

Weekly Reflection - REST

The Perfect Storm

Wikipedia states that a perfect storm “refers to the simultaneous occurrence of weather events which, taken individually, would be far less powerful than the storm resulting of their chance combination. The phrase, “a perfect storm” has gained substantial popularity. Over time it has grown beyond the concept of a simple weather phenomenon and has come to mean any event where a combination of circumstances will aggravate a situation drastically beyond the individual elements or parts. I bring this up because it feels that the day we live in, 2026, a perfect storm has blown in. Two elements of our reality have collided and as a people we are in the middle of a perfect storm. Human desire has collided with digital marketing.

Human desire

Thomas Aquinas, a 13th century Italian priest, once asked the question, “What would it take to satisfy human desire?” What would it take to ever feel like, ah, I'm satisfied, I have enough? And the answer he came up with was everything. We would have to experience everything and everybody, and he said, be experienced by everything and everybody in order to ever feel satisfied. What he is tapping into is the reality that desire is infinite, meaning it has no limit. There's no point at which desire is ever satisfied. In the book of Ecclesiastes we read, ***“He has made everything beautiful in its time. Also, he has put eternity into man's heart, yet so that he cannot find out what God has done from the beginning to the end.” (Ecclesiastes 3:11 ESV)*** Humans were created by God for eternity, for the infinite. We will always have an aching or desire for the infinite. Because we are finite, we inhabit time and space, the end result is restlessness. The Apostle Paul said it this way, ***“And not only the creation, but we ourselves, who have the firstfruits of the Spirit, groan inwardly as we wait eagerly for adoption as sons, the redemption of our bodies.” (Romans 8:23 ESV)*** We live with a chronic state of unsatisfied desire, like an itch that just no matter how often you scratch it, it just does not go away. Augustine, bishop from Northern Africa, said this, “Thou hast made us for thyself, O Lord, and our heart is restless until it finds its rest in thee.” More recently, Dallas Willard, a Christian philosopher, put it this way, “Desire is infinite, partly because we were made by God, made for God, made to need God, and made to run on God. We can be satisfied only by the one who is infinite, eternal, and able to supply our needs. We are only at home in God.” Nothing in this life apart from God can ever satisfy your desire because desire is infinite, and only God is infinite. So, we end up in this chronic state of restlessness at best, or worse, frustration, anger, angst, disappointment, disillusionment, all of that, just railing against our life, which ironically for most of us leads to a life of hurry, business, overload, shopping, materialism, careerism, a life of more, which in turn makes us even more restless. It's gas on the fire.

Digital Marketing

Now this infinite human desire collides with or is amplified by our cultural moment of digital marketing from a society built around accumulation and accomplishment. They say we see upwards of 4,000 to 10,000 advertisements a day. All of them are designed to stoke the fire of desire in our heart. Buy this, do this, eat this, drink this, have this, be this, own this, go here, go there. Social media, of course, just takes this problem to a whole new level. Paul Mazer of Lehman Brothers famously said this in 1927, quote, “We must shift America from a needs to a desires culture. People must be trained to desire, to want new things even before the old have been entirely consumed. We must shape a new mentality in America.” Fast forward to 2026 and our economy is literally built on people spending money they don't

have on things they don't need. We now spend; the most conservative estimate I've read is twice what we spent in 1945 on goods and services per person after you adjust for inflation. Twice as many cars, clothing, water bottles, vacations, square footage, all of it. There is a multi-billion-dollar marketing industry with direct access to your heart through the little computer in your pocket that is all designed on purpose to fan into flames your desire and make money off of your restlessness.

The Result is the Perfect Storm

All that to say, when our innate human restlessness collides with the digital age and a culture of accomplishment and accumulation, the result is an epidemic of emotional and physical unhealth and spiritual death. Psychologists are now diagnosing people with hurriesickness. What psychology today defines as a behavior pattern characterized by continual rushing and anxiousness. The phrase hurriesickness was coined by Meyer Friedman, who was a cardiologist in the 1950s, was the first one to connect the dots between chronic stress and heart disease. He defined it as, quote, "A continuous struggle, an unrelenting attempt to accomplish or achieve more and more things or participate in more and more events in less and less time."

AJ Swoboda, from his book, *The Subversive Sabbath*, writes this, "Our time-saving devices, technological conveniences and cheap mobility have seemingly made life much easier and interconnected. As a result, we have more information at our fingertips than anyone in history. Yet with all this progress, we are dissatisfied. In bowing at these sacred altars of hyperactivity, progress and technological compulsivity, our souls increasingly pant for meaning and value and truth as they wither away, exhausted, frazzled, displeased, ever on edge. The result is a hollow culture that in Paul's words is ever learning but never able to come to a knowledge of the truth. Our bodies wear ragged, our spirits thirst. We have an inability to simply sit still and be. As we drown ourselves in 24-7 living, we seem to be able to do anything but quench our true thirst for the life of God. We have become perhaps the most emotionally exhausted, psychologically overworked, spiritually malnourished people in history."

Good News

I have good news for you. Into this human condition of restlessness worsened by your phone in 2026, Jesus of Nazareth comes to offer you rest. ***"Come to me, all who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light."*** (Matthew 11:28-30 ESV) Here is Eugene Peterson's paraphrase, ***"Are you tired? Worn out? Burned out on religion? Come to me. Get away with me and you'll recover your life. I'll show you how to take a real rest. Walk with me and work with me—watch how I do it. Learn the unforced rhythms of grace. I won't lay anything heavy or ill-fitting on you. Keep company with me and you'll learn to live freely and lightly."***

Or the picture Jesus gives us in John 15, ***"I am the vine; you are the branches. Whoever abides in me and I in him, he it is that bears much fruit, for apart from me you can do nothing."*** (John 15:5 ESV) Jesus' word picture for how we are to bear fruit, which in the Gospel of John is defined as love, joy and peace is not of ambition, but of abiding. Not of like working your tail off and just striving to just be more loving and be more joyful and be more peaceful, but rather of resting in the Father's presence. If we break off that restful connection to the Father, or in His word picture, the vine, whether it is through sin or full-on unbelief or just through hurry and busyness and the phone and too much entertainment and a crazy schedule, either way the result is the same, you are cut off from God and you bear no fruit. In the place of love, joy and peace is burnout, compromise, defeat, anger, sadness, etc...

Sabbath is the doorway into restfulness.

So, all that to say, “Is there something from the Word of God and the life and the teachings of Jesus to fight against or relieve this restlessness of our condition and our culture, and to tap into His rest for our soul?” The answer is, of course, yes, there are many, and at the top of the list is Sabbath. Notice in your Bible that right after Jesus invites us to come to Him and rest, we have two stories about the Sabbath. It's not a coincidence. Rest for your souls and the Sabbath go together.

The word literally means to stop. That's all it means. The Sabbath is a day to stop, stop working. More than that, stop wanting. More than that, stop worrying. Just stop and rest. Of all those 4,000 ads coming at you daily, you don't need any of it to find rest. You don't need to buy anything to rest. You don't need to look like a model. You don't need to reinvent your life. You don't need to hire an interior designer. You don't need to be rich or poor. You don't need to be cool. You just need to Sabbath. You just need to stop.

This is an ancient practice that goes all the way to the beginning. It actually predates Jesus, Israel, and the Ten Commandments. It starts on day seven of creation, Genesis chapter two, verse one. It is not new, but tragically, it is new to many of us. AJ Swoboda writes this. “Sabbath has been largely forgotten by the church, which has uncritically mimicked the rhythms of the industrial and success-obsessed West. The result? Our road-weary, exhausted churches have largely failed to integrate Sabbath into their lives as vital elements of Christian discipleship. It is not as though we do not love God. We love God deeply. We just don't know how to sit with God anymore.” It makes sense that commandment number 4 of the 10 is remember the Sabbath. Remember the Sabbath. Why? Because we are prone to amnesia. We forget, and often we forget, the things that matter the most.

Read Hebrews 4:1-11. Sabbath rest is still on offer to all of us, but it warns that it is not automatic, we must put forth some effort to enter into this rest. Hebrews is saying that it's one thing for you to hear about the rest that Jesus has on offer for you, it's a whole other thing for you to obey and experience the rest that He has for you.

Three thoughts.

1. This is not a to-do list or a not to do list. If that's your personality, or if that's been your understanding of Sabbath, erase it. It's just basically a day to stop, to rest, and to delight, first and foremost in God, and then in your life with God in His world. This is an invitation. Maturity, health, growth, wisdom, flourishing love, all of it's an invitation. You have to decide if you're up for it.
2. Secondly, remember the J curve. ***“Truly, truly, I say to you, unless a grain of wheat falls into the earth and dies, it remains alone; but if it dies, it bears much fruit.” (John 12:24 ESV)*** Sabbath rest will produce good fruit in your life, but it also requires some things to die. Don't be surprised if as you really start to take it seriously, you feel awkward. Don't be surprised if you show up on Sabbath and you feel depression or you feel anxiety. That's likely a really good thing. That's your real life catching up with you for you to deal with it.
3. Rest is a weapon. It's really hard to tempt people that are healthy, full of joy, and well rested. Really easy to tempt people that are tired and stressed out.

Can you say, “It is well with my soul.”