

First Sunday after Trinity 18B

Deuteronomy 5. 12-15 & Mark 2.23-3.6

*The sabbath was made for humankind and not
humankind for the sabbath'*

I wonder how many people here are wearing a watch?
How many have a phone with them that gives them the
time?

Our lives are regulated strictly by time. When we turn
on the radio or the TV for the news, the first thing that is
mentioned is the time of day. It hasn't always been like
that. In pre-industrial societies, life wasn't governed by
the clock, but by the seasons and the time of the sun's
rising and setting.

In the UK time only became synchronized around
Greenwich Mean Time with the advent of the railways
and the need for common time around the UK to enable
train timetables to operate. As our world has moved to a
globalised society, time is now synchronized around the
world.

Time represents the gift of life that has been given to each one of us ... but it is a gift that is perishable that we must steward and use well, and this is recognized in the sabbath principle that God gave to his people in one of the Ten Commandments.

It is one that Jesus himself would have kept, being a good Jew and it is a principle that the church adopted in its keeping of Sunday as the day of celebration and worship.

We find the Ten Commandments – in Exodus Chapter 20, as well as in this passage from Deuteronomy 5 where the Ten Commandments are repeated. So, for Christians and Jews, punctuating our week with a day of rest and recreation for body and spirit is not just a *good thing to do*, it is a requirement that is there for our own good. It should be a holy habit. We rest, because God rested on the seventh day of creation.

At the recent diocesan clergy conference Bishop Steven was encouraging us to make sure that we ‘watch over ourselves’ to be accountable to ourselves for our time.

The work of parish clergy is largely self-directed and unbounded, and often a clergy person is working alone and is not really accountable to anyone for how they use their time. In these circumstances it is very easy to over-work, or conversely, to be lazy. If you are retired, the same probably applies to you too.

People who are in employment, juggling work and family or study commitments also have to 'watch over themselves', but for different reasons. It is very easy to get burnt out whatever stage of life we are at.

Taking regular rest and making time for ourselves and our relationship with God is also about re-creation.

Being relentlessly busy, in which we have no time for this or that, destroys creativity, it destroys our capacity for contemplation and the simple enjoyment we can have from noticing and being thankful for the present moment, what we can see, hear, smell and touch.

The sabbath principle helps us to redeem time as something that is sacred ... not something that is there to drive us on, exhaust us and condemn us. The sabbath principle helps us to change our attitude towards time as being a gift of life from a good Creator God.

Here are some words from the poet, Jan Sutch Pickard:

Accounting for time

*God of here and now, and of eternity,
constant presence,
help me to take time to be present to you.
to be mindful,
delighting in each given moment,
since each contains –
like the sweet kernel of the hazelnut –
everything that is.*

*Help me,
in seizing the moment
to savour it;
not to give my time – your time – away recklessly:
however worthy the cause,
however carefully I account,
however hard to say 'no',
without taking time to know your presence
in each given moment,
and to live in it,
and in you,
God of the here and now.
Amen.*

Quoted in *Living by the Rule*, Kathy Galloway, Wild Goose Publications 2010

Intercessions

In peace, let us pray to Jesus Lord of the Sabbath.

Saviour of the world,
be present in all places of suffering, violence and pain,
and bring hope even in the darkest night. We pray especially
today for all those mourning the loss of life in the London Bridge
terrorist attacks.

Inspire us to continue your work of reconciliation today.

Lord of the Church,
empower by your Spirit all Christian people, especially Steven
our Bishop and the work of your Church in every land.
Give us grace to proclaim the gospel joyfully in word and deed.

Shepherd and Guardian of our souls,
guide and enable all who lead and serve this community
and those on whom we depend for our daily needs.
Grant that we may seek the peace and welfare of this place.

Great Physician,
stretch out your hand to bring comfort, wholeness and peace
to all who suffer in body, mind, or spirit.
Fill us with compassion, that we may be channels of your healing
love.

Conqueror of death,
remember for good those whom we love but see no longer.
Especially, Robert Hicks, Mary Walker, Gloria Tull, William
Hastings, Sonja Arnold and Philip Stevens
Help us to live this day in the sure and certain hope of your
eternal victory.

