



ZIMZUM DISCIPLESHIP: THE SABBATH

SMALL GROUP SESSION 4 - THE CONNECTION TO CONSUMERISM

GATHERING

Opening Prayer:

Almighty God, who after the creation of the world rested from all your works and sanctified a day of rest for all your creatures: Grant that we, putting away all earthly anxieties, may be duly prepared for the service of your sanctuary, and that our rest here upon earth may be a preparation for the eternal rest promised to your people in heaven; through Jesus Christ our Lord. *Amen.*

Begin with brief check-ins and the opening questions below:

Opening Question:

How has it been practicing the Sabbath?

Content Study

- Theologian Walter Brueggemann writes in his book *Sabbath as Resistance*, "In our contemporary context of the rat race of anxiety, the celebration of Sabbath is an act of both resistance and alternative. It is resistance because it is a visible insistence that our lives are not defined by the production and consumption of commodity goods. Such an act of resistance requires enormous intentionality and communal reinforcement amid the barrage of seductive pressures from the insatiable insistences of the market, with its intrusions into every part of our life from the family to the national budget.... But Sabbath is not only resistance. It is alternative...The alternative on offer is the awareness and practice of the claim that we are situated on the receiving end of the gifts of God."
- What do you make of this connection that Sabbath is an act of resistance? Does it resonate with you? Why or why not?

Reading: Deuteronomy 5:12-15

“Observe the Sabbath day and keep it holy, as the Lord your God commanded you. Six days you shall labor and do all your work. But the seventh day is a Sabbath to the Lord your God; you shall not do any work—you, or your son or your daughter, or your male or female slave, or your ox or your donkey, or any of your livestock, or the resident alien in your towns, so that your male and female slave may rest as well as you. Remember that you were a slave in the land of Egypt, and the Lord your God brought you out from there with a mighty hand and an outstretched arm; therefore the Lord your God commanded you to keep the Sabbath day.”

Reflection Questions

- The book of Deuteronomy has Moses retelling the Hebrew people about the commands given by God at Mt. Sinai 40 years earlier. However, when he gets to the Sabbath commandment, the reasoning for it shifts from remembering that God rested on the seventh day (see Exodus 20:8-11) to now the people remembering that they had been slaves in Egypt and the Lord redeemed them. Why do you think there is a shift? What might the Hebrew people forget about their own experiences or the experiences of their ancestors? Which version of this command speaks to you? Why?
- Consumerism surrounds us in our culture. Ads—often depicting a Sabbath way of life—encourage us to buy more in order that we might finally achieve rest or delight. Brueggemann says that keeping a sabbath is “a visible insistence that our lives are not defined by the production and consumption of commodity goods.” What would a sabbath look like for you that did not include the consumption or purchasing of goods?
- We as Americans are often called “consumers.” What other labels might you take on if you were to not have your life defined by consumerism?
- Brueggemann writes, “The alternative [Sabbath can] offer is the awareness and practice of the claim that we are situated on the receiving end of the gifts of God.” What gifts would you be able to notice more readily if you engaged in a 24 hour work stoppage with family and friends each week? What role does gratitude play in Sabbath keeping?

Final Reflections

- What has captured your heart or your imagination in today's discussion?
- How is your soul?
- Where have you seen God—or Love—recently?

Closing Prayer

Almighty and Eternal God, you sacrificially withdrew from a place within yourself in order to create the entirety of the cosmos so that you might be in relationship with us and all of creation. Help us to embrace zimzum discipleship and make space in our own lives, that we might more faithfully follow in the way of Jesus who gave of himself for the salvation and healing of the whole world. All this we ask in the name of the Risen Christ, who dwells endlessly with you and the Holy Spirit. *Amen.*