

GOIN' GREEN: REDUCE  
Genesis 2:1-3

The word for today in our Goin' Green series is reduce. What do think of when I say the word REDUCE? Does the word reduce mean increasing portion sizes of the food we eat? Does the word reduce mean to accumulate as much stuff as possible so you need to expand your living quarters to accommodate your stuff? Does the word reduce mean to eat a meal with a cell phone in your ear and a lap top in front of your face? (Discussion regarding these questions) So know that we know what we have to do, is working on the foregoing enough?

In this morning's reading we hear that God rested on the 7<sup>th</sup> day. What did God rest from? God rested from all the work or busyness of the previous 6 days. In other words God's activity ceased or was reduced on the 7<sup>th</sup> day. Just as each of the 6 days prior contained actual acts of God creating, God was also intentional about creating rest on the 7<sup>th</sup> day.

There is a saying that sometimes "less is more" and from Rebekah Simon-Peter's book, "Green Church", we are told that "Weekends are different from weekdays in more ways than one. Not only are they designed for rest, but the earth can tell when we are refraining from work. NASA scientists have detected a 'weekend effect'. They can tell from space where in the world Sabbath is being observed on Friday, Saturday or Sunday because air pollution rates go down in regular, observable ways.

However, this phenomena is not just visible from space; we can see it on the ground. There is some evidence that weather changes depending on the day of the week. In the southeastern United States, based on the amount of particulate matter in the atmosphere, especially from commuting, the frequency and severity of rainstorms and lightning has been linked to the day of the week.

Using satellite data, scientist Tom Bell at NASA's Goddard Space Flight Center linked pollution levels with weather patterns to discover that in that part of the country, rainfall tends to increase in frequency during the week and decrease on the weekend. This appears to be due to heavier midweek particulates in the air from commuting. Storm development and lightning strikes also seem to follow this pattern. In other words, weather patterns tend to follow our work patterns, at least in one part of the United States. So, if you want better weather on the weekends, try honoring the Sabbath. Leave the car in the garage!"

Reducing our use of technology can also make a difference in our environment. Last month I did an experiment. I have heard some say that it takes more energy to turn power on and off, so I left my computer on 24/7 for an entire month. What happened is that I noticed that I used it more often because I could have immediate access. In other words since it was easily accessible and I didn't have to wait for it to power up. I also saw an increase in my utility bill of approximately \$100.00. What I found was that reducing the use of resources gives us more time and can also save us money.

So my question is: What are we doing here if we are supposed to be reducing our activity or resting today? In verse 3 of today's reading it states: "Then God blessed the seventh day and hallowed it ...". The word hallowed means sanctified or set apart. That word has to do with holiness. It also has to do with worship. In the Old Testament, the day of rest was the Sabbath, which was the 7<sup>th</sup> day of the week. Today we observe the Sabbath principle on Sunday which is the first day of the week. Sunday is not the Sabbath. The Sabbath is technically on Saturday. The Lord's Day is on Sunday. The principle of the Sabbath has now been incorporated in to the day called Sunday. The Sabbath existed from creation. There is still a day that is to be hallowed or sanctified, set part for God and God alone and that day is Sunday.

The Sabbath is about honoring God first, at the very start or beginning of our week. Sunday is really not a part of the weekend. Saturday is the weekend and Sunday is the day a new week begins. Just as we ought to give God the first fruits of all our lives, we ought to give God the first day of the week. God should receive the first dime out of every dollar we make. God should also receive the first hour of every day that we live through prayer or devotional time. God's Sabbath is not just to be day of rest; it is to be a day of reverence.

Why do you think God wants us to make sure that our day of rest is also our day of worship? One of the things that we need to do every week is replenish our spirit. Did you know that you can run down spiritually? It is just like a battery that wears out if it isn't charged. That is why we need

to come together on Sundays for our time of fellowship and worship and to study God's word so that we can be filled anew with the Lord's spirit.

Worship encourages us. Worship strengthens our faith. There is nothing more restful than getting together with God's people, studying God's word and worshipping the God of rest. We need to turn off our cell phones when we come into church because we need to understand that this is the one time of week that God deserves our undivided attention.

Here is some food for thoughts: In today's culture:

Do you think we could close our lap tops for one day?

Do we have the boldness to not check our e-mail for 24 hours?

Do we have the discipline to allow a few messages to wait on our cell phones for a day?

Can we turn off television, even if it is a Bills game day, or computer games for 24 hours?

Think about the difference that kind of commitment may make in our week ... in our work ... in our worship ... in our walk.

In addition to recharging our battery and reducing our use of resources, there is also a spiritual application to this day. The reason why God sent his Son, Jesus Christ, to this world was to do the work of salvation that only He could do, so that we could rest from trying to work for our salvation and earn it, which we can't and instead rest in His finished work on the cross. By reducing other things in our lives we realize that there is not rest like the rest we have in our heart when we know we are right with God

through a personal relationship with Jesus Christ. We can't work or earn our way to heaven. All we need to do is realize we can rest permanently when we give our heart to Christ knowing He has completed the work of our salvation. Amen.