

Weekly Study Guide

The week of December 14, 2014

Daily Readings

Monday	Exodus 31:13	Tuesday	Psalms 46:10	Wednesday	Jeremiah 6:16
Thursday	Isaiah 30:15	Friday	Hebrews 4:9-11	Saturday	Isaiah 58:13-14

My notes on this week's readings...

Next Week in Worship

Next week's message: *The Gift of Peace*

Next week's readings: Luke 2

Come next week at 9 or 11 a.m. to experience First Lutheran's Concert of Worship celebrating Jesus as the Gift of Peace. This peace is not the kind of peace that the world gives (the absence of conflict). The peace Jesus brings is the kind that is filled with abundance—joy, love, life, fullness! Peace is what happens in a heart when it knows it is loved. In the gift of Christ Jesus, nothing can take from us that perfect peace. Come celebrate the true meaning of this season!

first lutheran church

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Group Discussion

Connect

Think of the perfect day. What are things you do or experience that make you feel the most alive, most joyful, and most yourself? What things make you feel closest to God?

What would a day look like when those things are combined?

Learn

Read **Exodus 31:13 and Isaiah 30:15**. According to these verses about the Sabbath, where does our strength come from? Where does our holiness come from?

Whether they consciously mean to think this or not, many people end up acting as if their salvation comes from earning it by their good works or their religious accomplishments. When we rest, who is working? When we return, who are we relying upon? In Isaiah 30:15, what does this tell us about how salvation comes to our lives? Whose work do we rely upon? (Hint: John 3:16-17)

A life that is formed by Sabbath practice is a life that relies on the grace of God and the power of God. It is a life that values listening to God as well as acting for God. Few stories in the Bible show greater evidence of this kind of formation than the life of Mary, the Mother of Jesus. **Read Luke 1:29–49**.

What does Mary's response to the angel tell you about her character and her relationship with God? How do you think this relationship was formed?

Receiving this calling in "the now" changes the "next" that Mary had been planning on! When Mary listens to God and accepts his plan, what is the first thing God provides for her? What is Mary's response to this provision? (Luke 1:39-49)

What makes it hard for us to stop thinking about what comes next and just be with God in "the now?" Has spending time with God in "the now" ever changed your plans for what's next?

The Christmas hymn *In the Bleak Midwinter* concludes: "What can I give him, poor as I am? If I were a shepherd, I would bring a lamb; If I were a wiseman, I would do my part; Yet what can I give him—give my heart." How can intentional Sabbath practice (24 hours without to-do lists) be a gift of love back to your savior?

Apply

Many people try to apply Sabbath practice in a similar way to the Jewish Sabbath—sundown on Friday to sundown on Saturday, or sundown Saturday to sundown on Sunday; leaving the dark hours Sunday night to prepare for the coming Monday morning.

What kind of Sabbath rest might work consistently for you?

Pray

Lord, show us that YOU ALONE are savior not our earning, not our striving, not our doing, not our achieving. Show us that your good desire for us in Sabbath practice is to remember that what you love is not what we do, but simply us being yours. Teach our hearts what it means to rest, to let ourselves just be loved by you because we're yours. Amen.