

Sermon for February 8th, 2026
SEXAGESIMA

READINGS

Isaiah 55:10-13

10 “For as the rain and the snow come down from heaven
and do not return there but water the earth,
making it bring forth and sprout,
giving seed to the sower and bread to the eater,
11 so shall my word be that goes out from my mouth;
it shall not return to me empty,
but it shall accomplish that which I purpose,
and shall succeed in the thing for which I sent it.
12 “For you shall go out in joy
and be led forth in peace;
the mountains and the hills before you
shall break forth into singing,
and all the trees of the field shall clap their hands.
13 Instead of the thorn shall come up the cypress;
instead of the brier shall come up the myrtle;
and it shall make a name for the LORD,
an everlasting sign that shall not be cut off.”

Psalm 84

[Collect reading in **bold**]

1 How lovely is your dwelling place,
O LORD of hosts!
2 My soul longs, yes, faints
for the courts of the LORD;
my heart and flesh sing for joy
to the living God.
3 Even the sparrow finds a home,
and the swallow a nest for herself,
where she may lay her young,
at your altars, O LORD of hosts,
my King and my God.
4 Blessed are those who dwell in your house,
ever singing your praise! *Selah*
5 Blessed are those whose strength is in you,
in whose heart are the highways to Zion.
6 As they go through the Valley of Baca
they make it a place of springs;
the early rain also covers it with pools.
7 They go from strength to strength;
each one appears before God in Zion.
8 O LORD God of hosts, hear my prayer;
give ear, O God of Jacob! *Selah*

9 Behold our shield, O God;
look on the face of your anointed!
10 For a day in your courts is better
than a thousand elsewhere.

I would rather be a doorkeeper in the house of my God
than dwell in the tents of wickedness.

11 For the LORD God is a sun and shield;
the LORD bestows favor and honor.
No good thing does he withhold
from those who walk uprightly.

12 O LORD of hosts,
blessed is the one who trusts in you!

Hebrews 4:9-13

9 So then, there remains a Sabbath rest for the people of God, **10** for whoever has entered God's rest has also rested from his works as God did from his.

11 Let us therefore strive to enter that rest, so that no one may fall by the same sort of disobedience. **12** For the word of God is living and active, sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing to the division of soul and of spirit, of joints and of marrow, and discerning the thoughts and intentions of the heart. **13** And no creature is hidden from his sight, but all are naked and exposed to the eyes of him to whom we must give account.

Luke 8:4-15

4 And when a great crowd was gathering and people from town after town came to him, he said in a parable, **5** “A sower went out to sow his seed. And as he sowed, some fell along the path and was trampled underfoot, and the birds of the air devoured it. **6** And some fell on the rock, and as it grew up, it withered away, because it had no moisture. **7** And some fell among thorns, and the thorns grew up with it and choked it. **8** And some fell into good soil and grew and yielded a hundredfold.” As he said these things, he called out, “He who has ears to hear, let him hear.”

9 And when his disciples asked him what this parable meant, **10** he said, “To you it has been given to know the secrets of the kingdom of God, but for others they are in parables, so that ‘seeing they may not see, and hearing they may not understand.’ **11** Now the parable is this: The seed is the word of God. **12** The ones along the path are those who have heard; then the devil comes and takes away the word from their hearts, so that they may not believe and be saved. **13** And the ones on the rock are those who, when they hear the word, receive it with joy. But these have no root; they believe for a while, and in time of testing fall away. **14** And as for what fell among the thorns, they are those who hear, but as they go on their way they are choked by the cares and riches and pleasures of life, and their fruit does not mature. **15** As for that in the good soil, they are those who, hearing the word, hold it fast in an honest and good heart, and bear fruit with patience.

Our text for meditation this Sexagesima Sunday is on our Epistle reading.

Grace, mercy and peace to you from God our Father and our Lord Jesus Christ. Amen.

Introduction: The Seventh Day of the Week

Question: is Saturday the sixth day of the week or the seventh? This question was a topic of debate between my wife and I for years. I was raised with the belief that it was the sixth. For me, Sunday simply had to be the last day in a week because on Monday we all go back to work or school.

We call Saturday and Sunday the “weekend,” not the “week-end-and-then-start-again” after all. But my wife would always bring up that the Church has always met at the beginning of the week, not the end.

After a decade or so of spousal teasing and debate, I decided to look into it more deeply, and to my chagrin my wife was correct. It was only in 1988 that the International Organization for Standardization proclaimed that Sunday is the seventh day of the week. The churches have joined together in rejecting that proposition, because they have universally agreed, along with most if not all cultures around the world, that Saturday is the seventh. To begin with, there is the ancient Sabbath day, which is always on what we call Saturday. The word *Sabbath* in Hebrew is *Shabbat*, which is connected to the word *Sheva*, which means *seven*. In ancient Western cultures too, the week took the same ordering. The word itself originates from the Latin “*Dies Saturni*,” or “*Saturn's Day*,” out of the belief that the planet Saturn exerted influence over that particular day of the week;¹ since they believed there were seven “planets,” there were seven days, and Saturn is last on the list. When the Julian calendar came into prominence, everyone in the Roman Empire began using a seven-day structure for time. But it was not only Western countries and ancient Israel that held to this. Even the Chinese, far off from both Rome and Jerusalem, have Saturday, or “*Xing qi liu*,” listed as their seventh day.² The Babylonians observed it going as far back as 2000 B.C.

Where it Matters

So in the end, my wife is vindicated. But does that matter? In one sense it does. Scripture tells us that God rested on the seventh day,³ and this forms the reason behind the Third Commandment - “You shall remember the Sabbath Day, to keep it holy.” Here is how God puts it when He speaks from Sinai in the book of Exodus:

8 “Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy. 9 Six days you shall labor, and do all your work, 10 but the seventh day is a Sabbath to the LORD your God. On it you shall not do any work, you, or your son, or your daughter, your male servant, or your female servant, or your livestock, or the sojourner who is within your gates. 11 For in six days the LORD made the heavens and the earth, the sea, and all that is in them, and rested on the seventh day. Therefore the LORD blessed the Sabbath day and made it holy.⁴

So in this sense, identifying the correct day is of utmost importance. Every seventh day is a celebration of the rest that our Lord enjoyed when He took a look at the complete creation. And from there, even though we do not have to rest on exactly the same seventh day like the ancient Israelites did, God is still giving us a good *principle* to live by. People need rest and recuperation, and even more importantly they need to take time to rejoice in the fruits of their labors and be grateful for what God has given them. The least we could do is get the ordering of the days right.

Where it Doesn't Matter

Here is where it matters less though, and this is more important than merely having a day of rest every week. The author of our Epistle reading tells us that there is a Sabbath that isn't so much a single day of the week, but a *state of being*, something that we are called to actively enter instead of wait for. Here, in the heavenly state of rest, one is seeing God's actions and rejoicing in them the same way that He rested. The Sabbath rest that remains is a parallel term for being in a state of Grace – that is, our souls being at peace because we are saved. When you can say with full confidence that you are going to Heaven if you shed your mortal coil, then you are in the Sabbath rest that our Epistle reading is

1 Vitius Valens describes this reasoning in his *Anthologies*. A more concise history of the days can be found here: <https://articles.adsabs.harvard.edu/pdf/1999JRASC..93..122F>

2 The earliest record of a seven day week in Chinese chronology is in the seventh century A.D., but it can be surmised that they had been doing so for much longer.

3 Genesis 2:2-3

4 Exodus 20:8-11

bringing up.

This is why the Church has no problem holding the Divine Service on Sundays. *Could* we have it on Saturday? Sure. But do we have to? Absolutely not! The *old* Sabbath from the *Old* Covenant has been replaced by the *new* Sabbath in the *New* Covenant. One does not enter into God's Rest by being at Church on the approved day, and nor are you denied salvation if you have to do to work every day this week. With the Sabbath, what matters is not getting the correct day identified as the seventh in the week, but getting the correct *Sabbath* nailed down and *entering it*.

Entering God's Rest

Most importantly, the emphasis is on being in that resting state at all times. How do we enter God's Rest? Not by waiting, and not by ceasing our activities. After all, this is rest more for our souls than our bodies. The true way to enter the true Sabbath is by *faith*, which comes from the Word of God. To be at rest from the pressures of the Law and to rest from the terrors of death, to be at rest from slavery to the devil – *this* is the true Sabbath state for believers, peace for their souls. Someone who believes in Jesus can find themselves doing all sorts of tasks for their job, perhaps even taking extra shifts, but by faith in Christ they are still at rest. Maybe their week takes a cycle that makes Sunday look like the last day of the week, but this is no matter; even if feeding one's family requires *never* getting a day off, the believer's heart belonging to Christ means that they are still with our Lord and being refreshed by His gracious preservation. But this requires the Word.

Our Epistle reading presents the Word of God as a sword that can cut through just about anything. When hearing the Word as it is read aloud or preached, it will show you whether you have entered the true Sabbath that God wants you to inhabit. The Word slices open our hearts and shows us what's inside. When you read the Gospels and see Christ having risen from the dead, do you believe it? Then yes, you are in the Sabbath rest. When the Word proclaims that greed or coveting or murderous hate are all sins, do you agree with that? If not, then perhaps you decided to walk outside of the rest that God intended for you, and going back to penitent faith will bring you back.

Conclusion

So let us enter that rest, my friends. Not just on one day of the week, but by true faith in all that God proclaims in His Word let us *always* inhabit this holy Sabbath state, that all days may be holy to us. After all, this interior rest foreshadows the eternal peace which we shall enjoy when Christ returns, brings our bodies back to life, and lets us enjoy a kind of Sabbath that includes living and reigning with Him forever and ever.

Now the Peace of our Lord, which surpasses all understanding, guard your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus our Lord. Amen.