

2nd Sunday after Pentecost, Year B  
June 3, 2018  
Mark 2:23-28, 3:1-5

### **Sabbath Keeping for the Soul**

*In the name of the living, loving God. Amen.*

Who has heard the term *self-care*?

Maybe you even try and practice self-care.

If you do, that's great

and we're going to expand on this idea

and take a look at it through the lens of the spiritual disciplines.

But first, let's talk about this idea of *self-care*.

It's been around longer than you realize.

Doctors and medical professionals were talking about this concept in the 50s and early 60s primarily as a means by which mentally ill and elderly patients could treat themselves through the practice of healthy habits.

In the 60s and 70s, the idea expanded

to those who work in high-risk and emotionally daunting professions,

such as trauma therapists, social workers, first responders, and others,

as a way of coping with the stress brought on by work.

The idea behind all of this, was that you can't take care of others

unless you are taking care of yourself

and that means caring for the whole person.

Caring for the whole person means physical, mental, emotional, and spiritual health.

Now, fast-forward to recent memory and *self-care* is all the rage.

In an article on Slate.com called

"How 'Self-Care' went from Radical to Frou-Frou to Radical Once Again,"

Aisha Harris writes,

"in 2016, self-care officially crossed over in the mainstream.

It was the new chicken soup for the progressive soul."

Self-care is me-time, going out with friends, getting that pedicure,

curling up with a good book or going to the movies.

It is stepping outside the regular rhythm of life, work, and caring for others

in order to find refreshment and renewal for the self.

Now, depending upon your personality,

this either sounds terrific and healthy or you're stifling an eye roll,

flexing your Protestant work ethic muscles and thinking

"get on with it, people. There's work to be done."

Both sides are valid and still,

I want us, all of us, to expand this idea of self-care into a spiritual discipline

and think about it as sabbath.

What does *sabbath* look like and how is that different than self-care?

Whether or not you incorporate self-care into your regular routine,  
I want you to think about sabbath keeping.

Is it a planned and regular part of your routine or an idealistic notion,  
something super religious people and orthodox Jews participate in, but not you?  
Today, I want to invite everyone to dream about sabbath and what it can look like in your life.

We are finally back to the gospel of Mark where we will be throughout the summer months  
and Jesus is stirring up trouble again,

this time by traveling, picking grain, and healing someone all on the sabbath.

Mark 2:27 reads, "The Sabbath was made for humankind and not humankind for the Sabbath."

That's something to consider. In what ways was sabbath made for humans to enjoy?  
How do we spend sabbath? And how does sabbath impact the world?

Sabbath is a time set aside every week for the practice of *shalom*.

Shalom is a Hebrew word for peace and it means more.

Shalom is like being held by God, embraced by God,

in a way that makes us feel whole, healthy, and perhaps even holy.

Sabbath is a time to know ourselves as the person that God intends us to be.

This kind of time doesn't spontaneously happen.

It requires intentionality and planning.

There is an old saying that the three days leading up to Sabbath are times of preparation,  
and the three days following are times of remembering,

and Sabbath itself, is a day of being who God made us to be.

This is something wholly different than *self-care* and yet it's not really.

Sabbath can be divided into four components: beauty, holy time, feasting, and play.

Hans Urs von Balthasar wrote:

"God's beauty is God's power to attract, to give pleasure,  
to create desire, to awaken joy and wonder."

On the Sabbath, we seek and find God through beauty, through desire,  
in joy and wonder about the world around us.

That might mean going for a hike or making something with your hands  
or spending time in the garden.

Where you find beauty, you will find God.

Holy time is prayer.

This could be time set aside for prayer and devotion,  
for reading the Bible or another religious book.

It could be writing in a journal or sending a handwritten letter to a friend.

Holy time could also be rest or meditation.

This looks like whatever your soul desires.

Feasting is central to sabbath.

Perhaps this is one day each week in which everyone sits down at the dinner table together.

Phones are banished. You use the nice dishes and cloth napkins and say grace.

Someone brings in flowers from the garden and you take your time, not rushing.

This is a sabbath feast.

Play is an extension to holy time.

Play could be taking a walk on the beach or taking kids to the park.

Whatever is playful and fun is rejuvenating for the soul. Do that.

Self-care on the sabbath is more than self-care

because **it's soul care and that is transforming over time.**

Sabbath is more than a nap and it's not just about you.

When you take time for sabbath rest, it becomes about everyone else around you too.

Relationship is primary in the Kingdom of God

and we are able to better nurture and care for the abundant life of the other  
when our souls are refreshed.

Sabbath is life-oriented and life-giving.

When you are planning your sabbath, keep in mind what it is not.

Sabbath is not a merely a break nor a reward. It is holy rest.

It is essential rest required in order that life may continue.

Put it on your calendar and hold that time as sacred as you would any other commitment.

Sabbath as a spiritual discipline is how we sanctify both time and space  
and consequently how we nurture our souls.

Several months ago, I preached a sermon in which I asked the question,  
"How goes it with your soul?"

This summer, I encourage you to ask one another that same question,  
but with the added lens of sabbath.

We have to hold each other accountable to sabbath keeping.

We keep the sabbath in order to be able to notice and recognize  
who around us needs it themselves.

Who is in need of life when no one else seems to notice?

So, as you plan for sabbath and move into a practice of sabbath keeping,  
keep notice of your soul.

It's more than self-care and more than chicken soup for the progressive soul.

It is soul care and it is life-giving.

Some Sabbath content taken from *Foundations: Core Spiritual Practices for Small Groups*  
booklet written by Epiphany Parish, Seattle.