

# Sunday Morning Resources

Sunday 2 June 2024 - The First Sunday of Trinity

**Lectionary Readings** (depending on the kind of service you are leading, you may use one or more of the following readings – however, you **must** use the gospel reading, as this is what the homily is based on)

Deuteronomy 5.12-15; Psalm 81.1-10; 2 Corinthians 4.5-12; Mark 2.23 - Chapter 3.6

## Homily

**Today's homily has been written by the Revd Phil Marsh, Priest in Charge, Ely (Benefice)**

So what exactly is the Sabbath for? The swift answer is 'to rest from work'. In this day and age, we often preach the principle of Sabbath rest, rather than the rule. So we declare that as long as you are taking appropriate rest somewhere in the week you are keeping the principle of the Sabbath.

But.

Is rest actually what the sabbath is about? Checking that out may help us gain a better understanding of what is going on in our Gospel reading today. So, let's head to Deuteronomy 5:12-15.

Verses 11-14 say this - *"Observe the Sabbath day by keeping it holy, as the Lord your God has commanded you. Six days you shall labour and do all your work, but the seventh day is a sabbath to the Lord your God. On it you shall not do any work, neither you, nor your son or daughter, nor your male or female servant, nor your ox, your donkey or any of your animals, nor any foreigner residing in your towns, so that your male and female servants may rest, as you do."*

Sounds like it is all about rest, right?

Well, yes.... AND / BUT / ALSO, there's something else to it as well.

Verse 15. - *Remember that you were slaves in Egypt and that the LORD your God brought you out of there with a mighty hand and an outstretched arm. Therefore, the LORD your God has commanded you to observe the Sabbath day.*

You see it isn't just about rest. It actually is intended to remind folk that God is a God who rescues, a God who saves. It is a day commanded by God so that a people who once toiled in slavery can forever enjoy and celebrate that they have been enabled to rest, by their God who rescues and saves. We see in Nehemiah 8 the Sabbath was to be a day of joy and delight! And in the setting up of the sabbath, God's intent for the Sabbath extends to his people's servants, those who live among them and even their animals, so that everyone gets to enjoy, celebrate, and remember that the God of Israel is a God who saves, rescues, and

liberates. One who sets people free. The proper function of the sabbath is to promote life and extol God as a liberator!!

So, it makes sense that Jesus would heal a man's withered hand on the Sabbath. This would have been a liberating event for that man. As ever, Jesus' healings were always more than physical fixing. His restored arm would mean a return to work, independence, dignity, position in community. His arm being healed would liberate that man and set him free! In fact, we could argue, and Jesus is arguing this, that the Sabbath is the perfect day to heal this fellow and set him free.

This argument, remember, started with the critique of Jesus allowing his disciples to eat the corn from the fields as they passed through – accused of a legal technicality – it looks like they are 'working' on the sabbath, their light 'gleaning' still qualifying as 'work'. To this Jesus appeals to the story of David entering the temple {in 1 Samuel 21} and eating the bread set aside for the priests, because he was hungry, and even feeding some to his companions! In fact, it's the priest that gives it.

Jesus implies that to feed those who are hungry trumps any religious rule or observance. By remedying David's hunger, the priest sustained the life of a weary traveller and contributed to David's quest to live into his calling as the king anointed to replace Saul.

In both cases, the healing of the man, and the disciples eating of grain, Jesus is saying that rather than profaning the Sabbath they are appropriate actions for a day celebrating the God who gives life and sets people free. His critique is that the religiosity of the institution in its well-meaning concern to guard the things of God, has missed the real heart of God.

[Isaiah addressed the very same issue in Isaiah 58 – {Read Isaiah 58 aloud here}]

Do you hear the heart of God here? Not for religiosity, but for justice. Not for ritualised obedience but for heartfelt love and compassionate action that matches God's own heart.

So, what do we make of the Scribes objections to Jesus? One the one hand, they are only seeking to do their best by God. They are trying to get it right. The additional laws that have been constructed around the commandment to observe the sabbath were at root honest attempts to help people avoid getting it wrong. They were aimed at helping people keep the sabbath rightly. On the other hand, it is ironic that in an attempt to attend to God's heart, they had inadvertently replaced God's heart with man made rules and codes, and they have missed the point!

And before we jump on them too quickly, we might want to assess whether or not we too have accrued to ourselves ways of thinking about church, or how to worship, or how we are to come to Jesus, or who can come to Jesus, or even of what might exclude someone from coming to Christ, that we too have inadvertently swapped out our attention to God's heart for a set of man made rules, ideas and interpretations.

Let us notice that Jesus corrects the scribes view of the Sabbath. Reminds them of just where and how and on what God's heart is focused. And might we be careful to attend to the same. To be more eager to mirror God's heart, than to sustain our own human-made rules, procedures, positions, and ways of being, as well meaning, well placed, and as honest as they might be, might God's heart trump them all.

Let us pray.

Lord Jesus Christ, lead us in our following after you. Correct us when we have things wrong, and open our eyes to see you more clearly, love you more dearly and walk with you more nearly, that our living may be as generous as God's own heart is to the world. Amen.

### ***Ways to Engage all Generations***

When different generations are gathered together in worship there is an opportunity to build relationships and to encounter God in our conversations as we build relationships and learn from each other no matter what our ages, stage of life or faith and for all present to feel included. Adding some wondering questions to the service at an appropriate moment can help to do this.

Wondering Questions: Some wondering questions that may help to engage all generations to ponder and explore during the talk, service or during the week may include (three or so) of the following style of questions:

- I wonder what your favourite part of the story/passage is? I wonder why that is?
- I wonder who your favourite character is? I wonder why that is?
- I wonder how \_\_\_\_\_ felt or I wonder how \_\_\_\_\_ felt when \_\_\_\_\_ happened?
- I wonder how you feel about \_\_\_\_\_?
- I wonder where you are in this story?
- I wonder what part of the story is about you?
- I wonder what the [tree, pearl, coin] could really be?
- I wonder why \_\_\_\_\_ said \_\_\_\_\_?
- I wonder what we can learn about God in this story?

### ***Suggested intercessions***

#### **For the Church:**

Heavenly Father, we pray for the Church worldwide, that it may truly embody the spirit of Sabbath rest, not just as a day of physical rest, but as a celebration of God's liberating power. May our communities of faith be places of joy and delight, where all are welcomed and where the oppressed find freedom and healing. Lord in your mercy – **Hear our Prayer**

#### **For Those in Need:**

We lift up to you, O God, all who are burdened by toil and labor, especially those who are enslaved by unjust systems. Grant them rest and liberation, just as you delivered your people from bondage in Egypt. Strengthen us to work for justice and freedom for all your children. Lord in your mercy – **Hear our Prayer**

### **For Healing and Wholeness:**

Compassionate Healer, we bring before you all who need physical, emotional, or spiritual healing. May they experience the restoring power of your love, like the man with the withered hand whom Jesus healed on the Sabbath. Grant them wholeness and freedom from all that binds them. Lord in your mercy – **Hear our Prayer**

### **For Wisdom and Understanding:**

Holy Spirit, guide us into a deeper understanding of the true meaning of Sabbath rest. Help us to see beyond mere observance to the heart of God, who desires mercy, compassion, and justice above ritualistic obedience. Grant us wisdom to discern what truly honours you. Lord in your mercy – **Hear our Prayer**

### **For Humility and Openness:**

Gracious God, soften our hearts and humble our spirits, that we may be receptive to your correction and guidance. Keep us from becoming rigid in our interpretations and traditions, and help us to always prioritize love and compassion in all that we do. Lord in your mercy – **Hear our Prayer**

### **For Renewal and Transformation:**

Loving Creator, renew our minds and transform our lives, that we may reflect more fully the image of Christ. Teach us to live in alignment with your heart, following Jesus' example of prioritizing love and mercy over legalistic adherence to rules. May our lives be a testament to your grace and goodness. Lord in your mercy – **Hear our Prayer**

### **For the World:**

God of all nations, we pray for the healing and liberation of our world. Break the chains of injustice and oppression, and usher in your kingdom of peace and righteousness. May your Sabbath rest be known and experienced by all people, and may your love reign supreme in every corner of the earth. Lord in your mercy – **Hear our Prayer**

### ***Suggested hymns/songs***

#### **Hymns:**

- "Take My Life, and Let It Be" by Frances R. Havergal - This hymn speaks to surrendering our lives to God's service, which aligns with the message of resting in God's liberating power.
- "Sabbath Hymn" by Fanny Crosby - This hymn specifically reflects on the Sabbath as a day of rest and worship.
- "Come, Ye Thankful People, Come" by Henry Alford - While not directly about Sabbath, it celebrates God's provision and deliverance, themes that resonate with the sermon.
- "How Great Thou Art" by Stuart K. Hine - This hymn magnifies God's greatness and power, fitting with the theme of God as a liberator and healer.

- "Blessed Assurance" by Fanny Crosby - This hymn reflects on the assurance of salvation and God's faithfulness, which ties into the message of God's liberating love.
- "Great Is Thy Faithfulness" by Thomas O. Chisholm - This hymn emphasizes God's faithfulness and provision, echoing the idea of Sabbath as a celebration of God's saving acts.

### **Contemporary Worship Songs:**

- "Build My Life" by Housefires
- "Reckless Love" by Cory Asbury
- "Goodness of God" by Bethel Music
- "No Longer Slaves" by Bethel Music
- "Cornerstone" by Hillsong Worship
- "King of Kings" by Hillsong Worship

### **Activities to accompany the service:**

If you are looking for resources to accompany the service for engaging younger children, then there are lots of online resources. The following free to access/download resources may be useful starting points:

- <https://flamecreativekids.blogspot.com/>
- <https://www.pinterest.co.uk/MessyChurchBRF/>
- <https://www.faithinkids.org/>
- [reflectionary.org](http://reflectionary.org) – lectionary-based resources
- [engageworship](http://engageworship) – in particular 'Area 52' for lectionary-based material
- <https://www.bdeducation.org.uk/product-category/primary-age-5-11/>  
(weekly@lectionary resource)

This weeks Weekly@ resource from blackburn diocese can be found here:  
<https://www.bdeducation.org.uk/product/weekly-june-2024/>