

Selah for the Soul

I would like to thank Pastor Randy for that awesome word last week. I want to thank my team and the church for allowing Nikki and I to get away for a couple of days to see family in Georgia. We got to spend time with her mom and stepdad as well as her 101-year-old great grandma. The plan was to drive but we would break up the drive. It's about 12 hours to get to Nikki's mom's house so we stayed the night at the beach in Alabama and then Jackson Mississippi on the way back. Hanging with family there was no agenda. Just hanging out, eating, and fishing. There were two things I did not like about the trip. The first is the obvious 24 hours of driving. Although I listened to some great books and podcasts, it was still rough. The second thing I did not like was that I fished for 6 hours and didn't catch a single thing. My father-in-law on the other hand, caught about 20. He was trying to be a good coach and every time he pointed out a new tip he would catch a fish with that technique. He would say, "Try casting off the side of the boat instead of the rear like this" and then he would catch a fish doing that. Or "all the fish are on the bottom of the lake according to my fish finder so try working your lure through the grass" and then he would catch another fish. This went on for 6 hours. We were fishing for crappy, so we had a jig head with a little bright grubworm lure. The trick is to cast out and just slowly reel in so the grub can swim and the fish jump out and get it. Now, you all know me, I can't do anything slow. I walk fast, talk fast, eat fast, and sleep fast. Fishing is no different. My father-in-law would say, "You need to reel a little slower Rudy." He was so patient with me and wouldn't repeat his advice the same way twice. He made me laugh when he said, "Whatever you think is slow, cut it in half." I go too fast for my own good. What I have found to be true in my life is that I often find myself in trouble or frustration because I don't know how to be patient and slow down.

You have probably already seen the title of today's message in your bulletins. I want to teach for a few moments on the title "Selah for the Soul." There are many definitions of what scholars think the word Selah means. When you break all the definitions down, they define the word Selah as "to pause and calmly think about." "Selah" appears 74 times in Scripture—71 occurrences in the Psalms and three in Habakkuk. The word is always found within a song, psalm, or prayer. Of the 39 psalms that include it, nearly all have the phrase "to the choirmaster" at the beginning. We can thus conclude "selah" is a musical term of some sort. Here is an example in Psalm 46:

God is our refuge and strength, A very present help in trouble. 2 Therefore we will not fear, though the earth should change And though the mountains slip into the heart of the sea; 3 Though its waters roar and foam, Though the mountains quake at its swelling pride. Selah. -Psalm 46:1-3 NASB1995

So many places in the Scripture we see the pattern of resting, pausing, and reflecting. From the very beginning, God initiated the sabbaths day of rest. Even God Himself took time to rest. Jesus while on earth demonstrated the same thing as He often got away to lonely places to rest and be with the Father. How many times do we see the phrase "wait on the Lord" in Scripture? God does not want us to work ourselves to the bone or go too fast for our own good. One pastor was asked by a little old lady why he was always working and never took a day off. The pastor

answered saying, “Well, the devil never takes a day off, so I won’t either.” The little old lady corrected him and said, “Why is the devil your role model?”

Your life today can drastically change if you included the power of the pause, or a *selah* for your soul. In the Passion Translation of the Bible, Brian Simmons translates “*Selah*” using the phrase “pause in His presence.” Today I want to prove to you that pausing or taking a *selah* can change your life and position you to be better used by God. Today I want to look at a passage of Scripture that from the outside looks like a delay but is actually a powerful pause. If you have your Bibles, go with me to the Gospel of John chapter 11. We are going to begin in verse 1:

Now a certain man was sick, Lazarus of Bethany, the village of Mary and her sister Martha. 2 It was the Mary who anointed the Lord with ointment, and wiped His feet with her hair, whose brother Lazarus was sick. 3 So the sisters sent word to Him, saying, “Lord, behold, he whom You love is sick.” 4 But when Jesus heard this, He said, “This sickness is not to end in death, but for the glory of God, so that the Son of God may be glorified by it.” 5 Now Jesus loved Martha and her sister and Lazarus. 6 So when He heard that he was sick, He then stayed two days longer in the place where He was. 7 Then after this He said to the disciples, “Let us go to Judea again.” 8 The disciples said to Him, “Rabbi, the Jews were just now seeking to stone You, and are You going there again?” 9 Jesus answered, “Are there not twelve hours in the day? If anyone walks in the day, he does not stumble, because he sees the light of this world. 10 But if anyone walks in the night, he stumbles, because the light is not in him.” 11 This He said, and after that He said to them, “Our friend Lazarus has fallen asleep; but I go, so that I may awaken him out of sleep.” 12 The disciples then said to Him, “Lord, if he has fallen asleep, he will recover.” 13 Now Jesus had spoken of his death, but they thought that He was speaking of literal sleep. 14 So Jesus then said to them plainly, “Lazarus is dead, 15 and I am glad for your sakes that I was not there, so that you may believe; but let us go to him.” – John 11:1-15 NASB1995

The name Lazarus is the Greek form of Eleazar which means “God is my help.” Something we need to understand in the *selah* moments of life is that God is always in control and always our help. We feel passive in the pause. We think nothing is going to happen in the pause. But the reality is that God is always working. God always has a plan. We are often too busy to recognize that plan which makes the pause all the more important.

Let me set up the shock of this story with another story. When I was about 15, I was working a summer job and had my mom pick me up from work on day. While we were driving home, I heard a very loud and violent boom. My mom yelled something out and I thought our car was exploding or something. What really happened was a little old lady had served and hit the bottom of a light post on the side of the road and then flipped her car several times. My mom made a fast U-turn and we got to the scene of the accident. By the time we got to the accident, other people had gathered around the car. My mom threw me her cell phone and said to call 911. Now, all the people gathered were doing nothing. Gas was pouring out of the vehicle and the engine was still on. It didn’t phase my mom as she pushed people out of the way, pulled the door open, got on her back and supported the lady’s neck while pulling her to safety. You see that’s the kind of urgency you expect during an emergency. But Jesus didn’t do this. He wasn’t urgent when He heard Lazarus was deathly ill. Instead, Jesus delays. Jesus stays two more days. Now, there are a lot of

ideas why Jesus did this, but the important thing is to understand Jesus was not afraid to pause because Jesus understood supernatural authority and power. Even death is not greater than the power of God and there is nothing too difficult for the Lord. Jesus could pause in confidence and then obey the will of God.

If Jesus needed to pause, how much more us? I read one statistic that said the average human thinks 6,000 thoughts per day. I know several of us in here are more like 16,000. Now, here is a staggering fact, of those 6,000 thoughts, 95% are repetitive. Meaning without even realizing it, you are meditating on something all day long. I don't know about you but if I am going to be meditating on something all day long, I want it to be of the Lord and not of this world. So, this morning I have a little bit of encouragement for you. If you are taking notes, please fill out point number one.

POINT #1 – There is Peace in the pause.

First, we need to understand God *is* peace. Romans 14:17 says that the kingdom of God is righteousness, peace, and joy in the Holy Spirit. According to this verse, peace is one third of the Kingdom of God. Walking in peace begins with walking with the Lord. Romans 5:1 speaks about having peace with God since we have been justified by faith. Next, we need to understand peace is supernatural as it goes beyond understanding AND it is a gift from Jesus. John 14:27 Jesus says, “Peace I leave with you, MY peace I give you.”

When you purpose yourself to *selah* you are positioning yourself to be still with God. When this happens, you are naturally aligning yourself with the peace of God. There's that old joke about a man lost at sea. He prayed to God to save him. As he was praying a boat came along and asked if he needed help. The man lost at sea said, “No I'm waiting for the Lord to save me.” Next a helicopter flew down and asked if he needed help. The man again said, “I'm waiting on the Lord to save me.” The man ended up dying. In heaven he asked the Lord why He didn't save him. The Lord said, “What are you talking about? I sent you a boat and a helicopter!” I feel we do the same with peace. We blame God for not giving us peace when we have not slowed down to be with Him. Peace is not only something we need to receive but something we need to release. Look what Proverbs 12:20 in the New Living Translation says:

Deceit fills hearts that are plotting evil; joy fills hearts that are planning peace!
– Proverbs 12:20 NLT

In the book of Job it says, “the thing I feared has come upon me.” Job was expecting fear and planning for the worst. But the Bible here says that we can think about peace and actually plan for peace in our lives. The question this morning is, “Are you a peace planner?” We have plenty of conspiracy theorists and we have plenty of complainers. Did I mention that we have plenty of worry warts? But what we need more of in the church is peace planners. When you pause, you find God's peace. When you receive God's peace, you are positioned to give His peace away.

POINT #2 – There is Perspective in the pause.

In 1 Kings 19 there is the famous encounter Elijah had with the Lord. There was an earthquake, a strong wind, and a fire but God was not in any of those things. God was in the still small voice. God can be found in the still small voice. But how can we hear the stillness of His voice if we ourselves are not still? When you pause in life you not only experience God's peace, but now you can experience His perspective. Waiting on the Lord is not passive. It is a refining process in which we lean into His understanding.

John gave a great message this past midweek service through the book of Hebrews. He mentioned about loving others well in the church and beyond. One of my favorite points he had this past Wednesday was about Philippians 1:9-10.

9 And this I pray, that your love may abound still more and more in real knowledge and all discernment, 10 so that you may approve the things that are excellent, in order to be sincere and blameless until the day of Christ; - Philippians 1:9-10 NASB1995

Notice that love is tied together with real knowledge and discernment. I know none of you have ever said something out loud you immediately wish you could take back. I have done it a million times or I have acted too soon and didn't pray about it first and discovered I made a mistake. When you pause you position yourself to seek God's perspective and wisdom on the matter. Imagine if you paused more before trying to solve a problem. Imagine if you paused when you felt offended or hurt.

POINT #3 – There is Power in the pause.

If I were to ask you what the power of God looks like in your life what would you say? Some might say, "Healing the sick and casting out devils." Some may say, "prophesying or taking authority over demons." When I really think about how to walk in the power of God the first thing that comes to my heart is obedience. I believe that the closer you are to the will of God the closer you will be to the power of God. When your life is surrendered, God wants to use you for His glory. When you pause you can step in His peace, see through His perspective and then operator in His power. I came across this quote the other day and I think it is so fitting:

We need to practice the pause. When in doubt, pause. When angry pause. When tired pause. When stressed, pause. And when you pause...pray."

When you pause you can pray on a different level. The reason is that you are not reacting to the devil but instead responding to the Father. A reaction demands an instant knee jerk action, where a response takes its time so it can act in wisdom and power. What would happen if we waited a week before buying that thing we really wanted? We may find out we didn't really like it that much. There is power when we are assertive with the *selah* in our lives. The pause allows you to pray and better position yourself in the will of God so you can accomplish His will and bring Him glory.

THINK – What would pausing do for your decision making? What would it do in your conflict resolution? What would it do in your spiritual growth? How would your mental and emotional health change?