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Sabbath Time

"My help comes from God, the maker of heaven and earth." Psalm 121:1

Dear Ones,

Tomorrow will be Sunday – again. And not just any Sunday: Palm Sunday. A "high holy day" for us, inasmuch as we Protestants ever have those. It is pretty special.

And yet we will be in our homes, feeling separated from each other. This might lead to a further sense of loss – the loss of Palm Sunday altogether.

But it need not. It occurs to me that the ancient tradition of *Sabbath-keeping* is something that we might want to return to at this time. Perhaps you grew up in a 'sabbatarian' home (great word, eh? Save that up for a crossword puzzle win!). Did your parent peel the potatoes for Sunday dinner on Saturday night and put them on the stove to cook on the morrow? Did your grandparents frown if you tried to take out your bike, or hockey stick, or a deck of cards on Sunday afternoon? Did you get dragged to church not once, not twice, but three times on a Sunday – morning, noon and night? If so, then you know this rhythm.

Strict as those rules were, and as miserable as they were for most children ("Why *can't* I?"), they actually had a mystical beauty to them. In avoiding work on the Sabbath day, faithful people carved out a very special moment in time, that Rabbi Abraham Heschel calls "a cathedral in time."ⁱ

What a lovely image – not a cathedral made of soaring stone pillars, or brilliant shards of coloured glass, but a cathedral made of rest and ease, contemplation, and openness to the stirrings of God's Holy Spirit. "Wait for the Lord; be strong, and let your heart take courage; wait for the Lord!" (Psalm 27:14)

Rabbi Heschel again:

"Six days we wrestle with the world, wringing profit from the earth; on the Sabbath we especially care for the need of eternity planted in the soul. The world has our hands, but our soul belongs to Someone Else.... Six days we live under the tyranny of things of space; on the Sabbath we try to become attuned to holiness in time, a day on which we are called... to turn from the results to the mystery of creation; from the world of creation to the creation of the world....The Sabbath is a palace in time we build, made of soul, joy and reticence (discipline and abstention)... How else express glory in the presence of eternity, if not by the silence of abstaining from noisy acts."

Create your own Cathedral tomorrow. Set aside the distractions and work you have been doing. Place a green branch or scrap of cloth on your door. Read Matthew 21:1-11. Read it slowly. Read it repeatedly. Read it out loud. Write it down. Wait for God, and wait some more.

"God is with us. We are not alone. Thanks be to God!" (The New Creed of the United Church of Canada)

Grace to you, and peace,

Kate

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i Heschel, Abraham Joshua. *The Quest for God: Studies in Prayer and Symbolism*. New York: Crossroad, 1987.

*"Our relationship with God and each other strengthens us, and helps make the world a better place.
We welcome and include **everyone** into congregational life."*

