

# Lenten Devotional

## 2020

Monday, April 6, 2020  
Day 35, Exodus 35

### **Sabbath First**

*For six days, work is to be done, but the seventh day shall be your holy day, a day of sabbath rest to the Lord. Whoever does any work on it is to be put to death. (Exodus 35:2)*

We don't take rest very seriously. In fact, we have made busyness a mark of success. When we meet and ask each other, we blow out and dramatically say, "busy!" It has gotten so, at times, it feels like that is the only acceptable answer to give. This is so much the case that we have ads on television to give ourselves permission to stop work before it kills us. Rest has become a shameful thing to desire.

But, God sure seems to take it seriously. Here is the gift of sabbath rest in Israel's weekly rhythm and anyone who violates it is to be put to death. The sabbath goes back to the creation itself. God created for six days and on the seventh he rested. In other places of Scripture it is for this reason that Israel is also to rest on the seventh day.

It is no coincidence that this direction regarding the sabbath is here. Directly following this instruction, the actual work commences. People are to collect an offering, then the master crafts men will begin training, women will begin weaving, and the work is under way. This is good work, holy work. But, like all work it must have its limits. While the order is six days of work and then a seventh of rest. The instructions on the sabbath comes before the work. Sabbath is the first priority.

Without the sabbath being first priority, the work would be first. No matter how good the work is, it cannot be allowed the pride of place. When we go back to the creation account, the seventh day is the day of enjoyment. Of actually entering into the created order and enjoying it. Sabbath is life—not work. Work is good, but only if it is kept in its proper place.

One parallel is our children. How many people have children, but never really enjoy those children? Take time to be with them and watch them grow. Discover who their children are and are becoming. Work is a good creative act that must be stopped to be enjoyed. That's living. That's what God made us for: life! Work is only a part of that life. In some ways God is here warning us to not work ourselves to death.

We are busy, but these days we have been forced to at least slow down. Some are claiming COVID-19 as a curse from God. I disagree. I don't believe this is from God. However, I do believe that God has good for us even within these circumstances. This can be a time of rest and a time to establish new rhythms. When we come out of this time, I hope we will have a greater appreciation for rest and that we will keep it as a priority for our daily lives.

### **Prayer**

God of life, thank you for the place of rest in our lives. Help us to enter into your rest and enjoy your world and ours. Help us to see the relationship between our work and our enjoyment and worship. Amen.