

“My Sunday: Making Sunday a Day of Worship”
by Rom A. Pegram (10/1/17)

Welcome back to our early fall worship series—BACK ON TRACK! This series, folks, has been all about those of us who’ve felt just a little bit off track with God—after the summer months, after all the *good* distractions of this time of year. For many of us, over the past few months, maybe our spiritual disciplines or patterns of staying in touch with God have been interrupted. Maybe attending church has been set aside, or we’ve forgotten to pray or talk to God recently. Some of you have said to me, “Rom, I’m just feeling a bit off track with God and really need to get back on.” The GOOD NEWS is God wants to meet you right where you’re at and help you right back on those tracks. And, as I’ve said before, there’s no better time than right now. Take a look with me, if you would, at our first verse for today. This verse is both a promise & a challenge from God. Would you read it with me? James 4:8 says, “**Come close to God and God will come close to you.**”

And that’s what we’re going to do this morning, as we get our lives back on track with God. Take a look at your outline in the bulletin right now, would you? Again, at the top of the note page, there’s a diagram that’s guided us through this series with ‘words for the week’ ... and I have another one for you today. In week one, we talked about our morning routines and the word for that week was ‘Priority.’ How can we make God a priority in our lives, starting first thing in the morning? Week two was all about our day and the word we focused on that week was ‘Mission.’ When we go to work, we need God’s perspective—that we’re on a mission with God. Last week, we covered evenings and our key word was ‘Rest.’ How do we end our days in a way that honors God and gives us rest? And today, I want to talk with you not just about a *part* of your day; I want to talk with you about an *entire* day, a day that—in God’s eyes—is the most important day of your week. I want to talk to you about your Sunday...

Now, if we’re honest with each other today, we know Sundays are a mixed bag in Wisconsin. Sundays are an important day to do many things—many *good* things that we enjoy doing with family & friends, especially during the summer months. What are some things people love to use Sundays for? Here’s a few...

- It’s a time to ‘get away’—to the family cottage or land, to go camping, to do day trips to special places in our beautiful state (like Door County or the lakeshore)...
- It’s a time for ball games or ball tournaments—often scheduled on Sundays; these vary widely from professional sports, to college sports, clear down to the little ones playing ball tournaments on weekends...
- Or we live in an area where there are absolutely beautiful parks; that’s a great way to spend family time or personal time on Sundays, isn’t it?

And these are all GOOD THINGS! *Some larger cities actually have lists of things to do on Sundays (50 Thing You Could Do on Sundays, etc.).* I’ve looked at some of those lists, but do you know what’s *not* on the majority of those lists anywhere? Church. Going to church. Many people all across our country aren’t even thinking about the possibility of going to church on Sunday. In light of that, I want you to hear me clearly today: YOUR SUNDAY MATTERS. Sunday is the day of Jesus’ resurrection. As Christians

(Christ-followers), it's the one day of the week we set aside completely for him. We set aside our daily work and we focus on God. We come to church. We come to be with one another, and we connect (get back on track) with God.

And folks, when we do, something happens here that can't be imitated anywhere else. When we're together on Sunday, *God recharges us!* In fact, in your notes, that's our key word for today: 'recharge.' The truth is, a lot of what happens during your week—Monday-to-Saturday—drains you. It wears you down. You're running and running, and you're getting more and more drained. And that's due—at least in part—to the fact you could be distracted from what's most important.

The rest of the days seem to pull us away from God—our ultimate power source. But Sunday, that's when you come to church with your spiritual family. It's the one day of the week dedicated to *recharging* you spiritually and emotionally. It's the one day of the week you stop doing the work you do the other six days and plug into God. It's the day dedicated to worship and getting back on track with God so you're ready for the upcoming week. Right now, you're plugged into your power source (at least, I hope you are); you're getting back on track with God right now so you're ready to face the week that's ahead...

That's why I believe we should be excited to come to Trinity every week. That's why you should be glad to be here with your spiritual family. And that reminds me of what the psalmist said in 122:1 (*Would you read it with me?*): **"I was glad when they said to me, 'Let us go to the house of the Lord.'"** I hope that's your heart today; I hope you're glad when you get to come to the 'house of the Lord'!

Folks, open your notes for today ... and I want to show you four small steps you can take to make sure Trinity will be your 'recharge station'—the place you can always get recharged for the week. Are you ready? *To make Sunday a day of worship and fully recharge, here's the first step:*

PROTECT SUNDAY IN MY SCHEDULE. Why is it so easy to get 'off track' with God on Sundays? It's because there're so many things competing for our time & attention! If we're honest today, one of the reasons Sundays are no longer given to God is because there are so many distractions...

- Saturday nights are the time to stay out late! (I'm still looking for local bands who play a 3-6 PM gig on Saturdays, but I can't find one...) If you're out late on Saturday, you're not going to want to get up Sunday morning...
- Some of you are in school and Sunday's the day where you catch up on homework—write all those papers...
- For some, it's a time to catch up with friends & meet for Sunday brunch...
- For others, it's when you watch six NFL football games (all at the same time) ... and check on your fantasy football team to see how they're doing...
- As a parent, it seems like everything is scheduled for Sundays these days—kids' birthday parties, soccer practice—every event is on Sundays...

And, folks, THESE ARE ALL GOOD THINGS! *They're all things you can do, but are you protecting your schedule for the best things?* Are you making room for God? If you want to get back on track with God, it starts with putting God first in your Sunday schedule, making church the nonnegotiable anchor around which you schedule everything else—letting it all fall into place around your time with God. Be honest today. You're not going to get back on track with God, or get recharged spiritually and emotionally for the coming week, if you're not making room for God on the first day of the week...

Hebrews 10:25 reminds us that even Christians in the first century struggled with all this. The author of Hebrews writes: "Let us not neglect our meeting together, as some people do, but encourage one another, especially now that the day of his [Jesus'] return is drawing near." Folks, you don't have to miss out on all these other fun things we've been talking about today. You don't have to miss the Packer game...

I was so proud of my adult children who had their first opportunity to go to a Packer game last weekend ... but they came to Trinity with their 2 ½ year old and their 1 year old *before* going off to the game. They're adults; they make up their own mind. This dad never even tries to persuade his adult children when it comes to their walk with God. Jane and I raised them to the best of our abilities; now we leave it to God. But they know how important Sundays are to their whole week, so they make it a priority. ... But, they didn't miss the Packer game (or the tailgating), and I'm glad they didn't (great game!)...

Now, I know some of you have to work on Sundays from time to time (or regularly) and God knows that too. But what I'm trying to move you toward today is this: *I want you to set aside whatever excuses that keep coming up that prevent you from being here on Sunday with your church family.* Again, make being with God in worship nonnegotiable—the center of your schedule around which everything else falls in place. If you do, God's going to honor that ... and bless that.

Jesus, in the Sermon on the Mount (Matthew 6:33), shares this: "Seek the Kingdom of God above all else, and live righteously, and he will give you everything you need." Yes, you can still go to lunch. You can still make soccer practice ... and the Packer game. But *don't use those 'good things' as an excuse to miss the most important 60 minutes of your week!* **Protect Sunday on your schedule;** then...

PREPARE MY HEART BEFORE COMING TO CHURCH. The condition of your heart is critical to being able to get the most out of the Sunday service, to being able to hear from God, and to sense his presence when you're here; *it's vital!* The truth is ... a hard heart blocks God's power in you; it prevents you from sensing God's presence, from getting recharged for the week!

The fact is, many Sundays we come to church distracted, don't we? We've got tons on our mind—worried about finances, worried about work, worried about that fight you had with your roommate or spouse, worried about the report that's coming back from the

doctor—all these things, when you walk into service. Your mind is everywhere but on God; your heart isn't yet prepared for God.

And *maybe you come with the wrong motivations*. Maybe church has become an obligation; you're here because you feel you have to be. And when you're here, you're just going through the motions. You're singing the songs, your taking notes, but your heart's not in it. And the reason is ... *your heart's not right*. Then you wonder, "Why didn't the message speak to me today? Why didn't I hear from God?"

Jesus talks about this predicament in Matthew 15:8; here's what he says: "These people honor me with their lips, but their hearts are far from me." Have you ever felt this way? Like you're just going through the motions? You're doing the right things, but your heart's not really connecting to God...

So, *what are some small things you can do to get your heart right*, so when you walk in here on a Sunday you can connect with God?

- **Get your heart right with God on Saturday night.** Plan your Saturday night with Sunday in mind. If you're *not* going to be out late Saturday, plan on the 8 AM service. If you know you're going to be out late on Saturday, plan on the 10 AM service. Whatever your choice, make sure you get to bed on time to be able to say, "I was glad when they said to me, 'let us go to the house of the Lord,'" instead of waking up thinking, "I don't want to go to the house of the Lord! I have a headache (or I'm too tired)!" *What you do the night before has a lot to do with how ready your heart is for Sunday worship—to meet God...*
- **Get your heart right for Sunday by praying on your commute.** If you've got kids, this may be automatic: "Lord, please help my kids behave today so I can enjoy worship!" But turn stuff over to God in prayer, pray for our pastor, etc., so you're ready to worship when you get here. In other words, *don't let the first time you think about God be on Sunday when you sit down in the pew!*
- **Take the first song in worship, or the first prayer time, to give God whatever's on your mind—whatever might distract you from being recharged.** Don't just honor God with your lips; honor him with your heart by making sure you're prepared to hear from him even before you come in... Next:

PARTICIPATE FULLY IN THE SERVICE. If you want to get the most out of being here on Sundays, getting fully recharged during worship, the key is to be *fully here when you're here!* For a lot of us, that's going to require a change of our mindset...

Some 400 years ago, it was widely believed the earth was the center of the universe—every other planet or body in space revolved around the earth—and we were the center of the universe. Imagine the surprise when Copernicus discovered the earth wasn't the center of the universe, but the sun was and everything revolves around that. It required a huge change of mindset for people to understand they weren't the center of the universe...

Today, we suffer from a similar misconception; many go to church on Sundays and still think they're the center of the universe. They think they're the center of the worship service and everything else revolves around them—that's all that matters. We come on Sunday and say things like, "Well, that message didn't speak to me. I don't even know what Pastor Rom was talking about today," or "I didn't like that song. That didn't make sense to me," or "Man, it's too cold in here," or "Who cuts Pastor Rom's little bit of hair anyway? It looks terrible. Geez." We have all these things we say and you know what they indicate? It's all about me—everything and everyone else rotates around me to meet my needs. But, is that right? (Stay with me, would you?)

Folks, like Copernicus, we need to discover we're not the center of the universe, but God is—that it's not just about me on Sundays, but it's really about him. God should be the focus; I am not! And if we can adjust our mindset around this, we're going to begin to have a much richer and fuller experience in the worship service. We're going to get more out of it. We're going to plug into God and get fully recharged!

Here're 4 quick, practical ways you can put God at the center of worship:

- *Serving* – Nothing gets your heart right, connects you with God, and gets you recharged on Sundays more than serving others; the more you pour your life into others, the more God can pour his life into you (and just once-a-month can make a huge difference!).
- *Singing* – Whether you sing well ... or not so well, singing is a wonderful way to connect with God and to get recharged by God at worship. Everyone can sing corporately, making a 'joyful noise' unto the Lord...
- *Taking Notes* – We give you a note sheet every week so you can take notes—a discipline that helps you engage and retain what you hear. You remember a lot more if you write it down, than if you just hear it...
- *Give Generously* – Sometimes we get 'off track' with God when we're not honoring him in certain areas of our lives; this one's very common. And I mention this almost every single week. Our offering at church is a tangible way of responding to God's word. Are we thankful for God's word in our lives? Are we thankful God loves us enough to share his word with us—leading and guiding our lives? It's an act of worship...

1 Corinthians 14:26 says, "Well, my brothers and sisters, when you meet together, one will sing, another will teach, another will tell some special revelation God has given, but everything that is done must strengthen all of you." God wants to strengthen you at the Sunday service, as we participate fully... Finally:

PRAY ABOUT WHO TO INVITE NEXT SUNDAY. Listen, as I close today, think about this: If Jesus has impacted your life, let him use you to impact someone else's life this week, won't you? Acts 22:15 reminds us, "For you are to be his witness, telling everyone what you have seen or heard." People need GOOD NEWS ... and we have it! Remember what God told us through Jeremiah (15:19): "The LORD says: 'If you return to me, I will restore you.'" There's the GOOD NEWS people need to hear. There's the GOOD NEWS that'll help get you 'back on track.' Don't ever forget that...