

Service Notes

Growing up, many of us might have associated “sabbath” with a prohibition of what we were NOT allowed to do on Sundays – no playing, no TV, no shopping. And yes, there are good Biblical and theological reasons for why your sabbath day should look and feel different from your usual daily grind. But what we miss when we view Sabbath as “shall not”, is the beauty of God’s permission-giving, life-breathing, God and person-honoring gift of rest and delight. This worship service tries to hold that tension and ultimately help us to recalibrate our thinking away from “what we aren’t supposed to do” with “what God has gifted us to do.”

God Gathers Us and Invites Us to Sabbath

Call to Worship from Matt 11:28-29 (Message Translation by Eugene Peterson)

[God gathers us for worship with an invitation to come with everything we carry in our hearts. Maybe you are looking forward to summer vacation. Maybe you are tired after a busy week. Maybe you had a fight with a friend and you are worried about seeing them again at camp or school or work. God wants us to worship this morning bringing all these things to Jesus, who loves us, delights in us and gathers us this morning with these words:

*“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.”]*

God Reminds Us About the Meaning of Sabbath

Sabbath Scripture Litany (for 4 readers)

Reader 1: With the power of Christ within us, we hear again God’s desire for us, God’s children. Jesus says:

Reader 2: Come to me

Reader 3: Come

Reader 4: Come to me all you who are weary and heavy laden

Reader 2: I will give you rest

Reader 3: The Psalmist says

Reader 1: Be still before the Lord and wait patiently for him

Reader 2: "Be still, and know that I am God. I will be exalted among the nations, I will be exalted in the earth!"

Reader 4: Return to your rest, my soul, for the Lord has been good to you.

Reader 3: Truly my soul finds rest in God; my salvation comes from him.

Reader 1: God commands

Reader 2: Observe the Sabbath day by keeping it holy, as the Lord your God has commanded you. Six days you shall labor and do all your work, but the seventh day is a sabbath to the Lord your God.

Reader 3: Remember that you were slaves in Egypt and that the Lord your God brought you out of there with a mighty hand and an outstretched arm. Therefore the Lord your God has commanded you to observe the Sabbath day.

Reader 4: The Prophet says

Reader 1: But they who wait for the Lord shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings like eagles; they shall run and not be weary; they shall walk and not faint.

Reader 3: Jesus says

Reader 2: "Peace I leave with you; my peace I give to you. Not as the world gives do I give to you. Let not your hearts be troubled, neither let them be afraid."

Reader 1: Throughout Scripture, God tells us to rest. Sometimes this looks like delighting in the goodness of God. Sometimes this looks like actual physical or emotional rest. Sometimes this means a break from our daily habits to intentionally recognize God's presence in our lives. We hear God's call to rest, because God loves us and desires our flourishing and peace.

Reader 2: Rest

Reader 3: Delight

Reader 4: Remember.

All: Thanks be to God

Prayer of Confession

**This part of the service is an opportunity to be creative. Reflecting on the litany above, talk about how God desires both our physical and emotional rest. Give people an opportunity to share about things that distract them from being able to do this. You could solicit them ahead of time and use a picture slideshow. You could have people write them down on a post it note and bring them forward. You could use a whiteboard. Pray over these, asking God to forgive the ways we get distracted and too busy.

Assurance of Pardon

**God desires that we not only rest, but that we delight in the goodness around us. God could have kept creating and kept producing, but God rested and delighted in all that God made. God wants us to do this too! Give people an opportunity to think about ways they can intentionally delight in God's goodness in the coming week. Again this could be a picture slideshow, or post it or whiteboard. Stay consistent and find creative ways to visually show the contrast between what hinders Sabbath and what delight God calls us to in our sabbath.

God Delights in the Gift of Sabbath

There is a strong connection between Sabbath and the use of our time. Sabbath is an intentional time when we allow the Holy Spirit to realign our relationships, values and priorities. It doesn't have to just be a single day of the week, it should spill over into a lifestyle that slowly starts to change and recalibrate the way we live. Consider "praying the hours" For the next week, have 4 intentional times set aside in the day (they can be short!), to take a few deep breaths, observe around you what is good and beautiful, pray for what weighs heavy on your heart, take a few more deep breaths. Doing this even for a week will start forming habits of pausing. There are several ways to do this!

- Invite people to pull out their cell phones and add daily alarms for the following: right after waking up, upon arrival at work/school, midday, bedtime.
- Create a paper plate prayer wheel for those who don't yet tell time. Draw 4 equal sections on a paper plate and ask kids to design/decorate each section. Have a few cut out arrows and paper fasteners so you can move an arrow throughout the day.
- Distribute small, blank "sabbath journals". You can buy cheap small notebooks on amazon. Invite people to write a one sentence prayer of gratitude and one sentence prayer of hope/longing at various times through the day.
- Encourage people to walk 500 steps (¼ mile) during each of those 4 prayer times in the day. Turn that into an intentional prayer walk.

Here's another resource as you think about a "day." This version of the [10 commandments](#) was written to incorporate intergenerational voices and structures of the day. It's adaptable for your context.

God Sends Us Forth as Sabbath People

Parting Blessing (incorporating Romans 12 from the Message)

How we spend our days is ultimately how we spend our lives.
So take your everyday, ordinary life—
your sleeping, eating, making the bed, going-to-school, and walking-around life—
and place it before God as an offering.
May your habits and rituals of daily worship, offering daily to God,
Continue to shape you and form you as followers of Christ.

Song Suggestions

A Christian's Daily Prayer (Sovereign Grace)

Come Away from Rush and Hurry

Come to Me, O Weary Traveler (Red #123)

Goodness of Jesus (City Alight)

It Is Good to Sing Your Praises

Like a River Glorious

Lord, I Give You My Heart

My Soul Finds Rest

My Soul Will Wait (Sovereign Grace)

Nothing to Fear (Audrey Assad)

Song of Hope

Your Labor is Not in Vain

[Come to Me \(feat. Sandra McCracken\) - YouTube](#)