

Jesus: Our Resurrected Sabbath

Lenten Guide 2017
Blessed Earth

Dear clergy and lay leaders,

Many Christians think of Lent as a time to *give up* something and thereby honor the sacrifice of Jesus on the cross. This year, we invite you to *embrace* a new habit: holy rest. Yes, Sabbath involves sacrifice and preparation, but the rewards are life changing!

Eugene Peterson once said that Sabbath is the best thing he ever did for his marriage, his children, and his relationship with God. Sabbath is woven into the very fabric of creation, yet it's the most ignored of the Ten Commandments. What better time than Lent to re-establish the holy rhythms of work and rest?

In this Lenten series package, you will find suggested lectionary readings, themes, sermon outlines, audio/video links, and small group study materials—everything you need to plan a comprehensive Lenten study on Sabbath.

Feel free to tailor these materials to the needs of your congregation. Check out additional resources at our website, sabbathliving.org. And let us know if we can be of help by emailing us at contact@blessedearth.org.

Every blessing,
Nancy and Matthew Sleeth, MD

March 1, 2017, Ash Wednesday

Lectionary Readings--Joel 2:1-2; Joel 2:12-17; Psalm 51 [a]; 2 Corinthians 5:20-6:10; Matthew 6:1-6; Matthew 6:16-21

Theme--*Repentance: Our Sabbath Need*

Sample Sermon: *The Brake that Remakes* by Doug Calhoun, Redeemer Community Church, Needham, MA

[Audio Link](#)

“The Brake that Remakes” (Psalm 73; Ephesians 4:17-24)

- I. Introduction
 - a. Sabbath is an attitude adjustment day.
- II. What’s Important?
 - a. Busyness stops us from caring about what we actually care about.
 - b. 40 million hours of vacation go unused every year. Missing vacation is a symptom of us forgetting what really matters.
 - c. Sabbath living gives us the ability to pay attention. Sabbath is being able to become fully present.
 - d. Ask the Holy Spirit if you are disconnected from the people around you.
- III. How do we think about time?
 - a. How often do you find yourself saying, “If I only had more...” or “When I get to the next...”?
 - b. It doesn’t take much for our time to get out of control.
 - c. The gift of Sabbath is a space in time in which our thinking is made new. Our attention is fixed on God, and our mind is remolded. We have clear, healthy, whole thinking in a world that presses us to have unthinking minds.
 - d. There are two words for time in Greek.
 - i. Kronos—ordinary time of clock and calendar
 1. From the Greek god Kronos who ate his own children. You can never give Kronos enough. It always devours.
 - ii. Kyros—time as a gift, opportunity, or season.
 1. Jesus—“The *time* has come....”
 2. What is this time for? Kyros time leads us to a holy purpose.
 - e. How do you invite God to remake your ideas of time?
 - f. Sabbath is a time when we enter into the presence of God and he frames our thinking.
- IV. How do we think about God?
 - a. Our main sin is we want to be God. We want to control our lives.
 - b. Sabbath is a time to remember we are not God. God is God.
 - c. Sabbath keeping requires a whole new attitude about God.

- d. In the Jewish Sabbath, the family shares a meal and then goes to sleep. Sleep provide an object lesson. In sleep we accomplish nothing. Rest is a theological commitment. Rest helps us practice trusting God.
- e. Rest requires believing that God is good and works for us. Trusting that God is a God of goodness and abundance is a foundation of Sabbath.

March 5, 2017, First Sunday of Lent

Lectionary Readings--Deuteronomy 26:1-11; Psalm 91; Romans 10:8-13; Luke 4:1-13

Theme--Worship: *Our Sabbath Freedom*

Sample Sermon: *More Than Enough* by Dr. Christine Pohl, Asbury Theological Seminary

[Video Link](#)

“More Than Enough” (Exodus 16)

- I. Introduction
 - a. We are all fellow travelers in the Sabbath journey.
 - b. Exodus 16 is about God's provision, and man's frailty. It is about God's nourishment for man. The context of the text is God's provision for his people, and yet his people continually complain. They cry to return to Egypt. In their fear, they rewrite their very recent history of God's provision. Even then, God, in his grace, promises manna from heaven.
 - c. God gave the command not to store up manna. This is a difficult command for a people consistently worrying about having enough. Then the day before Sabbath, the Hebrew people are commanded to gather enough for the Sabbath as well.
 - d. Manna is a testimony of God's faithfulness. This passage brings Sabbath and God's provision together in a remarkable way. This was before the giving of the Decalogue. It is a story the Hebrew people can remember as they receive the 4th Commandment.
 - e. What can manna and Sabbath teach us about God, ourselves, and Sabbath?
- II. God: manna and Sabbath
 - a. God is a gracious God. Sabbath is a reminder that God supplies more than enough time, provision, and grace.
 - b. God asks in return our trust and fidelity.
- III. Us: manna and Sabbath
 - a. Sabbath and manna remind us that our trust and confidence is often dependent on our circumstances.
 - b. We quickly forget that the bread of heaven is enough.
 - c. This story is about trusting God in difficult circumstances.
 - d. Sabbath is a trust in the one we love and his ordering of our lives.
 - e. Sabbath is trusting God in the provision of time. For the Israelites, it was food. For us, it is time.
 - f. Sabbath is for everyone. Therefore, our keeping Sabbath is a blessing to others.

- g. Sabbath is not an excuse for irresponsibility. It is not “me” time. It is a gift. It is a precious provision that we should encourage and seek to give to others.
- h. Sabbath is a sign of God's work in creation and his resting in it.
- i. Part of the reason we struggle with Sabbath is because we don't know what to do with it.
 - i. We often think of it as don't do's, rather than what we can use our Sabbaths for.
 - 1. God' abundant provision is for worship, celebration, rest, and renewal.
 - 2. This abundant provision is in the bread of heaven— Jesus Christ.
 - 3. Jesus is our Sabbath. He is more than enough.

Week One Small Group Study

- As a group, watch session one of the *24/6 DVD* entitled “Our 24/7 World”.
- Use the provided leader's guide to facilitate a discussion of the session.
- Encourage participants to read chapters 1-3 in the *24/6* book by Matthew Sleeth.

March 12, 2017, Second Sunday of Lent

Lectionary Readings--Genesis 15:1-12; Genesis 15:17-18; Psalm 27; Philippians 3:17-4:1; Luke 13:31-35

Theme--*Covenant: Our Sabbath Hope*

Sample Sermon: *Stop to Remember and Anticipate* by Doug Calhoun, Redeemer Community Church, Needham, MA

[Audio Link](#)

“Stop to Remember and Anticipate” (Psalm 146; Revelation 21:1-7)

I. Introduction

a. Example of thankfulness around the table.

II. Sabbath is a time for reflection and assessment. (Psalm 146)

a. What psalm could you write this week as you use Sabbath to reflect on God's goodness?

b. Failing to remember God's goodness leads to ingratitude.

c. Sin, at heart, is ingratitude.

d. Reflecting is one the greatest spiritual cures for what ails us.

III. Sabbath is a foreshadowing of the rest we will experience in heaven.

a. Like the Lord's Supper, Sabbath is a foretaste of the wedding supper of the Lamb.

b. Sabbath is a time to say, “We haven't seen anything yet!”

c. Sabbath is a dress rehearsal for things above.

Week Two Small Group Study

- As a group, watch session two of *24/6 DVD* entitled “Why We Need 24/6”.
- Use the provided leader's guide to facilitate a discussion of the session.
- Encourage participants to read chapters 4-6 in the *24/6* book.

March 19, 2017

3rd Sunday of Lent

Lectionary Readings--Isaiah 55:1-9; Psalm 63:1-8; 1 Corinthians 10:1-13; Luke 13:1-9

Theme--*Dependence: Our Sabbath Posture*

Sample Sermon: *Let it go . . . and rest* by Mel Williams, delivered at Duke University Chapel on July 6, 2014

[Manuscript Link](#)

“Let it go . . . and rest.” (Matthew 11:28-30)

- I. Introduction
- II. The First Gift: The Gift of Sabbath Time
 - a. More than sleep, it is about rejuvenation, reconnection, restoration.
 - b. It is a sanctuary in time.
- III. The Second Gift: The Gift of Release
 - a. Sabbath is an opportunity to let go of stress and inner obstacles.
- IV. The Third Gift: The Gift of the Inner Wellspring
 - a. Letting things go removes the debris from our inner wellspring and allows the life-giving water to gush.
- V. The Fourth Gift: The Gift of Energy for Our Work in the World
 - a. By stopping and letting go, we gather energy for our mission. If we never stop, the needs of the mission will overwhelm us.

Week Three Small Group Study

- As a group, watch session three of *24/6: A Prescription for a Healthier, Happier Life* DVD entitled “How We Do 24/6”.
- Use the provided leader’s guide to facilitate a discussion of the session.
- Encourage participants to read chapters 7-9 in *24/6: A Prescription for a Healthier, Happier Life* by Matthew Sleeth.

March 26, 2017

4th Sunday of Lent

Lectionary Readings--Joshua 5:1-12; Psalm 32; 2 Corinthians 5:16-21; Luke 15:1-3;
Luke 15:11-32

Theme—*Holy Work: Our Sabbath Lifestyle*

Sample Sermon: *The Other Six Days* by Dr. Ellsworth Kalas delivered at Asbury
Theological Seminary

[Video Link](#)

“The Other Six Days”

- I. Introduction
 - a. God has been very patient with us humans.
 - b. He gave us a perfect Eden, and we messed it up.
 - c. Original sin must be his greatest disappointment, and also God's greatest demonstration of love.
- II. The 10 Commandments is the game plan for the New Kingdom.
 - a. The 10 Commandments were given to a people in slavery. By the time they received the Decalogue they had been slaves so long they had forgotten what freedom was like.
 - b. The 10 Commandments is a game plan for deliverance from slavery.
 - c. The Commandments are for freedom. Breaking of each commandment is a voluntary submission to slavery.
 - i. People made images of gods. They sought to only become more enslaved to falsehood. God offers freedom.
 - d. God gave us the Commandments to provide us the freedom to be all we could be.
- III. Sabbath is the linchpin commandment.
 - a. It was given prior to the law.
 - b. It is a commandment that God gave to himself.
 - c. It was not against a sin. It is a commandment that came to us from the nature of God.
- IV. God is a worker and restor.
 - a. For six days in creation God was productive, but he knew when to say, “That’s enough,” and rest.
 - b. The six days are a privilege. We can work and be productive.
 - c. On the seventh day we rest, but we don’t know what to do with that day. We think we follow a nervous God who can’t stop and rest.
 - d. Resting would have been new to the Jews who worked day after day for centuries under Pharaoh. Now God calls them to rest.
- V. The other six days

- a. We will never know what to do with Sabbath if we don't know what to do with the other six days.
- b. If we do not handle the other six days rightly, we will always treat Sabbath like a garbage dump: the day where we dump all the things we did not get done on the other days.
- c. Because we did not work rightly the other days, we spend Sabbath trying to catch up rather than resting for God's glory.
- d. God wants all of us to work as he worked. It is a privilege to work, and we should learn to love work as God does.
 - i. One of the reasons God loves work is because he is organized.
 - ii. When God came to the end of any day of creation, he said, "That's good; it's enough for today." He could do that because he was organized. He can recognize when the day's work is done.
 - iii. One of the finest things that we can learn is to recognize when a day's work is done. It takes organization.
- e. BUT: You have to be ready for two interruptions.
 - i. People
 - ii. God
- f. If your plan does not allow for those two interruptions then it is wrong.
- g. When the interruption is over, get back to the plan.
- h. AND: We have to allow ourselves to fail. Some days will just not work out. Don't focus on the failure; rather, learn from it. Don't do the same thing tomorrow.
- i. Sabbath is a lovely blessing. Protect it with how you use the other six days.
 - i. Work is part of the 4th commandment: "Six days you shall labor." You will fully experience Sabbath rest only if you labor well the other six days.

Week Four Small Group Study

- As a group, watch session four of *24/6: A Prescription for a Healthier, Happier Life* DVD entitled "Your 24/6 Life".
- Use the provided leader's guide to facilitate a discussion of the session.
- Encourage participants to read chapters 10-12 in *24/6: A Prescription for a Healthier, Happier Life* by Matthew Sleeth.

April 2, 2017

5th Sunday of Lent

Lectionary Readings--Isaiah 43:16-21; Psalm 126; Philippians 3:4-14; John 12:1-8

Theme--*Pressing On: Our Sabbath Call*

Sample Sermon: *Enter His Sabbath Rest* by Mark Wilson, Hayward Wesleyan Church

[Audio File](#)

“Enter His Sabbath Rest”

- I. Introduction
 - a. Israelites and Exodus
 - b. In captivity they were forced to work 24/7.
 - c. During the Exodus they were given the Ten Commandments.
 - i. Fourth Commandment: Remember the Sabbath.
 - d. Sabbath is a day to remember freedom.
 - e. Pharisees took Sabbath and made it a burden.
- II. Sabbath is entering a place.
 - a. Matthew 11:28-30. Sabbath is not about keeping a law. It is about entering a place.
 - b. Jesus is our Sabbath.
 - c. When we enter into Jesus, we find our Sabbath rest.
 - d. Jesus the person is the place.
- III. Sabbath is a shadow.
 - a. Colossians 2:16-17. If you have the Sabbath and don't have Christ, then you don't have Sabbath.
- IV. Sabbath, stop, and disobedience.
 - a. Hebrews 4:1-10. The Israelites failed to enter the Sabbath rest because of disobedience.
 - b. Psalm 95:8-11. In the wilderness the Israelites hardened their hearts.
 - c. Exodus 17. The Israelite people panicked and disobeyed. God says you will never enter my Sabbath rest.
 - d. Sabbath encourages a renewed trust and obedience. Quarrelling, strife, disobedience, and sin never lead to Sabbath rest.
 - e. The source of life and refreshment is Jesus. He is our fountain.
 - i. Psalm 87:7—“All my springs are in you!”

Week 5 Small Group Discussion

- As a group, watch and discuss bonus session 1 of *24/6: A Prescription for a Healthier, Happier Life DVD* entitled “A Special Message for Pastors”.
- Encourage participants to read Sabbath Quotes (pages 191-197) in *24/6: A Prescription for a Healthier, Happier Life* by Matthew Sleeth.

April 9, 2017

Palm Sunday

6th Sunday of Lent

Choose passages from Holy Week

Theme--Celebration: Our Sabbath Desire

Sample Sermon: *Sabbath: The Blessing of 24/6 in 2015* by Cliff Wall, Puett United Methodist Church

[Video Link](#)

“Sabbath: The Blessing of 24/6”

- I. Introduction
 - a. Sabbath is missing from our lives.
 - b. Shabat means stop, cease, or desist.
 - c. Sabbath is designed to be a stop to the process of daily routine.
- II. Sabbath is not primarily about us.
 - a. Sabbath is primarily about God, and finding rest in him.
 - b. Sabbath is a foretaste of the rest to come.
- III. Sabbath's foundation is God in creation.
 - a. The Sabbath pre-dates the giving of the Law on Mount Sinai.
 - b. God rested on the seventh day, blessing it and making it holy.
 - c. Sabbath should be a blessed day of feasting and rest.
 - d. Sabbath is the day to find fulfillment. It is a day for basking in the truth that God wants us in relationship with him.
- IV. Sabbath is a day to honor God.
 - a. No matter the day, are you setting aside one day every week to honor God?
 - b. Sabbath is a time to reset priorities.
 - c. If you give God 1/7 of your time, he will honor your other 6/7.
 - d. The blessing of the Sabbath is the blessing of your entire week.
- V. Sabbath doesn't lead us to Jesus. Jesus leads us to Sabbath.
 - a. Jesus tells all who are burdened and heavily laden to come to him to find rest.
 - b. Jesus is Lord of the Sabbath, and he gives it to us for God's glory and our blessing.

Week Six Small Group Study

- Watch the Bless Earth Sabbath testimonies of the [Marra family](#) and [Emma Sleeth Davis](#) or one of the [other recommended videos](#).
- Share testimonies with one another about your Lenten Sabbath experience.
- During Holy Week, encourage participants to read the list of “Sabbath Scriptures” listed on pages 173-190 in *24/6: A Prescription for a Happy, Healthier Life* by Matthew Sleeth.

April 14, 2017

Good Friday

Lectionary Readings--Isaiah 52:12-15; Psalm 22[a]; Hebrews 10:16-25; John 18-19;

Theme--*Crucifixion: Our Sabbath Preparation*

Sample Sermon: *Sabbath* by Dr. A.J. Swoboda, delivered at Houghton College, January 28, 2015

[Audio Link](#)

“Sabbath”

I. Introduction

- a. God has a Ph.D. in creation.
- b. Problem: Humans have lost the idea of stopping and letting God be God.

II. Sabbath and Creation: Sabbath is Gospel. (Genesis 1)

- a. God created the world for friendship with man.
- b. God made creation good because he wants his friends to enjoy his creation.
- c. On the seventh day, God rests.
 - i. Sabbath means stop.
 - ii. God rested because he was teaching us a lesson.
 - iii. Adam and Eve’s first day was a day of rest.
 1. It is the Gospel.
 2. The Gospel is not do, but rest in Jesus.
 3. Sabbath is not something you do to curry God’s love, but because you are loved.

III. Sabbath is love. (Deuteronomy 5:12-15)

- a. When you stop, the people around you are blessed by your ceasing.
- b. Jews give a spoon of honey on the Sabbath to remember the sweetness of Sabbath.

IV. Sabbath is scary.

- a. Saying you don’t have time to Sabbath is as silly as saying you don’t have time to follow Jesus.
- b. Taking a Sabbath doesn’t just happen. It costs something.
 - i. Example of Jewish people in war. Even in war, they were told to Sabbath.
- c. Best example is Jesus’ death, burial, and resurrection. (Luke 23:50-56)
 - i. Even after the crucifixion, women rested on Holy Saturday.
 - ii. After his labor on the cross, Jesus rested in the earth.

April 16, 2017
Easter Sunday

Lectionary Readings--Acts 10:34-43; Psalm 118:14-24; 1 Corinthians 15:19-26; Luke 24:1-12

Theme--*Resurrection: Our Sabbath Rest*

Sample Sermon: *Rest for Your Souls* by Dr. Steve Seamands, Asbury Theological Seminary

[Video Link](#)

"Rest for Your Soul"

- I. Introduction
 - a. "Take my yoke" is an invitation to apprentice under a master rabbi.
 - b. Jesus as the master rabbi speaks those words to us: "Take my yoke upon you and learn from me."
 - c. We have a problem with yokes. When we think of yokes, we think of slavery.
 - i. Jesus' yoke is not like that. His is easy, and his burden is light.
 - d. This is the context of Sabbath.
- II. Jesus' Sabbath is a challenge to legalism.
 - a. The Pharisees had turned an invitation into a burden.
 - b. The burden of the Pharisees is heavy and hard.
 - c. Jesus's Sabbath is light and leads to rest and flourishing.
 - i. Jesus is humble and gentle. He had no desire to be oppressive.
- III. The Invitation is for us today.
 - a. Jesus is still Lord of the Sabbath.
 - b. He wants Sabbath in our lives to be a rest for our souls.
 - c. Are we heeding his invitation?
 - d. Our present problem is not that we will turn Sabbath into legalism. Our problem is we ignore Sabbath.
 - e. It becomes an issue of trust.
 - i. Who are you going to trust that what needs to get done will get done?
 - ii. Who are you going to trust when you don't get done what you think needs to get done?
 - f. Sabbath forces an increased faith. Do we believe that God is the Lord of all time? Will we let him be the Lord of our time?
 - i. Tithing teaches us to let him be Lord of our money.
 - ii. Sabbath teaches us to let him be Lord of our time.
 - iii. Practicing Sabbath causes us to assume the posture of faith.
 - g. Will you engage in a concrete practice that demonstrates your trust?

Additional Resources

For a wealth of resources visit www.sabbathliving.org. There you will find additional discussion articles, videos, a Lenten devotional, Sabbath hymns, Sabbath sermons, and other helpful tools.