

***“The Right Tempo”***

On a scale of 1 to 10, rate your degree of stress and busyness on the following scale:

10 – Someone call an ambulance!

9 – “Free Time?” What’s that?

8 – I’m not going crazy, but I can see crazy from here ...

7 – “Exhausted” is my middle name.

6 – I can really use a vacation – and I just got back from one!

5 – How many days (hours/minutes) to vacation?

4 – My calendar is a wee bit on the heavy side.

3 – Feelin’ groovy!

2 – Ommmmmmm.

1 – I and the Universe are One.

If you rated yourself 5 or higher, this series is for you! If you rated lower than 5, then this series is also for you — not because it will help you

eliminate busyness and stress, but because it will help you focus your energies.

A couple of Sundays ago, we completed our **“Drawn In: Living the Creative Life with God” Worship Series** with the theme of “Rest”.

Today, we begin a new **Worship Series, “Busy: Reconnecting with an Unhurried God”**, as we begin the church Liturgical Season of Lent.

Surprise, the start of this new Worship Series is very much like the conclusion of the previous one! They both give significant focus to the need to slow down or take a break from our busy lives. In fact, the sermons for both the “Rest” Sunday of “Drawn In” and of “The Right Tempo” for this new series utilize the same gospel text.

**Why are we putting such a heavy focus on “Rest” and “The Right Tempo”? Well, one reason has to do with our common need to get relief from the stress, tension, and exhaustion that we all experience, at least, from time to time in our daily lives.**

Dale Fletcher, Executive Director of Faith and Health Connection, has written, “We will experience lots and lots of stress in our life. There is no getting around it.” **“I believe that the degree to which we effectively manage and cope with the stress in our lives will determine the degree to which we are healthy.”** “If we turn to unhealthy behaviors to cope with the stress, our physical and emotional health will suffer.”

Fletcher continued, “Many people turn to food as a way to cope with stress. Others turn to the use of drugs. Some turn to alcohol. Still others light up a cigarette. Some burn the midnight oil surfing the internet and pay for it the next day because they have had inadequate sleep.”

Fletcher went on to share, **“I don’t know of any more effective technique to get a handle on the stress in my life than to turn to Jesus.”** “God designed you and me in a way that our spirit, mind and body would react together in a marvelous way when we feel tense and anxious and “heavy” and set our heart and mind on Jesus. God knew that Jesus was our anecdote for stress ... not drugs, food, alcohol and the

internet.” (“Weekly Faith and Health Scripture: Jesus on Stress Management – Matthew 11:28-30” by Dale Fletcher)

Now, Dale Fletcher’s “effective technique” for dealing with stress may seem too simplistic or naïve. Indeed, we need to flesh out what he meant when he wrote about turning to Jesus. Fletcher reminds us **Jesus said in our Scripture, “*Are you tired? Worn out? Burned out on religion? Come to me. Get away with me and you’ll recover your life. I’ll show you how to take a real rest.*”** You might recall I used The Message version of today’s Reading a couple of Sundays ago. It gives a more contemporary way of talking about our need for rest and a needed change in the tempo of our lives.

Fletcher asked, “**How do we ‘Come to Jesus?’**” He answered, “We pray. We listen to inspirational music. We sit or walk quietly and listen for His voice. We cry out to Him in desperation. We read His Word, the Bible. We get on our knees and pour out our heart to Him. When we do this, He promises that He will give us rest.” Fletcher’s description may come off a

bit too pietistic or fundamentalist but with additional emphasis on being open to God’s Constant Agape Love and Invitation and on our calling to be just co-creators with God in the New Life and Relationship with God and with All People, we are able to recognize, receive – come to, and join in the New Life in Jesus Christ. As Jesus said, *“Walk with me and work with me — watch how I do it. Learn the unforced rhythms of grace.”*

Indeed, in this **“Busy: Reconnecting with an Unhurried God” Worship Series**, we are discovering and celebrating how each of us has a tempo that fits well – is part of “the unforced rhythms of grace” and energizes us. To find that tempo ask yourself, **“What tempo gives me life and energy?”** Another approach is to ask, **“What tempo of life feels toxic to me? What is the cost?”**

As the previous Worship Series was based on the book, **“DRAWN IN A Creative Process for Artists, Activists, and Jesus Followers”**, so also, this new Worship Series has as a resource a sermon series Rev. Eric Elnes.

With reference to the first Sunday in this Worship Series, Elnes focused on finding one's "sweet spot" as one way of seeking our "Right Tempo".

Rev. Elnes pointed out how one type of insect has a special desire or need to pollinate a specific type of orchid. He then says, **"I love this image of the insect pollinating the orchid not only because it provides a metaphor for our 'sweet spot,' but also because it suggests why living within our 'sweet spot' connects us to an unhurried God."** That insect isn't busy trying to pollinate every flower in a given field. It lives to pollinate just one flower, the one it was created to pollinate. So, it flies by hundreds of flowers without giving them an ounce of time or energy, without feeling the slightest bit guilty or duty-bound to go after more than the kind of flower it is was made for."

Elnes went on to say, "In contrast to the insect, we tend to get crazy-busy in our lives because we have a hard time saying 'No' to others." I would interject we also have a difficult time saying "no" to ourselves. He continued, "Therefore, we spend a lot of time, attention, and life energy

wrapped up in activities and pursuits that have little or nothing to do with what brings us alive in the world.”

He asked, **“How do we get back in touch with our flower?”** “And how do we gain the confidence to say ‘No’ to the ninety-nine that call to us in order to say ‘Yes’ to the one flower that best fits our ‘sweet spot’?”

Earlier I quoted Dale Fletcher with his answer to the question of how we can best overcome our issues of stress. He suggested we “come to Jesus”. So, it should not surprise us that Elnes answered his question of how to get back in touch with our “sweet spot” get in “the Right Tempo” by saying, **“Jesus offers us an important clue, which most people overlook. He says, ‘Take my yoke upon you and learn from me.’”** Elnes continued, “Most of us tend to react to Jesus as if he’s just one more flower that’s not our flower demanding our time and attention. So, we resist his yoke, feeling like he’ll burden us with all kinds of work that isn’t ours to do. But he’s not.

“Remember, he’s offering you a ‘well-fitting’ yoke.” **“In other words, he’s offering you the chance to do exactly the work you were created to do — the work that brings you most fully alive.”** And he’s offering to help you.” Sounds a lot like being drawn in to be a co-creator with God. Doesn’t it?

**Yes, Jesus did say in our Reading, “*I won’t lay anything heavy or ill-fitting on you. Keep company with me and you’ll learn to live freely and lightly.*”**

Elnes went on to say, “What Jesus is telling us is that, in contrast to other yokes, his fits. Jesus’s yoke isn’t a ‘one size fits all.’ Fits you perfectly. Like it was made just for you. And it was.” He continued, **“I love Jesus’s invitation to accept his yoke upon us because he’s really talking about finding and living into our ‘sweet spot.’”**

For our emphasis today, what he was calling our “sweet spot” is what is meant when we refer to **“The Right Tempo”** for our lives. We have “The

Right Tempo” when we periodically “Rest” to focus on our Relationship with our Divine Parent as co-creators with the Creator and then follow Jesus’ example – take on the other half of his double yoke – the well fitted yoke designed for us with him. **When we take his yoke, we become New Creatures in Christ guided and empowered by the Holy Spirit, so we agape love, forgive, and welcome All People. We work for justice for everyone, especially the vulnerable and powerless.** But wait, there is also the promise and the experience that when we are yoked with Jesus – in our sweet spot – in the Right Tempo, then we are also connected to a much greater power and ability than ours alone!

The first step in getting in “The Right Tempo” – our “sweet spot” is to liberate ourselves from our busyness – to follow God’s Example and to take the time – the unhurried time for “Rest” with God. **Let’s get “The Right Tempo” by welcoming and living the sacred and focused time of learning and doing God’s calling for us – our Reconnecting with**

**God's Purpose – Jesus' yoke of agape love, forgiveness, and welcome  
for ourselves and for All People! Amen.**