

This is Our Story. Part 9—The Sabbath

Text: Exodus 31:12-17

Warming Up

Questions:

1. *What do you think is one of the most underrated words in our Christian tradition?*
2. *Did you grow up with Sabbath traditions in your home, and if so, what do you remember about them?*

Digging In

Read **Exodus 31:12-17**.

In this passage we hear not only that those in the wilderness must keep the Sabbath, but also “the generations to come” must “forever” keep the Sabbath. It is a repeated command—four times! —throughout the book of Exodus. Jesus kept Sabbath. The earliest Christians kept Sabbath, resting on Saturday, and waking up extra early the next day—Sunday, the first day of their work week—to celebrate Jesus’ resurrection, before heading off to work.

Questions:

1. *What value do God’s people put on the Sabbath today?*
2. *In what ways are we good at honoring this ancient, holy tradition?*
3. *In what ways have we not kept Sabbath well?*
4. *What do you think it means that God called for the death penalty for those that didn’t keep Sabbath?*
5. *What rationale is given here in Exodus 31 for why the Sabbath should be kept?*

When we hear about the covenant from Mount Sinai again in Deuteronomy, there is a different rationale for keeping the Sabbath. Listen for it...

Read **Exodus 20:8-11** and **Deuteronomy 5:12-15**.

Questions:

1. *Why do you think in Exodus and Deuteronomy there are different reasons given for why the people should keep the Sabbath?*
2. *What reason for keeping the Sabbath is given in Deuteronomy, and why do you think this was important to God?*
3. *In what ways does our failure to keep Sabbath impact the inability of others to Sabbath?*

In the Gospel of John, the writer ties Jesus’ work of salvation with the Genesis account of creation. John begins with the same words as Genesis, “In the beginning...” The Gospel of John is framed by seven miracles, coinciding with the seven days of creation. When Jesus dies on the cross, he uses Genesis language for the seventh day, “It is *finished*.” Jesus quietly rests in the tomb on Saturday, the Sabbath.

Questions:

1. *Why do you think the writer of the Gospel of John works so hard at comparing Jesus’ life, death, and resurrection with creation?*
2. *In what ways are creation and salvation similar?*
3. *In what ways are Sabbath and salvation similar?*

Sending Out

In Exodus, Sabbath is one of the primary ways God invites an enslaved people to live into and practice their freedom. Sabbath is as important to the story of liberation as is the crossing of the Reed Sea and the covenant given on Mount Sinai.

Questions:

1. *How does keeping Sabbath enter us into a life of Christian freedom?*
2. *How does keeping Sabbath enable others to live a life of Christian freedom?*
3. *How might keeping Sabbath holy, or set apart, be a witness in our world?*

Closing

Take a moment in silence to come before God and ask the question, “*What word or phrase or idea or moment does God want me to remember from this morning and carry with me this week?*”

Close with prayer.