**Recuerda que fuiste un esclavo / Remember that You Were a Slave
Sunday, April 18, 2021, 1:00 p.m., All Saints Church, Pasadena
The Rev. Mike Kinman**

Remember that you were a slave.

Remember that you WERE a slave.

Our faith is one of liberation … and of memory.

We are made in the sacred image of God.

And so God dreams for us the essence of the divine self.

For us to be lovers.

For us to be creators.

For us to be caretakers.

For us to be free.

Our creation stories imagine a time when we were all these things.

Those stories are how we as humans try to explain for ourselves how things are so different from what they should be.

How too often we hate … and destroy … and consume.

How too often we are enslaved.

Talking about enslavement is tricky.

We are not only a nation that has kidnapped, enslaved and tortured labor out of beautiful images of God … we as a church condoned that practice and used our scripture to justify it.

And as slavery took different forms.

As it became convict leasing … and then Jim Crow … and then mass incarceration within a prison industrial complex … we as a nation and the church have continued to justify and encourage enslavement.

And yet the roots are even deeper than that.

Our faith is one of liberation and memory.

We are meant to be free. Each of us and all of us.

And God also says, “Remember when you were a slave.”

The core of enslavement is not only loss of freedom … it is only seeing value in what a person can produce, not in who they are.

It is treating a person as a means of production not as an image of God.

The people of Israel had escaped slavery in Egypt. They were together n the wilderness. They were on the edge of a promised land.

And God says to them: “Remember when you were a slave.”

Remember what it was like to be treated like all that mattered was not who you are but what you can produce.

How much wealth you can generate.

Remember what it was like to work and work and work and not rest.

Remember when you were a slave.

Then observe the Sabbath.

Embrace the gift of rest.

Know that you are more than what you can produce.

Know that you are more than what wealth you can generate.

As you move into this new land, do not make slaves of yourselves and others.

Do not buy into the economics of Pharaoh.

Do not become what you have worked so hard to escape from.

And here we are … thousands of years later.

And in addition to the enslavement of brown and black people through incarceration and unjust wages and no medical care … we are all part of a system that enslaves.

We have discarded the pleadings of God in the desert for the false Gospel of capitalism.

That our value is in what we produce. In how much wealth we can generate.

That our worth is not infinite because we are made in the image of God … but defined by “what the market will bear.”

Even as a church, we live in the fear that the slave system generates.

As a church, we have become a provider of religious goods and services … and we fear not producing enough because we fear people leaving and taking their pledges with them.

It is not the model of a faithful church, it is a business model that sees the highest goods not as human thriving but of numerical growth and the unholy trinity of attendance, buildings and cash.

And God is looking at us.

And God is not saying “Remember that you were a slave.”

God is saying, “You have become a slave.”

You have returned to the bondage from which I rescued you.

At All Saints Church, we say “we walk with a revolutionary Jesus.”

One of the most revolutionary things we can do in our walk with Jesus is to follow this commandment.

To take time apart as Jesus did.

To rest and restore, to celebrate and rejoice.

To support and hold each other accountable to this simple act … which in this church and nation is one of the most countercultural things we can do.

Later in Deuteronomy, the penalty for breaking Sabbath is revealed.

The penalty for breaking Sabbath is death.

That is not because God will come down and kill people who break Sabbath.

That is because when we don’t have Sabbath … when we don’t have rest … when we say that our productivity is more important than our humanity … we begin to die.

And eventually, that enslavement will kill us.

It will kill us all.

It is killing us all.

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Together let us create a world where we are once more. Amen.