

**June 3, 2018 Manor Road United Church Rev. Roberta Howey**

**I Samuel 3:1-10 Deut. 5:12-15 Mark 2:23-3:6 Let There Be Rest**

It is a pleasure to speak with you on this summer Sunday, where many of us that live in apartments are finally getting air conditioning, or we hear the ice cream trucks in the distance with their sweet siren song. This is an especially fun day because of the dedication of the park, a space made for play amidst the business of Toronto.

I love parks. I would be that kid that would love when we could run to one of the nearby playgrounds, pump as hard as I could on the swings, and even learned how to count to ten climbing the steps on the slide (my mom taught me that after ten comes “sit down!”, which was confusing, but I digress). Playgrounds are the universal equalizer, when done right. Kids, regardless of where they were born, where they come from, or where they are going in life, can all enjoy a playground. And now as more and more playgrounds are becoming accessible to those with varying disabilities, kids of every ability will be able to join in with their friends on one of the most important commandments God has given us; keeping the Sabbath.

Keeping the Sabbath is the curve-ball of the commandments. The other commandments directly relate to all of our social justice work. Love you neighbour. Don't lie. Don't steal. Don't covet, and don't have false idols or be greedy. The reminder to keep the Sabbath seems almost out of place here. I mean, we are living in tough times. It is so easy to see racism, sexism, homophobia, Islamophobia, and ableism in our society. While we may see more obvious examples in the States, rest assured that here, there is plenty of work to be done to address hate. Whether it is protests and petitions, opening up spaces for dialogue and stories, or even just learning how we as individuals can keep an open mind, the work is unending, right up until God's Kingdom is here on earth. As we kick off Pride month, a month that had humble beginnings with black and Latina protesters in New York, a month that is dedicated to people who have lived on the margins because of who they are and who they love, it is clearer than ever that we are encouraged by God to join them, either as LGBTQ persons ourselves, or the friends and families that love them, to fight for political, economic, social, and religious justice. That is the goal, to have a place in this universe where all are safe, happy, and free to love and live as they please. It requires every single one of us working, unceasing, until that goal is achieved. Right?

There is a sense that if we stop talking about racism, sexism, homophobia and transphobia, Islamophobia, classism and poverty, even for a day, that we are neglecting our friends and families, even ourselves, in the fight for social justice. That everything we do has a direct connection to someone else. Recently I had to get some groceries, and if you look at the packaging it can send you into a bit of a tail-spin. Do you get the coconut oil that is fair-trade? The strawberries picked by migrant workers with living

wages, or the ones without pesticides that are killing bees? Go vegetarian and avoid killing a cow? Or go with beef because the quinoa industry is pricing out people in poverty? Nut-free for the nephews in school? Kosher for my husband's Orthodox cousins if they ever come over? Halal for my friends when they pop by for tea (or wait, it is Ramadan!) I just came in for some gum! In a day and age where information is available at your fingertips, the pressure to do what is "right" is intense, constant, and in some cases, make it almost impossible to do anything.

There will always be work to be done. But I think this commandment, and the lessons that Christ teaches, are also a reminder that we are human. We are not just creatures of work. We are also creatures of play. We are not going to save Rome as it burns on our own. What we can do, is give Christ our burdens. It is exhausting fighting for love. We need a break every now and then. We need to eat, to nap, to love, and laugh. We need to remind ourselves that we need rest. As humans, we are often at our best when we are able to create without the worry of its value, to play games and sports just for fun, when we are able to nourish our souls by being much like our kids.

Which brings me back to the playground. Children do not care about appearances, or about social status. They care about running as fast as they can just to run or climbing for the sake of climbing. Being on the swings to see if they will go over the bars or playing one of the hundreds of universal games out there. There is a balance between work and play. God's commandment about the Sabbath is not about being a stickler for the rules, but rather for reminding us of that balance.

Christ reminds us that the Sabbath is made for humans, not for God. And yes, there will be days where we can't play or binge TV, because we have meetings, or appointments, or in my case sermons to write. There will be days when our feet are sore and backs in pain from a hard day's work, or our souls feel weary as we carry around the burdens that we pick up on our journey. But also remember to rest, because we are creatures of rest. I hope that this playground, amongst all the other forms of good it does, stands as a reminder and symbol to us all that we are not alone in the fight. Christ, God, and Spirit are with us, and with them, we can not only carry on the work; we can take a break from it to nourish our souls with the sense of play that we were born with.

Christ is with us every step of this journey. There will be days when we are able to work without ceasing. When we are able to read a bedtime story to the kids, do all the laundry, tackle every appointment, fight racism, and attend the community meeting all before 6pm. And there will be days where brushing our teeth is a struggle. I think what Christ is saying, what our Creator is saying, is that we are human. We are not Jesus, Mary Poppins, or Wonder Woman. Rest. Let your mind be free for a few minutes. Let Christ carry our burdens so we can unload and relax, and then carry on our work. Let Jesus help us with our worries, because Jesus can help us with it all. And then, when we

are done playing on the swing set, we can get to work, knowing that God is with us, and we are not alone in this journey. Amen.