

YOU MAKE THE SABBATH HOLY



Scripture:

Exodus 20:1-4, 7-9, 12-17

¹Then God spoke all these words: ²I am the LORD your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of slavery; ³you shall have no other gods before me.

⁴You shall not make for yourself an idol, whether in the form of anything that is in heaven above, or that is on the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth.

⁷You shall not make wrongful use of the name of the LORD your God, for the LORD will not acquit anyone who misuses his name.

⁸Remember the sabbath day, and keep it holy. ⁹Six days you shall labor and do all your work.

¹²Honor your father and your mother, so that your days may be long in the land that the LORD your God is giving you.

¹³You shall not murder.

¹⁴You shall not commit adultery.

¹⁵You shall not steal.

¹⁶You shall not bear false witness against your neighbor.

¹⁷You shall not covet your neighbor's house; you shall not covet your neighbor's wife, or male or female slave, or ox, or donkey, or anything that belongs to your neighbor.

Psalm 19: 1-14

¹The heavens are telling the glory of God; and the firmament proclaims his handiwork. ²Day to day pours forth speech, and night to night declares knowledge. ³There is no speech, nor are there words; their voice is not heard; ⁴yet their voice goes out through all the earth, and their words to the end of the world.

In the heavens he has set a tent for the sun, ⁵which comes out like a bridegroom from his wedding canopy, and like a strong man runs its course with joy. ⁶Its rising is from the end of the heavens, and its circuit to the end of them; and nothing is hid from its heat.

⁷The law of the LORD is perfect, reviving the soul; the decrees of the LORD are sure, making wise the simple; ⁸the precepts of the LORD are right, rejoicing the heart; the commandment of the LORD is clear, enlightening the eyes; ⁹the fear of the LORD is pure, enduring forever; the ordinances of the LORD are true and righteous altogether. ¹⁰More to be desired are they than gold, even much fine gold; sweeter also than honey, and drippings of the honeycomb.

¹¹Moreover by them is your servant warned; in keeping them there is great reward. ¹²But who can detect their errors? Clear me from hidden faults. ¹³Keep back your servant also from the insolent; do not let them have dominion over me. Then I shall be blameless, and innocent of great transgression.

¹⁴Let the words of my mouth and the meditation of my heart be acceptable to you, O LORD, my rock and my redeemer.

This is the Word of the Lord! Thanks be to God!



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Psalm 19 says that the heavens tell of the glory of God, and that the law of the Lord is perfect for reviving the soul, rejoicing the heart and for enlightening the eyes, to make the simple wise. Isn't that surprising? We think of laws as just rules to obey so we don't get in trouble. But the "law of the Lord" revives our souls, makes our hearts rejoice, and enlightens our eyes, while making our simple minds wise. Sounds like a wonderful law doesn't it?

Then God spoke all these words in our Exodus passage. God, our parent, creator, sustainer, Divine One in whose image we are to reflect to the world, spoke all these words. Why? Why did God speak these specific words?

It might surprise you to know that there are not many places in the Bible where the author of the passage claims that God directly spoke the words that are written. In fact, in all the Bible, only in Exodus 20 will you find the phrase: "God spoke all these words."

Most of the books of the Bible are carefully composed inspired descriptions of ancient events, laws, poems, stories and lessons for us to analyze and interpret so we can apply God's message to our lives today.

For example, the special relationship God had with the people of Israel as described in the Old Testament, is a metaphor for the special relationship we have with God as our creator, sustainer, protector, liberator, lover, and forgiver.

THE TEN COMMANDMENTS

The sacred scriptures help us understand the world and our purpose in relationship with God. As Second Timothy 3:17 says, the holy scriptures equip us to do God's good work. Yet no other passage directly states, "God spoke all these words." That is such a powerful way to introduce the Ten Commandments!

So why do these verses contain so much power? The commandments gave the Hebrew people structure and boundaries for their wandering behaviors. (Like the special presentation we are having tomorrow evening by Psychologist Ron Bauer on Boundaries and being your authentic self.) And still today we need these Ten Commandments because they instruct us how to be holy and have a heart like God's.

They provide a formula for healthy relationships. They give us a sense of purpose and equip us for harmonious behavior with our family and our neighbors. One way to look at them is to see that the Ten Commandments are Dr. God's prescription for healthy and happy living.

THE FOURTH COMMANDMENT

Today I want to especially focus on the fourth commandment as an example of God equipping us to do good works in the world by setting aside time to be Holy. The fourth commandment is basically about keeping the Sabbath Holy, and not like any other day off work.

KEEPING THE SABBATH

For devout Jewish people, keeping the Sabbath is the most important weekly ritual in their faith tradition. Their way of keeping the day "Holy" involves lighting candles on Friday evening, saying prayers of gratitude to God, re-reading the story of creation where God rested on the seventh day, blessing and partaking of wine and bread, and quality family time. On Saturday, they go to the synagogue for worship and prayers and go home for a special meal before the Sabbath ends on Saturday night.

The Jewish tradition calls the Sabbath "Shabbat" which means "to end, cease, or rest." Those who follow Judaism show reverence to the Sabbath ritual as if it was a weekly holiday rather than a routine day off work. The Judaism 101 website says, "Shabbat Rest means more than physical cessation of work. It implies taking oneself out of the ordinary, out of the routine, out of the rat race. This kind of rest gives the opportunity to re-create our spirit and restore our soul. Shabbat is a time that is set aside to take notice of the wonders around us."

There is much we can learn from the Jewish tradition of Sabbath rest. This reminder of how Judaism keeps the Sabbath

holy made me ask myself, Do you keep your Sabbath holy by recreating your spirit and restoring your soul on Sunday? What is your way of keeping the fourth commandment?

I'm thankful you all have included coming to worship as your way of honoring the Sabbath today.

REST, PRAY AND BE REFRESHED

In Wayne Muller's book, *Sabbath: Restoring the Sacred Rhythm of the Heart*, he explains that the Sabbath helps us remember what is most important in our lives. "Sabbath says, be still. Stop. Take time to rest, and eat, and drink, and be refreshed. And in the gentle rhythm of that refreshment, listen to the sound the heart makes as it speaks the quiet truth of what is needed."

By changing our routine one day of the week to slow down, worship, and pray together, we are given a chance to joyfully remember who we are and whose we are.

This day has been set aside from our busy week to encourage us to count our blessings and be grateful for the deep loving care Jesus has for us.

Then, after basking in the glow of God's love, we are to go, with renewed strength, and serve on behalf of Christ, those who feel abandoned, and those who need to see the compassion of God in your eyes or in your voice over the phone. Muller also says, "Once people feel nourished and refreshed, they cannot help but be kind. The world aches for the generosity of a well-rested people."

OUR OWN WAY

God allows us to define our own way of keeping the Sabbath holy with an understanding that the purpose of the Sabbath is not just to rest, but to enhance our

ability to do God's work of providing for the poor, advocating for justice, promoting compassion, and peace-making.

I believe God gives the freedom to choose how you keep the Sabbath holy because we have a God who loves diversity. You see it in all of Creation that God loves diversity. So God allows us in our faith practices to be diverse in the ways we keep the Sabbath holy, too.

Let me close with a familiar Jewish "midrash," [which is a teaching story] in which the teacher asks, "How can we know when the night has ended and the day has begun?"

A student answers, "You know the night has ended when you can distinguish a goat from a sheep." A second suggests, "You know the night has ended when you can distinguish between an olive tree and a fig tree."

Still, the teacher shook his head. Immediately the students began to argue with one another. "Answer your own question, teacher, for we cannot think of another response." Then the teacher spoke. "When you look into the eyes of another human being and see a brother or a sister, then you will know that the night has ended and the day has begun."

ON THE SEVENTH DAY – A SABBATH

In the beginning, God created diverse forms of life and then on the seventh day had a Sabbath. Then God awhile later realized the need for commandments.

The Ten Commandments are meant to keep you healthy, holy and happy. However you choose to keep the Sabbath holy, may it be a time of rejuvenation, honoring God's prescription of Sabbath rest.

My hope is that the more you attend church here, the more you will feel healthier,

happier and aware you have a heart with the love of God pumping through it.

You make the Sabbath holy by using this time in worship to empower, restore, and inspire you to do God's work in the world.

May God in some way speak to you a blessing for your own diverse way of honoring Shabbat. Amen

Benediction: Keeping the Sabbath holy is up to you. You decide every week. Your chosen way to keep the Sabbath holy is between you and God.

Just remember that when you walk out of here, the Sabbath isn't over and there are still twelve more hours to participate in God's holy mission of love.

And may the grace of our Lord, Jesus Christ, the love of God and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit bring you peace now and forever. Amen



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