



WINTER SABBATH

**WHEN THE STORM  
SLOWS US DOWN**

# A WORD OF WELCOME

Good morning, friends. The snow has done what we rarely allow ourselves to do: *it has forced us to stop.*

This morning, instead of rushing to get ready, driving to church, finding a parking spot, and settling into the pew—you're home. Maybe still in your pajamas. Maybe watching the flakes fall outside your window. Maybe frustrated that your plans have been disrupted.

What if this disruption is a gift?

This morning, we're going to practice something together: **Sabbath**. Not as an obligation, but as an invitation. An invitation to discover that when our rhythms are interrupted, we remember who we truly are.

You are a human **being**, not a human **doing**.

Take a deep breath. You are exactly where you need to be.

# OPENING PRACTICE: SETTLING IN

Before we begin, let's practice being present:

1. Find a comfortable place to sit—a favorite chair, the couch, even your bed.
2. Light a candle if you have one. (This is church, after all.)
3. Take three deep breaths:
  - Breathe in: "I am here"
  - Breathe out: "I am home"
  - Breathe in: "God is with me"
  - Breathe out: "All is well"

# WORD OF WISDOM: SABBATH

Our Word of Wisdom today is **Sabbath**.

In Hebrew, *Shabbat* means "to cease, to stop, to rest." But here's what's fascinating: Sabbath isn't just about stopping work. It's about stopping our need to prove ourselves. Stopping our addiction to productivity. Stopping the relentless voice that says, "You haven't done enough."

Sabbath says: **You are enough. Right now. Just as you are.**

The winter storm has given us something we rarely give ourselves: permission to stop. To rest. To simply be.

What if we received it as a gift instead of an inconvenience?

# SCRIPTURE: EXODUS 20:8-11

*Remember the Sabbath day, and keep it holy. 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, your son or your daughter, your male or female slave, your livestock, or the alien resident in your towns. For in six days the Lord made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that is in them, but rested on the seventh day; therefore the Lord blessed the Sabbath day and consecrated it.*

# REFLECTION: THE DISRUPTION WE NEED

Barbara Brown Taylor writes in *An Altar in the World*:

"The practice of Sabbath is one of those instances where we are invited to do nothing so that God can do something. It is not about taking a day off so we can work harder the other six. It is about remembering that we are more than our productivity."

Perhaps the snow has revealed: **Our rhythms were too fast.**

We've been moving at a pace that was never sustainable. Rushing from one thing to the next. Checking boxes. Filling calendars. Proving our worth through our busyness.

And then the snow fell.

And suddenly, you couldn't get to church. You couldn't run your errands. You couldn't keep all the commitments. Your regular rhythms were interrupted.

And maybe—just maybe—you felt something underneath the frustration: **relief.**

Richard Rohr says it this way:

"We do not think ourselves into new ways of living, we live ourselves into new ways of thinking."

The storm has forced us to live differently today.

*What if we let it teach us something?*

*What if we let this disruption reveal what we've been running from?*

**The invitation of Sabbath is not to do nothing. The invitation is to remember we are beloved not because of what we produce, but simply because we are.**

# GUIDING QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION

Take some time to sit with these questions. You might want to journal your responses, or simply let them simmer in your heart.

## **About the Disruption:**

1. What was your first reaction when you learned the weather would cancel church? (Frustration? Relief? Both?)
2. What does that reaction tell you about your relationship with rest?
3. What rhythms or commitments were you relieved to release today?

## **About Sabbath:**

4. When was the last time you truly rested—not as a reward for productivity, but simply because you are worthy of rest?
5. What would it mean to receive today as a gift rather than an inconvenience?
6. Where in your life have you confused your worth with your productivity?

## **About Being vs. Doing:**

7. If you couldn't do anything to prove your worth today, who would you be?
8. What does your body need that you've been ignoring?
9. What would change if you believed you were beloved not for what you accomplish, but simply for who you are?

## **Looking Forward:**

10. When life returns to "normal," what rhythm or pace would you like to release?
11. What practice of rest could you carry forward from today?

# SABBATH PRACTICES: WAYS TO REST TODAY

Choose one or two practices that speak to you. There's no right way to do this.

## 1. The Practice of Doing Nothing

Set a timer for 20 minutes. Sit somewhere comfortable. Do absolutely nothing. No phone. No book. No task. Just be. Notice what comes up—restlessness, boredom, peace. Don't judge it. Just notice.



## 2. The Practice of Slow Observation

Go to a window. Watch the snow fall for 10 minutes. Notice the patterns, the shapes, the silence. Let yourself be mesmerized. This is prayer.



## 3. The Practice of Nourishment

Make yourself something warm to drink—tea, coffee, or hot chocolate. Sit with it. Don't scroll while you drink. Just taste. Just be nourished.



## 4. The Practice of Giving

Choose a food item from your pantry, set it by the front door, and join us next Sunday in supporting the Souper Bowl of Caring!



## 5. The Practice of Napping

Seriously. Take a nap. God rested on the seventh day. So can you. This is not laziness. This is trust.



# SABBATH PRACTICES: WAYS TO REST TODAY

## 6. The Practice of Gratitude

Write down five things you're grateful for today. Not because you should. But because gratitude opens us to wonder.



## 2. The Practice of Connection

Call someone you love. Not to accomplish something. Just to hear their voice. To tell them you were thinking of them. This is ministry.



## 3. The Practice of Creative Expression

Draw, write, sing, dance, cook, build something. Not for anyone else. Just for the joy of making. God is a creator. So are you.



## 4. The Practice of Walking

If it is safe, bundle up and take a slow walk. Notice the beauty of the snow-covered world. Let the cold wake you up to the present moment.



## 5. The Practice of Silence

Turn off all screens. Sit in silence for 15 minutes. Light a candle and simply be present. The silence is not empty. It is full of God.



# A PRAYER FOR SABBATH

*By John O'Donohue, from "To Bless the Space Between Us"*

I would love to live  
Like a river flows,  
Carried by the surprise  
Of its own unfolding.

Blessed be the longing that brought you here  
And quickens your soul with wonder.

May you have the courage to listen to the voice of desire  
That disturbs you when you have settled for something safe.

May you have the wisdom to enter generously into your own unease  
To discover the new direction your longing wants you to take.

May the forms of your belonging—in love, creativity, and friendship—  
Be equal to the grandeur and the call of your soul.

May the one you long for long for you.

May your dreams gradually reveal the destination of your desire.

May a secret Providence guide your thought and nurture your feeling.

May your mind inhabit your life with the sureness  
With which a river rests completely in the ocean.

*Amen.*

# CLOSING BLESSING

As you go about your snow day, remember this:

You are not behind.

You are not failing.

You do not need to earn your rest.

You are beloved—not for what you do, but for who you are.

The storm has slowed you down.

Let it.

Receive it as gift.

Practice being instead of doing.

And when the snow melts and life returns to its regular pace, may you carry this Sabbath wisdom with you: **You are a human being, not a human doing.**

Go in peace. Rest well.

And as you do,

May God give us the grace never to sell ourselves short.

Grace to risk something big for something good.

Grace to recognize the world is now too dangerous for anything but truth, and far too small for anything but love.

So may God take our minds and think through them.

May God take our lips and speak through them.

And may God take our hearts—each and every last one of them—and set them on fire.

And may the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ,

The Love of God,

And the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with us and guide us,

In all our many, many, many, many....many different ways,

This day and all of our days.

May it be so.

Amen.