

#7 – SHABBAT... SHALOM (Pete Greig)

- Where have you seen God at work in your life this week? (Share any brief examples and encouragements).
- Was there anything from Sunday's message which you found particularly inspiring or challenging?
- Was there anything else you particularly noticed?

Leviticus 25:1-7 (NIVUK)

The Lord said to Moses at Mount Sinai, 'Speak to the Israelites and say to them: "When you enter the land I am going to give you, the land itself must observe a sabbath to the Lord. For six years sow your fields, and for six years prune your vineyards and gather their crops. But in the seventh year the land is to have a year of sabbath rest, a sabbath to the Lord. Do not sow your fields or prune your vineyards. Do not reap what grows of itself or harvest the grapes of your untended vines. The land is to have a year of rest. Whatever the land yields during the sabbath year will be food for you – for yourself, your male and female servants, and the hired worker and temporary resident who live among you, as well as for your livestock and the wild animals in your land. Whatever the land produces may be eaten.

1. For Israel, the practice of Sabbath meant much more than just taking a day off every week. It was part of the structure of the whole of life: for families, fields and food. In his book, *Free Play: Improvisation in Life and Art*, Stephen Nachmanovitch writes, "Perhaps the most radical sociopolitical invention of the past four thousand years was the sabbath. The practice of the sabbath [...] recognized that we need space and time reserved from the rushing and pressures of everyday life, reserved for going inside ourselves, for rest, review, and revelation."
 - *What is so revolutionary about the practice of Sabbath?*
 - *Why do you think Jesus said, "The Sabbath was made to meet the needs of people, and not people to meet the requirements of the Sabbath" Mark 2:27 (NLT)? What human needs does the practice of Sabbath meet?*
2. In their book, *Abba's Whisper: Listening for the Voice of God*, Alan and Elizabeth Davey note that "Marva Dawn provides possible modern paths for keeping the sabbath. She uses the word 'feasting' as a way of capturing relaxed sabbath time and space instead of our propensity to hurry from event to event. Her suggestions include feasting with music, feasting with beauty, feasting with food, feasting with affection, feasting and festival."¹
 - *To this day, Jewish families (both religious and secular) begin every Sabbath with a meal. How might we incorporate food and other kinds of 'feasting' as a part of our practice of 'Sabbath'?*
 - *How might we feast with beauty, or with music?*
3. Pete said that the practice of Sabbath shows a refusal to be driven by the bottom line. It is a reminder that I am not my job, and that, "And what do you do?" is not the most important question to ask when you meet someone.
 - *Why is it important to build a rhythm of rest into our lives? Why is it hard to do properly? What gets in the way?*
 - *What rhythms of rest are you practicing? When do you switch off your screens?*
 - *What new rhythms of rest do you plan to explore?*
 - *What would be your dream career break? What would you need to do to make it more than a dream?*
4. **Psalm 84:5** reads, "Blessed are those whose strength is in you, who have set their hearts on pilgrimage." Pete is planning a personal pilgrimage, walking the 290 miles of St Aidan's Way from Iona to Lindisfarne.
 - *How might a pilgrimage (which sounds like hard work!) be a meaningful part of a practice of sabbath?*
 - *How does a pilgrim differ from a tourist? Have you ever been on a walking pilgrimage?*
5. Pete spoke of Sabbath as a practice leading to **Rest, Relinquishment, and Renewal**. We all like the idea of rest – even if we find it hard in practice. We probably look forward to refreshing and renewal. But...
 - *Why is it so hard to relinquish the things we grasp so tightly... to let go of your ego?*

Richard Foster's Prayer of Relinquishment:

Today, O Lord, I yield myself to You. May Your will be my delight today. May You have perfect sway in me. May your love be the pattern of my living. I surrender to You my hopes, my dreams, my ambitions. Do with them what You will, when You will, as You will. I place into Your loving care my family, my friends, my future. Care for them with a care that I can never give. I release into Your hands my need to control, my craving for status, my fear of obscurity. Eradicate the evil, purify the good, and establish Your Kingdom on earth. For Jesus' sake, Amen.

¹ Marva Dawn, *Keeping the Sabbath Wholly*