

Last week we had our planning and vision meeting, and I think it went really well. I was really pleased with everybody who made it. It was great. We had a lot of good conversations. We had a lot of open and real conversations, and that's not something that's really easy to do. You know we all have ideas of what we want to accomplish. We all have ideas on how we can get there. And saying them in an open setting like that sometimes is a little scary, and it's a little hard. We had a meeting on Tuesday here. We invited a group that helps people communicate, and I invited a number of people throughout the community. People from the school, fire department, police department, city hall, as many people as I could think of there would be leadership positions, because I feel that so much in the community. We're not talking, we're not talking to one another. We think something's wrong with something or some group and they don't see it. And it might not be something wrong at all. Might just be my idea that somebody else is doing something that I don't like. And I don't know why they do it the way they do it, or anything like that. So I invited all of these groups to come together.

Like I said last week I got a couple of emails and was just ecstatic because you usually just me and Don to show up at these meetings. But we had a nice group. And we were talking about different things and at the end of the group, the discussion really frustrated me because it went right back to where so many discussions go. When you have somebody from the church, there it went back to. How do we get people in the seats? How do we get people back into churches? And that's part of where our playing meeting went. We were talking about that. How can we get people more engaged here in the church?

And that bothered me. It bothered me more on Tuesday because not everybody there belonged to a church. Not everybody there even lives here in town. So it's like, why are we bringing this back on other people? What we need to do is focus on real issues and real Outreach. But today's reading got me thinking more about it, from our perspective and from a church perspective. Not just everybody, not just random people talking.

When I was a kid, Sunday was meant for church. Sunday was the Christian Sabbath. You didn't do anything on that day. You didn't work. You didn't have sports, you didn't have school plays, you didn't have anything. If you did, it was late in the evening. In the afternoon, we focus on making sure that we kept the Sabbath holy and we say that a lot. Now we say wouldn't the world be better if we had Sundays back to the way they used to be. But even when we didn't have those things on Sunday, it still wasn't holy for everybody. And it wasn't really holy to us as much as we wanted to make believe that it was. My first year of college I went to Central College in Pella. Sundays were a nightmare because everything was closed. I was okay, with some things being closed. You know, we can go to church, we could do whatever. But we had to go to

church. we have an option at Central. But then once you're done, we're like all right. Great. Everything was closed.

So I got frustrated, and we saw that a lot when I was working in the service industry. We would have people come in all the time. And they would chastise us for not going to church On Sunday. Like, why aren't you in church? Depending on my mood I would say, if I was at church, what would you eat? We don't think of it like that when we say that we want to keep Sunday the Sabbath. So many times we are really only talking about one hour. We're just talking about a small portion of the day that we want people to come here. Is that keeping with the Sabbath or is that us putting our views on somebody else?

In our reading today from Luke, the first part, Jesus is walking through the grain field with his disciples, and they're so hungry. They don't even think about it. They grab a handful of grain, and they eat it because they have nothing else. And the Pharisees are seeing them, and they're like, hey, you can't do that. That's working on the Sabbath. Some of the working rules on the Sabbath were a little out there, but they served a point. They wanted to make sure that people were taking time to reflect on their spiritual well-being. Now, God created the world in seven days and God rested. So if God spent a day resting and doing nothing, you should be able to spend a day resting and doing nothing. But if that was really the case, why didn't God say that to somebody long before Moses? He didn't tell Abraham that he had to sit and do nothing one day a week. Or Jacob or Joseph. It didn't come around until Moses' time.

When we started doing the live stream and we all came back after Covid, and it was safe again that we could be together, a number of people wanted us to stop doing the live stream. They're very vocal. If we stop doing the live stream, then people have to come back to the church. They had to come and sit down with us. People still think that when I'm talking to other churches. Right now, I'm helping St. John's develop a system like ours, so they can reach out to more people. There are people at work on Sundays and their Sabbath is Monday or Thursday. So if we don't provide them an opportunity to see this later in the week, are we doing them a benefit by making them feel guilty for not being here on Sunday? Are we benefiting them by not giving them an opportunity to find that spiritual Sabbath for them later in the week? All of our schedules are different even. Well I guess most of yours are similar. But for many of us, we don't run the same times. We don't all wake up at 4:30 so we can get to Git and Go by five. We don't all make sure the kids are at school by eight o'clock. We don't make sure that the big point of our day is getting up in time for lunch. We all have different schedules. Just like we all find God in different ways. We find him on different days. We find them in quiet moments that many of us don't really have. We're so busy fighting all of these things to do. Isn't it more important that we find God in the quiet times? In the times that it is most important to us instead of coming and physically sitting in a place from 10:30 to 11:30 every week.

Now, I'm not telling you To all go home. It's great that we get to spend time together. It's great that we get to remember how much we all love God and how much he loves us, and how we get to share in that together. It's a wonderful, wonderful thing. And sometimes I think we forget that, and sometimes I don't know if I make a good enough point of reminding people that it is wonderful that we're here together, that we're spending time together. But it's just as important that we're not forgetting God during the rest of the week. And it's just as important that we're not forgetting, God speaks to everyone differently. Jesus says, in this one in this reading, that he is the son of man. He's saying that he has all authority on everything. And to some people, they need to hear that to recognize that the Sabbath is important to us at the individual level, to other people that need to hear it. Because they'd forget, but either way, he's still saying it, and he's saying it helped. People can hear. We don't all hear God in the same voice. We don't hear God saying the same things. We don't understand why God does what he does, but we know that one day, it will all make sense. And if we just take a couple minutes every day to sit back and listen, we can hear his voice come through in the smallest details that we might overlook because our lives are so, so busy. So I'm asking us all just to take a second and reflect and hear his voice. Let us pray.