

**“THE DEVIL’S PILLOW” – A Sermon by Rt. Rev. Bradley D. Heinrichs**

**LESSON 1 – Genesis 1:24-31 & 2:1-3.**

*24 Then God said, "Let the earth bring forth the living creature according to its kind: cattle and creeping thing and beast of the earth, each according to its kind"; and it was so.*

*25 And God made the beast of the earth according to its kind, cattle according to its kind, and everything that creeps on the earth according to its kind. And God saw that it was good.*

*26 Then God said, "Let Us make man in Our image, according to Our likeness; let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, over the birds of the air, and over the cattle, over all the earth and over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth."*

*27 So God created man in His own image; in the image of God He created him; male and female He created them.*

*28 Then God blessed them, and God said to them, "Be fruitful and multiply; fill the earth and subdue it; have dominion over the fish of the sea, over the birds of the air, and over every living thing that moves on the earth...."*

*31 Then God saw everything that He had made, and indeed it was very good. So the evening and the morning were the sixth day.*

*2:1 Thus the heavens and the earth, and all the host of them, were finished.*

*2 And on the seventh day God ended His work which He had done, and He rested on the seventh day from all His work which He had done.*

*3 Then God blessed the seventh day and sanctified it, because in it He rested from all His work which God had created and made.*

**LESSON 2 – Revelation 20:11-15.**

*11 Then I saw a great white throne and Him who sat on it, from whose face the earth and the heaven fled away. And there was found no place for them.*

*12 And I saw the dead, small and great, standing before God, and books were opened. And another book was opened, which is the Book of Life. And the dead were judged according to their works, by the things which were written in the books.*

*13 The sea gave up the dead who were in it, and Death and Hades delivered up the dead who were in them. And they were judged, each one according to his works....*

*15 And anyone not found written in the Book of Life was cast into the lake of fire.*

**LESSON 3 – Charity 168.**

*Concerning Charity in Workmen.* By workmen are meant laborers and artisans of various kinds. If they look to the Lord and shun evils as sins, and do their work sincerely, justly, and faithfully, they become forms of charity, each in proportion as he loves his work and is diligent in it. For their works are goods of use serviceable to the neighbor for various necessities and uses; such as food, clothing, dwelling, protection, preservation, pleasure, and in many other ways; they are also of advantage to the commonwealth.

*In so far as anyone puts his mind into his work and labor, from the love of it, he is in it, as to affection and thought concerning it; and to the extent he is in it, he is withheld from thinking and loving vanities, and so may be led by the Lord to think and love goods; and also to think and love the means to good, which are truths.*

*It is not so with one who applies himself to no work. Every workman who looks to the Lord and shuns evils as sins, **shuns idleness, because it is the devil's pillow.** He shuns insincerity and fraud; and shuns luxury and intemperance. He is industrious, sincere, sober, content with his lot, and works for his neighbor as he would for himself; because in doing his work he loves himself and the neighbor in equal degree.*

***“And on the seventh day God ended His work which He had done, and He rested on the seventh day”*** (Genesis 2:2). ***“And another book was opened, which is the Book of Life. And the dead were judged according to their works”*** (Revelation 20:12).

These two phrases point to the never-ending struggle of finding that critical balance in our lives between work and rest. After the Lord had finished His cycle of creating – He rested! And yet it is clear that when we die and move on to the next world, we will be judged according to our works. So we want to make sure that when our Book of Life is being reviewed that there are not a lot of blank pages, where we simply have penciled in our memo section - REST!

The beginning of a new school year is a great time to talk about finding that appropriate balance between work and rest. Many of us are about to experience somewhat of a culture shock as we move from the “lazy days of summer” to the busy weeks of working through a new school curriculum.

Our children go from biking, hanging out, playing video games, watching movies, and sleeping in – to getting up early, sitting through classes, doing homework, and going to bed at a decent hour. Parents go from summer vacations and free, relaxed evenings – to a regular work schedule, making lunches, and evenings filled with assisting on homework.

The bottom line is that right about now, many of us are probably wishing that the “lazy days of summer” could continue for a few more weeks. Perhaps we are even relishing the idea of making it to heaven so we can enjoy eternal rest from our labors. Didn’t the Lord say, ***“Come to Me, all you who labor and are burdened, and I will give you rest”*** (Matt. 11:28). Surely, we have earned a little rest and relaxation!

This leads us to the main message in the passage we read from the Doctrine of Charity. Where it stated that every good worker looks to the Lord, shuns evils as sins, and in particular shuns one certain evil because it is the Devil’s Pillow. Do you remember what that evil is?

IDLENESS. Idleness is the Devil's Pillow. One passage in the Writings even goes so far as to say that "*idleness is the root of all wickedness*" (SE 6088).

Before we go on, it is important to make a necessary distinction – recreation or rest, in itself is not idleness, when the purpose of it is to relax, revitalize, and recharge so that we can return to our activities refreshed and with renewed vigor (AE 1194; CL 207:7; HH 403). This is why the Lord instituted the Sabbath Day where we could rest from our labors. Idleness however is a very different thing.

We're told that "*heaven is a kingdom of useful services*" (CL 7:3). Performing uses is the very life blood of heaven, because the Lord inflows with love and delight into uses and gives life (LJ 179). Idleness is diametrically opposed to performing uses and thus to the life of heaven. It provides no positive receptacle or outlet for the Lord to flow into and give life.

The Writings say that performing uses is so essential to life of heaven that everything created was "*formed from use, in use, and for use*" (AE 1226:5). Consequently, that "*heavenly happiness consists in use, stems from use, and is proportionate to use*" (AC 454; cf HH 403). These teachings make it crystal clear that in its essence life all boils down to performing useful services for our neighbors. And to the degree we do this, we will find both satisfaction and joy.

Idleness, however, has a debilitating and crippling effect intellectually, emotionally, and physically (CL 207:7). Physically, we know that a person who is bed-ridden for a long period of time has muscle atrophy set in and they lose the ability to move themselves about. Emotionally, a person who is not engaged in some sort of useful activity eventually ends up facing bouts of depression. Intellectually, a person who is not actively involved in some kind of stimulating endeavor, finds that their mind begins to wander into unhealthy and unproductive areas.

Idleness has the same crippling effect spiritually. Eventually, the spiritually idle person finds that they see no real meaning in life and consequently experience no genuine or lasting joy in any facet of their lives.

There are many interesting reasons why idleness has such a devastating effect. When a person is not focused on performing a use then their spirit and mind tend to wander aimlessly and inevitably they find themselves entering into the territory of their proprium – that part in each of us that contains our hereditary tendencies towards evil.

However, when a person is focused and intent on performing a use, then their minds are fenced around and circumscribed as though in a circle (CL 249:1; AE 831:5). In a sense it is like circling the wagons around the use the mind is focused on. This keeps the mind from wandering into dangerous territory and from that secure and directed vantage point it can see and identify the specific evils lurking outside.

But in a state of idleness, where the mind is bored and unfocused, then the boundaries are thrown open and the person is more prone to wander into their inherent loves of self and of the world (AE 1226:7). Therefore, the bored and idle person is more likely to enter into gossip, slander, fraud, promiscuity, lust, vanity, drunkenness, excessive pleasures, vindictiveness, and hatred (Char. 168, 194; CL 249). This is why idleness is called “*the root of all wickedness.*”

As an example think of a teenager or even an adult who has, as the expression goes, “time on his hands.” Don’t we read in the papers about how they get involved in drug use, alcohol, vandalism, surfing the internet for porn, and so on. But the statistics for those involved in some gainful employment are dramatically better. In my former pastorate it was typical for there to be an increase in vandalism and theft during the summer months – classic cases of what happens when not being focused on use.

The reason this is so, is because idleness in being the devil’s pillow, also acts like a sponge. Just as a sponge in a bucket of water soaks up not only the water, but also all the filth

and dirt that is present in the water, so the idle mind soaks up all the hellish impurities of our proprium and the filth around us (SE 6072). Only the love of use, and the process of being engaged in that use, causes the mind to be taut, and in a state where it can repel those impurities from being absorbed.

Useful service is the antidote to idleness. Think about a young child with nothing to do. When they are bored and have nothing productive to do, they tend to bicker, fight, and whine. However, when they are given a job to do and shown how to do it, then their attitude can change dramatically. Have you ever witnessed the delight on a child's face the first time they accomplish a useful job for the first time?

Like when they turn a screw into the wood, or buckle their sister's car seat, or get their own drink at McDonald's. Their face beams with joy and satisfaction because they have accomplished a use they had not previously mastered. Their mind is engaged in a productive endeavor and therefore they do not get involved in the same destructive behaviors that they do when they are idle and bored.

The same holds true for adults. When they love their job and perform their use with vigor, their outlook on life tends to be optimistic rather than depressed. Now on this earth we have a choice as to whether we will be useful, industrious, and active, or idle, lazy, and slothful. Those who choose to be idle and not serve the common good of society, the Writings say cannot be called "*citizens, but destroyers of citizens*" and the human race (SE 2502).

However, in the next life we will not have the choice to be useless. It is mandatory that uses must be performed. The difference is that "*in hell uses are performed from fear, but in heaven from love*" (AE 1194). And it is love that imparts joy and happiness. So really our choice is to work in fear and be miserable or to work from love and be happy. The choice to be happy or miserable is ours, but one thing is certain – in the next life we will be useful whether we like it or not!

So as we are heading into a new school year and perhaps wishing that the carefree days of summer would last a little longer, it is useful for us to reflect on these teachings about idleness being the Devil's Pillow and the root of all wickedness. If we are honest with ourselves, we probably have realized that by the end of summer, both we and our children are ready for some structure and usefulness.

But at the same time, let's not forget that our rest and relaxation over the summer has served a very useful purpose. Like a bow string, the mind cannot stay perpetually taut, or it will lose its strength and elasticity. We need periods of rest; we just need to make sure that our rest does not turn into idleness.

To be truly useful and productive in life, we need to find that critical balance between work and rest. And as we head into the busy part of the year it will be important for us to maintain an appropriate balance so that we don't burn ourselves out. Perhaps the Lord has given us the obvious solution right at the beginning of his Word in the first chapter of Genesis, in the account of the creation story, ***"on the seventh day God ended His work which He had done, and He rested on the seventh day."*** (Gen. 2:2).

So let us be useful and work hard at our various endeavors during the week, shunning idleness as a pestilence by keeping our minds taut and focused, and then rest on the Seventh day. If we do this then we should be able to strike that perfect balance, and at the same time honor the Lord's words in the third commandment: ***"Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy. Six days you shall labor and do all your work, but the seventh day is the Sabbath of the LORD your God. In it you shall do no work.... For in six days the LORD made the heavens and the earth, the sea, and all that is in them, and rested on the seventh day. Therefore the LORD blessed the Sabbath day and hallowed it."*** (Exodus 20:8-11). **Amen.**