

“The seventh day is a sabbath to the Lord your God; you shall not do *any* work.” If only it were that easy. If only the entire world could just...stop. Not just in regards to people needing to catch up on things around the house, or go out grocery shopping to prepare for the week ahead, or whatever other errands need taken care of on a Sunday. Even if the entire world could just stop with such things, what about the elderly in nursing homes and hospice centers? What about the workers they need all hours of a Sunday too? What about the people who, all of a sudden, experience these symptoms that could mean a stroke or a heart attack, who have absolutely no control on what day of the week it so happens to be? What about the safety and welfare of entire communities that, also, need to be taken care of on the Sabbath day?

If only the entire world could just...stop, for all of God’s children to truly experience holy rest, to undergo a desperately needed re-centering of our hearts and minds. If only the church could just have that one day to do its job for the sake of the world’s all-around well-being. Well, obviously, not only did the world misplace God’s almighty memo, but so did the human body and the whole Creation, for that matter.

You need not look any further than a pastor’s own home to see how much the world remains in full-operation on the Sabbath. Being married to an

ER nurse is a pretty solid reminder of that: people still get sick on Sunday, people get agitated and take out stress on others to the point of traumatic injuries even on, supposedly, *God's* holy day; and, quite frankly, sometimes people just want an excuse to get out of work to avoid a bad case of the Monday's the next day, so they go to the emergency room on Sunday to get that much-coveted doctor's note. 'Tis the world, still, in full-operation mode on the Sabbath.

I remember when I went through a few months of an experience as a chaplain in a hospital setting, to get a better vantage point in the life of Pastor Harry Werner and other chaplains, while also better preparing ourselves for lives in the church. Every so often we would take our turn to be the on-call chaplain; so, if anything were to happen, if anyone wanted to speak to someone with regards to spiritual matters, or just wanted someone to talk to, or if any trauma patient was brought in to the hospital, we would be just a phone call away.

There was this family who watched their loved one die right in front of them in the emergency room, after the medical staff tried absolutely everything in their power to save them. I do not remember much about the exact circumstances; I just remember them asking me to make a phone call to

help setup some kind of arrangements for what was to happen next. When I had done that, I went to find them in a private room adjacent to the ER, anticipating that they still needed some kind of compassionate care and Gospel-driven reassurance. Except, when I walked in the room, there was this nurse, who was already in full compassion-operation mode, hugging and consoling one of the family members as her tears fell down the nurse's shoulder.

So, yes, the world does remain in full-operation mode today, but that does not mean the Gospel isn't being brought to life out there too. It is happening in emergency rooms, in many corners of hospice facilities, in the back of EMS cruisers, not to mention on city sidewalks, and grocery store check-out lines. This Sabbath day does not mean that God takes a break, or that God decides to lessen the divine workload from all over the world to, instead, just focusing on the inside of sanctuary walls one day a week, just to make God's life easier, after all.

Yes, it is helpful to give our bodies a rest on Sunday. It is also spiritually-nourishing to worship God with all our heart, soul, and mind; to re-center ourselves on what God is up to in our life. But, what if it wasn't just about bodily rest or even a break from the Monday through Friday stress of

daily life? What if we also rested from our cynical attitudes about the whole world we love to throw under the bus? What if we take a break from thinking that this whole place is just on it's way to H-E-double hockey-sticks in a handbasket? What if we took a Sabbath from such negative thinking about a world that God still loves, no matter how much we struggle to believe it?

What if, instead, we looked right in front of us to see God still at work in all different kinds of vocations in our local communities and beyond?

Because, on this Sabbath day, and all days, by the way; God isn't just in full-operation mode inside this sanctuary, but through nurses, chaplains, medical technicians, and complete strangers who aren't on any kind of work clock today. The Sabbath isn't just about resting our wearied bodies, hearts, and minds; it's also about raising our awareness to just how far-reaching, still, this God truly is in the world, the world God still loves. Much to our surprise, the Greatest News of all still remains: that God has never decided to take a break from humanity. This God, evidently, loves us too much. This God still cherishes this whole world far, far too much to consider even taking a day off from bringing compassion, mercy, and all-around new life to any place near and far, far away from us. And for that, we most certainly give thanks to God indeed! Amen.