

WEEK 31 August 1-7

Sunday - God's Gift to You (Originally appeared in the 2014 Mosaic)

When I was a child, my grandfather was visiting at our house on a Sunday afternoon. I got out a needle and thread for some small project-embroidery or sewing on a button. Granddaddy told me that if I sewed on a Sunday, a dragonfly would come and sew my lips shut! I didn't take this very seriously, though I was afraid of dragonflies.

Lately I have become more interested in Sabbath observance, maybe because I am growing older and more tired and more interested in a day of rest.

The first recorded mention of Sabbath as a day of rest occurs in Genesis 2:1-3 when God had completed six days of creating the world and all that's in it. On the seventh day He rested. Then when the Ten Commandments were given to Moses, the Israelites were told to "remember the Sabbath day and keep it holy". Some of the later Old Testament rules about the Sabbath were very detailed and restrictive: how far you could walk on the Sabbath, how heavy a burden you could carry, etc.

Jesus himself seemed to be a bit lax in his observance of Old Testament Sabbath regulations. His disciples gathered grain and ate it on the Sabbath, and the Pharisees criticized Jesus for allowing this. Jesus healed the sick on the Sabbath, and the Pharisees criticized Him for this.

Perhaps this is why some early Christians became less strict about the Sabbath observance. They also changed the observance to the first day of the week in celebration of Jesus' resurrection.

How then should we observe our Sunday? First and foremost, I think is worship. There is much to be gained by spending time in a house of worship with friends of like mind. I think we need to praise and worship God for our own well-being even more than He needs to hear our praise. It reaffirms us and strengthens us. I love the words of the hymn we sometimes sing for communion, "I come with joy to meet my Lord ..."

Rest on a Sunday afternoon is what I've come to appreciate also. A break from routine busyness, time to read (even better if it's spiritual reading), time to rest – all this is rejuvenating. Jesus said, "The Sabbath was made for man, not man for the Sabbath." We need it. Or, at least, I do – even though I'm no longer afraid of dragonflies!

Joan Levander

Scripture:

Genesis 2:1-3

Exodus 20:8-11

Psalms 92:1-4

Psalms 95:1-7

Psalms 84:1-4, 10-12

Psalms 122:1

Mark 2:23-28