

Rev. Dan Welch Pentecost 2 6-2-24 Text- Deuteronomy 5: 12-15 (8:00)

Rest. Relaxation. A day off. Those are appealing words, aren't they?

Summer is a busy time. Many people are very busy these days just trying to get away and relax. In fact, some are so busy trying to relax that they get more tired out than they were to begin with! Have you ever come back from a vacation so wiped out that you feel like you need another vacation just to get back to normal?

I'm sure we all have differing ideas of what rest and relaxation mean to us. For some people, rest and relaxation means going camping for a week or fishing for the weekend up north. For young adults and kids, it might mean hanging out at the pool here in town or Lake Marion or going "mocking" at Oak Leaf Park. "Mocking", is a term I've come to learn when young people especially get a hammock and go searching for two good trees to hang it between and then kick back and relax! For others relaxation might mean something a little closer to home like a nap on the sofa or shipping the kids off to Grandma and Grandpa's and listening to the welcome sound of silence!

Whatever your definition of rest is, we can all agree that rest is a good thing! We need it and God knows it. That's *part* of the reason why He gives this commandment we find in our Old Testament lesson today. "Observe the Sabbath day, by keeping it holy." "Remember" it. On the seventh day, the last day of the week, the Israelites were to stop all work: no farming, no milling, no basket-weaving, nothing, no work at all. The Sabbath was to be a day of rest and a day of worship.

This was a *command* from God, but not as cold as I think our English language makes it sound. When God commanded His people to "remember" or "observe" the Sabbath day, He was really saying "*Be careful* to keep the Sabbath, be on guard against anything that would prevent you from worship and rest, because the Sabbath has huge blessings for you." There was a lot of good in keeping this command.

Why? Why did God command the Israelites to rest like this? Some people today might say, "This was God preventing His people from burnout. He was simply making sure that they didn't wear out their minds and bodies by overworking all the time. He was building family time into the week by making sure that His people had one day a week to be together, one where the boss couldn't interfere." These are all great things, *but* that's not the reason God gives in our text today for observing the Sabbath. Our Lord had something else,

something even **greater** in mind. Why were His people to remember the Sabbath day? The answer: “Remember that you were slaves in Egypt and that the LORD your God brought you out of there with a mighty hand and an outstretched arm. Therefore, the LORD your God has commanded you to observe the Sabbath day” (v.15). That’s why they were to keep the 3rd Commandment, not just to rest from working but more importantly, so that they would **remember** God’s deliverance, His care for them.

Remember that, as a people, the Israelites had been slaves in Egypt for 400 years. Slaves were basically prisoners with jobs and for them there was no rest. They could be called on to provide labor at any time, seven days a week. It was back-breaking, blister-making work. It was making bricks and then making **buildings** out of the bricks. Seven days a week for 400 years.

The Israelites didn’t escape slavery on their own; there was no way they could defeat Pharaoh and his armies. No, it was God who delivered them. It was God who stretched out His arm and sent ten plagues upon the Egyptians, Who led His people away. It was the Almighty God Who parted the sea with a mighty hand so that the Israelites could get through, then closed it on the Egyptians soldiers so that the Israelites were saved. When the Israelites were delivered from slavery in Egypt, they knew that it was **God** who had delivered them.

In that day, the people could look back and say, “Today we rest. For our ancestors in Egypt, there **was** no rest, because they were slaves. But because God has delivered us, today we can rest from our labors.” They remembered what God had done. It was more than looking back at the past, though; it was remembering what God was **still doing** for them in the present. In other words, at the Sabbath, God’s people said: “For the last six days, we have worked hard to get things done. Today we rest; and as we rest, we remember not to trust in our own work, but to trust in God who gives us all good things.” It was also, as God’s Word says, a time to remember the Lord’s promises of what He would do in the **future** for His people, that He would send a Savior to give them **eternal** rest. You can see, then, why the Sabbath would be the day for worship; as they remembered all that God had done, was doing, and would do, it was only appropriate to hear those promises in His saving Word, and to sing His praises.

“Observe the Sabbath day,” the Lord commanded. “Keep it, guard it, don’t let it be lost.” With good reason: if the Israelites lost the Sabbath and its

meaning, it meant that they had lost their trust in God who provided. That would mean that they were lost, too.

Our Lord still commands us today: “Observe the Sabbath day by keeping it holy, as the LORD your God has commanded you.” Guard it, keep it, remember it, treasure it. What does it mean *now*? The New Testament tells us that this commandment has changed a little: The Sabbath, on whichever day we observe it, is still to be a day of worship and rest, but we don’t have to cease from labor for the rest of the day after worship. That’s because, in a very real and profound way, worship *is* our rest. This hour or one hour or so of Divine Service is the most restful, rest-filled, and resting hour of the week.

You see, by nature we have unrest with God; because of our sinfulness, you and I are not at peace with Him. Instead, we are slaves to sin and at *war* with God, the Bible tells us. There is only one way that we can have peace with God, that we can be at rest with Him, and that is to have our sins taken away. This is why Jesus went to the cross: to take away our sin, to give us peace with God. By His death, He has taken our sin and guilt, and God no longer holds those sins against us; He forgives all who trust in Him. He takes away our sin, He puts us at rest with Him: and in His care, He gives us rest, forgiveness, life, and salvation.

These wonderful, amazing gifts His first gives to us in Holy Baptism. Then week after week as we gather for worship, God renews and strengthens us in our faith in Him. This is the important reason for worship, for Divine Service: It’s here that our Lord takes the forgiveness won at the cross and applies it to us personally. In His Word and Sacraments, He is giving us forgiveness of sins which gives us true peace; peace that will last and last.

Yes, our Lord promises rest *and* peace for us in His Word and sacraments. But it’s not a *physical* rest that leaves our bodies feeling rejuvenated when we leave. Nor is it rest for the mind, leaving us feeling mentally refreshed and emotionally “charged-up” when we walk out of the doors of the Sanctuary. Although that often may be the case and it is certainly good when we do leave here happy. The rest that our Lord gives us is rest for the *soul*, the forgiveness of sins won at the cross.

It’s here, in God’s Word and Sacraments, that we find rest for our *souls*. It is here that we receive forgiveness of sins, life, and salvation. Through these means God is working to forgive us, to strengthen our faith, to remove our sin and guilt, to give us life everlasting. This is a great comfort for us as we endure

all kinds of trials in life because it's in the midst of trials that it becomes extremely difficult if not impossible for us to be emotionally happy. When we are sick or injured, we likely **will** leave worship feeling physically "down" and tired **because** of the sickness or injury; but that doesn't mean that our Lord has failed to give us rest! He has been true to His promise, and He has taken away our sin, given us the sure and certain hope of eternal life without sickness and injury. In the same way, when we're filled with worries, thoughts that trouble us, and grief, we can't expect to leave church feeling happy and care-free; but even if we are still feeling emotionally "down," our Lord has given us rest: He **will** carry us through those trials that trouble us now.

"Observe the Sabbath day by keeping it holy." God commanded. Guard it, keep it, treasure it, don't let anything get in its way. Because it's in His Word and Sacraments that He gives us rest- forgiveness, hope, life, strength and salvation. Our Lord Jesus Himself gives us this command and this invitation, "Come to Me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you and learn from Me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For My yoke is easy and My burden is light" (Matthew 11:28). So, with heart-felt thanks we remember the Sabbath today, and every Lord's day, because here our Lord remembers **us** and gives us **rest**. Amen.

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Rest. Relaxation. A day off. Those are appealing words, aren't they? Summer is a busy time. Many people are very busy these days just trying to get away and relax. In fact, some are so busy trying to relax that they get more tired out than they were to begin with! Have you ever come back from a vacation so wiped out that you feel like you need another vacation just to get back to normal?

I'm sure we all have differing ideas of what rest and relaxation mean to us. Graduates, I'll bet you're all enjoying some well-earned rest and relaxation from school these days after achieving your goal of graduation! Maybe you're sleeping in a little bit later in the mornings or into the afternoons, perhaps?

For some people, rest and relaxation means going camping for a week or fishing for the weekend up north. For young adults and kids, it might mean hanging out at the pool here in town or Lake Marion or going "mocking" at Oak Leaf Park. "Mocking", is a term I've come to learn when young people

especially get a hammock and go searching for two good trees to hang it between and then kick back and relax! For others relaxation might mean something a little closer to home like a nap on the sofa or shipping the kids off to Grandma and Grandpa's and listening to the welcome sound of silence!

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Why? Why did God command the Israelites to rest like this? Some people today might say, "This was God preventing His people from burnout. He was simply making sure that they didn't wear out their minds and bodies by overworking all the time. He was building family time into the week by making sure that His people had one day a week to be together, one where the boss couldn't interfere." These are all great things, *but* that's not the reason God gives in our text today for observing the Sabbath. Our Lord had something else, something even *greater* in mind. Why were His people to remember the Sabbath day? The answer: "Remember that you were slaves in Egypt and that the LORD your God brought you out of there with a mighty hand and an outstretched arm. Therefore, the LORD your God has commanded you to observe the Sabbath day" (v.15). That's why they were to keep the 3rd Commandment, not just to rest from working but more importantly, so that they would *remember* God's deliverance, His care for them.

Remember that, as a people, the Israelites had been slaves in Egypt for 400 years. Slaves were basically prisoners with jobs and for them there was no rest. They could be called on to provide labor at any time, seven days a week. It was back-breaking, blister-making work. It was making bricks and then making *buildings* out of the bricks. Seven days a week for 400 years.

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In that day, the people could look back and say, "Today we rest. For our ancestors in Egypt, there **was** no rest, because they were slaves. But because God has delivered us, today we can rest from our labors." They remembered what God had done. It was more than looking back at the past, though; it was remembering what God was **still doing** for them in the present. In other words, at the Sabbath, God's people said: "For the last six days, we have worked hard to get things done. Today we rest; and as we rest, we remember not to trust in our own work, but to trust in God who gives us all good things." It was also, as God's Word says, a time to remember the Lord's promises of what He would do in the **future** for His people, that He would send a Savior to give them **eternal** rest. You can see, then, why the Sabbath would be the day for worship; as they remembered all that God had done, was doing, and would do, it was only appropriate to hear those promises in His saving Word, and to sing His praises.

"Observe the Sabbath day," the Lord commanded. "Keep it, guard it, don't let it be lost." With good reason: if the Israelites lost the Sabbath and its meaning, it meant that they had lost their trust in God who provided. That would mean that they were lost, too.

Our Lord still commands us today, "Observe the Sabbath day by keeping it holy, as the LORD your God has commanded you." Guard it, keep it, remember it, treasure it. What does it mean **now**? The New Testament tells us that this commandment has changed a little: The Sabbath, on whichever day we observe it, is still to be a day of worship and rest, but we don't have to cease from labor for the rest of the day after worship. That's because, in a very real and profound way, worship **is** our rest. This hour or one hour or so of Divine Service is the most restful, rest-filled, and resting hour of the week.

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Yes, our Lord promises rest *and* peace for us in His Word and sacraments. But it's not a *physical* rest that leaves our bodies feeling rejuvenated when we leave. Nor is it rest for the mind, leaving us feeling mentally refreshed and emotionally "charged-up" when we walk out of the doors of the Sanctuary. Although that often may be the case and it is certainly good when we do leave here happy. The rest that our Lord gives us is rest for the *soul*, the forgiveness of sins won at the cross.

It's here, in God's Word and Sacraments, that we find rest for our *souls*. It is here that we receive forgiveness of sins, life, and salvation. Through these means God is working to forgive us, to strengthen our faith, to remove our sin and guilt, to give us life everlasting. This is a great comfort for us as we endure all kinds of trials in life, because it's in the midst of trials that it becomes extremely difficult if not impossible for us to be emotionally happy. When we are sick or injured, we likely *will* leave worship feeling physically "down" and tired *because* of the sickness or injury; but that doesn't mean that our Lord has failed to give us rest! He has been true to His promise, and He has taken away our sin, given us the sure and certain hope of eternal life without sickness and injury. In the same way, when we're filled with worries, thoughts that trouble us, and grief, we can't expect to leave church feeling happy and care-free; but even if we are still feeling emotionally "down," our Lord has given us rest: He *will* carry us through those trials that trouble us now.

I hope and pray that this is something that all of us, but especially you, our graduates, will always remember! This is without a doubt a very exciting

time in your life, as you look to the future with all of its possibilities and potential. Yet this can also be a very anxious time, as you wonder what exactly *is* next. Will you like it at the new school that you're moving on to? Or the service you're going into? Will you be able find a job, a career someday that you can enjoy and make a good living at it? Please remember through all the changes in life there is one thing that doesn't change and that is Christ. "Jesus is the same, yesterday, today, and forever" (Heb. 13:8). And through all the anxious times remember also to "Cast all your anxiety on the Lord because He cares for you." (1 Peter 5:7).

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Anyway, I'm sure we all have differing ideas of what rest and relaxation mean to us. Graduates, I'll bet you're all enjoying some well-earned rest and relaxation from school these days after achieving your goal of graduation!

For some people, rest and relaxation means going camping for a week or fishing for the weekend up north. For young adults and kids it might mean hanging out at the pool here in town or Lake Marion or going "mocking" at Oak Leaf Park. "Mocking", short for hammocking, is a term I've come to learn when young people especially get a hammock and go searching for two good trees to hang it between and then kick back and relax! For others relaxation might mean something a little closer to home like a nap on the sofa or shipping the kids off to somebody else and listening to that strange sound- silence! We all have different ideas of what is restful and relaxing.

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