

Let us pray... Shepherd us O God beyond our wants and beyond our fears... May we find time to lie down in green pastures... May we find rest besides your still waters... And may we be restored to fullness of life each and every day... Amen.

I'm not the most technically gifted person, and I don't really know what goes on behind the scenes of all our gadgets or how everything works.

But I do know, that technology can be a wonderful thing... That is, when it is working...

Some of the biggest headaches I had from my time at Red Eye was when our system went down, throwing a wrench into everything...

Because the kitchen items printed electronically, the bar drinks, the bills for customers, the credit card system... Everything was tied together and connected.

And so, whenever there was a system failure, I would go to the office downstairs, unplug everything... Wait a little bit... And then plug everything back in...

Sometimes this would work... And sometimes it wouldn't... But there is something to be said about unplugging technology...

By simply rebooting or restarting your computer, your phone, your watch, or unplugging your tv or other devices, a lot of issues can be fixed...

And I have come to learn that hitting the reset button is not only important for electronics... It is also important for people to make time to unplug and to step away...

Which can be hard to do... Especially when you need to get things done, taking a break can feel counterintuitive...

Because how can your work get done if you're not doing it?

But as I have come to learn, again and again, taking a break is not only important, but it is vital to creativity, clarity, rejuvenation, and refreshment...

And yet, I still struggle with stepping away, because I find it easier to be busy and achieve things rather than allowing myself some grace and taking a break... Because taking a break... Is all about grace...

And thankfully, grace is a renewable resource... There is not a finite amount available... Providing us endless opportunities to practice receiving grace.

Because grace is continually being poured out by God... Showing up in all places, urging us to follow Christ and the grace he poured out to us through his life and death.

Grace that shows up in our gospel today, when Jesus said, I came so that you could have life—Indeed, so that you could live life to the fullest.

Something that our society has lost track of... As living life to the fullest is often thought of as having an abundance of things, or involves having a full schedule... Doing all the things... Seeing all the places...

Which does not lead to a full life the way God intended... Instead, this can lead to burnout, fatigue, and obsessing over all the things you need to get done.

And I get that this change in mindset is hard...

Not to mention, there are things that we need to do, and certain things have to get done...

But what if we approached all that we need to do differently? What if, we thought of our to do list as a river...

Since a river flows, it needs water to keep coming into it, to keep it flowing, otherwise the river would dry up...

Showing us that it is actually life-giving to leave things on your to do list, so your river can keep flowing...

Allowing you to welcome the things that flow into each day, finding grace and space to put other things aside...

By acknowledging that it is equally important to step out of your river and head over to God's still waters.

Because your river will always be there...

Which is why God has sent us the good shepherd... To lead us beside those still waters... And to make you lay down in green pastures.

And I love how the psalmist says that the Lord makes him lie down...

Because if it were up to us, we might not take that break...

And God, our loving shepherd knows this...

And God, our loving shepherd wants you to have time to unplug and recharge... So, God can restore your soul...

Because God wants you to have life, and live life to the fullest.

And to live life to the fullest, requires that you to have times of rest...

So, you can be restored...

The kind of rest that does not negate the realities of the world, where you trust that everything will be magically fixed...

But restored in a real and grounded way... In the presence of God... So, God's grace can seep into your places of hurt...

Even in the presence of your enemies... Even in the shadow of death.

Because that is what a shepherd does... A shepherd does not stray when the wolf comes.

He might not be able to stop the wolves from coming, but he is continually with you... Providing comfort through his rod and staff, in ways that are available to you.

Because this shepherd laid down his life for you... Not just for you to get into the kingdom of God...

But so that the kingdom of God could get into you while you live.

Because the kingdom of God is all about transformation, renewal, and grace...

And when the kingdom of God is in you, you will not only experience those things, but you will also bring the kingdom of God to others...

So, that others may also know God, and know what is like to live life to the fullest.

Because that is what a shepherd wants for all of the flock...

Yes, a shepherd will go look after one sheep, and will go to great lengths to find that one sheep... And yet, a shepherd also looks after an entire flock...

And as a part of Christ's flock, we are called to listen to our shepherd's voice...

Which is increasingly hard to do in our world today, when there are a ton of other loud voices out there...

From social media platforms, to the news, to local gossip, it is easy to confuse whose voice we are actually listening to...

Which is why it is so important to make time... Time to unplug... To turn off those other voices and seek the true voice of our shepherd.

So, you may discover a world beyond your wants and fears... Where you are led not only on right pathways but into a fullness of life that only our good shepherd can provide.

This week may you find time to step out of your river and into God's green pastures... May you make time to lay down besides the still waters... To be still and listen to God... Amen.