

How many times have we read familiar stories only to find things something new? I find them when I least expect to and chuckle to myself wondering how did I miss that in the first place. This week we conclude our series on Psalm 46 *Still & Knowing*. Our first week we looked at the broader context of the Psalm that gives us an often quoted line – “be still and know that I am God.” Last week we leaned into how & what we know about God particularly as we celebrated our church’s 41st anniversary. This week we move to the being still part.

Not many of us are particularly good at being still. We see this in our children who are little orbs of energy constantly moving, thinking & talking. We see it in our middle age when we are trying to get everything done. We see this when folks first retire because they want to do all the things they did not have time to do. We see this later in retirement when we just want to do things while we can. We just want to do. Before we look more deeply at what Sabbath – I invite you to close your eyes and after each phrase I say, take a breath and think about it.

Be still and know that I am God

Be still and know that I am

Be still and know that

Be still and know

Be still

Be

Somehow we have forgotten that God made us to be. Period. We've lost the ability or willingness to just be. We've forgotten that it is not just important but that it is good as God modeled for us in the creation of the universe. The first 5 days, God did 4 things. First, God did the creating. We do not know God's process other than calling into being. We do not know if sometimes it took 4 hours or 12 hours, we just knew that God had done it. Next, after that work of creation was done, God called it good. After proclaiming that it was good God named it. Finally, after creating, calling it good and naming it, God just was. We have been so focused on doing whatever it is that is before us that we've forgotten the purpose of our existence – to be in connection with God and each other. In the words of Peter Pan, we've become pirates!

Christmas break of 1991, my sister and I went to the Edwards Cinema and watched the movie *Hook*. The premise of the movie is that Peter Pan has grown up as a successful, unimaginative workaholic lawyer whose married to Wendy's granddaughter. Enter Captain Hook who comes and kidnaps his children. Peter is

told that he must come to Neverland to save them. Peter turns to the authorities who have nothing to go on. Never fear – Wendy tells Peter that he must remember that he is Peter Pan and alone can save his children from Hook! Enter Tinkerbell who sprinkling pixie dust transport Peter to Neverland and to have Hook see a Peter he does not recognize. Tinkerbell again intercedes and Hook agrees to send Peter to the Lost Boys to remember who he is so that he can fight Captain Hook properly. The Lost Boys look at Peter and cannot see that this was once the great Peter Pan – instead he has become a pirate. Through Tinkerbell's belief and encouragement, Peter finally has a happy thought and begins to regain his identity as the great Peter Pan. My favorite scene in the movie as a child is when Peter regains his imagination to have a food fight with the Lost Boys.

While none of us have Tinkerbell available to sprinkle fairy dust, no amount of happy thoughts can transport us to Neverland. And yet, God has made us in God's own image and that image is a creator. None of us create in the same way but we are all called to do it! We can look at the beautiful cards Ms. Susan makes for our prayer ministry or the crafts that Ms. Mary makes to sell at the Pumpkin Patch. Ms. Patsy's Plum Pudding, Mr. John's Chicken Fried Venison for potluck. We can look at the beautiful woodwork that Mr. Marvin makes or the cars that Mr. Alfred has restored.

We could keep naming ways in which we are all creators of beautiful things. But we know that when we are so focused on getting things done, our time creation is one of the firsts to go. We've seen this in our public schools who've chosen to spend additional time in helping students read so that they miss out on art & music. A 2005 study by the Rand Institute found "involvement in the arts is associated with gains in math, reading, cognitive ability, critical thinking, and verbal skill. Arts learning can also improve motivation, concentration, confidence, and teamwork." It is part of who God calls us to be!

Our challenge this week is to encourage each other, as well as those we meet, to slow down, to be so that we may recover parts of ourselves that we don't give enough time to. What would our community be like if everyone had the opportunity to do something they loved every week? Not only would our happiness increase our relationships would be stronger. Do you remember the safety demonstration that flight attendants give before taking off on any flight? Besides fastening seatbelts, location of exits and where to find the flotation devices, we're told about the oxygen masks that can deploy from the overhead compartment. They also say, and follow-up individually with anyone traveling with young children & anyone who may need to help, to always put your oxygen mask on before assisting someone else. Why?

Because if we do not have oxygen we cannot think straight. That breath, which God gave us is part of our lives but reminds us that selfcare is what allows us to care for others. God created, called it good, named it and rested throughout the creation of the universe. We are in awe when we look at the detail and beauty that we find in this place we call home. God did not sacrifice beauty for efficiency and we are pattern our lives after God.

Today marks another milestone in the midst of the pandemic – for the first time in 65 weeks that our choir has the opportunity to share in our worship through the gift of song. The gathering and learning, even when we're rusty, has brought joy in a new way. It's hard to not feel good at enjoying things that we have missed. It has also been a reminder that tomorrow is never promised so each day we have is a gift – what better way to honor it than creating something beautiful. May we go forth encouraging each other to recover who God made us to be. In the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit. Amen.