

Rest Stop Genesis 1:1-2:3

I want you to imagine for a moment that you are in your favorite place –that place where you feel relaxed and calm and refreshed and happy. Is it by the sea? In a garden? In the mountains? At a lake? For some of you it's a real place, for others it's an imaginary place. But I want you to take time and imagine that place right now.

When you go there, you feel more relaxed, right? Even when you close your eyes and imagine your favorite place, you're more at ease.

You just experienced a psychological "rest stop." A brief reprieve from the stresses and roller coaster of life. A time of relaxation, refreshment, and joy in which for a brief time, you can put your troubles aside, and breathe.

We all need something that breaks our stress, interrupts our pain with a little bit of pleasure and joy, something that breaks our "fasting" with a little bit of peace. We all need a "selah," a peace pause, a "rest stop."

Rest stops were created for this kind of necessary break. Day been long? Road been hard? Life been tough? Take a break. Pull over. Relax. And refresh. Stop and rest.

In the Jewish tradition that **rest stop is called the "sabbath,"** named by God, who after six hard days of labor in creating the entire universe, decided to take a little rest.

But "rest" is a tricky word and we've kind of misconstrued it in our culture today. We've begun to associate the idea of taking a "rest" as taking time for ourselves just to do more stuff! Or sleeping in instead of going to church! The problem with that is that's not the kind of "rest" that God intended.

Scriptural sabbath is not a break FROM God, but a break WITH God! Sabbath is time to take a breath. But not just any breath –a breath from our master rejuvenator, the Holy Spirit.

This is why Jesus told us, "Come to me, all you who are weary, and I will give you rest." Jesus is our Sabbath. Jesus is our break. Sabbath is a time when we allow Jesus to refresh us, renew us, heal us, and rejuvenate us before sending us out again into the mission field to follow him into long and sometimes difficult places filled with hurting people.

And sabbath with Jesus is a little bit of heaven. Especially during those days when we celebrate holy communion together. Sabbath is a time when we remember that each breath we take is a gift of life from God.

For those on the discipleship road with Jesus, life can sometimes feel like an endless series of burdens and trials. That's why we come together for worship - our rest stop along the way through the mission field to our destination of glory.

And when we gather we sing, we praise, we pray, we smile, we celebrate holy communion, we release all of the trouble and tension we've been holding on to all week long. We stretch our minds and hearts, breathe in deeply, and allow ourselves to relax. Sabbath keeps our faith fresh from week to week, so that we can get up and keep on walking that discipleship road again.

Sabbath worship is a time to revel in your relationships, especially your relationship with God. And it's a time when you renew your strength and get ready to make a new start.

Our ancestors were nomadic people. They were nearly always on the road. A "rest stop" for them was a great relief – a time out from being on the road, to pitch a tent and put down some

roots, to stay for a little while. Time to build an altar and to worship as Jacob did in the hills of Israel.

For them, as for us, sabbath was God time. And during God time, the heart was at rest. And there was peace. And for a little while, home became a place for new beginnings. Every covenant recorded in scripture begins with God giving His people a new start. And perhaps the greatest of these stories is the story of Noah.

The word “noah” in Hebrew is “noach” – which means a place of rest, a resting place, a place to start anew, a renewed covenant if you will. Noah’s name is a play on words, for when the ark reaches Mt. Ararat and the waters recede from the lands, God gives Noah a new “resting place” – a place of rest from the turbulent waters, transitional travel, and long, hard days of turmoil. And a new start, a new covenant in a new place, to build a new world for God’s people.

This is what we do every time we come into worship with God our creator, our re-newer, and our Lord. In worship our hearts find a new resting place, peace from worry, relief from sin, refreshment from the journey, a brand new start, and a fresh beginning in our faith and in our lives.

So let’s take time now and breathe in the Holy Spirit. To fill our reserves with the bread and body of Christ, the juice and blood of Christ, the Holy Spirit of Christ.

And when we do we’ll find the strength to go out into the world renewed with a sense of mission and joy for service. For the vineyard is ripe....and the workers are few.

Come. Find your rest stop. Find your Lord in Communion.