

Pentecost 2 – June 2, 2024  
Text: Mark 2:23-28  
Theme: You Deserve a Break Today

**Remember that famous McDonald's tag line? "You deserve a break today. So, get up and get away, to McDonalds." What kind of pathological liar made that one up? If you get sued for your 1/4 pounder being too light, or your coffee being too hot, how can you get away with that kind of false advertising? Any fast-food restaurant with a kiddie play-area and hard plastic molded furniture is about the furthest thing from my imagination when someone says "you deserve a break today." Children screaming, soda spilling and the infamous cold French fries are simply not on my agenda when I'm looking for a little get-away. No, I only went to those places to reward the kids for doing something well, or to make it up to them when I had been traveling away from home with the youth group or the District. The tag line for me was "you deserve to pay penance today, because all week you've been away."**

**However, having said that, while McDonald's is not my choice for getting away, it is true that we do need a break. We need a Sabbath Day. We go to work, get off work, run the kids to baseball practice, soccer practice, piano lessons, and dance classes, run home and make dinner, pick the kids up, eat dinner, run to church for a meeting, go home, put the kids to bed, feed the dog, load the**

**dishwasher, watch Netflix, fall into bed for five or six hours and get up and get ready to do it all again. Does it sound like your life? If you're retired substitute volunteering for the church and various community organizations, watching grandchildren and everything taking longer to do than you used to be able to do it.**

**When do you take a Sabbath? When do you slow down and sanctify a holy day? You might say – right now - at worship – and maybe that is true for you, but what about those times you are singing in the choir, teaching Sunday School, and serving as a lay minister? Can you truly say that you have remembered the Sabbath Day and kept it holy? Or even worshiped for that matter?**

**Maybe you have another time that is your Sabbath. Maybe it is a Bible Study, or a prayer group or something else altogether, but the key question is – do you take a Sabbath?**

**Sabbath can be a dirty word. I grew up having very negative feelings about it for a couple of reasons. First, I was raised, just like all of you with that good old American work ethic. We are products of our times and society taught us that work was the most important thing we do and the value of work is defined by the money it pays. So "Sabbath" was almost a dirty word. That was for weak people**

**who couldn't keep up. Real Americans squeezed God in around their time and a half double shift.**

**Secondly, I spent a good deal of time in the deep South where there were "Sabbath blue laws." What that means is that there are laws to protect and enforce the Sabbath. No commerce was to take place on Sunday. Now what this meant was that your self-righteous neighbor could condemn you and your family for mowing the grass on Sunday as they drove off to the cafeteria to have Sunday dinner. Apparently, the commandment does not apply to people who are needed to serve food to proper Christians. Just so you know, nurses, doctors, plumbers, police, fire-fighters and newspaper deliverers are also exempt from the Sabbath. The hypocrisy of "keeping the Sabbath" at the expense of everyone else infuriated me, being one of those paperboys at 5am every Sunday morning.**

**So, it was easy for me to have a bad taste in my mouth about the Sabbath. Maybe you too have experienced such a feeling. But I came to understand that I wasn't upset with the Sabbath or with God, I was upset with the human beings who had used it and abused it to suit their whims. Then they presented themselves as holier than thou because they supposedly kept the Sabbath.**

**But before we throw the Sabbath out, let's take a look at what God says about it since it is His invention after all. First there was the Old Testament Sabbath around which are built all the ceremonial Sabbath laws. Did God mean that you couldn't do any labor on the Sabbath? Yes, he did. Did he intend for his people to do nothing but spend the day in devotion to him? Yes, he did. The Old Testament Laws were very constrictive. They were meant to hem people into a very restrictive lifestyle during that time in which earth awaited the coming of the Messiah. The Old Testament Law was given for two reasons. First it was a foreshadowing of Christ's coming. Christ would bring Sabbath for everyone, all the time. Second it was a method of training the people who would be called upon to deliver the Messiah to the world. Being chosen did not come without cost. But the event is over now.**

**That's is where we so often get off track. Some Christians try to impose Old Testament Law on New Testament people. You will hear people talk about tithing 10% of their income. Nope! Old Testament. We are free to give whatever we believe is a faithful portion of our gifts. You will hear people talk about various dietary restrictions. Nope! Old Testament. We are free to eat and drink whatever we like so long as we do not intentionally bring spiritual**

**harm to another person. I also sometimes hear so-called "Sabbath keepers" speak as though they are fulfilling God's Law.**

**How can you fill something that is already full? When Christ came, he fulfilled the Law perfectly, completely. Christ has kept the Sabbath perfectly for us. So how will anyone condemn us? They cannot. In our Gospel for today, we hear the religious leaders of the day trying to condemn Jesus for allowing his disciples to work on the Sabbath. But Jesus reminds them that God did not create us to fulfill the Law. We were created long before the Law was given. The Law was created for us and now it is fulfilled for us. If we choose not to follow it, God will not punish us – but we will miss out on a great deal of good.**

**So, getting rid of the legalistic wrappings, what do we have left? God says, take some time every week to take care of your soul. See God doesn't need our worship. If we all ceased worshipping God right now – God would still be God. God continues on whether or not we believe in Him, whether or not we worship Him. But your soul is a living – breathing entity. It has life, and it feeds on God. If we choose not to nourish it, sooner or later, it will die.**

**There are vast armies of people in the world today with sick and dying souls. These are people who have ignored Sabbath. They**

**have sacrificed everything for work or sports or school or a relationship and let “soul time” slide. I talked to an Uber driver in LA a few months ago. I asked him how he could afford to live in California. He told me that he and his wife worked seven days a week. He worked two jobs and his mother-in-law watched their three kids. Their plan was to do this for 5-7 years until their house doubled in value when they could sell, move somewhere else and buy a home for cash. Ok, not a bad fiscal plan, but what about feeding your soul for 5-7 years? What about teaching your kids to worship and learn about God for 5-7 years? What about the Sabbath? What about his faith and the faith of his children?**

**No one is required to observe the Sabbath. But God encourages us to do just that because it is so good for us mentally, physically, and spiritually. As Jesus sated the disciples’ hunger and healed the man with the withered hand, so too He fills us with His Word and heals us from sin on our Sabbath whenever it is. Sabbath is not a law for us; it is a gift from God. You deserve a break today! Happy Sabbath!**