



“Give It a Rest”

Second Sunday after Pentecost
Saturday and Sunday, June 2 - 3, 2018

All Services

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Trinity Evangelical Lutheran Church
Camp Hill, Pennsylvania

Deuteronomy 5:12-15; Mark 2:23-3:6

Grace to you and peace, from God who is, who was, and who is to come. Amen.

My son Evan graduated from Juniata College a couple of weeks ago. Four years, too much debt, and a really good education, he is now the proud bearer of a Bachelor of Arts degree with emphasis in Communication and graduated Cum Laude. In honor of this great achievement, Marianne & I took Evan and his lovely girlfriend on a four-day adventure up to the Finger Lakes region of New York. We rented a house on Lake Seneca, toured the area, went to the Women's Rights National Historical Park, hiked several waterfalls, and visited a few wineries and breweries.

It was nice, relaxing, restful, and relatively stress free. It was good to get away. Especially since, with Trinity being down a pastor, and all the various needs and concerns that we have to address on a regular basis, it was good to **not** be concerned with what was going on, **Right Now**, at Trinity. We had a nice few days of vacation. I could even go so far as to call it a bit of a *sabbath*.

Americans don't really understand this whole concept of "sabbath." We get the idea of sabbath from the book of Genesis and the story of creation. We all probably remember Genesis 2:2

² And on the seventh day God finished the work that he had done, and he rested on the seventh day from all the work that he had done. ³ So God blessed the seventh day and hallowed it, because on it God rested from all the work that he had done in creation. (Gen. 2:2-3 NRS)

God rested on the last day, which we call Saturday. Which is also one of the theories as to why we have a seven-day week. It was the early church, though - the church in the first century, after Jesus' death, resurrection, and ascension - that led to that day of rest and worship moving **from** Saturday **to** Sunday. There are several theories as to why, the primary best explanation being that Jesus rose from the dead on the **first** day of the week, that is, Sunday.

What's happening in our Deuteronomy lesson, is a rereading of the commandments. Specifically, we heard the command about sabbath, or "rest." The commandments start off explaining how we are to *respect* the Lord God Almighty, that is, have no other gods before the Lord God; we are to make no idols; we are not to use God's name in vain. The next commandment is one that most people actually **want** to hear: the

command that we are to: Relax; Rest; Recharge, and to Rejuvenate.

¹⁴ But the seventh day is a sabbath to the LORD your God; you shall not do any work...

In the gospel, Jesus takes that “Rejuvenate” idea to an entirely different level when he restores a man’s deformed hand. Jesus asks his detractors this great question (and this is the Brock translation here):

“Is it permitted on the sabbath to do good or to do evil, to restore life or to destroy it?”

It’s such a great question, strong, direct, to the point, that it shocks his detractors into silence.

Isn’t that a great way to strive to live? To say to myself before I do something, or while I’m doing it, or even right after I’ve done it:

Is what I’m about to do (or doing, or just did), is it going to bring about good? Is it going to help others, or be a good thing for me? Or is what I’m about to do going to cause pain, bring evil, hurt someone? Will my actions restore life, or destroy life?

And this is where **sabbath** comes in. What I have discovered in my own life, is that when I have spent time with God rebuilding, refreshing my faith, I am far more likely to make good decisions. I make better decisions about things when I am well rested; when I feel safe, secure, well fed. When I have a decent place to sleep, enough liquid to drink, clothing that’s adequate for the situation, I tend to make far better decisions in my life. When I am right with God, when I am rested in God, I am an all-around better person. Good decisions in my own life, tend to help me make good decisions that affect *others* as well.

Did you know that the United States has no required paid vacation days? The Federal Fair Labor Standards Act (FLSA) of 1938 has no requirements for individual employers to give their employees any paid vacation time. Most companies **do** give employees vacation time and paid holidays. But they are not *legally* required to do so. Thing is, those of us Americans who **do** have paid vacation are notorious for **not taking** all of our vacation days.

We all need to rest. We need time to refresh, not only our bodies, but our hearts minds spirits, if you would. That’s what this commandment is getting at: We humans need to *take* the time, we need to *make* the time, to relax. More importantly, we need to take that down time and *be with* God That’s something we are **not** good at.

That **is** something we tried to instill in our Affirmation of Baptism students this year. At Saturday worship, we had this year’s students confirm their faith. That is, they took onto themselves those promises made for them at their baptism. They had to attend class on Sunday morning for this past year. They had to listen to a whole bunch of different speakers, including Pastor Horner, me, and Peter Fox, who leads the whole program. They had to learn about scripture; and get a better understanding of the Sacraments, Baptism and Communion. Among other things, they had to write a one-page essay on

their faith life. In our small group end of the year discussions (we broke them into three groups, with Pastor Horner, Peter and me each taking one), they were sharp. My discussion group was right on the mark. All three of us said these students had some really *solid* answers for questions we asked. Questions that I am certain many of us sitting here would struggle to answer.

I know that those students are ready and able to take on for themselves those promises of how to live a faith filled life.

We all deserve a rest. We all need to take that rest, to get spiritually renewed, refilled, refreshed, so that we, too, may go in peace, because the Spirit sends up forth to serve.

Amen.

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