

Pastor Troy E. Medlin
8th Sunday after Pentecost
7/18/2021

There is always more to be done.

Whether the to-do list is written down on a post it note on your desk or refrigerator....or you are like me....and it exists on a note card....but also.... in an endlessly expanding roll-a-dex in my mind that seems to appear out of nowhere when I wake up at 2am.....it seems like there is always more for us to be doing....or at least more that we *should* be doing.....anyway...the little voice in our head tells us....after all.....and there is so much good stuff that needs to get done...and who needs rest..when it feels so good to cross things off our list.....even for someone like me who is not a natural list maker....I feel a little rush...when I cross something off....and I did a first a couple weeks ago....I wrote something I accomplished down on a note pad....*just so I could cross it off*.....Productivity makes us feel successful and needed.... There's always more work to be done....

CJ Green wrote in *Mockingbird* magazine....back in 2019 about our cultures relationship with work in an article called *The Cathedral of the Perpetual Hustle*.....and how often all of us...check our email....at home...at the dinner table....on vacation....and how good it feels to be needed.....and to feel productive....and how a staggering number of Americans work more than forty hours a week — despite, and often because of, major technological advances designed to make life easier. As many of us know, online work is never done. There is always another click to get, another message to send.....

There is always more to be done....

Green mentions how Erin Griffith posed the following question in *The New York Times*: “Why Are Young People Pretending to Love Work?” Griffith takes aim at the expansive WeWork franchise, the shared workspace “where company becomes community” and whose mission is “to create a world where people work to make a life, not just a living.” At WeWork, the commandments “Hustle harder” and “Do what you love” light up the walls, and the water coolers contain artfully carved cucumbers beseeching you, “Don’t stop when you’re tired, stop when you’re done.” Really!- he says.....

There is always more to be done..... And we hear those voices to keep going- keep striving- keep moving---keep grinding---do not stop....especially when our work is good and meaningful and we like it..... Why would we want to stop...when we are not done? The to-do-list is growing.....and we can knock it out...

Everywhere we look....we are told to work harder...longer.....be more productive....build our CV.....climb the corporate ladder....and pull ourselves up by our bootstraps...higher and higher....to level up....We are told that work and those to-do lists will pay off....and

make us happy---keep us fulfilled---and win for us...a bigger payout....and an ever newer...and more abundant life.... There is always more work to do....and why would we stop.....Do you hear those voices....encouraging us....to find the strength within----to be our best and most productive selves.....preaching to us---sometimes ever so subtly that our worth is tied to our work...that we are what we do..commanding us...not to stop....and rest? You might call those as CJ Green's article implies----proclamations from the priests who work at the cathedral of the perpetual hustle.....or secular shepherds....leading us to their own version of salvation built on self-justification.....like those in Jeremiah's day...who attempt to lead but only destroy and scatter....and always leave us with *more to do*.....

Even during COVID those voices told us....that we could work even more at home...after all...if you work from home....you never leave your office..... And on top of that you can learn new languages....write books....start businesses.....reinvent yourself....Work...be productive....keep going-----there's always more work to be done.....

The temptation to *never stop*...is even more alluring when you are following Jesus....doing God's work.....why would ever want to stop..... There's always more to do.....

The disciples come to Jesus....sharing with him all that they had done and taught in his name....they had crossed so much off their....sanctified to-do-lists.....yet..there was more to do---and Jesus....knowing all of this..including the length of their ever expanding list....looks lovingly at them...sweat dripping down their brow And says"Come away to a deserted place all by yourselves and rest a while."

So many self-identified shepherds....try to lead us by telling us....that we are our work...and our worth is built on our performance or productivity....some of those voices even whispers to us....that we have to work harder for God...to earn or keep God's approval or love....that we have to finish up our to-do-list of virtue....or keep hustling for the kingdom....ever improving ourselves....becoming more holy, more pure, more right, and then eventually when all that is crossed off...and there is nothing left to do....then we will be called beloved....then we will be worthy....then...when we finally measure up....we will be forgiven...

It is there...in that place....when we are exhausted and discouraged...*voices all around us*...weary and worn out by the worries of this world and our own hearts...drained by all that we have done and have yet to do....that we hear...in the distance...the voice of the true Shepherd....call to you and I....come away....and rest for a while.... The LORD is your shepherd....who makes you lie down in green pasture...and leads you beside still waters....this one...who restores your soul....who leads you down paths of righteousness..who walks with you even through the darkest valley.....the one who spreads a table before you...even in the midst of your enemies...who anoints your head with oil...the one who will dwell with you...today and forever....

The one who has made you a member of the household of God---by grace alone....

Hear the voice of the Shepherd----who spoke over you in your baptism....before you had done much good or bad....long before the to-do-lists could be written...let alone accomplished.....said to you....you are my beloved child.....you belong to me.....your sins are forgiven....forever.....And I will never love you more than I do right now....and I will never love you any less either.... I have given you life....both now and life eternal....you live in me and I in you....and we are bound together....and nothing can separate us any longer....

The Shepherd beckons you to come away and rest.....find your identity and worth in him....let your soul....exhale....feel it expand....and breathe again.....

In this Shepherd's death and resurrection we have died to the religion of perpetual hustle and endless striving....and have been set free from a life built on endless work and no rest.....where we never quite reach the finish line....or ever illusive fulfillment....the voices of those other shepherds have been drown out and have no power over us anymore....And...we have risen again....to a life...of trust....in this Shepherd's loving care...knowing we are beloved.... Before we are ever anything else..... That is our end and our beginning....

From that broad place....we live our vocations in the world.....we love our neighbors...for their sake alone....and we work for justice in the world....because the Spirit is made alive in our hearts.....we live as the body of Christ....following our Shepherd's call....because that is just what we do....animated by the promises of God....that fill our hearts and spill out into the world...

To-do lists....are not bad....work isn't wrong....it's just not who you are....beloved child of God....and it's not where you find your life or worth.....

There's always more to be done....but it's finally not up to you....to carry it all on your shoulders.....

Because don't you know....the shepherd is already carrying you....on his?

So let the Shepherd carry you....Come away with him.....as often as you need...and find your true rest....rest today...and rest in the world to come.