"LABOR AND LEISURE"

INTRODUCTION  An article in the financial section of Thursday night's POST caught my attention, and since it ties in with the subject of today's sermon, I share it with you:

"The big word in the stock market this year is leisure - especially the outdoor kind. And one of the most popular of new outdoor activities is the old sport of bicycle riding. Across the country, millions of Americans of all ages are taking to country roads, city streets and bike trails.

With bike sales this year expected to reach 8 million units, many customers are finding themselves on waiting lists. Overburdened bike shops are limiting their repair work. The interest in pedaling has not escaped the attention of the stock market. One of the biggest stock gainers so far this year is Murray Ohion Manufacturing Company, a Nashville company that holds some 25% of the domestic bicycle market."

My concern this morning is not to provide you with any tips for your investment purposes, nor is it to encourage you to place your order for a bike and spend more time enjoying Central Park - although I respond enthusiastically to this suggestion - but rather my main purpose is to spend some time on this relaxed Summer weekend considering the subject of leisure. Even as busy as we are throughout the greater part of the year, we do nevertheless have more leisure at our disposal than any previous generation.

The length of the working day is steadily being reduced. The four day week is receiving consideration in some areas, in some industries. The three day holiday weekend was introduced this year. The forty hour week for some may soon be reduced to thirty-five hours. Many persons today have no idea of the conditions under which their great-grandparents toiled. In his diary, John Clifford, born in Victorian England, stated:

"I have worked from four o'clock on Friday morning all through the night to six o'clock on Saturday evening, and then run hom glad and proud with my small wage of two shillings and sixpence to my mother - like a king".

The work was to splice the ends of cotton from bobbin to bobbin to keep the thread broken. Those days, thank God, for most of us have gone.

DEVELOPMENT  Leisure in America has become an almost universal commodity. Most people have three times as much free time as working time. Figure it out - subtracting the hours you work in any week from 168, the number of hours in a week. Much of the time is spent in sleeping and eating, but those are leisure activities. Three times as much free time as working time.

In England, not too long ago, the House of Lords gave a whole day to a debate on the problem of leisure. First, a personal problem, it has taken on the dimensions of a social problem. Triviality is perhaps the most characteristic and besetting sin of Americans: time frittered away in a succession of activities that lack any serious purpose. So many there are who have no skill in entertaining themselves, possessing such a small stock of ideas and interests.
"LABOR AND LEISURE"

**INTRODUCTION**

On this Labor Day weekend, when a great many of us enjoy the few remaining hours of the more leisurely relaxed pace of the summer months before launching into the more hurried pace of the Fall, I have chosen to talk on a subject that touches all of our lives. Call, if you will, the use and the abuse of leisure. Even as busy as we are throughout the greater part of the year, we do nevertheless have more leisure at our disposal than any previous generation.

The length of the working day is steadily being reduced. A forty-hour week is now common, and the chances are that automation will reduce this to thirty or thirty-five hours before many more years go by. Many persons today have no idea of the conditions under which their great-grandparents toiled. In his diary, John Clifford, born in Victorian England, stated:

"I have worked from four o'clock on Friday morning all through the night to six o'clock on Saturday evening, and then run home glad and proud with my small wage of two shillings and sixpence to my mother - like a king"

The work was to splice the ends of cotton from bobbin to bobbin to keep the thread unbroken.

**DEVELOPMENT**

Thank God, those days have gone. With the advent of the Welfare State and social legislation accompanying it, leisure in America has become an almost universal commodity. Most people have three times as much free time as working time. If this strikes you as being fantastic, figure it out for yourself; subtracting the hours you work in any week from 168, the number of hours in a week. Much of the time is spent in sleeping and eating, but those are leisure activities. Three times as much free time as working time. What do you do with your leisure.

This is an important subject. In Great Britain, not too long ago, the House of Lords gave a whole day to a debate on the problem of leisure. First, a personal problem, it has taken on the dimensions of a social problem. Triviality is perhaps the most characteristic and besetting sin of Americans: time frittered away in a succession of activities that lack any serious purpose. Think of the number of people there are who have no skill in entertaining themselves, possessing a small stock of interests, and ideas. In all of this, television - which could be such a great cultural and educational force - inclines instead to be a demoralizing influence. It has invaded our homes, and consumes more and more of our leisure. Some time ago, John Crosby of the Herald Tribune, said: "If the Harris Committee wants to know what is wrong with television, it ought to stop interviewing witnesses and look at that monstrous box for a week". Monstrous box is not an exaggeration. In support of his words, he quoted Clare Booth Luce:

"Today there are 27 westerns and 20 whodunits on the weekly programs of the major networks. For a thousand and more nights, from sea to shining sea, their chilling hordes have passed before the eyes of 20 million American families. Among their evil numbers are safeblowers, brain blowers, convicts, extortioners, counterfeiteers, blackmailers, thugs, stool pigeons, hoodlums, savages, cattle rustlers, lynchers, jail breakers, drunks, drug addicts, pushers, pads, panderers, pimps, prostitutes, rapists, sadists, home-breakers, arsonists, maniacs, murderers - all the lice and scum, dammed and doomed dregs of
humanity, giving an advanced course for young and old alike in all the techniques of crime and the ways of violence."

DANGER OF LEISURE The danger of leisure, as with every gift of God, lies in its perversion — when it leads to idleness, or is given over to a round of trivial amusements and pursuits more exhausting than a round of daily work. The problem is no longer to reduce the hours of work. The problem is to get people to recognize that the art of using leisure is part of the art of living. If it is not used properly and wisely it will lead one to the shallows of life. Bertrand Russell's comment gets at the dimension of the problem:

"To be able to fill leisure intelligently is the last product of civilization."

The last product of civilization and certainly a major concern of the Christian — for the right use of time, as of money, depends upon the belief held by the spender of the meaning and purpose of life. It's bound up with such questions as: What is man? What is he here for? Whither is he bound?

LEISURE AND WORK In all of this, leisure and work should be thought of together. In the well-ordered life they blend harmoniously. We shall not make the best use of our leisure if we are not making the best use of our work. To be enjoyable, leisure presupposes hard and honest effort. There is solid satisfaction in relaxation after steady sustained application to a task. The enjoyment of leisure comes as the aftermath and reward of faithful toil.

The problem of leisure is bound up with the problem of work. The nature of the one affects the appetite for the other. Work should make men well as things. A great deal has been done to improve working conditions, but we need to continue to go on remodeling the social system so that jobs which do not offer an interesting and useful life and an opportunity for the development of character are reduced to a minimum. Wherever society is ordered more with an eye to money making than to human welfare, wherever workers have no interest and no creative joy or pride in their work but inwardly rebel because it is endlessly repetitious, tedious, and non-creative, we must not be surprised if we get some distasteful moral problems: low taste, mediocrity of character, intemperance, gambling, vice, and crime. People turn out of frustration to the race track, the tavern, to sexual escapades, to crime, and drugs in order to get the dreariness and boredom of their everyday existence out of their systems. They say in the Bowery that to get drunk is the quickest way out of New York City.

We should be seeking constantly for techniques whereby far more men and women than at present can achieve in their working lives the reality of self-expression, and exercise to the full their natural, God-given powers. This sort of thing may not be said often in churches, but it needs to be said. Surely the aim of Christian citizens ought to be to organize society so that all work increases human well-being and so that workers feel they are carrying out some part of God's purpose for the world.

I have been stating the case in broad and general terms. Now I want to offer a bill of particulars. We are going to have more and still more leisure. We should budget it as carefully as we do our money if we are to become the sort of persons God would have us be.

I. REST Some of it should be given to rest. We must sleep in order to renew ourselves after the physical and nervous fatigue of the day. There are no hard and fast rules about this. Each of us must discover how much or how little
he requires. They say that Thomas Edison got by with four hours. As we grow older, the majority of us need less than the eight hours that once constituted a minimum.

II. RELAXATION Some of our leisure should be given to relaxation. There is sound common sense in "Sometimes I sits and thinks and sometimes I just sits". The bigger the job a man has, the more necessary it is for him to relax. It must be remembered, though, that relaxation is subject to what the economist calls the Law of Diminishing Returns. Great benefit is derived from a couple of hours of taking it easy. But ten times as much is not derived from twenty hours. Relaxation is good medicine, but in small doses.

III. SELF-IMPROVEMENT Some of our leisure should be given to self-improvement. Perhaps this will remind you of Benjamin Franklin and his plan for self-improvement that he mentions in his autobiography. Perhaps we ought to follow his suggestion and his techniques for ordering the day more precisely. The trouble is we're too slack, too self-indulgent. Most of us, for example, should make a habit of reading more discriminatingly than we do. Balzac, after spending an evening with friends who talked about everything in general and nothing of real consequence went to his study when he got home, took off his coat, rubbed his hands, and with his eye on the works of the masters on his book shelves, said, "Now for some real people"

Perhaps the ancient Greeks could teach us all a lesson in this matter. They elevated leisure into a national art. It was regarded as essential to good citizenship. Games, festivals, dramatic performances all formed a part of what was really organized leisure. For men like Socrates and Plato, Pericles and Demosthenes, the things of supreme worth were not money making and status seeking, but the development of the body and the growth of the soul and the cultivation of the mind.

IV. VOLUNTARY SERVICE Christian people ought to give some leisure to a form of voluntary service. We ought to have an avocation as well as a vocation. We ought to involve ourselves more than we do in causes, movements, other people's troubles. Some of you are doing well in this respect. Others ought to get started with things in this area, and should you desire to do this now - speak to me after the service. The need is great and so few there are who really will follow through. Abilities vary, for God made us different that we might supply each other's need, but opportunities for service are always close at hand - in the home, the church, the community. Voluntary service is the time, energy, and work you freely give because you believe that "bearing one another's burdens" is the law of Christ.

V. WORSHIP Finally, some of our leisure should be given to worship. Thoreau, who has so much to say that our generation needs to hear, once wrote: "He has true leisure who has time to improve his soul's estate". This is why in the Divine Economy a whole day in every week was set apart for rest and for worship. It was to be a holy day, not a holiday. We have built a lopsided civilization in this land - for while leisure has increased and the entertainment world expanded - worship has diminished. Rest - relaxation - recreation - volunteer service - worship - all make their contribution to the good and whole life. All are important, but if we have 120 hours a week out of 168 to be shared among them, is one hour enough for God. For some, it is difficult to find even one hour.

Soon we shall be starting up another year together. I appeal to you to save your Sunday mornings for the great things of the human spirit. I appeal to each
of you to re-establish your habit of weekly worship in order to strengthen those
spiritual values which nourish our lives. Consider what happens in worship. As
William Tample once put it: the conscience is quickened by the holiness of God,
the mind is fed with the truth of God, the imagination if purged by the beauty of
God, the heart is opened to the love of God, the will is devoted to the purpose of
God.

A minister was asked to call on an elderly man who was dying and who was
afraid of death. As tenderly as he knew how, the spoke to him about God and
Christ and the salvation of his soul. Bitterly and brokenly the elderly man com­
plained, "I've had a very busy life. I've never had time for that sort of thing". But
he had had four thousands Sundays across a lifetime.

Labor and leisure. They are related. As we go on from here why not con­
sider giving more time to rest, to relaxation, to self-improvement, to voluntary
service, and to worship in the leisure of your life.

LET US PRAY  O God, who worketh in all things, who hast called us to be
fellow workers with thee, and dost assign to every man his
separate task: teach us, in our several callings, what thou wouldst have us do,
and make us faithful to do it to the best of our abilities, and then guide us
in our leisure that we may live the well ordered life - giving time to rest, to
relaxation, to self-improvement, to service for others, and finally to our worship
of thee. We ask this in the spirit of Jesus of Nazareth, the carpenter's Son. Amen
TWELFTH SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY
September 5, 1965

ORDER OF WORSHIP
11 A.M.

ORGAN
"Adagio and Andante" Mendelssohn

CALL TO WORSHIP
HYMN NO. 2 "Come, Thou almighty King"

PRAYER OF CONFESSION (seated)

Most merciful Father, we have done little to forward thy kingdom in this world, to foster the brotherhood of man, and to establish love as the law of life. We have allowed self to blind us, pains to embitter us. Pardon our shortcomings; forgive our neglect; give us a pure heart intent on pleasing thee. Help us in all our seeking to seek first thy kingdom and thy righteousness. And make us to come, as came thy Son, not to be ministered unto, but to minister. We ask this in the spirit of Jesus Christ. Amen

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GLORIA PATRI

APOSTLES' CREED page 512

SCRIPTURE Psalm 8

PASTORAL PRAYER

ANNOUNCEMENT OF CONGREGATIONAL CONCERNS Psalm 67 Freudenthal

OFFERTORY SOLO (Mr. John White, Tenor)

PRESENTATION OF THE OFFERING WITH THE DOXOLOGY

HYMN NO. 11 "Through all the changing scenes of life"

SERMON "LABOR AND LEISURE" Mr. Clarke

HYMN NO. 180 "Breathe on me, Breath of God"

Benediction

ORGAN "Postlude in B flat" West

WELCOME

We give a hearty welcome to friends old and new who worship with us on this Labor Day weekend. For several Sundays, the coffee hour which gives us such a fine opportunity for fellowship has been discontinued. However, our greeting to you is just as real and full of warmth as if it were given with coffee or tea cup in hand.

We invite you to sign one of our Guest Books. We hope you will be drawn to worship with us again in this House of Prayer for all people.

ALTAR FLOWERS

The altar flowers are given by our African friend, Augustin Shutsha, in loving memory of his mother, Dehmba Harry Shutsha.

FOR THE CHILDREN

Sessions for the children (infants through third graders) are held every Sunday morning throughout the year from eleven to twelve. These sessions meet on the fourth floor. Mrs. Levy is available to care for the younger children. Miss Strozier is in charge of the older boys and girls.

UPPER ROOM

Copies of the September - October issue of the Upper Room are available in the narthex. A copy is there for you to take home for your daily devotional exercise.

CHOIR TO MEET

The first choir rehearsal of the Fall Season will be held this coming Wednesday evening in the basement choir room. New members are welcome.
PARK AVENUE METHODIST CHURCH
106 East 86th Street
New York, N.Y. 10028
AT 9-6997

CHURCH DIRECTORY
Rev. Philip A. C. Clarke.................................Minister
Dr. Harold C. Metzner..................Associate Minister, Emeritus
Mr. Mark A. Else......................Choir Director
Mr. J. Earl Weatherford......................Organist
Mrs. George Leech......................Day School Director
Mrs. Kent Klineman......................Church Secretary
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Lay Leader, The Church...............Mr. Mark A. Else
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Education Commission Chairman...Mr. Thomas Stribling
Finance Commission Chairman........Mr. Glenn Lowry
Membership Commission Chairman.....(To be filled)
Missions Commission Chairman...Dr. Harold N. Brewster
Social Concerns Commission Chr.....Miss Nancy Curtis

STATED MEETINGS
Sunday Services: 10:00 a.m................Sunday School
11:00 a.m................Morning Worship
12:00 noon.................Fellowship Hour
7:30 p.m................Young Adults
(2nd and 4th Sundays)
Official Board................Second Tuesday, 8:15 p.m.
Choir Rehearsal.............Every Wednesday, 6:30 p.m.
Day School................Every morning (9 - 12)