

Week 2

Last week we discussed sleep as a good gift of God's Creation. This week we turn to sleep as impacted by the Fall. While sleep was initially a means of generative community, the introduction of sin separates us from that community. Examples of this are Noah's sleep in Genesis 9 and the disciples' sleep in Gethsemane in Matthew 26.

In Genesis, Noah fell asleep after becoming drunk from the wine of his vineyard, the first ever planted. Noah's son Ham saw his father naked – a state of dishonor – yet chose not to cover him up. By contrast, when Noah's other sons Shem and Japheth saw Noah exposed, they took a sheet and, walking backwards to avoid seeing him, laid it on him. When Noah awakes and realizes what his sons had done, he curses Ham and his descendants, the Canaanites, to be slaves to Ham's brothers.

Perhaps you resonate with Noah in that your work is such that you have a hard time sleeping the way you would like. Maybe you just collapse at the end of the day from the tolls of your labors. If that's you, I pray your community can be like Shem and Japheth and help you improve the quality of your sleep.

Or maybe you're like Ham in that you see someone in a non-ideal sleeping state yet do nothing to help. Or worse, perhaps you even dishonor them for how they are sleeping. *They should get a job... They shouldn't do drugs or idolize money.* If that resonates with you, I pray you can see God's invitation to become like Shem and Japheth, swapping out inaction, or even disrespect, for compassion. May we see Christ in those naked and cover them – with clothes, shelter, and prayer.

In Matthew 26, Jesus enters the Garden of Gethsemane to pray over his looming crucifixion. He asks Peter, James, and John to go with him, and to stay awake. Thrice he leaves them to agonize with God in prayer; thrice he returns and rebukes them for sleeping.

Jesus' disapproval reminds us that sleep is from God and thus for drawing closer to God. To be sure, elsewhere in the Gospels Jesus prized rest for his disciples. However, in that current moment, he had discerned that their sleep routine had to be altered. We should commit to sleep routines as best we can, but be ready to sacrifice sleep when we discern God asking us to remain in community with others. May we have wisdom to judge wisely how long our notes of rest are to be. Amen.

***How can you cover those who sleep vulnerably around you?
When do we choose sleep over obedience to Jesus?***

Prayer: God thank you for helping me sleep. Help me see those who lie exposed around me, and may my community help me sleep when I feel exposed. Help me stay awake with you as you ask me to keep watch. In Jesus' name, Amen.