

Rest: Retain

Sunday 10 January 2021

Before You Begin

Our hope is that this is a resource that will help us to engage meaningfully with God's word and invite us into a sense of worship, despite being unable to meet face-to-face. Use it in a way that feels comfortable and helpful to you.

A table of contents has been added to give you a sense of what will follow and allow you to move more easily through the worship elements.

Prepare

Have your Bible close by and some food and drink prepared for communion. It doesn't have to be bread and grape juice; it could be whatever is available (tea and a biscuit) to use in this symbolic time.

Get into a 'Sacred' Space

Be intentional. Sit somewhere. Have some visual representation of God (perhaps a small cross, your Bible, a symbol or image) or you might play some reflective music. Start with a few moments of silence and deep breathing.

Consider your environment

What will work for you in the space you have? If you have others in your house (housemates/family), consider sharing this time with them, each reading or participating as appropriate. You might simply reflect individually, in your own time and space. Afterwards, you might connect with others through technology to share your reflections, or an encouragement, with them.



What's Inside

On a computer, you can click these links

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Call to Worship

Caitria Reid

Welcome to this week's worship resource from Ringwood Church of Christ. Today we'll be continuing the January theme of REST. When I say rest, how does it make you feel? My family seems to have two extremes of people: on the one hand we have the natural rest-ers – they can sit on the couch and do absolutely nothing! That is just mindboggling to me – I am the other extreme, I find it very difficult to slow down. Even when I try to rest, I have 50 ideas in my mind of how to rest better.

Where do you sit on this continuum? If you have people around you, you can have a chat about whether you're a natural rest-er or whether that is more difficult for you.

No matter whether you find it easy or more difficult to rest, I invite you to take the time to try and slow down and learn more about what it means to rest in this video today. We will have a dwelling in the text exercise and some songs to help you, and then Brendan will talk to us more about how to rest better. I hope you enjoy today's worship resource and take a rest.

10,000 Reasons

Bless the Lord O my soul O my soul
Worship His holy name
Sing like never before O my soul
I'll worship Your holy name

The sun comes up it's a new day dawning
It's time to sing Your song again
Whatever may pass and whatever lies before me
Let me be singing when the evening comes

Bless the Lord O my soul O my soul
Worship His holy name
Sing like never before O my soul
I'll worship Your holy name

You're rich in love and You're slow to anger
Your name is great and Your heart is kind
For all Your goodness I will keep on singing
Ten thousand reasons for my heart to find

Bless the Lord O my soul O my soul
Worship His holy name
Sing like never before O my soul
I'll worship Your holy name

And on that day when my strength is failing

The end draws near and my time has come
Still my soul will sing Your praise unending
Ten thousand years and then forevermore

Bless the Lord O my soul O my soul
Worship His holy name
Sing like never before O my soul
I'll worship Your holy name

Worship Your holy name
Lord I'll worship Your holy name

Sing like never before O my soul
I'll worship Your holy name
Worship Your holy name
Worship Your holy name

CCLI Song # 6016351

Jonas Myrin | Matt Redman

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Dwelling in the Word

Pat Greig

Rest can be experienced in a range of ways. One of those is dwelling in the word.

As you prepare to read our bible reading for today, I would invite you to adjust your position so that you are sitting or lying in a comfortable position.

Take some time then to be aware of your breathing. As you breathe in and out..... Notice the gentle rise and fall of your chest..... and abdomen.

Notice that your breath is slightly cooler as you breathe in and warmer as you breathe out. There is no need to control your breathing in any way. Just let the breath breathe itself.

Now be aware of your thoughts. Just notice them, acknowledge their presence and let them go like passing cars.

Now in space of stillness, allow your mind to dwell fully in the word as you read the scripture passage for today.

Bible Reading: Psalm 23 (NIV)

Read this reading slowly, dwelling in the Word.

The Lord is my shepherd, I lack nothing.

He makes me lie down in green pastures,
he leads me beside quiet waters,
he refreshes my soul.

He guides me along the right paths
for his name's sake.

Even though I walk
through the darkest valley,

I will fear no evil,
for you are with me;
your rod and your staff,
they comfort me.

You prepare a table before me
in the presence of my enemies.

You anoint my head with oil;
my cup overflows.

Surely your goodness and love will follow me
all the days of my life,
and I will dwell in the house of the Lord
forever.

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Message

Brendan Petty

It was nearly 12 months ago that I last put together a message around a theme of rest. I think I used most of my good material back then! The 26th January 2020 - have a listen on Soundcloud. Like any good sermon and reading of scripture, there's lots of truth in it that doesn't date even 12 months (and one unprecedented global pandemic) later: humans are still humans, God is still God.

This week our restful topic is 'Retain' – to hold on to important memories, learnings and truths, even as we transition from season to season and as we move through the cycles of work, rest, school terms, holidays and new years.

In last year's sermon I flashed up a slide with the Brendan-Kondo approach to de-cluttering Sabbath – much like how we usually sort through items on a list or things in our home, one at a time. This idea of 'retain' brings to mind a different approach, especially to my engineering mind!

I've done quite a few music recording and video editing projects and always look forward to the point where it's all complete, ready to be archived so I can clear the decks for the next thing. But these projects can accumulate a huge number of source recording files – easily in the thousands –

most of which are not actually in use in the final product. You could just keep them all, or go through one at a time to mark the ones that can be deleted, or – the approach built in to most software is one that copies all the good and useful files off to a new location, and then we simply delete everything that’s left. It’s the same with the automatic machines at the ten pin bowling alley. I’ve always wondered, while looking at the disarray of pins (some upright, some out of place, some lying down) how the machine will sort them all out and reset their positions. The approach – pick up all the pins that are needed for the next bowl, then sweep away the rest (including the extra bowling balls that other members of the youth group sent down all at the same time).

So let’s look today at what our most important things are, so we can hold on to them as we let everything else sweep away.

This week we’re looking at Psalm 23. I suspect this might be the most famous of the Psalms. It’s the first to come up as a suggested search in Google, even when I (always seem to) type in “pslam”. It’s got lots of different versions as a song. I wonder if it might be in the top 5 most memorised Bible passages? Retaining scripture in our memories is a good way to let the truths seep into us, to dwell on them. Let’s dwell in this text today. Let it seep into you, leak beyond your brain, circulate into your whole self, into your habits, into your concerns, into your soul. Perhaps you could memorise a version of it. We’ve already heard it in the NIV. As we step through it I’m going to use the Message version just for a different angle. And – just for fun – I’ll step through it backwards.

Take some time to dwell on each verse as you get to it.

First question for you to ponder: what do I really need?

I’m back home in the house of God for the rest of my life

Psalm 23 is a song of trust, perhaps written after an episode of threat followed by deliverance, either for the author (attributed to David, as are many Psalms) or for their whole community (that is, the nation Israel, after their time of in the wilderness after escaping slavery in Egypt). It’s certainly been written from a place of security and safety but it’s also trusting for security and safety into the future.

Does this resonate with you at the moment? Do you feel like you were delivered through the threat of 2020? Perhaps you don’t feel like you’ve made it yet, or that you didn’t survive it, or that threat still looms. This is a ‘now and not yet’ Psalm – it has already happened (past), and it keeps on happening (present), and we’re also hoping and waiting for it to happen (future).

Your beauty and love chase after me every day of my life

The theme of retain is not *only* about us retaining things – memories, learnings, relationships, stuff. It's also about us *allowing ourselves to be retained*. God's beauty and love *chase* after us every day of our lives. Allowing ourselves to be held and retained by God, allowing our faith to hold us steady, allowing our faith communities – including our church – to reach out, connect and hold us steady especially when our own individual(ised) faith is wobbling.

Yet *being retained* (just like rest) is not entirely passive – it often involves some active intent and initiative on our part – planning space into our calendar, sending a(n honest) text to someone, sticking up our arm and waving when we're caught in a rip – not simply assuming that others know what's going on for me.

You revive my drooping head; my cup brims with blessing

Or as in the NIV, God anoints our head with olive oil – this is a custom reserved for the guest of honour. God serves us as the guest of honour – we are *that* important to God!

You serve me a six-course dinner right in front of my enemies

Many of us have a theology of work. Many of us have a robust theology of servanthood. Despite the difficulty of putting it into practice most of us will have a theology around loving our enemies. We also each need a theology of rest.

This complex verse about eating a six-course dinner in front of our enemies possibly has more historical allusions again, perhaps referring to the experience of Israel as they wandered the desert for 40 years after crossing the Red Sea that the Egyptians couldn't cross?

A theology of rest: not just that God allows us to rest, or that God knows we're feeble and need sleep when we've exhausted ourselves and gotten useless, not even just that we need to rest in order to be productive, but a theology that encourages us to rest as part of the fullness of the experience of life that God has designed for us. That we can enjoy times of rest and that rest helps us to enjoy life itself.

Your trusty shepherd's crook makes me feel secure

The image of God as Shepherd also features in other Psalms, in Isaiah, Ezekiel, in John 10: 10-15... God is the Good Shepherd and sheep can recognise the voice of their own shepherd. In December, shepherds tend to get a bit of visibility in the Christmas story and traditions, and the point that the sermons tend to bring out is that shepherds are the stinky outcasts of society. Not valued or respected by people in general. They have a dirty, dangerous and thankless task, but it also informs their identity. And how peculiar that God entrusts a bunch of shepherds with the first news of Emmanuel – God with us in human flesh. Out of town, on the margins, not even broadly

followed on Facebook or Instagram as a means of quick communication out to the masses that they influence.

What does this mean? This is the God of the mustard shrub. God is willing to (and actively chooses to) come into humanity as a homeless refugee baby in a family with a questionable timeline of conception in relation to marriage. In Psalm 23, God is willing to take on the necessary but uncelebrated role of a shepherd to us, staying up and out in the night (cold, dangerous) while we rest.

As we roll this imagery and the metaphors around in our mind, it's important to remember that we are not called to *be* God or to *be* gods.

Some translations of the Psalm refer to the rod and the staff. The rod is for fending off wild animals – the image of protection we've already explored. The staff is an instrument used to keep sheep from wandering away. There are ways that God protects us from non-external threats too, drawing us back, holding, *retaining* us.

I'm not afraid when you walk at my side. Even when the way goes through Death Valley

This is really a Psalm about God's presence. Not solving everything, ironing out wrinkles, not simplifying complexity, but being present.

True to your word, you let me catch my breath and send me in the right direction

What stops you from rest, and from trusting? Note I'm asking 'what' because there will be things for each of us.

Psalm 23 reminds me of the Vicar of Dibley, a TV show set in the English countryside and centred around a vicar and church with endless quirky personalities and funny events. Having been in church communities my whole life, I actually don't think the writers had to go too far to get their material for the scripts! It reminds me to not take myself too seriously... and taking things too seriously is (for me) one of the biggest sabotages to having good rest.

God let's us catch our breath. This January, let's catch our breath, let's re-evaluate what we're going to grasp on to... then take in another breath and allow the rest to fall away if it needs to.

Another question for you: is there a (metaphorical) shepherd that's calling you home?

You have bedded me down in lush meadows, you find me quiet pools to drink from

These are the special moments of rest, moments for our brains to retain what we choose to retain. Sleep helps us hold our learnings and experiences in long term memory, then flushes out the rest.

God, my shepherd! I don't need a thing

I shall not want. Israel had all they needed in the wilderness, and David celebrates that in his 'now and not yet' Psalm. How does that look for us in our 2020 wilderness and what are we going to retain as we boldly step into 2021?

To conclude, you may wish to read again through the NIV of Psalm 23, in the normal direction!

Faithful Now

I am holding on to faith
'Cause I know You'll make a way
And I don't always understand
And I don't always get to see
But I will believe it
I will believe it

You make mountains move
You make giants fall
And You use songs of praise
To shake prison walls
And I will speak to my fear
I will preach to my doubt
That You were faithful then
You'll be faithful now

I am standing on Your Word
I'm calling heaven down to earth
And You will fight my enemies
And this will end in victory
And I will believe it
Yes I will believe it

And I know that I know You never fail
Yes I know that I know You never will

CCLI Song # 7137533
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Communion

Have some food and drink prepared for this time

If you would like to you can view the communion video via this link rngwd.com/fby or use the following reflection to take communion in your own way today and after, consider who you can call to have a chat as you would on a Sunday morning after a church service.

Welcome to this time of Communion. Today our theme is Rest: Retain.

Brendan Petty

As a Church of Christ, we share communion around an open table. All are welcome, all are invited. It's a tradition and practice (one of the very few) that we've retained through centuries and even when many other traditions were allowed to be swept away.

It's a table of hospitality, a table of rest. A (metaphorical) table where we can take a seat with other followers of the Way of Jesus, with little thought of our differences or trivial matters, gathered solely for the purpose of sharing communion. Celebrating our unity. Remembering Jesus' death on the cross. Re-enacting the Last Supper that Jesus shared with his disciples. Symbolising the hope we have in the resurrection and embodying our being part of the Body of Christ.

We're very used to communion being scattered – though it's mostly celebrated on a Sunday, it's done in different time zones around the world. It's done in smaller gatherings in many churches and homes across the city. It's done in slightly different ways with different physical elements and different rituals beforehand. These are the trivial things, they are differences that have always been there in some way.

The central and important part is that we're symbolically together, sharing, celebrating and remembering.

Thank you Jesus for giving us life, even though it cost you your own. Thank you for being a model for us, a guide, a protector, saviour and restorer of all things. Thank you for the strength you give us each and every day. Thank you for loving us. Amen.

We invite you to eat and drink in remembrance of Him

Playgroup Update

Tiffany Gilmour

Hi there, my name is Tiffany. I have had the pleasure and privilege of running playgroup at Ringwood for 2020. Playgroup is about connecting with mums, dads, grandparents, carers and connect with them as they journey with their little ones. At playgroup we sing and we dance and we play inside and outside and we do craft and we chat and have a lovely time together. Have you thought about whether you might be able to serve in the playgroup ministry in 2021?

If you're interested in becoming part of the team and you have time on Tuesday from 10-11:30am, we start term 1 in 2021. Even if you can just contribute once a month, I would love to hear from you and hear about how you'd like to be involved! Please email me at playgroup@ringwoodchurch.org.au or speak to the church office.

January Update

Brendan Petty

Acknowledging that we're as geographically scattered as ever before this summer, we will be providing a broad range of ways to connect in with worship and communion, which will inevitably each be smaller gatherings. We'll be producing pre-recorded worship videos, paper church, communion reflections (pre-recorded and on Facebook) and also opening the chapel for the worship video, communion and the chance to chat with others. We will be serving communion again, in sealed single-serve cups to minimise handling as we re-engage with this practice together.

Connect cards online

Click this link or enter it into your web browser rngwd.com/connect.

We love to know that you have been able to connect through worship today. Please click on the link (or enter it into your web browser) to our online connect cards letting us know which ways you have been able to worship, and if you want to let us know how we can praying with you.

Thank you!