

The Reverend Kathy Boss  
All Saints' Episcopal Church, Littleton, NH  
Sermon  
August 15, 2021  
Proper 15, Track 2, Year B  
"Way of Love: Rest"

Proverbs 9:1-6  
Psalm 34:9-14  
Ephesians 5:15-20  
John 6:51-58

On the seventh day God rested. And so, appropriately, the seventh practice in the Way of Love, is Rest. In the past seven weeks we have talked about what it is we are called to *do* as Christians--Turning, Learning, Praying, Worshiping, Blessing, Going...today we rest, today we abide in God.

"From the beginning of creation," The Way of Love website says, "God has established the sacred pattern of going and returning, labor and rest. Especially today, God invites us to dedicate time for restoration and wholeness – within our bodies, minds, and souls, and within our communities and institutions. By resting we place our trust in God, the primary actor who brings all things to their fullness."<sup>1</sup>

Rest is so important that it shows up in the ten commandments. It shows up as the final commandment in the first four--the four that address our relationship with God.

"Remember the sabbath day, and keep it holy. **9** Six days you shall labor and do all your work. **10** But the seventh day is a sabbath to the Lord your God; you shall not do any work—...**11** For in six days the Lord made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that is in them, but rested the seventh day; therefore the Lord blessed the sabbath day and consecrated it."<sup>2</sup> Exodus 20

God made the day of rest holy. Holy.

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.episcopalchurch.org/way-of-love/rest/>

<sup>2</sup> Exodus 20:8-11 NRSV

So today I'm just going to rest, y'all. You all can stretch out on the pews if you want! I'm taking a nap!

But seriously, rest is hard for us humans. It's a hard commandment. For many of us it may be the hardest practice of all in the Way of Love. And, yet, none of the others are possible without it.

In today's lesson from Ephesians Paul exhorts his congregation to make the most of time. Today that would mean getting your work done, mowing the lawn, doing those chores you've meant to get done, going on errands and so forth. But when Paul talks about making the most of time, what is his example? "Be filled with the Spirit, as you sing psalms and hymns and spiritual songs among yourselves, singing and making melody to the Lord in your hearts, giving thanks to God the Father at all times and for everything in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ."

I love that idea of rest as "making melody to the Lord in your hearts."

We do not need to always be beating time, keeping time, taking time. But we are like sharks. If we stop for too long we find it hard to breathe. And yet, we long for that breath.

Sadly, rest has come to mean something other than this making a melody to God, something other than abiding in Christ. It has become complexly conflated with entertainment, and indulgence--each of which have their place on our hierarchy of needs, but neither of which make the most of our time in and with God.

Holy rest is not about doing, or escape, it's about abiding, it's about being. It's about our relationships with God and one another.

Rest is a time between. A time apart from doing.

A wise man in one of Ursula LeGuin's novels says to his young and eager companion, "When I was young, I had to choose between the life of being and the life of doing. And I leapt at the latter like a trout to a fly. But each deed you do, each act, binds you to itself and to its consequences, and makes you act again and yet again. Then very seldom do you come upon a space, a time like this,

between act and act, when you simply may stop and simply be. Or wonder who, after all, you are.”<sup>3</sup>

Think of rest as this time to sit down with Christ at this holy, holy feast of the bread that will make you live forever. Abide in him. Stop doing and pay attention to what is.

Turn off media, get done the work that absolutely needs doing, clear your calendar (really clear it, no going away, no massages, no golf, no family gathering) and give yourself time to be, to sit or walk, to learn about who you are with each other, with yourself, and with God. Let the time spin out before you as you make it, as you rest in it rather than trying to control it. Be. See yourself reflected in the loving eyes of God.

It is not easy, this being. This is why we often cover our need to rest with more doing, with elaborate vacations, leisure activities, media, to do lists. In this practice we are invited into holy rest, into Sabbath.

“It must always be remembered that the Sabbath is not an occasion for diversion or frivolity;” writes Jewish scholar Abraham Heschel, “not a day to shoot fireworks or to turn somersaults, but an opportunity to mend our tattered lives...”<sup>4</sup>

Without this rest, this Sabbath, we lose sight of ourselves.

Stopping, resting, abiding in Christ makes us vulnerable. For in God we are reflected back in all our glory and all our brokenness and neither of those are easy for us to see. In God we are both accountable and forgiven. Rest, stopping to be in God, to be silent and apart from the hurley burly distraction of our world allows for care and for healing, both of which can be hard at times. But the more we practice this resting, the deeper that care will be.

Make time each week, try for a whole day if you can, if not at least a few hours, where you can make a melody to the Lord in your hearts--a time apart, without media, without to do lists, without appointments, without judgement, without distraction; with God, with love, with solitude, with companionship, with attentiveness. Rest for rest's sake. Make all your “doing” about these precious

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<sup>3</sup> LeGuin, Ursula, *The Farthest Shore*, Simon and Schuster, NY, NY 2001, pg. 45.

<sup>4</sup> Heschel, Abraham Joshua. *The Sabbath* (FSG Classics) . Farrar, Straus and Giroux. Kindle Edition.

moments of being, of making a melody to the Lord, instead of making the resting about preparing to do more.