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Exodus 20:1-8  
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**All of creation must rest.**

Good Morning Church. Today's passage is the beginning of what is commonly known as the Ten Commandments, or as the text says, the ten words that Moses received from God at Mount Sinai. These ten words are the beginning of a large number of laws about freeing slaves, when we hurt each other or destroy property, social justice, holidays, how the Tabernacle is built, and what priests should wear. This is a wide range of laws or agreements of how best to live with one another and in a relationship with God.

Please pray with me. Lord, Open our hearts, minds, and souls to the mystery of your word.  
Amen.

**All creation must rest.**

Our valley rests brown in the summer, waiting in the scorching heat for when gentle warmth and rain to combine so that our wildflowers and orchards burst to wakefulness in spring.

The spotted owl rests in its ancient tree canopy. Sitting on its perch, waiting in the dark of night. Its homeland threatened by human desire for wooden houses, paper, and pews.  
(Owl call: wa wa woah)

The prairie grasses rest in their roots, as a fire rushes through the hibernating dry brush. A rich black char to clear away the oaks and brambles, so the little bluestem has a place.

The river flows, and the river cuts its path through the hills. A trickle, then a torrent, full of life both big and small. Where it will go, it does not know; when will it reach its rest?

**All creation must rest.**

We ourselves must rest. Every night we close our eyes, letting our minds take flight to worlds unknown. We ourselves must rest at day, working hard on one day, our bodies telling us to rest with soreness and exhaustion on the next. Some seasons we bring in the harvest, picking and packing fruit from dawn till dusk. So that we can rest in winter, some of us traveled to New Zealand for relaxation. Fast and slow, work and rest.

**All creation must rest. And we are a part of creation.**

In case you cannot tell, today I feel called to talk about the Sabbath, in Hebrew, Shebat. The Sabbath is a command to rest. The Sabbath is a time when people, animals, and creation must rest. I love how today's verse makes the equal nature of the Sabbath clear. The Sabbath is not a time to put up your feet as your children do all the work, nor can you expect your slaves, animals, or foreign workers to pick up the slack. Everyone, and I mean everyone must rest.

The Sabbath is not just about the weekend, The sabbath is also a cycle of letting fields go fallow every seven years. Leaving a field fallow was not only a pious thing but a common agricultural process. In the arid climate of the Middle East, the land could not sustain constant farming, so ancient farmers commonly left different portions of their fields unseeded, or fallow each year.

Ezekiel talks about how the Sabbath is a sign of the special relationship between God and God's people. Jesus talks about the Sabbath as a gift from God for the benefit of humans. As I leaf through the Bible, I believe that the Sabbath is a matter of identity as much as it is a day off. Honoring the Sabbath is shouting we are the people who respect rest. Honoring the universality of the Sabbath is putting into action that rest is something for everyone, not just kings.

**All creation must rest. The high and the low, the humans and the land.**

So how do we make resting an active choice? In our shift work, open 24/7 culture, the command to rest is a beautiful gift for everyone. I think about my mother, who chose to work nights, from 11 p.m. to 7 a.m. so that we could go to church. I know that even that schedule is a privilege since not everyone gets to choose their hours. There was even a Supreme Court case back in June about a USPS employee who refused to work on Sundays. If we remember history, it took years of strikes to seize the 5-day 40-hour work week. It takes a lot of effort to get some rest, eh.

And I know I'm going to regret saying this, but I want all of you to take your rest as part of our church life together. I invite you not to burn yourselves out. It is important to say no to things and set healthy boundaries, even when I ask for your help. In our recent council meetings, we acknowledged it is okay to let go of programs we're only doing because we feel obligated. Let us focus on doing the core values of our church well. Caring for our children, doing peace and justice, and (checks notes) my notes say playground bark. The Sabbath teaches us that our rest, even if it is one day out of seven, is important, even holy. Let me say that again, the sabbath teaches us that rest is holy.

**All creation must rest. All creation must rest. Amen.**