

RANSOMED HEART

LOVE GOD. LIVE FREE.

May 2019

Dear Friends,

I hope I'm not too late.

This is my annual "sabbath" letter, more commonly remembered as my "What are you going to do for your soul this summer?" letter.

I'm guessing you're making plans for the next several months, even if they are plans that you can't make plans this year. And I'd like to step in as an advocate for your soul—which probably needs some advocating, if you're like most adults. The pace of life, the constant demands, the drone of media coming our way make any kind of soul kindness hard to come by. Our lives are so full we lost track of our souls long ago.

Thus, my letter.

You have a soul. It is a lovely gift from God. Your soul is what enables you to enjoy your life. When you find yourself laughing at something in a carefree way, that's your soul feeling happy. When you are moved deeply by someone else's story, that's your soul too. When beauty makes you worship, when stillness allows you to exhale deeply, that's your soul doing well. Your soul is an extraordinary gift from God. And it needs some care.

As Jesus said, "What does a man have if he gets all the world and loses his own soul? What can a man give to buy back his soul?" (Matthew 16:26). You can lose your soul long before you die, by the way. It's lost quite easily in the mad rush of life, the unrelenting pressure, hurry, worry, fear and lack of any real space to simply be human.

So—what will you do this summer to be kind to your soul? Where is your sabbath this summer?

To clarify, family "visits" do not count as sabbath or soul care. I understand the need for family visits; they play an important role in our relational networks. But they are not sabbath, not even vacation, for the simple reason that they require from us. Often they require a great deal. When we enter into the gravitational field of family visits, we encounter all the dynamics of family ecosystems—everyone's brokenness, their demands, their disappointments, and their warfare. It's just the way it is in a broken world. I'm not disparaging family visits; I'm simply trying to point out that they do not qualify for sabbath in any form or fashion.

Notice—what's the condition of your soul when you return from a week with the inlaws? Don't you typically say to yourself, "I need a vacation?" And if you could choose between the obligatory family visit or two weeks in Tahiti, which does your heart leap at? Well...there ya go.

Banzai weekends also do not count for sabbath, vacation, or soul care. Rushing out the door to get to some destination where you go-go-go all weekend can be loads of fun, but again—notice

the condition you're in Monday morning when you return to work. You're exhausted; you need caffeine to even keep going.

You shall know them by their fruits.

Allow me a personal story. Last summer Jesus invited me to take a road trip with him. No agenda, no deadlines, no one to take care of, or come through for. I brought my fishing gear because I thought I would spend my days fly fishing and my evenings in leisurely time with God. As my soul began to enter rest, I realized that the adrenaline rush so central to fishing was not what I needed. My soul needed care, which meant it needed quiet. Ease. A very slow pace. I ended up hardly fishing at all, which at first was a disappointment, but by day three was a rescue.

This is very simple really—sabbath makes you feel rested. It makes you feel renewed. It restores your soul, to quote the famous Psalm.

Sabbath reconnects you to the God you love, and allows you time to linger with him unhurried. It also reconnects you with your own soul, allows you to feel, to think about stuff you normally don't get to think about. By its nature, sabbath is not an adrenaline experience.

So—as you make your summer plans, when is your sabbath?

It doesn't have to be that gorgeous cottage in Hawaii, or villa in Tuscany (which is good news). Sabbath is so much more available, attainable. It can be a choice to simply set aside evenings every week this summer, where all you do is sit on the porch and enjoy the sunset, let the breeze caress your face, do absolutely nothing at all. A friend has a hammock on her porch; she said to her husband, "I'm going to lie in the hammock and do nothing; I get to be human again."

Sabbath can be long walks in your neighborhood, the park, or "open spaces" common now to most urban areas. (Notice I didn't say a run or mountain bike ride, because sabbath has a nonchalant nature to it. It's slow, kind, easy, simple. Sabbath walks let you notice flowers, birds, a stream—all the things we normally rush by.)

Nothing in this mad world is going to encourage you to plan, and protect sabbath. It's something you'll have to choose, and fight for. But it's utterly worth it, I promise.

So—before you set this letter down and go on with the ten other things currently demanding your attention, stay with the question for sixty seconds—What will you do for sabbath this summer? Block it out on your calendar.

Offered in love,


John

PS Make sure to get your "Homecoming 2019" tickets before they sell out! It's going to be a wonderful event this coming November, with the whole RH team and all your allies in one place! You can learn more and register on our website ransomeheart.com.