

Lord of the Sabbath
By Rev. Todd Farnsworth
Luke 6: 1-5



One Sabbath Jesus was going through the grainfields, and his disciples began to pick some heads of grain, rub them in their hands and eat the kernels. 2 Some of the Pharisees asked, "Why are you doing what is unlawful on the Sabbath?" 3 Jesus answered them, "Have you never read what David did when he and his companions were hungry? 4 He entered the house of God, and taking the consecrated bread, he ate what is lawful only for priests to eat. And he also gave some to his companions." 5 Then Jesus said to them, "The Son of Man is Lord of the Sabbath."

Even though we've been at this covid world for close to a year, I've not really adjusted to the life we're called to lead. I mean, the rhythms I kept pre covid are not available to me and it creates a blurring of time...days flowing into nights flowing into afternoons, flowing into weeks...or is it months? I don't know...until somebody texts me and asks if I'm coming to the meeting that's scheduled for that day...or night! Have you experienced this? The strange ongoing-ness of covid time? I find it difficult to know when to start and when to stop and I'm pretty sure that like Jesus, I have violated a whole lotta sabbath laws.

Even in his time, there were 39 categories of rules around the sabbath. They were called the **Melachot** and they have been around for a very long time. Within the 39 categories are hundreds of rules that are subcategories for proper behavior on the sabbath. It appears that Jesus and the religious

leaders in today's text are aware of these rules and regulations as Luke reports:

39 MELACHOS TABLE

Ch חטום Chisum Trimming	Zo צוץ Zotz Cutting	Ko קוצץ Kotz Cutting	Mm ממזג Mmazg Mixing	Du דוף Duf Beating	Zr זרז Zurz Cutting	Mv מבזבז Mvazv Wasting	Mc מכבד Mkav Honoring
Bo בזבז Bavav Wasting	To תוף Tuf Cutting	Mi מייבש Miyav Drying	Lu לוחץ Luvav Cutting	Of אופף Ovav Cutting		Kt קטוף Ktav Cutting	Mk מכבד Mkav Honoring
Go גזז Gavav Cutting	Me מזבז Mavav Wasting	Mn מנזבז Mnavav Wasting	Tz תזבז Tavav Wasting	Tv תזבז Tavav Wasting	Ma מזבז Mavav Wasting	OB אובד Ovav Cutting	Ha הזבז Havav Wasting
Or אורז Ovav Cutting	Po פוזבז Povav Wasting	Ko קוצץ Kotz Cutting	Mr מזבז Mavav Wasting	Mt מזבז Mavav Wasting	Tf תוף Tuf Cutting	Kr קוצץ Kotz Cutting	MP מזבז Mavav Wasting
Td תוף Tuf Cutting	Sc סוזבז Sovav Wasting	Mf מזבז Mavav Wasting	Mb מזבז Mavav Wasting	Mi מזבז Mavav Wasting	Mh מזבז Mavav Wasting	Bn בזבז Bavav Wasting	So סוזבז Sovav Wasting

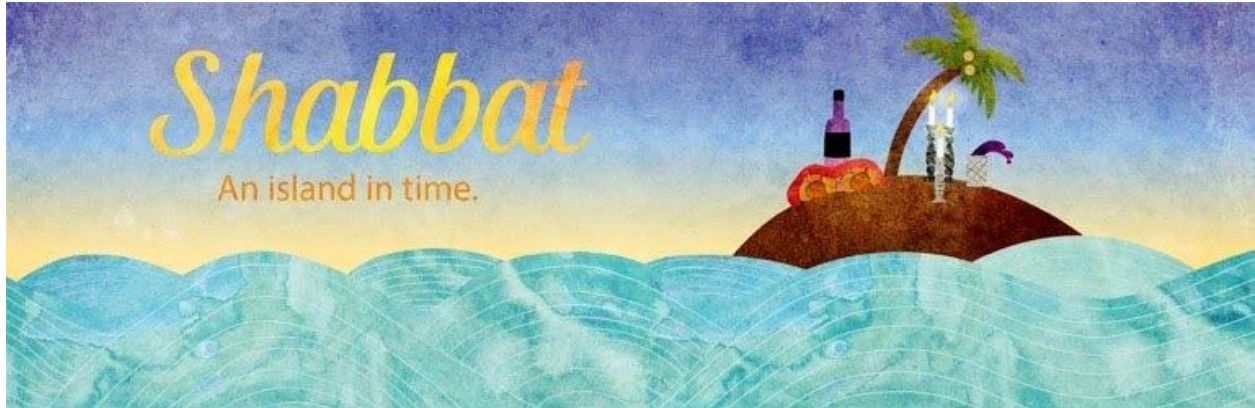
One Sabbath Jesus was going through the grainfields, and his disciples began to pick some heads of grain, rub them in their hands and eat the kernels. 2 Some of the Pharisees asked, "Why are you doing what is unlawful on the Sabbath?"

The "law" the Pharisees refer to fell into the categories of *reaping*, or cutting off a part of

a plant from its growing part, and probably, *"threshing"*, removal of an undesirable outer from a desirable inner. So, the disciples "picking" and "rubbing" the grains to eat the kernels was, in the Pharisee's opinion, a clear violation of the Melachot.

But Jesus challenges these ancient rules. He responds with a look to King David (who wasn't actually feeding his men on the sabbath, but was offering them compassion and sustenance). And, Jesus takes a further step by conferring upon himself the title "lord of the Sabbath." The title means that he makes the rules/he is the rules...which is good news for those of us who are feeling a bit fuzzy on time and protocol! Thanks to Jesus, we need not be encumbered by all of the rules of the melachot. We can let go of "doing it wrong" or "disappointing God". With Jesus at the helm, sabbath is something that is doable.

I tell you all of this because I think that sabbath is a way to reclaim the rhythms of time during covid.



According to chabod.org sabbath is “an island in time.” I think that’s a beautiful description. An island. A place we can go. Cut off from the rest of the week. Full of provisions. At God’s mercy. In God’s care. An island in time.

So perhaps we can imagine preparing for our trip to the island each week. We pick a day or a few hours, when we can head off to that island. We can set it on our calendar and look forward to the trip! Right? We can make it a priority around which other things happen. Surely if you were headed to the Bahamas you would not let a little thing like a phone call from a telemarketer derail the vacation! Like a weekend getaway, here’s how I would do it.

- **Planning:** Once I decided to go, I’d have to figure out what would I pack? Would I bring special clothes? Special foods? Special games or activities? Maybe a book that I’ve been meaning to get to? Some art supplies? If it was warm weather, perhaps you’d find your island outdoors: in a garden, in the woods, by the shore of a lake or the ocean. Wherever we find Jesus, there we can experience sabbath island! When our family began practicing “sabbath” we agreed to forego sweets during the week and save up for a sumptuous dessert

on the sabbath. Martha would prepare something delicious for us to feast on each week. It was something to anticipate. The point is to make it a place or an activity that you could repeat once a week.

- **Arriving:** When you finally got to the sabbath you would be ready to immerse yourself in island life. Cut off from the world, you would have to be dependant on God to see you through the time. It might take a little decompressing from the pace you are accustomed to (could you set your phone aside? Turn it off? Unplug from media? You decide. But, what a gift to “not being in charge” once a week! You could relax, kick your shoes off, dance, sing, laugh, cry, sleep, dream. When we began sabbath keeping we would light a candle at dinner on the Friday night of our sabbath. One of the kids would say something like, “we welcome the light of sabbath.” Sometimes we would have a disco dance party! Whatever you do to start your sabbath, know that God will be holding you in your sabbath time. God will be caring for you. You might even give thanks to God for the care. You may discover an unexpected blessing.
- **Resting:** As the sabbath continues you would have the time to rest. The constant flow of time without rhythm is exhausting. Sabbath would provide you with an intentional stopping point each week and you could intentionally take a deep breath and just be with the lord of the Sabbath. I confess, I’m not very good at “just being.” I find it takes a bit of practice...maybe you’ll be better at it than me! Resting means taking a break from the work we usually do. Whatever that looks like for you, give it a try.
- **Thanking:** As your time in sabbath nears its conclusion, you could reflect on the gifts you have received during the sabbath. The

disciples were fed in the body by the eating of the wheat grains. The food prepared them to go on and continue ministering to the people who needed healing, who sought justice. Perhaps you will be fed in body, or spirit. Like a benevolent Mr. Rourke on *Fantasy Island*, your host (Jesus) will see you to the plane and send you back to the mainland, transformed for your time with him. Ready to act out your sabbath experience in the world. Be gracious.

- **Returning:** When you come back from a trip, it is not uncommon to want to tell others about what you've experienced. To relive some of the highlights and odd experiences you've had. Feel free to share your sabbath delights with those who care about you. No need to make a lengthy slide show or PowerPoint presentation, just a few words, a contented smile, a renewed presence, or a different way of interacting with the world around you will suffice as you begin planning for your next trip to sabbath island.

Covid time can be very disorienting. I believe that embracing the sabbath each week can give a structure to our week that not only centers us during the experience, but orients us for the living of the time beyond it. It points each week toward the lord of the sabbath, Jesus, who provides for us with compassion and love in our time of need. I invite you to try sabbath living, and feel free to let me know how it goes. Amen.