

John 9: 1, 6-9, 13-17, 34-38

As he walked along, he saw a man blind from birth.

He spat on the ground and made mud with the saliva and spread the mud on the man's eyes, saying to him, 'Go, wash in the pool of Siloam' (which means Sent).

Then he went and washed and came back able to see.

The neighbors and those who had seen him before as a beggar began to ask, "Is this not the man who used to sit and beg?"

Some were saying, "It is he."

Others were saying, 'No, but it is someone like him.'

He kept saying: "I am the man."

They brought to the Pharisees the man who had formerly been blind.

Now it was a Sabbath day when Jesus made the mud and opened his eyes.

Then the Pharisees also began to ask him how he had received his sight.

He said to them, 'He put mud on my eyes. Then I washed, and now I see.'

Some of the Pharisees said, 'This man is not from God, for he does not observe the Sabbath.

But others said, 'How can a man who is a sinner perform such signs?'

And they were divided. So they said again to the blind man,

'What do you say about him?

It was your eyes he opened.'

He said, 'He is a prophet.'

They answered him, 'You were born entirely in sins, and are you trying to teach us?'

And they drove him out.

Jesus heard that they had driven him out, and when he found him, he said,

**‘Do you believe in the Son of Man’
He answered, “And who is he, sir?
Tell me, so that I may believe in him.’
Jesus said to him, ‘You have seen him,
and the one speaking with you is he.’
He said, “Lord, I believe”.
And he worshipped him.**

Meditation:

**I would like to begin with quote from Thomas Merton:
“There is a pervasive form of contemporary violence...
[and that is] activism and overwork.
The rush and pressure of modern life are a form,
perhaps the most common form,
of its innate violence.**

**To allow oneself 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.**

**The frenzy of our activism neutralizes our work for peace.
It destroys our own inner capacity for peace.
It destroys the fruitfulness of our own work, because it kills the root of inner wisdom
which makes work fruitful.”**

**Now, I’ll be honest, I’m not really sure that the Evangelist John really meant this
Gospel reading to be a pitch for Sabbath keeping...
Most commentators explore the dynamics of Spiritual sight...
they look upon the healing of the blind man as metaphor of our enlightenment...**

they discuss at length the need to trust our own experiences of the Holy...
but since Jesus often got in trouble for healing on the Sabbath...
it seems to open a door to walk in this direction for our reflection today.

You know...I don't know about you, but so often,
when I ask someone "how are you?"
a most common response is "tired" or 'busy'

Why, What gives?

Why is everyone always so tired and so busy?
even kids complain of being tired and busy...

One issue that is really a thorn in the Pharisees' side is all the healing
Jesus does on the Sabbath...

For the ancient Jews, the Sabbath originally was intended to give the people...and their
animals...a day of rest.

It was intended to restore the bodies, minds and spirits of the Jews
and to create the time and space to prioritize their relationship with YHWH...

It so interestingly that honoring the Sabbath was such an important part
of the Law of the Jews!

A commandment, right up there with
'do not kill, do not steal, do not commit adultery...' etc...

The ancient peoples saw that overwork could morally and socially (and I would add
spiritually) dangerous...as reprehensible as murder and robbery and deceit,
so says author Wayne Muller.

Really?

I'll be honest, I do have a hard time equating working on the Sabbath with stealing or having an affair...

but yet, there must be something that we are missing in our contemporary understanding of the need, or not, to keep the Sabbath...

There is a piece of wisdom from the Jewish Tradition that says:

It is not that Israel keeps the Sabbath, but that the Sabbath that kept Israel.

What that means, is that the intent and focus of the Sabbath:

resting in the presence of God sustained the Jews throughout the week....

It helped them to be more aware of the Holy in their every day lives doing every day things....

It helped them make right decisions: kind decisions, compassionate decisions, just and moral decisions..

Now, we are all pretty much aware, that keeping the Sabbath got carried way too far... what started out as necessary guidelines became oppressive rules and people felt crushed under the weight of Sabbath instead of being liberated, renewed and revitalized...

and so, we ought not to go that far....

Yet...we need, desperately to become liberated, renewed and refreshed

from the hamster's wheel of activities that so many of us today are caught up in

Because when we are continuously exhausted we can become the best of who we were created to be...

Now, Sabbath keeping includes many practices but for today I would like to reflect upon just one, but an essential one:

and that is the practice of Rest.

We might not think of rest as a spiritual practice,

but allow me please to explain why it is...

**Have you ever noticed that once your life begins to slow down,
you almost need to sleep all of the time.**

So often, we don't even know how exhausted we are....

Finding an afternoon, a morning, a day, to rest,

begins the most essential process for rejuvenating our cells and our souls...

**Many of us contemporary people consider rest a bother, an interruption
to our productivity...**

yet, look around the natural world...

there is no species, plant or animal that does not rest.

Rest is essential to growth...rest is essential to life..

Perhaps it is the expectancy of our time...

many of us expect to go to Disney world on vacation

to drive a car that is often worth more than our parent's first home..

we want our children to go to 'the best schools' and we feel the need

to look cool and hip, with the latest technology and newest craze...

so we work...a lot!

**and if we are not working, then we have to catch up on all our personal
and household responsibilities...**

but of this activity, all of this work, comes at a price...

the price of our lives.

We so often miss our babies' first steps and our teenagers' first love

we no longer see the loneliness in the elder's eyes

or feel the joy of deep friendship...

**We are so busy we no longer see the new growth of spring just peeking beyond
the cold late winter soil...**

We no longer hear the call of the sand hill crane migrating back from the winter home...
we no longer smell the cool, moist Spring earth...
we no longer stand with awe under a night sky...
we no longer see the magnificence and beauty of the sunrise.
We have lost the ability to see, really see the Beauty and Sacredness
that is a part of our every day lives...because we are exhausted.
We can barely keep our eyes open.
It is true...it is if we were blind...

Today, this day perhaps...you can take the time...

I won't say 'find' the time, because to find time that isn't being used for something
can be virtually impossible for many....

We must take the time to be.

to rest.

We must awake from this 'blindness' of insistent doing,
consistent working...

so that we can truly SEE the glory, the beauty, the mystery of life..

so that we can truly SEE the presence of Grace and the presence of the Holy One that is
everywhere in all things, in all people...

This is the true miracle of recovering our sight in our day

You know, I did not intend to reflect upon being healed from blindness...

but I guess I did...

so I guess the next thing we ought to do is to say, "Thank you!" Amen.