

Today our Scriptures remind us of the importance of keeping the sabbath – for rest, for worship, for keeping holy. I envy my Jewish siblings in their practice of sabbath – that it is a time that spans parts of two days, that it is for worship and for family time, for prayer and singing and storytelling and special food. That is not something that can be wedged in between work obligations or sports commitments or weekend errands. Sabbath takes time. It is intentional. It brings together several things essential to our life with God and one another.

As Jesus reminds us today, the sabbath is made for humanity and not humanity for the sabbath. And that seems a bit contrary to how I was raised – where Sunday was more a day where you dressed in uncomfortable clothes, sat for an hour on an uncomfortable pew, and you were on your best behavior because God and Mom were watching. It did not seem to be a day made for me.

But Jesus says the sabbath is made for humanity and not humanity for the sabbath, which I think means that there is something about this day that feeds us, that knows us, and is flexible to our needs, but that also wants our full attention and presence.

And that reminds me of my favorite story about sabbath, from the storyteller John Shea. I've told it before on a similar picnic a few years ago, but it bears repeating.

Tell the story of Mordecai...[found here](#)

I love this story because it reminds us that the Sabbath is a powerful encounter with the Word of God. And it also reminds us that the Word of God is highly connective – it's less something we consume, and more something that holds us together. It binds together loving human relationships, communal worship, and the divine spark present in all of God's creation. Sabbath is a time when all of those things can come together if we let them. And out here in the woods is a good place to experience it – to let the Word of God become one with the Word of the Woods which becomes one with the Word of each of us.

It's not simply a story about how to get our kids to go to church. Believe me if the answer is for the pastor to pick up each child and hold them close to the heart, I have to tell you that is not possible – for one, it breaks about every Safe Church rule in the book. But it does speak to a greater wisdom of how we encounter the Word of God. The Rabbi knew that the love present in human relationship was essential to being able to recognize the Word of God and let it do its work in us.

And that speaks to the transformative power of these Sabbath connections. Mordecai grows to be a wise and wonderful man because of the way that the Word of God has lodged in his life – becoming one with the creation that he loves, and his own word, which he respects.

Perhaps this is the great gift of Sabbath. If it is made for us, its purpose is to make us – to form us – into people integrated with God and one another. And not just for us individually – but for those who ultimately reach out to us: those who are lost, and hoping to find direction. Those who need a way out of their darkness, and are hoping to find an exit. Those who are restless and hoping to find peace.

Loving in this way is our gift back to God, our participation in love that spills over the side of Sabbath rest and fuels our work throughout the week.

So today, give yourself time to savor the Word of God in all its forms, let it mingle within you and bond tightly to your word. As you rest today, let the sabbath do its work in you.

Amen