

# Rest for the Lenten Soul

## A JOURNEY OF TRUST AND RENEWAL



Preparation



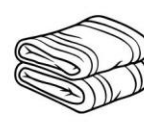
Wilderness



Freely



Abide



Trust



The Cross

Discover the sacred rhythm of rest and renewal  
as we trust in God's grace this Lent.

This free 6-week Lent study is designed to accompany  
the *God's People: Rest. Work. Play. Journal*, available on Amazon.com

Created by the United Methodists of Upper New York  
[www.preachersrestworkplay.com](http://www.preachersrestworkplay.com)



# Rest for the Lenten Soul

A Journey of Trust and Renewal

Week 1: March 9-14

## *Rest as Preparation*

Theme: Rest is preparation for transformation.

Welcome everyone and share introductions. Ensure everyone has a copy of *God's People: Rest. Work. Play. Journal*.

### Today's Scripture | Mark 2:19-20 and 23-27

<sup>19</sup> Jesus said to them, "Can the groomsmen fast while the bridegroom is with them? As long as they have the bridegroom with them, they can't fast. <sup>20</sup> But the days will come when the bridegroom will be taken away from them, and then they will fast in that day.

<sup>23</sup> Jesus was going on the Sabbath day through the grain fields; and his disciples began, as they went, to pluck the ears of grain. <sup>24</sup> The Pharisees said to him, "Behold, why do they do that which is not lawful on the Sabbath day?" <sup>25</sup> He said to them, "Did you never read what David did when he had need and was hungry—he, and those who were with him? <sup>26</sup> How he entered into God's house at the time of Abiathar the high priest, and ate the show bread, which is not lawful to eat except for the priests, and gave also to those who were with him?" <sup>27</sup> He said to them, "The Sabbath was made for man, not man for the Sabbath."

### *Today's Devotional*

Lent is a season when the Church reflects, repents, and draws closer to God. It's a journey of preparation—a time to align our hearts with the rhythm of Christ's life and ministry.

In today's scripture, we find Jesus responding to criticism from the Pharisees. They question his disciples' actions, accusing them of violating Sabbath laws. But Jesus reframes the purpose of Sabbath, reminding them, "The Sabbath was made for man, not man for the Sabbath." This statement points to a deeper truth: rest is a gift, not a burden. It is God's provision to sustain us and prepare us for the work ahead.

Before Jesus began his public ministry, he entered a period of preparation, fasting, and solitude in the wilderness. This intentional time of rest and reflection gave him the strength and clarity to fulfill his mission. Similarly, the season of Lent invites us into a sacred pause—a space to let go of striving and rest in God’s presence.

Rest can feel counterintuitive. We often think of fasting, prayer, and service as the most important acts of faith, while rest feels indulgent or unnecessary. Yet Jesus shows us that rest is not merely an absence of work; it is an active practice of trust. By resting, we acknowledge that it is God—not our efforts—who sustains and transforms us.

As we journey through Lent this year, this study will help us embrace rest as a form of preparation.

### Reflection Questions

- How can you imagine embracing rest as a way to prepare for transformation?

### *Rest This Week*

Ensure each person has a *God’s People: Rest. Work. Play. Journal* and familiarize yourself with the journal at this time.

Rest this week by journaling the This Month page and utilizing the Daily Questions pages.

### **Closing Prayer**

All Breathe In:           The Sabbath was made for me

All Breathe Out:        I rest in You, God.

All: God of rest and renewal, help me prepare my heart for transformation as I journey through Lent. Amen.



Week 2: March 16-21

## *Resting in the Wilderness*

Theme: Lent mirrors Jesus' 40 days in the wilderness.

### Today's Scripture | Matthew 4:1-11

Then Jesus was led by the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted by the devil. <sup>2</sup>After fasting forty days and forty nights, he was hungry. <sup>3</sup>The tempter came to him and said, "If you are the Son of God, tell these stones to become bread." <sup>4</sup>Jesus answered, "It is written: 'Man shall not live on bread alone, but on every word that comes from the mouth of God.'"

<sup>5</sup>Then the devil took him to the holy city and had him stand on the highest point of the temple. <sup>6</sup>"If you are the Son of God," he said, "throw yourself down. For it is written:

"He will command his angels concerning you,  
and they will lift you up in their hands,  
so that you will not strike your foot against a stone."

<sup>7</sup>Jesus answered him, "It is also written: 'Do not put the Lord your God to the test.'"

<sup>8</sup>Again, the devil took him to a very high mountain and showed him all the kingdoms of the world and their splendor. <sup>9</sup>"All this I will give you," he said, "if you will bow down and worship me." <sup>10</sup>Jesus said to him, "Away from me, Satan! For it is written: 'Worship the Lord your God, and serve him only.'" <sup>11</sup>Then the devil left him, and angels came and attended him.

### *Today's Devotional*

The season of Lent intentionally mirrors Jesus' 40 days in the wilderness. For Jesus this time was marked by fasting, solitude, and reflection, yet it was also a time of profound testing. In the wilderness, Jesus faced temptation and resisted, demonstrating his unwavering trust in God's Word.

Christian theologian Richard Foster writes, "*Solitude with God repairs the damage done by the fret and pace of daily life.*"

Solitude in the wilderness can be renewing—a time of escape to step away from the noise and reconnect with God. But being in the wilderness in daily life can also feel like a place of disorientation, uncertainty, and spiritual struggle.

In our daily lives, the wilderness may take many forms: seasons of doubt, overwhelming responsibilities, or the challenges of navigating the unknown. Yet, even here, Jesus shows us that rest and renewal are possible. His time in the wilderness was not about escaping reality but about confronting it with faith and perseverance.

Lent invites us into our own wilderness journey. We are called to make space for solitude and rest, trusting that even in the struggles, God's presence sustains us.

### *Reflect* by journaling

- What kind of wilderness are you experiencing in your life right now?
  
- Is this season marked by positive space and renewal, or does temptation and uncertainty feel closer? How might you trust God to meet you in this wilderness?
  
- From your Rest. Work. Play. Journal this week, what are three things you were grateful for this week?
  
- Following Journalling, share as you feel led together.

### *Rest This Week*

Rest this week by utilizing the Daily Questions pages and take 10 minutes this week to sit quietly in a space that feels like your wilderness—a park, your room, or a quiet corner. Write one word that describes how you feel in this moment. Offer that word to God in prayer, trusting God to meet you where you are.

### **Closing Prayer**

All Breathe In: You are with me in the wilderness.

All Breathe Out: I trust in You, God.

All: God this week in moments of solitude, let me find renewal. In times of temptation, let me find strength. Amen.





Week 3: March 23-28

## *Rest Freely Given*

Theme: Rest as a gift of grace, freely given to all.

### Today's Scripture | Isaiah 55:1-2a

Come, everyone who thirsts, to the waters!

Come, he who has no money, buy, and eat!

Yes, come, buy wine and milk without money and without price.

<sup>2</sup>Why do you spend money for that which is not bread,  
and your labor for that which doesn't satisfy?

### *Today's Devotional*

Rest is a gift—not something we earn or achieve but something built into Creation by God. In today's scripture, the prophet Isaiah paints a vivid image of abundance offered without cost: water for the thirsty, food for the hungry, nourishment for the soul. This divine invitation extends to all. Everyone is worthy of rest, not because we've worked hard enough or done enough, but because God's desire is to fill us.

The same is true of rest. In a world that often ties rest to productivity, it's easy to believe we must finish everything on our to-do list before we can pause. But our scripture today reminds us that rest isn't a reward for getting everything done, but a gift - freely given.

God's invitation to rest reminds us: we are worthy of rest simply because we are loved by God. As one traditional communion invitation says, *"Come to the feast, not because you have earned it, but because grace has invited you."*

Lent is a season to step away from striving and return to God's abundant grace. When we accept rest as a gift, we allow God to nourish and sustain us in ways our own efforts cannot.

This week, reflect on where you may be resisting rest. How might God be inviting you to freely receive the gift of renewal?

## *Reflect* by journaling

- Are there any ways you have been resisting rest?
- How might God be inviting you to freely receive the gift of renewal?
- What does it feel like to imagine receiving God's rest, without needing to earn it?
- From your Rest. Work. Play. Journal this week, what did you write down when asked, "How will you rest today?"
- Following Journalling, share as you feel led together.

## *Rest This Week*

Rest this week by engaging the Day 7 Plan and Day 7 Questions pages from your Rest. Work. Play. Journal.

## **Closing Prayer**

All Breathe In: I come, thirsty for your rest.

All Breathe Out: You give freely, God.

All: God of abundance and grace, help me to rest in your provision.

Teach me to trust in the gift of renewal, freely given, so that I may be nourished and restored. Amen.

Week 4: March 30-April 4

## *Rest as Abiding*

Theme: Abiding in Christ is an active form of rest.

### Today's Scripture | John 15:4

Remain in me, and I in you. As the branch can't bear fruit by itself unless it remains in the vine, so neither can you, unless you remain in me.

### *Today's Devotional*

Abiding in Christ is an active form of rest. In John 15:4, Jesus invites us to *remain* in him. This word, "remain," comes from the Old English meaning *to dwell* or *to stay*. To abide is to make our home with Christ, resting in his presence.

The image of the vine and the branch is simple yet profound. A branch cannot bear fruit unless it stays connected to the vine—it cannot strive or force itself to grow. Its only task is to remain, to abide. In the same way, we cannot produce lasting fruit in our lives apart from Christ. We cannot produce unless we remain connected. When we pause to abide, we let go of self-reliance and instead receive strength, renewal, and life from God.

Saint Augustine reminds us, "*Our hearts are restless until they rest in You.*" In our striving, we often resist this kind of rest. We try to bear fruit on our own, running on empty. But abiding calls us to surrender—releasing control, slowing down, and dwelling with God. Resting in Christ is not passive; it is a daily choice to remain connected to the true source of life.

### *Reflect* by journaling

- This week, allow yourself to pause and ask: Am I abiding, or am I striving?
  
- Are there any specific ways you have been resisting rest and striving to do it all on your own?
  
- Do you feel you have enough time to abide and dwell on God?

- From your Rest. Work. Play. Journal this week, what did you write down for where you needed God to be at work in the week to come?
  
- Following Journalling, share as you feel led together.

### *Rest This Week*

Dwell in God's presence this week by engaging the Daily Questions pages in your *Rest. Work. Play. Journal*. Spend a few minutes each day imagining yourself as the branch connected to the vine—secure, nourished, and held.

### **Closing Prayer**

All Breathe In: I remain in You, God.

All Breathe Out: You remain in me.

All: God help me to trust in your presence, release my striving, and dwell in your grace. May your life flow through me, Amen.

Week 5: April 6-11

## *Rest and Trust*

Theme: Find strength in resting in God.

### Today's Scripture | Isaiah 30:15

For thus said the Lord Yahweh, the Holy One of Israel, "You will be saved in returning and rest. Your strength will be in quietness and in confidence."

### *Today's Devotional*

In today's scripture, God invites us into a profound truth: salvation and strength are not found in striving but in returning to God and resting in trust. This quiet confidence is the foundation of faith—an active choice to rely on God rather than our own efforts.

The hymn *Be Still My Soul* echoes this invitation:

Be still my soul the Lord is on thy side  
Bear patiently the cross of grief or pain  
Leave to thy God to order and provide  
In every change He faithful will remain

Be still my soul thy best, thy heavenly friend  
Through thorny ways leads to a joyful end

Be still, my soul, thy God doth undertake  
To guide the future as He has the past  
Thy hope, thy confidence let nothing shake  
All now mysterious shall be bright at last

Trusting God allows us to rest deeply, even when the world feels uncertain. It is in the stillness, the quietness, that we find the strength to keep going, knowing that God is with us and for us.

Yet trusting enough to rest can feel like a risk. Our culture often tells us that productivity and busyness are signs of success. Resting, especially in moments of uncertainty, can feel counterintuitive. But God's promise remains: "*You will be saved in returning and rest.*" "*Return and Rest in Me.*"

*Reflect* by journaling

- What areas of your life require quiet confidence and trust in God's plan?
  
- Where is God calling you to return, to release, and to trust? What might change if you allowed yourself to rest in the confidence that God is on your side?
  
- From your Rest. Work. Play. Journal this week, do you sense any relationship between the practice of gratitude and trusting God? How might gratitude help you deepen your trust in God's provision?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
- Following Journalling, share as you feel led together.

### *Rest This Week*

Engage the Day 7 Plan and Questions pages in your *Rest. Work. Play.* Journal. Each day, pause to reflect on a specific area where you can actively trust God.

### **Closing Prayer**

All Breathe In: In returning, I find rest.

All Breathe Out: In quietness, I find trust.

All: God of quiet strength, help me to trust you more fully. Teach me to return to you, to rest in your promises, and to find the confidence that only comes from your presence. May my heart be still as I trust in your unfailing love. Amen.

Week 6: April 13-19

## *Rest in the Shadow of the Cross*

Theme: Jesus extends a radical invitation to lay burdens down, even amid sacrifice.

### Today's Scripture | Luke 23:32-44

There were also others, two criminals, led with him to be put to death. When they came to the place that is called "The Skull", they crucified him there with the criminals, one on the right and the other on the left. Jesus said, "Father, forgive them, for they don't know what they are doing."

Dividing his garments among them, they cast lots. The people stood watching. The rulers with them also scoffed at him, saying, "He saved others. Let him save himself, if this is the Christ of God, his chosen one!"

The soldiers also mocked him, coming to him and offering him vinegar, and saying, "If you are the King of the Jews, save yourself!"

An inscription was also written over him in letters of Greek, Latin, and Hebrew: "THIS IS THE KING OF THE JEWS."

One of the criminals who was hanged insulted him, saying, "If you are the Christ, save yourself and us!" But the other answered, and rebuking him said, "Don't you even fear God, seeing you are under the same condemnation? And we indeed justly, for we receive the due reward for our deeds, but this man has done nothing wrong." He said to Jesus, "Lord, remember me when you come into your Kingdom."

Jesus said to him, "Assuredly I tell you, today you will be with me in Paradise."

It was now about the sixth hour, and darkness came over the whole land until the ninth hour.

### *Today's Devotional*

Today, we rest in the shadow of the cross.

In this moment of unimaginable suffering, Jesus extends forgiveness and assurance. To those who mocked and crucified him, he prays, "Father, forgive them, for they don't know what they are doing." To the criminal who seeks mercy, he promises, "Today, you will be with me in Paradise."

The cross is the place where we see the fullness of God's grace. As Dallas Willard reminds us, "The cross is the place where we find ultimate rest because Christ bore it all for us."

Even in the darkest hour, Jesus invites us to lay down our burdens and receive the rest only he can give. This rest is not an escape from pain or sacrifice but a deep assurance that we are held in God's grace, even amid the struggles of life. The shadow of the cross offers a place of refuge, where we are reminded of God's unfailing love and the promise of new life.

This week, as we journey through Holy Week, may we pause to reflect on the radical invitation of the cross. What burdens do you need to lay down? Where do you need to receive God's assurance and forgiveness?

### *Reflect* by journaling

- What burdens do you need to lay down? Where do you need to receive God's assurance and forgiveness?
  
- In what ways can you extend the grace of the cross—assurance, forgiveness, and love—to others around you?
  
- From your Rest. Work. Play. Journal this week, share how you've noticed this small group, journaling and rest and play supporting your wellbeing this Lent?
  
  
- Following Journalling, share as you feel led together.

### *Rest This Week*

Take part in Holy Week services this week. Allow these sacred moments to deepen your understanding of Christ's invitation to lay your burdens down and find rest in God's love.

### **Closing Prayer**

All Breathe In: In the shadow of the cross

All Breathe Out: I lay down my burdens

God of forgiveness and hope, in the shadow of the cross, I find an eternal



rest through Jesus. Amen.

Thank you for journeying together through *Rest for the Lenten Soul: A Journey of Trust and Renewal*. This time of reflection, rest, and renewal has been an opportunity to deepen our trust in God and abide in God's grace.

As we move forward, may the rhythms of rest we've practiced continue to sustain and transform us, reminding us of God's unending invitation to lay down our burdens and find peace in Christ. You may always reconnect to *God's People: Rest. Work. Play. Journal* via Amazon.com

Thank you for your vulnerability, your presence, and your willingness to embrace this sacred season together.