



TOUCH POINT

A Pause to Remember – Touchpoint for May 29, 2024

Deuteronomy 5:12-15 (NRSVUE) Remember the Sabbath

¹² “Observe the Sabbath day and keep it holy, as the LORD your God commanded you. ¹³ Six days you shall labor and do all your work. ¹⁴ But the seventh day is a Sabbath to the LORD your God; you shall not do any work—you, or your son or your daughter, or your male or female slave, or your ox or your donkey, or any of your livestock, or the resident alien in your towns, so that your male and female slave may rest as well as you. ¹⁵ Remember that you were a slave in the land of Egypt, and the LORD your God brought you out from there with a mighty hand and an outstretched arm; therefore the LORD your God commanded you to keep the Sabbath day.

Mark 2:23-3:6 (NRSVUE) Pronouncement about the Sabbath

²³ One Sabbath he was going through the grain fields, and as they made their way his disciples began to pluck heads of grain. ²⁴ The Pharisees said to him, “Look, why are they doing what is not lawful on the Sabbath?” ²⁵ And he said to them, “Have you never read what David did when he and his companions were hungry and in need of food, ²⁶ how he entered the house of God when Abiathar was high priest and ate the bread of the Presence, which it is not lawful for any but the priests to eat, and he gave some to his companions?” ²⁷ Then he said to them, “The Sabbath was made for humankind and not humankind for the Sabbath, ²⁸ so the Son of Man is lord even of the Sabbath.”

The Man with a Withered Hand

³ Again he entered the synagogue, and a man was there who had a withered hand. ² They were watching him to see whether he would cure him on the Sabbath, so that they might accuse him. ³ And he said to the man who had the withered hand, “Come forward.” ⁴ Then he said to them, “Is it lawful to do good or to do harm on the Sabbath, to save life or to kill?” But they were silent. ⁵ He looked around at them with anger; he was grieved at their hardness of heart and said to the man, “Stretch out your hand.” He stretched it out, and his hand was restored. ⁶ The Pharisees went out and immediately conspired with the Herodians against him, how to destroy him.

Grace and peace to you from the Mystery in whom we live and move, and have our being.

Like children, we often slip into dependency on commandment-keeping as a means of guidance to lead us out of bondage. Commands serve to manage the life we see as unmanageable. If we do this or that, then God will surely protect us from the out-of-control nature of the world. Perhaps we think command-keeping will show obedience to The Boss and deflect his anger and punishment.

As I look at the Ten Commandments, I am struck that the Sabbath commandment is the only one that begins with ‘Remember’. All the other commandments instruct, from this day forward. This commandment implies there is a history of experience and understanding with the Sabbath. Well, *Duh Henry!* On the seventh day God rested.

This is not a command given to maintain social order, like don’t murder or covet. It is one to remember. Remember what?! It is a pause to remember this vertical connection of absolute dependency upon God... that we are never apart from God, and we can do nothing apart from God. Rest on that! As we go about our days as mini creators, we must pause to remember we are only re-creating. There is nothing new under the sun.

We are engaged every moment of every day in self-initiated activities and engagements, barely having the time to be an observer. We are producers and consumers.

I don't think I've ever heard a eulogy that included something like, "He was really good at resting. I remember one Saturday he didn't lift a finger."

What makes something holy or sacred is when there is a thoughtful touchpoint. To be standing on holy ground is a three-way connection. Me, the earth and Spirit. As we remember, and we rest, we become aware of Divine presence in all three.

This is what occurred when Jesus healed the man and the hungry were fed; it was fulfilling the purpose of the Sabbath. It is not producing or consuming, to care for the needy on the Sabbath, it is a touchpoint of the holiest of connections with God.

The Sabbath became lost in a flood of regulations. It must have taken a lot of work to create all the regulations. I wonder what those workaholics did on the Sabbath.

What were the religious leaders and lay judges misunderstanding about the Sabbath? Perhaps it was that the commandment was not a matter of social and spiritual conduct, but rather a nurturing of the body in a state of rest, a way to stop the mental and physical spinning we get ourselves into. It is a gift that honors life and its nourishment, a time to rest and reflect on something greater than being producer and consumer. What is that something greater?

Here's what Wayne Muller writes in his book called *Sabbath*:

There is a tidal rhythm, a deep, eternal conversation between the land and the great sea. In our bodies, the heart perceptibly rests after each life-giving beat, the lungs rest between the exhale and the inhale. We have lost this essential rhythm. Our culture invariably supposes that action and accomplishment are better than rest, that doing something—anything—is better than doing nothing. Because of our desire to succeed, to meet these ever-growing expectations, we do not rest. Because we do not rest, we lose our way. We miss the compass points that would show us where to go, we bypass the nourishment that would give us succor. We miss the quiet that would give us wisdom. We miss the joy and love born of effortless delight. Poisoned by this hypnotic belief that good things come only through unceasing determination and tireless effort, we can never truly rest. And for want of rest, our lives are in danger. In our drive for success, we are seduced by the promises of more: more money, more recognition, more satisfaction, more love, more information, more influence, more possessions, more security. Even when our intentions are noble and our efforts sincere—even when we dedicate our lives to the service of others—the corrosive pressure of frantic over-activity can nonetheless cause suffering in ourselves and others. — *Muller, Wayne. Sabbath. Random House Publishing Group*

Now this kind of freedom, treating holy rest as a gift, can really irritate perpetual rule keepers and producers. Much like the religious stalkers that harassed Jesus did. Driven morality cops of our day don't like to see anybody as free as they would like to be.

My brother reminded us how we used to play cards on the bathroom floor late at night so my grandmother wouldn't catch us. But when we asked her to play the board game, *Sorry!*, she was happy to join in and could shuffle like a dealer at a blackjack table.

People love to be invited to purposeful life-giving rule breaking. The teachers that made an impact on me, were the ones who broke the rules now and then because they had to find ways to engage me... to give me an emotional break from frustration and academic redundancy. They must have seen my discouragement and lack of motivation. The words, 'Work harder,' never motivated me; permission to take a break or do something different did. Once I was given a hall pass to look for ways to help other classrooms on Labor Day. It was a great day! The hall pass made me feel free. I kept it concealed in my pocket so teachers would stop me and tell me to go to class. Then I would flash my pass.

The Sabbath has this rest from redundancy built into it. Jesus said the Sabbath was for humankind, not the other way around! When I look at it this way, it's so beautiful to heal, to feed, and to love on the Sabbath. Not only was it unlawful to be healed on the Sabbath, but also the man with the withered hand is told to reach out his hand and receive it! Before he healed the man, Jesus was angry at the people waiting for him to heal and break the law. Jesus was basically saying "In your face!" Yes, he was being compassionate as well, but it's undeniable that he was expressing compassion as a revolution!

Moral of the story: It takes a bad ass to show compassion. Sabbath is subversive in nature. If it's not, it is simply another religious box to check.

My Sabbath rest should never infringe on another's need for restoration, and my doing something about it, and religion, should never infringe on my holy sloth of Sabbath.

Here's an interesting thought: What if we close the churches on Sundays for worship and open them for daily respite services? Sundays would be reserved for rest, healing and service!

What would the world look like? What would loving communities look like? What would our inner world look like?

Amen.

Opening Songs

Be Still

(The London Fox Taizé Choir)

Be still, know that I am God

Calm Me, Lord

(Margaret Rizza)

Calm me Lord as you calmed the storm.
Still me Lord, keep me from harm.
Let all the tumult within me cease.
Enfold me Lord, in your peace.

Bible Passage

(A passage takes us from one place to another)

Touchpoint

(Where God's story touches our life story)

Come Drink of Living Water

(The London Fox Taizé Choir)

Come drink of living water. Never thirst again.

The Meal

The Lord's Prayer

(Monastery Choir of St. John of San Francisco)

Benediction

The Lord Bless You and Keep You

(National Lutheran Choir, feat. Peter C. Lutkin)

The Lord bless you and keep you.
The Lord lift his countenance upon you... And give you peace...
The Lord make his face to shine upon you... And be gracious unto you...
The Lord be gracious unto you. Amen.