

“Unhitch the Horses”

Thursday night I had a dream that I just cannot get off my mind. Oftentimes we soon forget our dreams in the light of the day, but this one is sticking with me. Although I feel a little strange to include this in the form of life application, I am reminded that the Bible says, *“And it shall come to pass in the last days, saith God, I will pour out of my Spirit upon all flesh: and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, and your young men shall see visions, and your old men shall dream dreams”* (Acts 2:17). On a humorous note, last night’s dream may be applicable because these are the last days and since turning 60 this summer I can qualify for the old men dreaming.

Now remember, this is a dream, so don’t look for the logical or something congruous with everyday norms. In the dream I was presented a horse and buggy as a gift. I was thrilled because I never lived in the horse and buggy days but I have often wondered what it was like. I received a minimal amount of tutorage and mounted the buckboard and began to go on errands all over town. I went hospital calling, to the church and the store. In the dream about two days transpired and I parked the buggy on the curb just like I had the night before. I went inside my house and began preparing for bed when it occurred to me that I was treating my horse and buggy just as though it was an automobile. I sat up in bed and said, “The horse!” I quickly pulled back the covers put on my clothes and raced outside to the curb. I approached the horse and looked at its sad face in the dim light of the street lamp. I said, “You are tired and need to be unhitched, don’t you?” He looked at me with a forlorn yet affirming look. Then I said, “You need a nice straw bed to lay down upon don’t you?” Although he was not a talking horse like Mr. Ed, his look was in total agreement with that statement. I unhitched him walked him around to our small barn in the back yard, opened the door, went to a nice stall with plenty of straw and he was so tired he flopped down like he had been shot. As I closed the stall door, I said, “Rest well; I’ll see you in the morning.” He sighed a relief that could audibly be translated, “Thank you and it’s about time!”

As we honor our community servants today on this the 10th anniversary of 9/11, my mind goes back to the old days when fire engines and ambulances were pulled by trusted, hard working horses. I suppose if we were in the “good old days” we would also be honoring some faithful steeds as well as their masters. It is touching to read in history of the affinity that people had for their beasts of burden. We see this closeness with warriors and their warhorses, farmers and their mules and firemen and ambulance drivers and their specially trained horses. Those men and woman took very special care of their horses. Lives were at stake! If a horse became overly exhausted he would fail to make the scene of an emergency situation. If we can understand the importance of a horse needing its rest to be fully competent for work, how much more should we not see the importance of people getting their rest? Today, I dedicate this Pastor’s Word to our firemen, policemen and emergency responders. I am concerned for all of you and even those in other lines of business that we all remember to “Unhitch.” Jesus said, *“...Come ye yourselves apart into a desert place, and rest a while: for there were many coming and going, and they had no leisure so much as to eat”*

(Mark 6:31). Vance Havner often used to say, “You’d better learn to come apart and rest awhile or you’ll end up just coming apart.” He was so right. Many burn out and end up wiping out because of not following the Sabbath principle of resting. Ideally, I would like for everyone to consider making Sunday a day of rest. This is an ideal and not going to happen for everybody because we have fires on Sunday and people have health issues on Sunday, so some of Harris and Montgomery County’s community servants are going to have to be on call. Let me encourage each and every one of you: if you don’t find some time in the course of every week to unhitch and rest, it will finally come home in the form of broken health, broken marriages, broken workplaces and sometimes all of the above.

I want to be a blessing to our community servants as well as all our members reading these words. Why unhitch?

1. God has placed the Sabbath principle in Scripture and nature.

Soon after the beginning, God laid down this principle, “*And on the seventh day God ended his work which he had made; and he rested on the seventh day from all his work which he had made*” (Genesis 2:2). Notice God rested from all, not just some of His work. He was God - do you think He was really tired? Of course not, He was doing this as a lesson for us. He knew we would need it. It is a day we need to rest and worship. Even as He stepped back from His labors to admire what He had done, this principle would serve all of us well: to step back from our busy schedules and worship God for who He is and what He has done in this world and our lives.

God was dogmatic on this issue. When the children of Israel were in the wilderness, God made provision for a day of rest, as so seen in Exodus 16:29,30: “*See, for that the LORD hath given you the sabbath, therefore he giveth you on the sixth day the bread of two days; abide ye every man in his place, let no man go out of his place on the seventh day. So the people rested on the seventh day*” (Exodus 16:29,30). God gave bread every day in the form of manna from heaven. It was good for only one day; if they gathered for two days, the second portion would rot. One exception was the day before the Sabbath, when they were commanded to get an extra day’s ration and it would stay as fresh as though it had been gathered on the day of rest. Why? It was so the people of God would have one kickback day to rest.

The Bible says, “*Six years thou shalt sow thy field, and six years thou shalt prune thy vineyard, and gather in the fruit thereof; But in the seventh year shall be a sabbath of rest unto the land, a sabbath for the LORD: thou shalt neither sow thy field, nor prune thy vineyard*” (Leviticus 25:3,4). The Lord laid down the law of resting in agriculture. If you want your land to stay workable and useable, you’d better let it rest. The reason that many a farmer in the old south ran into trouble was because cotton was so lucrative and he could make so much money from growing it, he just kept planting cotton every year until he stripped the land. If farmers had remembered to rotate and rest their crops, cotton could have stayed “king.” It is a law in nature; we need rest.

2. You’ll become a new you!

God not only put this law in nature, he put it within us. As I write these words, I have to be honest with you; I am coming to this realization late in life. I wonder how many headaches I could have avoided, how many times I have “crashed and burned” simply because I would not stop and unhitch the horses. I think I have even used a “spiritual” excuse by saying, “Well, I am working for the Lord.” To my civil servants: I know the Bible teaches that you, too, are working for the Lord when you stop a fire, save a life or arrest someone in criminal activity. We might also use the excuse, “I am providing for my family.” Remember, we are to put food on the table, but that doesn’t mean we have to keep working to provide some unnecessary luxuries.

I challenge you to give yourself one rest day a week for one month. You will be surprised how four wonderful days could make a great deal of difference for you and your family. Some of your kids have never seen you in a relaxed mode. They may not recognize you, but they’ll love the new you...you’ll be a lot easier to live with. See if God will not refresh and restore you! And by the way, if you can find your Sabbath on a Sunday, come sit down in Christchurch and let the music and the Word of God revive you in a way that cannot be duplicated in the world. We would be honored with your presence.

-Pastor Pope-