

“The Recreation Room”

Matthew 6:25-34

8/2/09

The spirituality of fun! Take time to relax.

We have reached the end of our home makeover—our fourth and final room that we take a close look at this morning. We have looked closely at our hearts as we cleaned out the hall closet, put ourselves on a diet of God’s Word and Spirit as we rummaged through the kitchen, and opened up our relationships as we moved from the living room into the family room.

And now we reach a room that I honestly did not grow up with in my home, nor do we truly have one in our home now, but a favorite nonetheless: The Recreation Room.

I guess the name speaks for itself for what happens in the recreation room. You have fun. It’s where the typical rules for the house don’t apply, because you can play games in there and be loud and maybe make a mess.

I looked up “recreation” on Wikipedia, the online encyclopedia, and here is what it said:

Recreation or **fun** is the expenditure of time in a manner designed for therapeutic refreshment of one's [body](#) or [mind](#). While [leisure](#) is more likely a form of [entertainment](#) or sleep, recreation is active for the participant but in a refreshing and diverting manner.

Sounds like a serious answer to a fun subject. But it really is about our question this morning:

What do you do for fun? What activities do you do to refresh your mind, body, and spirit?

It’s probably not a subject we hear too many sermons about. But how important it really is!

Now of course, when we talk about recreation this morning—having fun—it is about God-honoring activities. I mean, there are a lot of things that may be fun that are not good. Just have to make sure I say that. ☺

But something as adults we can sometimes forget is that:

God has given us life to enjoy it.

Now, let me say that clearly there are many folks around us now and always in the world that, by no fault of their own, have a difficult time enjoying life. We know what illness and loss and stress and violence and hunger and every other struggle humans face everyday can do to a person. To say flat-out to someone in that kind of situation, “Come on, just have some fun!” would be hurtful to say the least.

Life is not all fun and games to be sure. But listen to what God has to say to us.

“Therefore I tell you, do not worry about your life.” Matthew 6:25

“You show me the path of life. In Your presence there is fullness of joy; in your right hand are pleasures forevermore.” Psalm 16:11

“The Lord is my shepherd, I shall not want. He makes me lie down in green pastures; He leads me beside still waters; He restores my soul.” Psalm 23:1-2

“As for those who in the present age are rich, command them not to be haughty, or to set their hopes on the uncertainty of riches, but rather on God who richly provides us with everything for our enjoyment.” 1 Timothy 6:17

“So I commend enjoyment, for there is nothing better for people under the sun than to eat, and drink, and enjoy themselves, for this will go with them in their toil through the days of life that God gives them under the sun.” Ecclesiastes 8:15

God has given us life to enjoy it.

Let me reflect on something for a minute. It seems as if there is an image of Jesus that we have created, one that I am not so sure is completely accurate. It’s the image of Jesus as some somber, boring, deadly serious Man who never cracked a smile or had fun. We have our friendly looking pictures of Jesus that we hang on the children’s walls, but I am not so sure we adults truly buy into that image. Religion, Jesus is serious business.

Probably we preachers can get caught up in making it that way. And to be sure, reading God’s Word, spending time in prayer with God, being here with our faith community, serving God, are all things we must take seriously, in that these are critical for life and what we are called to be about. It is not something to take lightly.

But it’s not always some heavy thing either. God has given us life to enjoy it, and that includes our relationship with Him.

Nehemiah 8:10 says, “The joy of the Lord is our strength.”

Psalm 150 says, “Praise the Lord! Praise God in His sanctuary; praise Him in His mighty firmament! Praise Him with trumpet sound; praise Him with the lute and harp! Praise Him with the tambourine and dance; praise Him with the strings and pipe! Praise Him with clanging cymbals; praise Him with the loud clashing cymbals! Let everything that breathes praise the Lord!”

That sounds like fun! Everyone of those directives ends with an exclamation point! This is not somber, serious affair, but joy and enjoyment with God!

Let’s just stop and think for a moment on this. Jesus was fully human just as He was fully God. I know, something I will never get my mind around, but true all the same. So He was a Man. He had emotions. He was angry when He turned over the tables at the Temple. He was sometimes sharp with others, as when He called the Pharisees “white-washed tombs full of the bones of the dead and all kinds of filth.” (Matthew 23:27) He was not endlessly patient, as we try and make Him out to be. He was impatient with His inept disciples, like when He says, “How much longer must I endure you?”

Jesus was a Man, with emotions, feelings, passions, love, suffering, sadness, and, as I am certain, He had fun. I mean, first you got to think that He hung around with 12 guys all the time for three years, walking to different towns, lots of downtime as they traveled. Do you honestly think that every single second that He was with these guys He only sat in somber quietness and gave them their lessons?

If I get together with 12 of my closest guy friends, I know exactly what happens. Now, Jesus was sinless—He didn’t act like a fool like I have and continue to do on occasion. But together with 12 other guys for that amount of constant time, I don’t think it’s too much of a stretch to say that He laughed from time to time. Probably a lot. In fact, I’m certain Jesus had a terrific sense of humor. Any person that I respect in life and that exemplifies godly character has a good sense of humor.

God made us to enjoy life.

Now, maybe you are sitting here thinking to yourself, “I don’t have a recreation room in my house.”

Not all of us have an actual rec room in our homes. It’s not always something you have room for. And certainly it’s not something you can just go home and add on to your house.

And as I thought about that it makes this message that more clear: No, we don’t all have that in our homes, and how much does that mirror our lives?

We might think, just like our homes, “I don’t have room for recreation. That’s not something I can add on to my life.”

But it is something already given to us in life by God, and not just for the sake of fun, but recreation has important value for our lives.

Recreation is a healing activity.

We must learn to intentionally pursue emotionally and spiritually replenishing experiences. When you hurt, if you don’t find something God-honoring to fill your tanks with, you’ll find something that isn’t God-honoring. Or at the very least, you’ll be vulnerable to something that isn’t.

We touched on that a few weeks ago when we talked about what we feed ourselves, that we must be intentional about feeding on good things—God’s Word and Spirit.

But today is even a little different than that. Today is about truly making time for release, refreshing, refocusing.

What are things that flow deep emotional and spiritual joy into your life? For some folks it’s boating, or golf, or gardening, or reading. For me, it’s travel, time alone with family, and enjoying anything outdoors.

There’s a whole host of possibilities. God has given you passions and interests to use for enjoyment and wellness in life.

I read an article about depression this week, that highlighted something that doesn’t sound all that new. It says,

“Researchers at Britain’s Essex University have found a much cheaper alternative than medicine to treat depression, with few side effects: nature. Seventy-one percent of those suffering from depression said a 30-minute walk outdoors ‘made them feel better about themselves.’ Of the 108 patients who took part in conservation projects, went cycling, or hiked, 94 percent said the activities brought about greater mental health. Researchers are calling the new treatment *ecotherapy*.

Brian Lowery, associate editor, PreachingToday.com; source: "Health & Science," The Week (6-15-07), p. 20

I would argue that it’s not all that new. Of course there are those that need the help of medicine. I have seen how it has helped many individuals. So that is true and necessary.

But it’s nothing new that being in God’s creation—ecotherapy or whatever you want to call it—has great benefits. Look at how much of the Bible praises God for His wonder of creation.

Psalm 148: *“Praise the Lord from the heavens! Praise Him sun and moon, shining stars! Praise the Lord from the earth. You sea monsters and all deeps, fire, hail, snow, frost, stormy wind fulfilling His command! Mountains and hills, fruit trees and all cedars! Wild animals and all cattle, creeping things and flying birds! Praise the Lord!”*

When you’re in it all you can do is praise God, and that is good for the soul.

Recreation is a way to allow God to re-create you.

Although the words are not really related, I have to make that play on them: recreation is a re-creation of yourself.

Theologian Thomas Aquinas...concluded: "God plays. God creates playing. And man should play if he is to live as humanly as possible and to know reality, since it is created by God's playfulness."

Recreation forgets about time.

"Time flies when you're having fun," we say. And it is true. That's what's so great about it, because we are such a time-driven society, always watching the clock. It's breakfast time, work time, sleep time, bath time. It's time for school, time to go, time for church.

Let's be honest, how many of us sit here and look at our watches to see if we are going over an hour for worship?

We need time to forget about time. Space, if you will, to simply enjoy life and God and others around us.

Recreation forgets about routine.

It's one of the blessings I have received in having children. There's no choice but to put your watch away and your calendar away and your iphones away and get on your knees and play.

Now that we are all a little older, we love to be outside doing stuff, or just walk around in the yard and talk, or go to local parks and places to check them out. And all of a sudden I realize that I am looking at the trees and the sky and all my surroundings like I did when I was younger, full of imagination and wonder.

I actually remember how great God is and simple yet amazing all this really is. It's that childlike faith Jesus talked about—not simple minded, but open minded and wide-eyed at what an awesome miracle just being alive really is.

It's when I can stop taking myself so seriously. Because if I stop and play, well, I am pretty sure the earth is going to keep turning.

Of course, there's something else that happens with all this.

Recreation builds relationships.

With others and with God.

When I take a walk alone, I am not alone. And that is some of my best time to talk with God and listen to God and just let my mind and soul be where they want to with God. I feel my heart beat, my muscles work together, my eyes alight with all the surrounding beauty, my breath which carries me the next step, smells of green and earth and the sounds of creation all singing in harmony in praise to God.

And with my family we bond as we engage in the give and take of activity together, learning our likes and dislikes, laughing, listening, helping, giving.

Hear these words from Ecclesiastes again: *"So I commend enjoyment, for there is nothing better for people under the sun than to eat, and drink, and enjoy themselves, for this will go with them in their toil through the days of life that God gives them under the sun."*

It is in those times of enjoyment—with God and others—that carries us for the days ahead. Because there is much toil in life. But take time, even in the simplest of ways, to allow God to restore your soul. Amen.