

Lent Series
Busy: Reconnecting with an Unhurried God

Busy
Ash Wednesday Worship
March 6, 2019

Taking a Breather

As we gather together, we will use the first part of the service to slow down, to settle our souls so that we might reconnect with an “unhurried God.”

Prelude

At Calvary
Towner

Slow It Down (ticking clock)

We live in a clock-ticking world

at a break-neck pace

trying to accomplish overwhelming tasks

day after day after day...

What does it cost to be so busy?

*[fade the clock-ticking audio and begin slow, soft piano or guitar
underscoring for the theme song]*

This Lent,

fast from hurry

fast from worry

come and find a quiet center.

Gathering Song 2128 (verse 1)
Center

Come and Find the Quiet

*Come and find the quiet center
in the crowded lives we lead
Find the room for hope to enter,
find the frame where we are freed:
Clear the chaos and the clutter,
clear our eyes that we can see
All the things that really matter,
be at peace, and simply be...*

Catching our Breath

I invite you to a deep breath...

[take a moment to breathe in and out slowly]

If you have a watch on, I invite you to take it off for this hour of worship.

If you have a phone, I invite you to turn it off or put it away now.

If that makes you very anxious, that's OK.

Just notice the feeling and give it some thought.

As Lent begins, let these simple acts (or maybe not-so-simple acts)

be a sign of the commitment to give ourselves a break,

to give ourselves just a moment to catch our breath,

to give ourselves time to give God attention.

Prayer for Clearing Out (responsive)

Let us pray a "prayer for clearing out..."

Forgiving God, we are not sure we can slow down.

Help us make room for you.

We have too often crowded you out, too busy even to make a change.

Help us find room for you.

We come to you wanting it to be different.

Let us be room for you.

In the name of Jesus, who invites us to wholeness.

Amen.

+Hymn 172 (Upper Room Worship)

Dust & Ashes

Taking Note

The second part of our service invites us to “take note” of what God is saying to us this day, through scripture, music, and sermon.

Gospel Reading

Matthew 6: 1-16

The Message

“Be especially careful when you are trying to be good so that you don’t make a performance out of it. It might be good theater, but the God who made you won’t be applauding... And when you come before God, don’t turn that into a theatrical production either. All these people making a regular show out of their prayers, hoping for stardom! Do you think God sits in a box seat? Here’s what I want you to do: Find a quiet, secluded place so you won’t be tempted to role-play before God. Just be there as simply and honestly as you can manage. The focus will shift from you to God, and you will begin to sense God’s grace.

Anthem

Lamb of God

Paris

Chancel Choir

Reflection

Liz Rolf

Kanerva

Sermon Note: In this 21st century world, many of us have come to believe, however subconsciously, that being “busy” is what is required of us

and ultimately what makes us a good person. But perhaps we've forgotten that God isn't looking for humans to "perform" as if we must earn God's love (or anyone's love) through succumbing to a faster pace for more productivity in order to be "worthy." How can we be "simply and honestly" present in this Lent season? We begin by repenting or "turning around" from unrealistic expectations and false beliefs. Include an introduction to the use of ashes in your reflection.

Time Out in the Prayer Chair

Pastor: If you raised children, or are raising children, or even if you haven't or aren't, you've heard of a "time out." We give a time out when a break is needed. Perhaps we need to think about the consequences of an action or we just need to break the intensity. Perhaps we are spiraling emotionally and need some perspective. Perhaps we just need to get quiet so we can change the course of action. In this series, we are giving ourselves a "time out" and we are sending ourselves to the Prayer Chair.

This will be a time for letting go of the things we do not need that are weighing us down, sometimes known as "confession, assurance, and petition." These three ways of reconnecting with God are ancient and just make so much sense.

In confession, we let go of regret about the past—unburdening our hearts. Then we remember the promise and assurance that God will never abandon us, no matter what, even when sometimes we are the ones who have been distant.

And in petitions, we let go of worry about the things we cannot control and worry about the future—giving it all to the loving God who holds us close and rocks us gently.

My hope is that you will also designate a prayer chair at home and find time each day to give yourself a “time-out in your Prayer Chair” to let go, remember God’s presence, and ask God to hold all those you hold dear.

So let’s just start with some silence... and it’s OK not to try to find words to fill that silence in your head. And it’s OK if thoughts won’t quiet down. Just find a stillness, perhaps calling your attention to your feet on the floor or your hands in your lap and your breath in and out. There is nothing expected of you now. There is nowhere to go, nowhere to be. This stillness, this being, is enough.

[music fades to silence... take the amount of silence your congregation is used to—you may want to see if you can stretch it a bit longer each week of the series.]

A voice (or voices) break the silence with vs. 2 of “Come and Find the Quiet Center,” sung slowly, perhaps a cappella]

Gathering Song 2128 (verse 2) *Come and Find the Quiet Center*
Silence is a friend who claims us, cools the heat and slows the pace,
God it is who speaks and names us, knows our being, touches base
Making space within our thinking, lifting shades to show the sun,
Raising courage when we’re shrinking, finding scope for faith begun.

For the times when we have been too busy for you, God... forgive us.

For the times when we have been too busy to take care of ourselves...
forgive us.

For the times when we have been too busy to let our loved ones know
how much we love them... forgive us.

Help us be open to your nudge in this season, to adjust to *your* timing for
us.

In this moment we hear your promise:

“You can just be you. It’s enough.

You don’t have to ‘perform’ for me,

or try to be anybody else except for who I created you to be.”

You do not ask us to live up to the standards of the world’s version of success. We are your children, and you love us. Right now.

We bring our petitions to you this day, O God. Here are the people and things we are worried about and yet know that we cannot control:

Lord’s Prayer

The God Box

Fasting is an ancient practice for many traditions, and in the Christian tradition it became especially associated with the time of Lent as a way of having a more focused prayer life. Over time, giving something up during Lent gained the notion that we were doing this as some sort of punishment, but if we go back to the deeper sense of the purpose of fasting, it is simply to make more room in our lives for God. And so for this Lent, we are going to make more room by letting go of the hurry that threatens to suck the joy out of our lives and the kind of worry that is a misguided need to control outcomes, which of course, we cannot do. We’ll have practices of slowing down—you are invited to find a chair at home that can be your “Prayer Chair” and we will give you prayers each week for that time at home.

For fasting from worry, we are going to use what’s called a “God Box.” You were given a slip of paper when you came in. I invite you to write on it the things you worry most about. As you come to receive ashes, you are invited

to put that paper in this God Box as a sign that you are letting go of that which you cannot control into the care of God. We will practice replacing the time we spend worrying with the Serenity Prayer by Reinhold Neibhur, 20th c. theologian.

“God, grant me the serenity to accept the things I cannot change; the courage to change the things I can; and the wisdom to know the difference.”

Reception of Ashes

Beloved people of God:
in only 7 weeks we will celebrate our redemption
through the death and resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Lent is a time for us to prepare for this celebration and to renew our life in the paschal mystery. And so we begin this holy season, this journey of reconnecting, by acknowledging our need for repentance to turn back from unrealistic expectations we impose on ourselves, our children, our neighbors, our spouses, our neighbors, and strangers.

We begin our journey to Easter with the sign of ashes. This ancient sign speaks of the frailty and uncertainty of human life and may it be a visual reminder to each one...

Remember that you are dust,
and to dust you shall return. Amen.

Taking It Out

The final movement of our service is a time of committing to take a bit of this serenity and peace out into a busy world. We are reminded to
“keep the main thing the main thing.”

+Closing Song 840

It Is Well with My Soul

+Invitation to Lenten Practice

So when you get home, find a chair that will be your Prayer Chair for Lent. Maybe put a candle next to it to light for your prayer time. We have today's prayer ready for you to use...[announce that it is an insert or that they can pick one up on the way out] and each week we will have the prayer from worship for you to take home

And then find a small box, perhaps shoebox size, and decorate it if you like and put the Serenity Prayer on it, perhaps cutting it out of this worship guide and gluing it on. This God Box will also be available here in the sanctuary throughout the season whenever you need to add to it.

+Blessing

May this journey change your way
of thinking and being.

May this journey open you to more loving,
more living, and more thriving.

May you know deeply that there is time enough
for you, for your relationships, for your work AND for prayer.

And may you be re-acquainted each day
with an unhurried God
who is calling you to dive deeply into love.

Gathering Song 2128 (verse 3)
Center

Come and Find the Quiet

In the Spirit let us travel, open to each other's pain,
Let our loves and fears unravel, celebrate the space we gain:
There's a place for deepest dreaming, there's a time for heart to care,
in the Spirit's lively scheming there is always room to spare.

Postlude

What Wondrous Love Is This