

## An Invitation to a Holy Lent - 2009

Reading from the gospel of Matthew (*The Message*) Jesus says:

***“Are you tired? Worn out? Burned out on religion? Come to me, Get away with me and you’ll recover your life. I’ll show you how to take a real rest. Walk with me and work with me—watch how I do it. Learn the unforced rhythms of grace. I won’t lay anything heavy or ill fitting on you. Keep company with me and you’ll learn to live freely and lightly.”***

As we begin this holy Lent, I challenge you to a new idea—instead of giving up something for Lent, use your time of self examination to look at how you spend time in Sabbath and to intentionally make and take time for Sabbath.

When we see Jesus withdraw from the crowds and retreat to a place of rest, he is simply not taking a well-deserved break from his useful but exhausting ministry. He is **honoring a deep spiritual need** for a time dedicated not to accomplishment and growth, but to rest.

His disciples cannot comprehend his leaving; they run in search for him. Doesn’t he realize there is still much good work to be done? Similarly when we slip away for Sabbath, whether an hour, an afternoon, or a weekend retreat, are we not besieged by family, friends, committees, etc. that say, “How can you do that? You need to do XYZ.” I invite you to consider: how can we **not** take the time?

Barbara Taylor Brown says, “Sabbath is a gift, but we are so reluctant to accept it, that God had to make it a command.”

The meaning of Sabbath is to celebrate time, rather than space.

- Sabbath is for our joy and our rest
- Sabbath is for deepened communion with the Living God
- Sabbath is a time for us to be shaped within
- Sabbath is for our life in community

John Calvin simply tells us: “On the Sabbath, we cease our work so God can do God’s work in us.”

Sabbath is to engage in these simple, time-hallowing acts:

- Seek rest from daily occupation
- Share with others in worship
- Take time for God’s word
- Engage in acts of compassion
- Enjoy activities that refresh and renew the spirit

The story is told of a South American tribe that went on a long march, day after day, when all of a sudden they would stop walking, sit down to rest for a while and then make camp for a couple of days before going any further. They explained that they needed the time of rest so that their souls could catch up with them. (*Sabbath—Restoring the Sacred Rhythm of Rest*, Wayne Muller)

I invite you during this holy Lent to stop and take time to let your soul catch up with you by considering taking “time out” and making time for healing, rest, refreshment, perspective, and relationships.

Resources:

*Sabbath--Restoring the Sacred Rhythm of Rest*

*Sabbath Keeping*

*To Everything A Season—A Spirituality of Time*

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Bonnie Thurston

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