

A RIDE AT AN AMUSEMENT PARK

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Does our life sometimes feel like we are on a ride that makes us sick and tired and yet we think there is now way to stop the ride and no way to get off?

Over the next couple of weeks I want to provide some thoughts that I hope will act as a path and guide us to and through our Summer Sabbath.

Today, I want to raise our awareness of the rhythms of our lives and the rhythm of Shadow Rock; our life together.

Next week I want to invite us to think about a specific kind of obedience that in fact leads us to freedom.

Our last Sunday together before our Sabbath I want us to explore the idea that Sabbath is an opportunity for recycling our spirits and enjoy each other's company around "slow food".

Finally, I want to plant the seed that Sabbath is not the break we take after 11 months of working our tails off--, rather I believe that Sabbath is the defining rhythm for the upcoming 11 months. The question for us to keep in front of us is, "How do we infuse the Sabbath wisdom and experience into our everyday life together?"

There is a rhythm at Shadow Rock. It is a rhythm that aligns itself with the program year of the schools of our children. When they start, we start. When they finish, we finish. . Thus all of our lives and every aspect of our lives have had to adapt in order to address our fears that somehow if we do not comply then our children will fall behind and miss out. Corresponding roughly with the school calendar is the exodus of our sunbirds from the heat of the valley to the cooler regions toward the rim and the slow return of people through the months of September and October. Additionally the rhythm of Shadow Rock is shaped by the way sports and band have crept in and overflowed from their contained months of May and September into all months of the summer The rhythm of Shadow Rock follows the rhythm of the lives of our families, and our family's lives follow the rhythm of an education system that greatly concerns us.

As if that was not demanding enough we have made personal financial commitments that if they are not crushing us they own much of our time, energy and resources, therefore, we work harder and longer. While our education and jobs keep us above economic poverty we have created for ourselves a "poverty of time".

While we have great concern about the fast pace merry-go-round of our lives we have no idea how to stop the ride and get off. There are social structures that shape our lives and we

hardly acknowledge them let alone challenge them, and if we did stop the ride and get off we would probably struggle with what to do next.

Does it seem like we, Shadow Rock, do not have a rhythm of our own? If it is true that we do not have a rhythm of our own, it strikes me as odd. Does it strike anyone else as odd that the people of God are dictated to by other social structures, other agendas, and other timelines? It truly is an example of the finite dictating to the infinite.

It is true that our missional spirit is one of gentleness and servitude but I do not think this means that we lose ourselves or become enmeshed in society's priorities and therefore we fit in wherever and whenever we can.

Illustration regarding the idea of putting oneself under the feet of another: One is a position of strength for the sake of being a support like a foundation to a house and the other comes from a position of weakness with the result of being used like a doormat.

Our mission is to serve but we may have crossed the line from servitude with our own agenda and timeline to being doormats without any agenda or timeline of our own. When we cross this line we lose our identity, our values and our mission and we become one of many choices for our busy families. *When we lose our identity, our values, and our mission we become a part of the consumer culture. We cannot compete as a consumer choice, nor should we. We are a counter-cultural choice for the people and we need to explore, plan, and implement what this means to the fullest extent.*

This is the blessing and gift of our July Sabbath. Our July Sabbath is not a reflection of a lack of commitment or laziness. Our July Sabbath is our act of defiance in a world that values doing over being. Our Sabbath is our witness to tired and frustrated people that there is hope. Our Sabbath is our testimony and our model of how to be different in the world. It allows us the opportunity to stop the ride, get off the ride, and be in the world in a different way. The more we learn and live out this Sabbath wisdom the stronger our invitation will be for so many people who want what we offer.

When we keep our July Sabbath we are practicing for a month the freedom that God intends for all people for all time. We are practicing life outside the frantic pace of the merry-go-round. We are practicing independence from the social forces of a materialistic culture and consumer/success driven society.

During our July Sabbath let us try on a new way of life. Let us begin to allow our weeks to be changed in response to the greater promises of God and the greater depths and joys of life. It will not be easy but it is right and we will learn together.

THE SCRIPTURE GIVES US THE IMAGE OF PUTTING ON COMPASSION, KINDNESS, HUMILITY, GENTLENESS, AND PATIENCE LIKE PUTTING ON CLOTHES. LIKE TRYING ON GROWN UP CLOTHES. THEY DO NOT FIT AND IT IS ACKWARD AND CLUMSY BUT FUN AND EVENTUALLY WE GROW INTO THEM.

If this is the truth of our Sabbath then what does it mean for us to let the rhythm of our Sabbath shape the rest of our year? Instead of working and obsessing and then taking a break until we can pick up the routine again, perhaps we can let the Sabbath and the spirit of the Sabbath reinvent our life together as a congregation. I do not think we can afford to do otherwise.

There is a Sabbath rhythm, a rhythm to life; can we find it, can we listen to it, and can we obey the rhythm which matches the rhythm of our own spirits? This is what we will explore together next week.

¹²Therefore, as God's chosen people, holy and dearly loved, clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience. ¹³Bear with each other and forgive whatever grievances you may have against one another. Forgive as the Lord forgave you.

¹⁴And over all these virtues put on love, which binds them all together in perfect unity.

¹⁵Let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, since as members of one body you were called to peace. And be thankful. ¹⁶Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly as you teach and admonish one another with all wisdom, and as you sing psalms, hymns and spiritual songs with gratitude in your hearts to God. ¹⁷And whatever you do, whether in word or deed, do it all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him.