

Week 5

Ah, our last week! Thank you for journeying with me through these meditations on sleep. I pray this Lenten trek has given you glimpses of the spiritual riches of this wondrous divine gift. From Creation to New Creation, we can see how God uses sleep to bring about God's good purposes in the world. Talk about sweet dreams.

This week I want to draw sleep into the rest of *Notes of Rest*. *Notes of Rest* harmonizes 5 different notes, like a musical chord: Salvation, Sabbath, Sleep, Stillness, and Sanctuary. Though our Lenten journey has focused on sleep, it has always been with an eye towards the other notes reverberating off of it. Most centrally, I've been harmonizing Sleep with Salvation. God uses sleep to help bring about rescue and healing for creation – such as when God instructs Joseph through sleep to take the Holy Family into exile to avoid King Herod (Matthew 2:13-15).

Sleep harmonizes well with the other notes too. To start, consider Sleep and Sabbath. Both happen best in rhythm. Every week God called the Hebrews to receive the good gift of rest from work and find restoration in God's call to pause, pray and play, and that vision paralleled God's daily invitation to undergo restoration in sleep. Furthermore, both are liberating practices that God used to establish stronger community. They are clarion calls from God to avoid the temptation to collapse our identity into what we produce, for God's vision for our fullness has always preceded and exceeded productivity (Deuteronomy 5:12-15).

Sleep and Stillness enjoy an intimate dance. By "Stillness" I mean a lack of movement in mind, body, and soul. We play both notes well when we resist the urge to constantly move. Although Stillness is primarily a conscious activity – e.g., "be still and know that [God is] God" (Psalm 46:10) – and Sleep a rest from consciousness, they aid one another. For instance, when I struggled with insomnia during the pandemic, my sleep therapist advised me to meditate during the day. Slowing down my conscious mind during the day helped me slow down my unconscious mind at night. "When you are disturbed, do not sin; ponder it on your beds and be silent" (Psalm 4:4).

Finally, Sleep resonates with Sanctuary. Sanctuary is consecrated space for worship and safety –an invitation for the vulnerable (be it humans or other animals). Sleep renders all vulnerable, but especially those without sanctuary. It is telling that Psalm 4:4 leads to verse 5: "Offer right sacrifices and put your trust in the Lord." May our shared need for sleep take us to the least of these. Glory Hallelujah.



*How does your practice of sleep help you practice the other notes?
How might your community change if all five notes held together?*

Prayer: O Divine Giver of Rest, thank you for Sleep, Sanctuary, Stillness, Sabbath, and Salvation. Help us play the music for our weary world to hear. In Jesus' name, Amen.