

## Summer as Sabbath.... or not?

June/July 2014

Do you remember the feeling when, as a kid, school was finally over for the year and you could look forward to a summer of play, play and more play – maybe with a family vacation thrown in? The anticipation of such freedom was almost as good as the real thing!

Sure, you got bored before long. But if you were lucky, your mom wasn't very sympathetic about your lack of imagination and pretty soon, you were able to find something else to do. Maybe even something creative, new or challenging.

Summer was the ultimate Sabbath when I was a kid. Time to unwind from the pressures of the school year, sleep late, to just be. By the end of it, when September came around, we were ready to rededicate ourselves to the business of learning and conform to the school schedule.

Nowadays, the very word – Sabbath – makes us feel guilty. "I know, I know," we tell ourselves, "we're supposed to stop what we're doing and rest. But there's so much to do..." How many of us take the prescribed twenty-fours of rest per week that God gives humankind in the creation story? How many of our Sundays are packed with church, errands, lawn work, sports practice, and catching up on work instead?

When the Pharisees come after Jesus because he wasn't keeping the Sabbath properly, he replied that "the Sabbath was made for humankind, and not humankind for the Sabbath." That is to say, the Sabbath isn't some random law that God set up just for its own sake. Not just one more law to keep, one more hoop to jump through. The Sabbath is given as a gift to us, for the benefit of our freedom and our flourishing.

In order to encourage us all – me included – to claim this gift, let me remind us of some of the benefits of this loving gift from our loving Creator:

- Rest for our physical bodies. That is, time to catch up on sleep, to eat more slowly, to unclench those stressed out muscles.
- Creative space for our minds. Constant busyness leads to shallow, hurried thinking. When you free some time to daydream, good things can happen.
- A reminder of our place in the universe. There is a God and it's not you. In fact, the world will run just fine for 24 hours without you. That's good news.
- Time to reconnect with your inner self and the Spirit that lives within. Some say the soul is shy, and only comes forward to be heard when it's safe and quiet.
- Slow time with those you love. Our relationships need this, in order to stay strong and life-giving.

Take a look at your calendar. God's gift of Sabbath is there for us. What will you have to say 'no' to, in order to say 'yes' to this gift? Blessed summer to you and your families!

Pastor Susan