

Tell Me Why I Don't Like Mondays

Mr. Allister Pattison

That Monday Feeling

It's Monday morning and the alarm is going off. It's the depths of winter and it's cold and dark outside. You're about to hit the snooze button (it's so warm and comfortable under the duvet) when you remember that you'd set the alarm for 15 minutes later than usual because you wanted to get in a few more precious winks.

The groan that emerges from your reluctantly stirring consciousness is no ordinary "Oh No!" This is an "Oh No!" that sinks right down to the pit of your stomach. It's a unique kind of "Oh No!" that could only mean that it's Monday and your worst fears are indeed confirmed. Just when you were starting to get the hang of the weekend.

Everyone's got their unique thoughts at that moment of course. For mothers it might be "... and I've only had two hours' sleep because the baby was throwing up all night and I have to make them all breakfast and packed lunches." For the working amongst us it's "why am I doing this to myself? I wish I was on holiday." For students and scholars "it's that really incomprehensible lecturer who reads everything straight out of the text book and mumbles at the overhead projector," or "I forgot to do my Maths homework. What am I going to do?" Perhaps there are others like the unemployed who don't set the alarm anymore. For them it's a different "Oh No!" For them it could be "Oh No, not another day of feeling worthless and being worried." In light of all the resonant pain that we may feel at all of this it's not really that surprising that back in the eighties, The Boomtown Rats wanted to "shoot the whole day down" and The Bangles wished it was Sunday.

What's going wrong?

That Monday feeling says something to us about our lives and ourselves that we may not always be conscious of. It's a feeling that says

to us that there's something fundamentally missing, and that missing something is so important that we can be deeply unhappy without it.

The Monday "Oh No!" also says something about our aspirations. It says that what we really want is *rest*, not work. But the rest that we want is a peculiar kind of rest. The unemployed among us can testify that the "rest" that comes from mere absence of work through lack of opportunity is not rest at all. Unemployment can be a more depressing and debilitating form of emotional toil than the humdrum of day-to-day graft.

The rest we want is the rest of *fulfilment as human beings*. It is a rest that comes from a feeling of wholeness and purpose. It is the rest that comes from living active, meaningful and satisfying lives. It is something that, just now and again, breaks through into our consciousness like sun through thick cloud and gives us momentary peace. This missing peace is one that is born out of the knowledge that what we are experiencing is meaningful and good. It is a rest that makes us feel happy and content in our lives. It is a feeling of wholeness that comes from knowing who we are and why we're here.

The First Monday

To find out what we're missing, we need to find out what we've lost, and we find that in the garden of Eden. Imagine you're Adam or Eve waking up on the first Monday morning. You've been alive and living with your partner for less than two days. You've been created into a world that is teeming with life, and eye-assaulting in beauty. If you woke up in the night, it was not because it was cold and your arthritis was being aggravated or because you were awakened by a sick baby. Instead it was probably the sound of nocturnal animals. If you'd cared to look around in the night hours what you wouldn't have seen was lashing rain and gales. Instead you would have experienced the softness of God's mist going up to water the ground and might have seen an innumerable multitude of stars entirely undimmed by light pollution.

Remember the previous day? You probably spent it in face-to-face communion with God, entering into His joyful rest with Him and

wondering at His mighty works. Perhaps God spent time with you explaining everything that He had done and helping you to understand what He wanted you to do. Maybe He even spent some time giving you advice on how to get started in the gargantuan task of subduing the earth to His will.

Think what it must have been like stepping out into that Monday. Think of the sense of wonder and excitement that would come from the empowerment by God's loving guidance on the Sabbath, knowing exactly what you are there to do and why, knowing the magnitude of the task, not as an oppressive burden, but as an exciting and engaging project that God was there to support you in. This is a life of purpose and meaning, a fulfilled life of direct access to God the creator. Adam and Eve had the good life.

An Average Monday

Contrast that with *your* average Monday. Perhaps it begins with the kids screaming at each other over who gets the last bowl of Frosties. For the kids it might continue with having to face bullying and name-calling at school. For older students there's the pressure of expectation at exam time and the shame of failure when you don't live up to it. For mothers there's all of the ferrying to do: getting them off to school, taking them to football and hockey; there's the washing, ironing, cooking, cleaning, tidying up; maybe there's visiting a frail mother or father in hospital.

For those at work there's the office politics: everyone stabbing everyone else in the scramble up to the next rung of the promotion ladder. Maybe your boss is exploiting you to get him or her up the ladder. There are few things more demoralising than being walked all over. Perhaps you're going to face opposition for your faith this Monday as unbelievers ridicule your views and laugh at your stupidity. Maybe you're an elder and you've got the added burden of another spat over yesterday's sermon. Whoever you are, and whatever you're doing, this kind of Monday is one that is characterised by conflict. There's conflict with your own sin, conflict with unbelievers and there's conflict with your family and with the church. There's not a lot of peace in a Monday like this one.

For the sinless partnership of working together to fulfil God's great commission, we've now got the rat race. For the direct feedback, recognition and advice that we had from God in the cool of the evenings we've now got the corporate ladder. For the tending the garden we've got the production line.

The Redemption of Work

When Adam and Eve fell for Satan's lie they rejected God. They rejected God's loving advice and instruction. They rejected the face-to-face contact that they once enjoyed with the only person who could make sense of the world and of work. In short they rejected God's friendship and in rejecting that Adam and Eve ushered in an age in which the whole creation became subject to endless futility. The human project degenerated into a cycle of birth, toil, sickness and death.

It is in the recovery of the lost friendship of God through faith in Jesus that work is redeemed. Jesus has reconciled us to God so that we can have communion with Him again. Like Adam, whose friendship grew through meeting with God in the cool of the day, we also need daily fellowship with God. For us this consists in daily "closet" time where we engage with our heavenly Father in Bible reading and prayer. In so doing we get His authoritative reflection on the direction of our lives. This daily encounter with the living God is vital to our spiritual health. The moment we forget who we are working for is the moment we will start to live just like the world and our only concerns will be money, pleasure and personal advancement.

We also need to encounter God in fellowship with His people in the Church. In fellowship we should share our life experiences with one another. Through this sharing we learn so much from the collected wisdom that we all gain from reflecting on God's providence in our lives. We find counsel, comfort and correction. We get ideas on how to speak to unbelievers and people of other faiths. In addition we discover the truth that all of us are subject to the same temptations and so find a counterbalance to our selfish tendency to think that our own life difficulties are so much worse than everyone else's.

It is this contact with God and His work that gives our futile working lives meaning. In fellowship with God we receive rest. We receive the peace of knowing His presence, the comfort of knowing that we are on the right path, and the confidence to get up and go forward knowing that what we are doing is our *vocation*. Where we are is where God wants us to be. In knowing that we are in a God-appointed vocation we are liberated from worrying that we are not up to the task. We only have to trust and God will lead. In vocation God saves us from loneliness and selfishness and empowers us to live for Jesus who loved us and gave Himself for us.

The great thing is that this is only the beginning. As God points the way in this life, He also points to the everlasting rest of the life to come. In work we learn to trust in God, to love Him more and to hope in His salvation so that we will be comfortable resting in Him in the regeneration of the universe. In working for Him, God is shaping us to take our place as living stones in His Holy Temple. He is preparing us to live with Him in heaven where all of our joy will be in seeing Him as He is and living every moment in His light.

So let us resolve to get up tomorrow morning in the consciousness that God is with us. Let us resolve to become people of prayer, people of the Word, and people of love, for as we do so we will be transformed into the likeness of Jesus Christ and be salt and light in the tastelessness and darkness that surrounds us. When this is who we are then those around us who are struggling with the futility of it all will see something of the world to come in the here and now and wonder where we get our hope from. When they ask us how we shoulder our burdens with such commitment and self-sacrifice let's be ready to give an answer and point them to the Saviour in whom we have the assurance of resurrection to glory and everlasting life with the Triune God of Christians.

This article was authored by Allister Pattison (PhD), an Optical Systems Architect for Nortel Networks.