

**Deuteronomy 5:12-15 – Mark 2:23-3:6**  
**Elkton United Methodist Church**  
**A Holy Pause to Continue**  
**June 3rd, 2018**

There are so many reasons to celebrate, so many people to share with, so many thoughts coming to mind. A service like today invites us to stop and ask how did you get here? Who walked with you this path of academic, spiritual, and social growth? After all, being here is another witness of a village -that with a common purpose- has accomplished its goal; educate and learn, transform and be transformed.

This time hopefully leads us into remembering the good and the bad, the regrets and the forgiveness, the pain and suffering but also the courage and motivations to keep going.

From High School to Cecil College to Salisbury University, Del-Tech to UD, from Elkton to Newark or from here to Oregon. From grad school to work place or a PhD program. From there to back home. No matter in what way of the transition, graduation is a time that helps us to transit from one stage to open on us the possibilities for the next chapter in life. Graduation has all the aspects of a ritual that make us travel in time thinking about the process we have suffered: the first day of school picture contrasted with the last day's. A procession of students entering into a space to then be send forth to the world.

Excitement, happiness, relief, nostalgia, uncertainty are some of the emotions that that come up at graduation. However, nothing defeats the overwhelming sentiment of expectation; what is going to come next? Two years ago, I had just finished a Master in Divinity -which somehow translates to people that I have mastered the Divine. I am now an expert on the mystery of God-. Do you relate to that? You are expected to know and be sure what your future holds. As recently graduated with a Business or Finances degree, as Occupational therapist, as teacher of young children, environmental savvy, lawyer, or phycologist you have lost the right to say "I don't know". All of the sudden, that is no longer a valid answer. Life slowly turns to become a little more intimidating at the culmination of this part of life.

Although difficult to maintain as a regular practice, preserving a time of rest, worship and being in communion helps us to decrease the level of anxiety directing our thoughts and actions towards a faithful representation of God here on earth.

What we commonly know about a Sabbath according to the Scripture read today is that is a spiritual discipline that invites us, commands us, to dedicate a day of rest, to dedicate a day to God. After all, God Godself took a break and rested on the last day after the creation was made and was declared to be good.

In the Jewish tradition, the Sabbath started at sunset and will end 24 hours later. One would get immersed in an intentional break to bring the body to rest from the physical effort of daily duties and calmness to the mind and soul from the busyness of life.

But the Sabbath could not stop there. There break opens full awareness to self- reflection and communication with God, a state of worship through contemplation, songs, and prayer. Others would add hiking, reading while drinking tea, journaling, silence or listening to music as venues to a connection with God.

In this intimate connection, we are reminded of our relationship/identity with God: we are creation of the Creator. We are children of a God who is loving, compassionate, caring, righteous, and just. If we declare being made at God's image, we ought to embody such features with our neighbors. Claiming to be a child of God without fellowship and commitment with our siblings is a theological and spiritual contradiction.

Pharisees before Jesus were so wrapped up about the lawfulness of the Sabbath that they wrote multiple files to decide what could be considered work or not during the Holy day, the Holy rest. So many details were included in the intention of following the practice, that at some point the essence of it lost its meaning. It became a set of boxes to check off out of the list of self-righteousness.

"I am now good stands, socially and spiritually," one might think. Many of us may live out the Christian life centered on the church in a similar way. "Ok, I have made it to church. All is ok now! But what happens the rest of the week? What happens with the commitment outside of the temple? Aren't other days holy too?"

From the chapter in Mark, Jesus rescues us from falling deeper into an empty practice. Pharisees questioned Jesus disciples' procedures while they both gathered food to feed the hungry and Jesus healed the sick on the Sabbath day. "The Sabbath was made for man, not man for the Sabbath. So the Son of Man is Lord even of the Sabbath." As a Holy concept, the Sabbath is relevant as long it connects us with God, with our purpose in life, and with others. That pause, the Holy pause, is for the Body's sake since we are called to pay attention to the signs of God that heal a world in pain and division.

We tend to believe that the church is well as long as the pews are occupied or if the arcs of the church are filled with money. But Jesus reminds us that the church will be a witness to the world when we, wherever we are at, become the reflection of the Light in the world. How are we advocating for justice in the midst of deep mistrust among us? How are we going to advocate for the dehumanization of God's children who are persecuted due to immigration status? How is it that on the Sabbath, the Son of Man –Jesus Christ- is the Lord in our lives? God's social order invites us to keep our eyes open to identify the priorities; the sacredness of life remains the first priority.

For John Wesley, there was not religion but social religion, no holiness but social holiness. We are invited to take a break, to breathe, to pause and rest. It is for our sake. In doing so, we reflect upon and contemplate about the essence of the Creator through whom we ought to remember our identity in Christ over all. We are not to stop there. Let's continue the path of faith and live claiming the direct connection from our Creator that absolutely commands us to do good at moments, at places, and with people who the world make you think are not worthy. In that, we worship God. Then and only then, we could experience the Son of Man being the Lord even on the Sabbath. May it be so. Amen.

### **Benediction**

I invite you to go forth in peace.

As you have heard the word proclaimed, go forth and share.

As you have been fed at this table, go forth and feed.

May the grace of our Lord, Jesus Christ, the love of God and the communion of the Holy Spirit be among you this day and always. Amen