

Mount Hollywood United Church of Christ – Los Angeles
Second Sunday After Pentecost – June 3, 2018 – Communion
Rev. Anne G. Cohen, Minister
Deuteronomy 5:12-15

FOR REFLECTION

**“Most of the things we need to be most fully alive never come in busyness.
They grow in rest.”**

~ The Holy Wild: Trusting in the Character of God by Mark Buchanan,
professor at Ambrose University College in Calgary

Time Out

This weekend (June 1-3) marks Wear Orange Weekend, a movement in support of gun violence prevention started in 2015 when Hadiya Pendleton, a 15-year-old girl who performed at former President Barack Obama's second inaugural parade in 2013, was shot and killed in Chicago a week later. Her friends wanted to honor her legacy during her birth month of June by wearing orange ([the color] hunters wear to protect themselves in the woods) and speaking up against gun violence in America.

<https://www.billboard.com/articles/news/politics/8458772/what-is-wear-orange-day-weekend-gun-violence-awareness>

In the gun violence prevention movement orange also signifies “you see us, now hear us.” The slogan “Never Again” came out of the school shooting in Parkland, Florida, in February this year. There have been 11 school shootings since the movement started.

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_school_shootings_in_the_United_States#2015_to_present

There have also been numerous student-led walkouts and marches, including the 6th Annual Brooklyn Bridge March for Gun Sense yesterday. And we are hoping that the students’ push to the polls will bring massive changes in political will on June 5th and beyond.

There are other things we have our hearts and minds on in this season of social chaos and environmental payback. There are the infants and children of undocumented immigrants being torn from their parents and then “lost” in our child welfare system. There are threats of nuclear holocaust by heads of state, protesters killed on the border with Israel, continuing lack of restoration in Puerto Rico 9 months after Hurricane Irma, more black lives lost for no good reason.

Our Myrtle Johnson called me Wednesday to tell me that her grandson actually survived an encounter with police. He was dog-walking in an upscale neighborhood and someone decided he was stealing the dog. He had to have the police call the owner of the dog (on a trip to NYC) to confirm his right to be on that sidewalk in broad daylight. He lived to tell about it. That was enough to have Myrtle call her minister to share her relief. These are our times.

And this church is full of people who have always cared about these issues – from labor relations during the migrations of former slaves from the south to L.A. during Jim Crow – to pacifism during both World Wars and Vietnam and beyond – to tangible alliances and support for Japanese Americans torn away and then returning from internment.

This church is full of people who are constantly doing what they can to mitigate suffering. And, once in a while, you deserve a rest from your labors. In fact, according to our holy book, G-d insists upon it. The text again, in a different version – Eugene Peterson’s The Message:

12 No working on the Sabbath; keep it holy just as God, your God, commanded you. 13 Work six days, doing everything you have to do, 14 but the seventh day is a Sabbath, a Rest Day - no work: not you, your son, your daughter, your servant, your maid, your ox, your donkey (or any of your animals), and **not even the foreigner visiting your town. That way your servants and maids will get the same rest as you.** 15 Don't ever forget that you were slaves in Egypt and God, your God, got you out of there in a powerful show of strength. That's why God, your God, commands you to observe the day of Sabbath rest.

<https://www.biblestudytools.com/msg/deuteronomy/5.html>

There are plenty of scientific studies that will tell us that if we don't rest, we burn out and are then no-good to anyone. And our text tells us that the same is true for servants, slaves, laborers – even those migrant workers from other countries. And the same is true for our task animals. If G-D can get tired – so can we. So, take the time to rest and restore, allow all others to do the same.

Let's do that this morning – look up from our labors and look at each other. Let's take time to see G-d at rest around us – and be filled with gratitude for life and breath and beauty in this moment.

I leave you with some peaceful words from one of my favorite poets, Wendell Berry – one of his Sabbath poems:

Sabbaths, 1982—IV
(“A gardener rises out of the ground”)

Thrush song, stream song, holy love
That flows through earthly forms and folds,
The song of Heaven's Sabbath fleshed
In throat and ear, in stream and stone,
A grace living here as we live,
Move my mind now to that which holds
Things as they change.

The warmth has come.
The doors have opened. Flower and song
Embroider ground and air, lead me
Beside the healing field that waits;
Growth, death, and a restoring form
Of human use will make it well.

But I go on, beyond, higher
In the hill's fold, forget the time
I come from and go to, recall
This grove left out of all account,
A place enclosed in song.

Design
Now falls from thought. I go amazed
Into the maze of a design
That mind can follow but not know,
Apparent, plain, and yet unknown,
The outline lost in earth and sky.

What form wakens and rumples this?
Be still. A man who seems to be
A gardener rises out of the ground,
Stands like a tree, shakes off the dark,
The bluebells opening at his feet,
The light a figured cloth of song.

— Wendell Berry, *A Timbered Choir: The Sabbath Poems*, 1979-1997

Scripture Reading for Sunday June 3, 2018 – Second after Pentecost – Year B

Deuteronomy 5:12-15

12 Observe the sabbath day and keep it holy, as the LORD your God commanded you.
13 Six days you shall labor and do all your work. 14 But the seventh day is a sabbath
to the LORD your God; you shall not do any work--you, or your son or your daughter,
or your male or female slave, or your ox or your donkey, or any of your livestock, or the
resident alien in your towns, so that your male and female slave may rest as well as
you. 15 Remember that you were a slave in the land of Egypt, and the LORD your God
brought you out from there with a mighty hand and an outstretched arm; therefore, the
LORD your God commanded you to keep the sabbath day.