus to hang out with, but...maybe. Someone else said they would choose Enoch because Enoch is one of the two people in the Bible that doesn't die. That was from my husband. He said he wanted to hang out with Enoch to figure out *how did you do this this where you were so good that God said, "You know what? Just come hang out with me."* Some people

picked Peter, other people picked Elijah, somebody picked James. So then I answered the question, and this is how it happened; this is kind of how my mind went. I started off by picking who I would not choose. So I decided I can't go with the prophet Jeremiah because Jeremiah was known as the weeping prophet. There is nothing worse than being stranded on an island with someone that cries. I decided not to go with Peter, and the reason I decided not to go with him is I figured that Peter is a little bit too passionate. I might make him angry and he'll chop off my ear. And then I thought, ok, let's go with James. But James—that whole faith without works is dead thing—he might work me half to death and we're on a tropical island...trying to get a little bit of vacation...can't choose him either. And then I thought Adam and Eve would be cool because they are the first people. But then I thought, no, they're going to get me in trouble because they are going to eat all of the wrong fruit on the island. So then I thought my first choice would be Moses. There's something about a guy that can part the Red Sea that just seems very helpful when you're stranded on an island. I figured all I have to get him to do is put that staff on that water and I can just walk on home, right? But then I thought, no, Moses actually had anger issues, so that probably wouldn't help either. Then I thought, let me choose the person that is most like my husband. I'm married to my husband because he brings me a great amount of balance. This is true, this is who Cecil is...I told Cecil when we were pregnant with our first son, "Oh my gosh Cecil, we're pregnant! We're having a baby!" And Cecil's reaction was, [spoken in a flat, monotone voice] "I'm very excited." That was it, that's all I got. So then I figured, if I'm going to get stranded on an island, at least let me be on the island with someone that's calm in every situation. My husband is calm in every situation. So then I decided I would go with the apostle Paul, because the apostle Paul, if I see anything in the New Testament, was calm in every situation. The apostle Paul was the guy that said *in all things I am content*. This is what he says in Philippians...*in all things I have learned to be content*. Essentially what Paul is saying is that *when I was poor, I was content and when I was rich I was content. When I was in prison I was content and when I was free I was content*. That's contentment. You're as content in prison...come on, right? The apostle Paul was the guy that was persecuted. The Bible tells us in the book of Acts that he was stoned at Lystra...stoned and left for dead. He was shipwrecked, persecuted and imprisoned, and this is the same guy that while he was in prison, wrote a letter to Timothy, telling him, "I thank God for you daily." Really Paul? You're in prison. Do we have any idea of what prisons were like back then? I can't believe it was very sanitary. And yet, Paul is in every situation that we see, over and over and over again, praying for the people of God, he's encouraged by their faith, and he's calm in all these situations. So for me, Paul would be my first choice to be stranded with on a desert island.

In 2 Corinthians Paul says:

**8** We are hard pressed on every side, but not crushed; perplexed, but not in despair; **9** persecuted, but not abandoned; struck down, but not destroyed.  
**10** We always carry around in our body the death of Jesus...**16** Therefore we do not lose heart. Though outwardly we are wasting away, yet inwardly we are being renewed day by day. [2 Corinthians 4:8-10,16]

I don't know about you, but I just think that at some point, I would complain. And yet, every letter that we see that Paul writes, he's calm, he's cool, and he's thanking God and centering his life on who God is. Paul can take an immense amount of pressure. But then something happens in Paul's life. In 2 Corinthians, he breaks. He has a moment where all the stress, all the anxiety, all the worry, all of the pressure that Paul can take—that we see him taking in the book of Acts—there comes a point in 2 Corinthians where he has finally had enough. Let me give you the background before I give you the scripture.

Paul is supposed to visit the church at Corinth and he tells them *my intention is, on my way to Macedonia, I was going to stop and visit with you, and then on my way back home from Macedonia, I was going to stop and visit with you again.* But he says, *I cannot come and visit you, because if I would come and visit you, I would harm you.* Why was Paul saying this? Well, this brings us to our scripture this morning. In the first chapter of 2 Corinthians Paul says,

8 We do not want you to be uninformed, brothers and sisters, about the troubles we experienced in the province of Asia. We were under great pressure, far beyond our ability to endure, so that we despaired of life itself.

The King James version says, "I was pressed beyond measure."

9 Indeed, we felt we had received the sentence of death. But this happened that we might not rely on ourselves but on God, who raises the dead. 10 He has delivered us from such a deadly peril, and he will deliver us again. On him we have set our hope that he will continue to deliver us, 11 as you help us by your prayers. Then many will give thanks on our behalf for the gracious favor granted us in answer to the prayers of many. [2 Corinthians 1:8-11]

The apostle Paul said *I was pressed beyond measure, I despaired unto life* and he's still thanking people for praying for him. There's nothing more important to the apostle Paul than keeping his word. He says this in 2 Corinthians 1, verses 15-23. He explains to the people that *there is nothing more important to me than me keeping my word, but I am devastated that I can't come and visit you, because I broke.* [paraphrased]

What I want to talk about this morning is the fact that I believe every individual in this room has a PSI rating—pounds per square inch. You have a unit of measure of pressure and stress that you can handle, right? Let me give you an example here. I'm going to pull a Rich Phenow in this moment...let's hope this doesn't explode. The apostle Paul's life, all of our lives, are like this bottle of Coke, and each of us has an amount of stress that we can handle. Life does this to us constantly [shakes bottle]... relationships, money, conversations about what is happening in our nation...constantly. It just continues to build and build. And then there are those moments of surprises, when someone then throws a Mentos—I'm not going to do it—into the Coke. What happens when you throw that Mentos in? It explodes. This is what happens to Paul. Paul is shipwrecked. He's in prison. He's persecuted. He has to live through being

separated from his beloved Barnabas because Barnabas chooses John Mark over Paul. Shaking, shaking, shaking. And then Asia comes, and there goes that Mentos, and he breaks. We all have a PSI rating; the tires on our cars have a PSI rating, footballs have a PSI rating, basketballs have a PSI rating. And I asked some doctors—ok, I am not a medical professional at all—but your blood vessels, your arteries, have an amount of pressure they can take, right? What happens if you have too much pressure in your arteries? You have high blood pressure.

Now, the reality is we have no idea what happens to Paul in Asia—the Bible doesn't tell us—but we do know that he breaks. We see this happen over and over again in the Bible. In the book of Numbers we have Moses crying out to God saying *I would rather be dead than to have to continue to carry the burden of these people*. Numbers tells us that Moses is leading 600,000 men on foot. He said he would have rather been dead. We see this with Jesus, do we not? Our savior, we see Him have a breaking moment. Do you realize that when we say the Words of Institution, we say that on the night of His betrayal, Jesus essentially throws a party? And He sits around a room, and He gives bread and He gives wine, with people around the table He knows. One will betray Him, and by the end of what happens on the cross, most of them will not be there. And yet He sits with them around the table. The pressure is adding up. But it's not until we get to the garden of Gethsemane that we actually see Jesus break and He begins to cry tears of blood, and He says *if You would, take this from me*. Now, He's faithful, He continues, but that pressure adds up. We see this with Elijah; this man prays and it stops raining. He prays again and it rains. God uses him to slew false prophets. And then Queen Jezebel sends word that she wants him dead and what happens? He breaks. He takes off. The pressure is too much. We each have a PSI rating; we have an amount of pressure that we can take. And life—just because of the way life is—adds the pressure.

I did my own kind of assessment of the things that add pressure to our lives. [slide shown] And my assessment was that responsibilities add pressure...begin to shake that bottle. The outside world, relationships, self-inflicted pressure (self-inflicted pressures would be like procrastination. Procrastination I don't think is a sin, but it definitely adds a weight to your life), money—just talking about money stresses me out—poor diet and health adds pressure to our lives. And most of us have more pressure in our lives than is healthy for us, right? You guys took a survey yourself. There were 825 people who responded to this survey, and this is what you said are the biggest stressors in your life. Two hundred forty-five people said relationships. Yeah, I get that. Anybody who has been married a month knows...marriage itself is pressure. Kids. Kids are that wonderful thing...you have this idea in your head. Before you have kids you think *Oh my gosh, I'm going to do all these wonderful things with my kids...we're going to sleep in tents and build forts and all of these things*. And then you have the baby and you think *Oh my gosh! What I was imagining is like ten years down the road!* Work was mentioned by 184 people, 121 people said money, 76 said time—not having enough time, 49 people responded health, 34 people responded responsibilities and expectations, 32 people responded worry and fear, 21 responded the future, 15 answered the political state of our country, and 4 people stated they are not stressed at all. I have made it my goal to find out who these four people are. What are you doing in your life that you have no

stress at all? Last service I asked who it was and no one came forward, so I'm counting on you 9:30 service. At least give me one person that this applies to.

This is the reality of our lives. We keep building the stress in our lives because we have too many responsibilities, we have too many activities, we're doing too much all of the time so that when a surprise comes our way—unexpected death of a family member, unexpected financial issues, unexpected circumstances at work—that surprise is like that Mentos dropping in the bottle, and then it explodes and it breaks.

This morning I want to advocate for the Sabbath because the Sabbath rest is meant to serve as self-care for the people of God. It is a way to provide healing and wholeness in your life. We're going to talk about time and how we will utilize our time differently in 2017. I would say that it is time to begin taking the Sabbath. The word Sabbath is defined as rest; it means to cease. It is what Psalm 46 refers to: "Be still and know that I am God." It is also the 4<sup>th</sup> commandment in the Bible. Exodus 20 says,

8 "Remember the Sabbath day by keeping it holy. 9 Six days you shall labor and do all your work, 10 but the seventh day is a Sabbath to the Lord your God. On it you shall not do any work, neither you, nor your son or daughter, nor your male or female servant, nor your animals, nor any foreigner residing in your towns. 11 For in six days the Lord made the heavens and the earth, the sea, and all that is in them, but he rested on the seventh day. Therefore the Lord blessed the Sabbath day and made it holy. [Exodus 20:8-11]

In Mark 2 Jesus says that we were not created for the Sabbath, but the Sabbath was created for us. Have you ever read the New Testament and thought how ironic it is that Jesus gets in trouble because He is healing people on the Sabbath? It's not coincidental. It's because the Sabbath is actually meant for healing. The Sabbath is meant to release the pressure on our lives. Let me give you an example of what the Sabbath is meant to do. [Begins shaking bottle again] So you have all this pressure building up in your life. The Sabbath is meant to release. [Twists cap a little] Hear that sound? [Fizzling sound is heard] That's what the Sabbath is meant to do in your life...release the pressure, so that eventually you can take the top off. And now you can go about your day without having too much stress and anxiety because you actually observed the Sabbath. It's a pressure release valve.

You guys took another survey in which you answered the question, "If you had a whole free day to yourself, how would you spend it?" Now let me tell you about a phenomenon that exists in American culture. We have a tendency to answer questions based upon who we want to become and not based upon reality. The perfect example of this is the Newlywed Game. The Newlywed Game is where newly married couples compete to see which spouse understands their partner better than the rest of the group. I will never forget watching this episode where three couples were competing, and this question was asked of the husbands, "On a scale of one to ten, with one being the lowest and ten being the highest, how adventurous is your wife?" All three husbands answered between one and five. When the same question was asked of the wives, every wife

rated herself between eight and ten. The wives were rating themselves based upon how adventurous they wanted to be, while the husbands were rating them on how adventurous they actually are.

Now, let's talk about what you guys said you would do if you had a whole day to yourself. Out of 824 people who responded, 317 said they would spend the whole day reading, 275 said they would spend the day with friends and family, 230 said they would exercise, 187 said they would spend the time doing errands, cleaning and chores, 177 said they would sleep, 115 said they would eat, 77 said they would watch television—reality versus who you want to be—and only 2 people said that they would go on Facebook. The reality is that it may not actually be realistic for you to take an entire day for the Sabbath, right? That's not realistic for a lot of us. For some of you it is, but for others it may not be, so what I want to advocate for is the idea of Sabbath moments. How can you incorporate Sabbath moments into your life in 2017 and then begin to build to the point where you can actually take an entire day and dedicate it to God as a Sabbath? Let me give you examples of some Sabbath moments. There was a statistic that just came out that said an average American would actually complete reading 200 books in the time they spend on social media in one year. Most of us are on our phones before we even brush our teeth in the morning. I can't think of anything more important to do first thing in the morning than brush my teeth, but how many of us are checking our phones? Checking to see what our workday will be like, checking to see what time you have to leave the house for your meeting...What would it look like if you converted that time that you spend on your phone in the morning to a Sabbath moment, centering yourself on God, observing who God is, remembering what He has done in your life, and then beginning your day? What would it look like if you spent the Sabbath in your car? Before you actually step out of your car to enter into work, what would it look like if you took a Sabbath moment? Five minutes in your car...it's simple. Because all of us can't take a full day, what would it mean if you began to incorporate Sabbath moments throughout your day—at lunchtime? What would it mean if 30 minutes before you went to bed, you actually centered yourself on God's word, as opposed to watching TV, catching that last bit of news? Before you read the newspaper, what would it mean to actually spend the time with God? I have this really cool app on my phone. It's called the "Centering Prayer" app, and essentially what it does is you read a scripture, you center yourself for a couple of minutes in silence, you close out in scripture, and that's it. Sabbath moment. Rest.

Walter Brueggemann, who is probably one of my favorite Old Testament guys, says that the Sabbath serves as testimony and as resistance. It is testimony to our particular identity as followers of Christ. If we are people who take the Sabbath, we exemplify to the world that there is another way. Walter Brueggemann contends in his book, *Sabbath as Resistance*, that the Sabbath is a spiritual discipline. He says it is just as important as reading your Bible and as praying. But he also says that the Sabbath provides healing because it serves as resistance against the pressures of life. It serves as resistance against the need to multitask or juggle. This is for the women in the room. How many of us cook and clean, watch the kids while watching TV, being on your phone, your iPad and your computer, all at the same time? I do. Every day. The

Sabbath is resistance against the need to multitask because the Sabbath means that you must be fully present in the moment that you are in—that there is nothing else but you and God. The Sabbath is also resistance against exclusivism because God extends the Sabbath beyond just the people of Israel. He extended the Sabbath to the immigrant. You see this in Isaiah 56 where He extends the Sabbath to all of the people that are in the region.

What would it mean if your family took Sabbaths together? The McIntosh family does this. We take Sabbath on Saturday morning with our kids. We have been doing our best to prevent our kids from getting into the sports—this will be changing because our oldest son is now in traveling basketball—but we have been intentional about holding that Sabbath morning so that our entire family can take the Sabbath. This extended to my mother-in-law who is a Seventh Day Adventist, and she takes the Sabbath. She actually became a Seventh Day Adventist as a result of the practice of us taking the Sabbath, because of how important the Sabbath rest became in her life. We have extended the Sabbath now to our friends. We invite our friends over and say *this morning we are going to do a Sabbath rest together. Will you participate in it with us?* What would it mean to expand this beyond yourself as an individual to your entire families, and beyond that?

The Sabbath rest is also resistance against anxiety because again, you are called to be still and know that He is God. And lastly, Walter Brueggemann says that the Sabbath is resistance against spiritual immaturity because in your Sabbath rest, you are asking God to give you wisdom and discernment, and to lead your life, amen?

So, I am contending that in 2017, you begin to take Sabbath moments, and my hope and prayer is that you would be able to begin over time to extend this to where you are actually observing an entire day. Spending that day, not necessarily running errands, not necessarily watching TV, and for the two people that spend their time on Facebook, not being on Facebook, but actually spending that time with God. Let's pray.

Father God, I thank you so much for the opportunity to be here, and to be with this community. Lord, I pray that in 2017 we would begin to take Sabbath moments, to take moments of rest. We have an amount of pressure and stress that we can tolerate Lord, and for many of us it continues to build in our life between work and responsibilities. Lord God, those responsibilities bear on our shoulders and it becomes too heavy. Father God, be with us as we are in desperate need of You in these desperate times. Lord God, be for us all the thanks that we need. In Jesus Christ we pray. Amen.

*The nature of oral presentations makes them less precise than written materials; any lack of attribution is unintentional, and we wish to credit all those who have contributed to this sermon. Soli Deo Gloria.*