



Shepherd of the Hills Lutheran Church *Pastor Terry's Thoughts of the Week*

Sabbath

Do you keep a sabbath? Most of us don't. I don't mean that we don't come to worship and all that, but I don't think we really know what a Sabbath is.

A sabbath is a day of rest. That's the story in Genesis. God rested. Whether this is a literal meaning of how God works or rather a "teaching moment", we need to remember that rest is so important in our lives that God gave us a good example.

Sabbath has come to mean the day on which we worship. Fortunately, the land in which we live offers us both Saturday and Sunday as days when things slow down, even close.

When I was a kid – yes, way back then – none of the stores in New England were open on Sunday if they were something other than "mom and pop" size. I remember being in Ontario, Canada on a weekend and found that there was not even a Sunday paper, but rather a paper that came out on Saturday for the weekend. These were called "blue" laws. I'm not quite sure why, but they did keep us tuned in to a "restful" time. Really, we couldn't do anything else, so we rested.

Now Sunday is just another day for many people. All the stores are open and people do their shopping on the way home from church – if they go to church at all. So Sunday is no longer a "sabbath" day – a day of rest. But God has let us know that we need a sabbath – a rest. We need a time in life when we just let our minds go their own way, let our thoughts fly where they will and just delight in the world around us. Most of us are not doing that and we are all the worse for it.

Is Sunday your Sabbath Day? To some degree it is for me. But remember, for pastors this is not a day of rest, it's a day of work. And most pastors are not good about finding that sabbath time. If we are preaching and leading worship, the week before has lessons rolling around in our brains trying to come to some kind of thought and teaching that will be edifying and filled with good messages for our particular family of God. If we are retired, pastor or not, sometimes our days are filled with volunteer work to the point that we want to go back to those lovely 12 hour days we used to work!

The commandments have a specific place that says "remember the sabbath day to keep it holy". Is worship part of that "holiness"? Yes. But quiet and contemplation, family gatherings and the like are also part of that holiness. Going out to lunch and enjoying each others company is part and parcel of holiness. Some of our volunteering is as well, but some becomes a stress as we try to fit so many things into our schedule.

Like everything in life, we need to set priorities. God helps us with guides for living and for life. The commandments are not only good community guides and basis for western law, but they are also personal guides for a good and healthy life. Find that sabbath time. Find that time that will give your physical body and mental facilities a good sabbath. When you come to worship, throw yourself into the lessons, the singing, the joy of the hour and know that God has come into our midst with the joy of Sabbath.

It's time to remember to rest. God says so!

TMK

-- Week of May 31, 2009