

“VACATION FOR THE SOUL”
“Sabbath: Friendship with God”

We begin a new sermon series, “Vacation for the Soul.” As a child, I always looked forward to summer vacations. I still feel that sense of relaxation when summer hits. I spend long evenings on the deck, ride my bike for both exercise and enjoyment, find more moments to be with family and friends. I believe we need vacations, we need time when the pace slows down and we can savor life a bit more. In scripture, that is called “Sabbath.” In the Hebrew Law, Sabbath is a weekly occurrence and we are “commanded” to keep the Sabbath Holy, in fact it is the only commandment that asks us to keep something holy. Our lives have become so complex and driven, that this summer is a good time to focus and reflect on a vacation for our souls, that we might deepen in our spiritual walk and learn to find the paths which will connect us with Christ. Our study guide will help us focus on one of the classical Spiritual Disciplines and on Wednesdays, there will be a prayer time from 12:10 p.m. to 12:40 p.m. in our chapel to practice that discipline and have a prayer pause during the week. This Sunday, we begin with the concept of Sabbath and the Spiritual Disciplines of Meditation. Each day, I will invite you into a Sabbath practice. May you encounter a vacation for the soul this week, as you discover God’s Friendship with you and embrace “Sabbath Time.”
Pastor Cindy

Things I’d like to remember from today’s sermon: **“Sabbath: Friendship with God”**

Prayer for the Week

Psalm Prayer based on Psalm 131, in *Upper Room Worship Book*, #334

O God, so mighty and gentle, I bow before you in humble adoration. With a calm and quiet spirit, I climb into your lap, there to rest. In my resting fill me with hope so that I may trust you forever.

This week’s sermon may be viewed at <http://sundaystreams.com/go/firstwichita>

Study Guide

Monday, June 4, 2018 Deuteronomy 5: 12-15

The third commandment is significant. Keeping the Sabbath holy is not more important than the other nine, but the context is different. The other commandments use language like “*shall or shall not*” in order to be clear about the behavior expected. This commandment says, “*observe it, keep it, honor it*” which points to what a gift God has given us in the Sabbath. For our Jewish brothers and sisters the Sabbath is welcomed each week. It is a day of celebration and prayer and is the most important holy day in the calendar. Each week, this gift is given by God, for love, for joy and for rest. *Today, take a pause sometime. For fifteen minutes, turn off the notifications on your phone, your tablet or computer. Pray our Psalm prayer for the week and just quietly rest in God, knowing how much God loves you and longs to be in relationship with you.*

Tuesday, June 5, 2018 Mark 2: 23-24

For thousands of years, Jews and Christians have taken seriously the command to keep the Sabbath holy. In these verses, the disciples are picking grain to eat. The religious leaders question why, and with good reason. The commandment says there are six days of work to do all of one’s tasks. The seventh day is a gift of rest, worship, and time with family, friends and God. Six days to prepare to have time to enjoy a pause and be blessed by all the gifts God has given. The religious leaders were pushing Jesus on why he was allowing his “disciples” to work. The question from the Pharisees (we will find out) was a set up to undermine Jesus. For us, however, their question may be profound. Without being too legalistic, how do you justify not taking time off? Where do you find in the words of the hymn “the quiet center?” *Today, the challenge is to find a Sabbath moment, at least fifteen minutes. Mediate on God’s love for you. Let go of any thoughts and distractions and just be with God.*

Wednesday, June 6, 2018 Mark 2: 24-28

Here is where the religious authorities really push Jesus. Here Jesus points out the Sabbath is not meant to be a legalized burden on people. Emergencies, taking care of an accident are all allowed on the Sabbath even if it entails “work.” The Sabbath was created for human beings, not the other way around. Traditionally in Jewish understanding, the Sabbath is creating holiness in time rather than space. It isn’t the place, it is in the time that we find the presence of God. The Sabbath was created for human beings to put aside all their cares and concerns and every day work and delight in God and in each other. Religious people can become so concerned about the “keeping” of the Sabbath, they forget how to enjoy the Sabbath. This is a Christian concern as well as the religious leaders of Jesus day. How will you find a new way to keep the Sabbath holy? *I invite you to make a list of a variety of things you can do to find Sabbath moments in the day: a phone call to friend, a time to pause to pray, a cup of coffee with someone special, or a break to read a book. What will you do so it doesn’t become a burden or one more thing to check off your to do list? What one thing will you do today that will allow you to enjoy a Sabbath moment?*

Thursday, June 7, 2018 Mark 3: 1-6

The religious leaders are still trying to stop Jesus. When they won’t answer his question about the Sabbath he becomes angry and heals anyway. Jesus would never deliberately do something that would lead people away from faith. What Jesus often did was question the understanding of the law if it was harmful to others. Jesus would give new perspectives to old understandings. It angered him when people used the law to belittle, abuse or harm others. Instead of keeping Sabbath in a way that brings joy and delight, the legalism can overshadow what is important. One of the Sabbath gifts was blessing the candles, the bread, the wine, the children, and others. Jesus honored the Sabbath by blessing the man with a hand that was healed. *So today, take a Sabbath moment and bless someone: a child, a sibling, a friend, a parent, a partner. Or bless a stranger: notice someone in a car, in the store, in a coffee shop, and bless them silently: “May you be happy, may you be at peace. May you know God’s love and grace.”*

Friday, June 8, 2018 Deuteronomy 5: 12-15

Today I want you to plan a Sabbath. I don’t know when your day off might be, Saturday, Sunday or another. I want to invite you to actually take the day off. Sleep late, plan breakfast or brunch with friends or family. Turn off your notifications on your devices. Be present to God’s presence, in your food, in a walk, in your family and friends, or in worship. Savor this gift, this holiness in time. Keep the Sabbath holy, as a marker of God’s grace and love.