

The Value of Sunday—Sacred Time, Sacred Place, Sacred Renewal

Scripture: Exodus 20:8-11; Luke 24:13-35 (The Road to Emmaus)

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I have been spending time with people and learning what they need in their spiritual life. I've talked with people inside the church and beyond the walls of the church. Everyone says something similar to me: they want connection and to know that a gathering is going to happen, again. I call this ritual.

This has got me thinking about the value of Sunday and why we come together as one body.

They say the most segregated hour is on Sundays at 10am. This creates an image of division and separation. Even in our own country, people are divided. Even people in this room, in this village and town are divided.

I know I am seen as an outsider, and this perception of me being an outsider creates folds othering, which we are seeing on a large scale in our media landscapes.

Rural areas are sometimes hard to find belonging with other people, because of the histories that converge in small places.

If that is true, could Sunday become a day that is valued by all? Could we reimagine our life together by intentionally gathering as a community to listen to one another, to hear the grief that we are all carrying, and to imagine the New Jerusalem, where there will be no religion?

Do we have the capacity?

Could we stoke the fires of what is sacred among us? We might find we have connections to similar things and we will discover that we diverge in light of our differences, and yet could we discover what is sacred between us all?

The Protestant Work Ethics accelerates the atomization of people, which contributes to our isolation and division.

In this season of divided political "loyalties" within many Christian congregations, it is important to remember the role of the pastor, as both prophet and priest, is not to build bridges between political opinions, but rather to repair the breach between the Call of Christ and the conviction of humankind AND to restore the streets (communities) in which the people dwell...to this end, there is no division in the Word enfleshed.

Introduction: The Question of Sacred Time and Sacred Place

What makes a place sacred? Is it the prayers spoken within it? The people who gather? The silence that lingers after we leave?

Wendell Berry gives us a simple but profound truth:

"There are no unsacred places; there are only sacred places and desecrated places." (*Given*)

Sunday—this day we set apart—reminds us that time itself can be made holy. That space, wherever we are, can become a site of transformation. That renewal is not found in escape but in presence.

Yet, we live in a world that often desecrates time. We move too fast, rush from one task to the next, and forget to mark what is sacred. So today, I want to invite us to reclaim Sunday as a place of rest, a place of gathering, and a place of transformation.

I. The Sacredness of Rest—Howard Thurman’s Vision of Sabbath as Refuge

The command to “Remember the Sabbath” (Exodus 20:8) is not just about following a rule—it is about resisting a world that tells us we are only as valuable as what we produce.

Howard Thurman, when he pastored the Church for the Fellowship of All Peoples in San Francisco—the first intentionally interracial, interfaith church in the United States—understood that **Sabbath is about creating space for the weary.**

He wrote:

“There must be the quietness of the moment, a pause, a breath that refreshes and restores.”

For Thurman, Sabbath was not just about religious ritual. It was about **creating a spiritual refuge**—a space where the exhausted, the marginalized, the seekers, and the skeptics could come and be renewed. His church became a **living Sabbath**, a space where people could simply exist, breathe, and be reminded of their worth.

Sunday, then, is not just a day on the calendar. It is an invitation: **Come as you are. Lay your burdens down. Let yourself be restored.**

II. The Sacredness of Gathering—Baldwin and the Search for Home

James Baldwin, a man who spent much of his life displaced—searching for belonging across continents—once wrote:

“Perhaps home is not a place but simply an irrevocable condition.” (*Giovanni’s Room*)

Sunday is a home we create together. It is a place where we come—whether in certainty or in doubt, in faith or in longing—and find that we are held.

In Luke 24, the disciples on the road to Emmaus are lost. They don’t recognize Jesus walking with them. But when do they finally see him? **At the table.**

It is in the simple act of breaking bread together that their eyes are opened. This is what Sunday does: it opens our eyes. It reminds us that we do not walk this road alone.

Thurman once asked:

“How good it is to center down! To sit quietly and see oneself pass by!”

Sunday invites us to **center down**, to pause long enough to recognize Christ in our midst, to remember that we belong to one another.

III. The Sacredness of Transformation—Berry’s Challenge and Our Task

Sunday is not just a moment of retreat. It is a launching pad for transformation.

Wendell Berry challenges us:

“There are no unsacred places; there are only sacred places and desecrated places.”

If this is true, then our work is to take the sacredness of Sunday and carry it into the rest of the week.

Thurman put it this way:

“Do not ask what the world needs. Ask what makes you come alive, and go do it. Because what the world needs is people who have come alive.”

Sunday is a place of coming alive. A place of renewal. A place where we remember who we are so that we can be sent out to heal the world.

Conclusion: A Call to See, to Rest, to Renew

Sunday is not just a day. It is a **sacred pause**. A place of **gathering**. A site of **transformation**.

May we learn to **stop**. To **breathe**. To **see what is holy**.

And may we take what we find here and make the whole world a little more sacred.

Amen.