



BULLETIN INSERTS

March 29, 2020 – Lent 5 (A)

Life Transformed: The Way of Love in Lent - Rest

Drawing on the ancient practice of setting aside Lent as a period of study and preparation for living as a Christian disciple, we are pleased to present weekly teachings from *Life Transformed: The Way of Love in Lent*. Learn more at episcopalchurch.org/life-transformed.

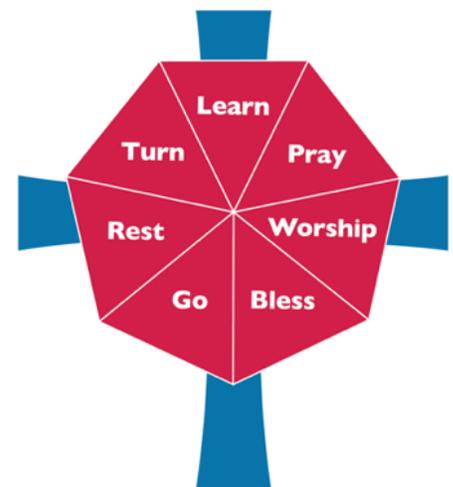
READ Ezekiel 37:1-14

We do not live in a culture that encourages REST. All too often, we are forced to work harder and longer hours, and it shows in our health. Yet, from the beginning, God – who rested on the seventh day of creation – set rest into the pattern of all life. Truly practicing the Way of Love means spending time with God in sabbath rest. Not everyone has the luxury of long breaks and vacations, or even days off. Still, we can help each other find ways internally to pause and receive the gift of sabbath. The act of rest and restoration is a part of the cycle of rebirth that is God’s hope for us and gift to us.

In the exciting story of the Valley of the Dry Bones, we hear the way God sent God’s breath, the Holy Spirit, onto a field of bones. That very breath was enough to reanimate them and bring them back to fullness of life. Making sabbath rest has the same impact. Sabbath rest provides the opportunity for God to refresh us, to breathe new life into us. When we neglect sabbath time with God, we can begin to feel withered and tired, just like those dry bones. This is no coincidence. When we constantly run from activity to activity without breathing and returning to God, we become depleted and dry.

The gospels record numerous times when Jesus retreated to a place of sabbath to reconnect with God and to receive the strength he needed to continue his ministry. In Luke 5 when the news about Jesus spread and crowds gathered around him, Jesus withdrew and prayed. Studies have shown that people who take regular breaks from work have higher rates of creativity and productivity. It should come as no surprise that the ritual of baptism follows the pattern of death into life – that is the sabbath cycle in action.

REFLECT: It has been said that we don’t take a sabbath, but rather make sabbath. Rest is an intentional act. Do you currently have a practice of reserving a block of time each day, week, or month for sabbath rest? If so, how does it restore you? If not, what has the effect of that lack felt like? Lent is a chance to reevaluate our patterns of living. Is God calling you to explore the gift of sabbath this Lent?



THE WAY OF LOVE
Practices for Jesus-Centered Life