

ENOUGH IS MORE

24th August 2025

(Proper 16 C)

READINGSⁱ

Isaiah 58:6–14

Is not this the fast that I choose:

*to loose the bonds of injustice,
to undo the straps of the yoke,
to let the oppressed go free,
and to break every yoke?*

*Is it not to share your bread with the hungry
and bring the homeless poor into your house;
when you see the naked, to cover them
and not to hide yourself from your own kin?*

*Then your light shall break forth like the dawn,
and your healing shall spring up quickly;
your vindicator shall go before you;
the glory of the Lord shall be your rear guard.
Then you shall call, and the Lord will answer;
you shall cry for help, and he will say, "Here I am."*

*If you remove the yoke from among you,
the pointing of the finger, the speaking of evil,
if you offer your food to the hungry
and satisfy the needs of the afflicted,
then your light shall rise in the darkness
and your gloom be like the noonday.*

The Lord will guide you continually
and satisfy your needs in parched places
and make your bones strong,
and you shall be like a watered garden,
like a spring of water
whose waters never fail.
Your ancient ruins shall be rebuilt;
you shall raise up the foundations of many generations;
you shall be called the repairer of the breach,
the restorer of streets to live in.

If you refrain from trampling the Sabbath,
from pursuing your own interests on my holy day;
if you call the Sabbath a delight
and the holy day of the Lord honorable;
if you honor it, not going your own ways,
serving your own interests or pursuing your own affairs;

then you shall take delight in the Lord,
and I will make you ride upon the heights of the earth;
I will feed you with the heritage of your ancestor Jacob,
for the mouth of the Lord has spoken.

Luke 13:10–17

Now he was teaching in one of the synagogues on the Sabbath. And just then there appeared a woman with a spirit that had crippled her for eighteen years. She was bent over and was quite unable to stand up straight. When Jesus saw her, he called her over and said, "Woman, you are set free from your ailment."

When he laid his hands on her, immediately she stood up straight and began praising God. But the leader of the synagogue, indignant because Jesus had cured on the Sabbath, kept saying to the crowd, "There are six days on which work ought to be done; come on those days and be cured and not on the Sabbath day."

But the Lord answered him and said, "You hypocrites! Does not each of you on the Sabbath untie his ox or his donkey from the manger and lead it to water? And ought not this woman, a daughter of Abraham whom Satan bound for eighteen long years, be set free from this bondage on the Sabbath day?" When he said this, all his opponents were put to shame, and the entire crowd was rejoicing at all the wonderful things being done by him.

REFLECTION

(Rev. Toby Keva)

Let me start with a reminder that, if you happen to forget, I now work only four days instead of five days a week in the church. My working days here are now from Thursday to Sunday. I spend the rest of the week either with my family or doing chaplaincy with the Royal Australian Navy in HMAS Stirling.

In Australia today, however, a standard full-time work usually comprises of five days of work in a week. But it has not always been like this. In the past, people used to work for five days a week instead of four days. This is still true in other parts of the world. I remember going to half-day of school on Saturday when I was growing up in Indonesia!

Nowadays, there is a growing discussion about cutting yet another day from the work-week. This means, some people are pushing to change the standard five-day of work in Australia to four-day of work! They argue that reducing the number of days when people work does not only contribute to a healthier lifestyle—which, in the long run, will reduce the burden on our medical services; they argue that by reducing the number of working days during the week, our productivity level will actually increase. And they have proof from companies who have already implemented four days of work in a week.

This topic about how long we should work is, surprisingly, spiritual in nature as well. This issue is encapsulated in one of the key commandments in the Bible: the commandment to keep the Sabbath. We find a reminder about this commandment being interweaved into Isaiah's call for justice in our reading.

“If you refrain from trampling the Sabbath,
from pursuing your own interests on my holy day;
if you call the Sabbath a delight
and the holy day of the LORD honorable;
if you honor it, not going your own ways,
serving your own interests or pursuing your own affairs;
then you shall take delight in the LORD,
and I will make you ride upon the heights of the earth ...”
(Isaiah 58:13-14 NRSV)

But, first, we need to remember that the commandment to keep the Sabbath was originally given to the people living in an agrarian society; the people who did back-breaking manual labour day after day, tilling the land to grow food; the slaves in the land who had no choice but to do whatever their masters told them to; the foreign workers who had

little to no rights in the country; even the animals who were often forgotten, yet who did most of the hard labors that no human could have done.

Let's hear again the commandment of the Sabbath in the book of Exodus.

“Remember the Sabbath day by keeping it holy.
Six days you shall labor and do all your work,
but the seventh day is a sabbath to the Lord your God.
On it you shall not do any work, neither you, nor your son or daughter,
nor your male or female servant, nor your animals,
nor any foreigner residing in your towns.”
(Exodus 20:8-10 NRSV)

And the reason for this is given in the following verse.

“For in six days the Lord made the heavens and the earth,
the sea, and all that is in them,
but he rested on the seventh day.
Therefore the Lord blessed the Sabbath day and made it holy.”
(Exodus 20:11 NRSV)

So Sabbath is divine pattern that humans, created in God's image, ought to follow. Not to follow this pattern, therefore, means going against God's very design of us as God's creature. Not to follow this design will simply push ourselves beyond the limit and we will eventually break down.

The Japanese have a word for this: *karoshi*. The word was coined in the 1970s, and is still in use today, to describe death from a stroke, a heart attack, or even by suicide due to excessive work!

So, at the heart of the commandment to keep the Sabbath is the commandment to put limits on ourselves and on others. The law of Sabbath is the law of *enough* as against the law of excess.

But, our consumeristic world today—through its daily bombardment of advertisements—likes to tell us that we need to have more and more to be happy or to achieve more and more to feel fulfilled; that every single one of us must be on the so-called ‘hedonistic treadmill’ where we are required to keep running to chase the ever-elusive reward in life. But, there will never be enough and we will require ourselves and others to run faster and faster, stopping only when we finally break down.

The law of the Sabbath shows us a different path. It tells us that we will find fulfillment in life not by keep striving to meet our worldly desires. The law of Sabbath tells us that we will find fulfillment when we become whom God has created us to be; when we put constraints on our wants; when we learn to have ‘enough’ instead of ‘more’.

This is why Jesus teaches us to ask for our ‘daily bread’ in the prayer that we now know as the Lord’s Prayer.ⁱⁱ In the original Greek version, what is translated as “daily” literally means “enough”.ⁱⁱⁱ Jesus doesn’t teach us to ask for a feast or a fancy meal in the equivalent of a Michelin-starred restaurant. No. He teaches to ask for what we need for one day only.

See, friends, Jesus teaches us to have enough because he knows that greed is at the heart of many maladies in the world today. Greed is the very reason why people exploit other people; why the rich exploit the poor; why the powerful exploit the weak and the vulnerable.

Greed is also the reason behind all the injustices in the land the Isaiah, the prophet, decries in our reading today. No wonder that to honour the Sabbath is a part of the solution that he offers to tackle exploitation amongst his people.

This is also why our Gospel reading is an appropriate reading to accompany our reading from Isaiah. Here, in Luke's Gospel, we are introduced to a woman who

"was bent bent over and was quite unable to stand up straight."
(Luke 13: 11 NRSV)

Scholars believe that the woman may be suffering from "*spondylitis ankylopoietica*, a fusion of the bones in the spine that created ongoing stiffness, inflammation, fatigue, and acute pain."^{iv}

But that's not how Luke, the author of the Gospel, sees as the cause of her condition. For him, the woman is bent due to

"a spirit that had crippled her for eighteen years."
(Luke 13:11 NRSV)

See, for ancient writer like Luke, evil spirit was the source not only of all kinds of illnesses in a person, but also of all kinds of illnesses in the society. So, it's not a far cry to imagine that, in Luke's view, the woman is bent over due to the burden of exploitation of vulnerable people like

her in her society. And what better time to heal her from the kind of evil power that has kept her in bondage for years than on the day of Sabbath!

“And ought not this woman,” Jesus says, “be set free from this bondage on the Sabbath day?”
(Luke 13: 16 NRSV)

Friends, through his words and healing, Jesus teaches us what Sabbath is all about. Sabbath is about freedom. It is the ‘law’ that set people free. It is the ‘command’ that frees us from our self-imposed bondage and tyranny.

It's not always easy, however, to impose ‘law’ on ourselves, even when it is good for our own wellbeing. It's a bit like asking my children to limit their screen time so they can go to bed early and get plenty of rest before school. They often rebel!

We too can be like little children: we don't like to put limits on our wants and desires. Today, however, we are reminded to no longer be children, but adults who have the wisdom and the courage to say, “What I have is enough.

Who I am is enough.”

Amen.

Questions for Reflections

1. What are the wants in your life that you need to put limits on?
2. What does "having enough" look like in your life?
3. How would you ask God, in prayers, to give you wisdom to live with "enough" instead of "more"?

ⁱ New Revised Standard Version Updated Edition of the Bible.

ⁱⁱ Matthew 6:11.

ⁱⁱⁱ Hauerwas, Stanley. *Jesus Changes Everything: A New World Made Possible* (Plough Spiritual Guides) (p. 88). Plough Publishing House. Kindle Edition.

^{iv} Cory Driver, *Commentary on Isaiah 58:9b-14*, Working Preacher from Luther Seminary, August 24, 2025 (<https://www.workingpreacher.org/commentaries/revised-common-lectionary/ordinary-21-3/commentary-on-isaiah-589b-14-6>).