

Call to Worship

God whose grace overflows in bountiful gifts in the harvest of all creation;

God who nurtures in us the flowers of kindness, that we may carry them as blossoms of hope into places of despair;

God whose life is spread in wonder throughout all the earth,

singing of the joys of futures with justice and of shared love in every place; teach us today, how also, to rest.

Prayer of Invocation

Holy Spirit, lift up our hearts in this hour and be clear to us through your voice of truth. Walk in our midst, Jesus Christ, and be near to every trembling heart. Come, Holy God, and re-create our lives.

The Word **Genesis 2:1-3 Exodus 20:8-11; 23:12-13a (CEB)**

The heavens and the earth and all who live in them were completed. On the sixth day God completed all the work that he had done, and on the seventh day God rested from all the work that he had done. **God blessed the seventh day and made it holy, because on it God rested from all the work of creation.**

Remember the Sabbath day and treat it as holy. Six days you may work and do all your tasks, but the seventh day is a Sabbath to the Lord your God. Do not do any work on it—not you, your sons or daughters, your male or female servants, your animals, or the immigrant who is living with you. **Because the Lord made the heavens and the earth, the sea, and everything that is in them in six days, but rested on the seventh day. That is why the Lord blessed the Sabbath day and made it holy.**

Do your work in six days. **But on the seventh day you should rest so that your ox and donkey may rest, and even the child of your female slave and the immigrant may be refreshed. Be careful to obey everything that I have said to you.**

Living the Word

The Word that we read in the scriptures this morning expresses to us that God had a plan for rest for the people from the beginning of Creation, as the story is told. Work six days, rest the seventh. But for many people, that rest doesn't get fit into our busy lives until we are at total exhaustion, ready to collapse. Yet God intended for us to make a planned time, one portion of our week for our body, soul and spirit to catch up on life, health and wholeness.

"God blessed the seventh day and made it holy, because on it God rested from all the work of creation."

"Six days you can do all your tasks, but the seventh day is a Sabbath to the LORD your God. Do not do any work on it." "But on the seventh day you should rest so that your ox and donkey may rest, and even the child of your female slave and the immigrant may be refreshed. Be careful to obey everything that I have said to you."

This rest is not only for the family, but also the servants and the stranger. All people are included. Also it includes animals – ox and donkey. In Leviticus the scriptures goes even farther, by introducing the Sabbatical year. Leviticus 25:1-7 “The LORD said to Moses on Mount Sinai, Speak to the Israelites and say to them: Once you enter the land that I am giving you, the land must celebrate a sabbath rest to the LORD.

You will plant your fields for six years, and prune your vineyards and gather their crops for six years. But in the seventh year the land will have a special sabbath rest, a Sabbath to the LORD: You must not plant your fields or prune your vineyards. You must not harvest the secondary growth of your produce or gather the grapes of your freely growing vines. It will be a year of special rest for the land.

Whatever the land produces during its sabbath will be your food—for you, for your male and female servants, and for your hired laborers and foreign guests who live with you, as well as for your livestock and for the wild animals in your land. All of the land’s produce can be eaten.”

So even if they didn’t plant that year there would be enough for all who needed to eat, human and animals. Could it be that simple to just quit planting and God would provide enough?

Jeremiah 6:16 Is the beginning of our response to the whole Sabbath idea: “The LORD proclaims: Stop at the crossroads and look around; ask for the ancient paths. Where is the good way? Then walk in it and find a resting place for yourselves...But you said, “We won’t go!””

Sometimes I wonder why God puts up with us...The Word of God’s desire for us to ‘get it’ is always there, but we often just glide over the words we don’t want to respond to. Everyone loves the 23 Psalm. Yesterday I read it as I usually do at Memorial services. It is a comfort, for we know it well and it allows us to discount the fear of death for our Creator is with us even in the end of life. It begins with pleasant word pictures: “The Lord is my shepherd, I shall not want.”

But then the tone changes – and I think this is one of those parts we glide over: “He makes me lie down in green pastures; he leads me beside still waters, he restores my soul.” Finally our body and spirit give out and we are forced to rest, forced to be still to be restored.

You may be familiar of the verse in Psalm 46 verse 10: “Be still, and know that I am God!” Those words are from the New Revised Standard Version of the Bible. The Common English Bible puts it a very different way: “That’s enough! Now know that I am God!”

The first time through we read it, we may have missed the exclamation point at the end of the phrase, but the words make that more clearly in the second version. God has the authority and wants us to be still or quit at some point in our week.

You know Jesus came to help us understand what God had planned for us and was willing to take all of our baggage so we could find rest in our lives. In Matthew 11:28-30, Jesus says:

“Come to me, all you who are struggling hard and carrying heavy loads, and I will give you rest. Put on my yoke, and learn from me. I’m gentle and humble. And you will find rest for yourselves. My yoke is easy to bear, and my burden is light.”

In the next few minutes I want us to experience the rest that Jesus spoke about. I have put together on the screen some simple choruses, which we will sing twice through after Mary plays them through once. They are from the Taize' Christian Community. Between each chorus I will share some quotes by Rev. Scott Daniels from his book "The Rest That Works." Try to hear what God might have for you -

Paraphrasing what Jesus said in Matthew 6, "Here is what I want you to do: find a quiet, secluded place...before God. Just be there as simply and honestly as you can manage.

The focus will shift from you to God, and you will begin to sense his grace. Begin to develop your own form of the rest that works. Let the love that created you -wash over you, taking any harsh judgments with it. Any needed correction will then be experienced as opportunity and relief rather than punishment."

SONG OF PREPARATION 2013 [sing x2]

Bless the Lord my soul and bless God's holy name.

Bless the Lord my soul who leads me into life.

The three point cycle of the rest that works: "First Trust - in the Living God in Whom "we live and move and have our being" with the confidence and playfulness of an adored child – because you are. Second, Rest – relax your critical mind as you open your heart. Slow down, take a few breaths and trust the unforced rhythms of grace that are giving you life. Third, work – Seek to create the highest good in the moment with the Holy Spirit – the Spirit who brings wholeness through love – not a critical spirit that would condemn you or others."

SONG OF WILLINGNESS 2200 [x2]

O Lord, hear my prayer. O Lord, hear my prayer.

When I call, answer me.

O Lord, hear my prayer. O Lord, hear my prayer.

Come and listen to me.

"The first step is willingness to believe in a Being greater than ourselves and confidence in the Love giving us life. Here are some descriptive phrases for the rest that works: resting in God and working from there; getting to loving with God; Jesus' Way and Truth of Loving with God; living a life of loving mindfulness with God.

God wants our lives to be love stories. The rest that works is a way to write a rich, loving storyline from your heart, day by day, with your Creator. It is a means to take your life well beyond a one way or shallow relationship with the Living God."

SONG OF REFLECTION: 2054 [x2]

Nothing can trouble, nothing can frighten.

Those who seek God will never go wanting.

Nothing can trouble, nothing can frighten. God alone fills us.

"Here is what makes the rest that works, [really] work: The Great 'I AM' is central to everything. Centering on the Living, Loving God makes sense. Cultivating a loving mindfulness takes us into the creative territory of God. The irony is that sometimes we have to rest in order to get there."

SONG OF HEALING: 2157 [x2]

Come and fill our hearts with your peace.
You alone, O Lord, are holy.
Come and fill our hearts with your peace. Alleluia!

"Relaxing is key to love getting through, both coming and going. Sabbath is about relaxing enough to allow God's Creative, Home-making Love to move in and through us. It's wise to do that at least a seventh of the time to stay spiritually healthy. Letting go, sets [us] free."

SONG OF HOPE: 2195 [x2]

In the Lord I'll be ever thankful, in the Lord I will rejoice!
Look to God, do not be afraid.
Lift up your voices, the Lord is near,
Lift up your voices, the Lord is near.

Hear these words written by the Apostle Paul to the Hebrews, but also to us today: (Hebrews 4:1-3,11) *"Therefore, since the promise that we can enter into rest is still open, let's be careful so that none of you will appear to miss it. We also had the good news preached to us, just as the Israelites did. However, the message they heard didn't help them because they weren't united in faith with the ones who listened to it. We who have faith are entering the rest. Therefore, let's make every effort to enter that rest so that no one will fall by following the same example of disobedience."*