

Sabbath Economics: The Way of Christ as Ecological-Economic Justice

The Bishop's Committee for the Environment, Episcopal Diocese of Olympia: <http://www.bce-ecww.org/sabbath-economics>



"Israelites Gathering Manna," Ercole de' Roberti, 1490

"The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me to bring good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim release to the captives, and recovery of sight to the blind, to let the oppressed go free, to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor." Luke 4:18-19

"Will you cherish the wondrous works of God, and protect the beauty and integrity of all creation? I will with God's help." C015: Addition to Baptismal Covenant Language

"You cannot serve God and wealth [Mammon]." Luke 16:13b

Jesus & Jubilee

Throughout this liturgical year of readings from Luke's Gospel, members of the Bishop's Committee for the Environment (BCE) and the Commission on Liturgy and the Arts (CLA) invite members and congregations of the Diocese of Olympia to a time of study and reflection focused on the biblical traditions of Sabbath (i.e., periodic rest for all of Creation) and Jubilee (i.e., debt cancellation; freedom from captivity and oppression). In Luke's Gospel, Jesus draws upon the interrelated traditions of Sabbath and Jubilee to define his public ministry. With a view toward a shared sufficiency for all and the temperance to live simply within the regenerative integrity of Creation's bounds, the Sabbath-Jubilee traditions characterize an orderly, economic life. Such an ethos honors God

by restraining compulsive work, accumulation, and consumption and by regularly redistributing the wealth of Creation for everyone to have enough. Notably, the economic-ecological wisdom in these ancient traditions runs counter to the predominant "economics" of today. Yet these overlooked traditions permeate the heart of Scripture, as evident in Torah (e.g., Ex. 16, 20; Lev. 23, 25; Deut. 15, 24), the Prophets (e.g., Is. 3, 5, 61; Jer. 22), the ministry of Jesus in the Gospels (e.g., Mk. 10; Lk. 4, 12-19), and the life of the early church (e.g., Acts 2, 4; II Cor. 8).

For Whom Is an Economy "Good News"?

The highly individualistic, acquisitive economic system in which we live and participate in the U.S. privileges, on one side of the coin, a dangerous, deepened divide between rich and poor, and on the other, a destructive addiction to limitless growth on a finite planet. Yet more and more people today are experiencing firsthand the structural violence this system engenders, such as the corruption of democratic governance by private, moneyed interests; the consequent collapse of social services for protecting the most vulnerable; resource wars fought at home and abroad; and the unfolding, ecological catastrophe of climate change.

If we have eyes to see and ears to hear, where do we find ourselves amid this reign or rule of Mammon? If we examine the systemic, cumulative effect of the economic patterning of our lives—our buying, borrowing, investing, working, consuming, etc.—do we find ourselves serving an economy that serves neither the common good nor the true desire of our hearts? If we critically examine the pervasive powers and principalities that perpetuate the dominant economy and our participation in it, how might we move beyond the paralysis of fear, denial, or despair? How might we find the freedom or courage we need to persevere in the practice and hope of discipleship? In what concrete ways might we—as individuals, households, congregations, or ministries of the diocese—move toward more equitable and ecologically sustainable ways of being?

A Sabbath Economy for People & Planet

To this vital inquiry concerning the economic and ecological dimensions of our faith, members of the CLA and BCE invite you into the practice of reading “the Bible economically in order to read the economy biblically.” Recommended guides for such a practice are the study guides and resources on “Sabbath Economics” developed by Bartimaeus Cooperative Ministries. These resources (listed to the right) can be readily adopted for either group or individual study. For instance, you might consider organizing a discussion group focused on screening the 6-part DVD “Mammon to Manna: Sabbath Economics and Community Investing” during the season of Lent or Easter. Or form a small, informal group interested in working through and discussing the DVD, booklets, or other materials, such as the “Introduction to Sabbath Economics” online course. Or consider an independent, self-paced study. Regardless of which materials or mode of study you choose, we hope that you will find the study and practice of Sabbath Economics an inspiring source of strength in your apprenticeship to Christ and his ministry of “good news to the poor”.

Sabbath Economics: Resources for Study

Curricula for group and individual study

“Mammon to Manna: Sabbath Economics and Community Investing” (6-part DVD & study guide)

This resource explores the ecological-economic vision of Sabbath-Jubilee in Scripture, conjoined with contemporary discipleship practices, including investment practices, for serving God, not mammon.

DVD: <http://www.chedmyers.org/dvd>

Study guide: <http://goo.gl/rbXFDE>

“The Biblical Vision of Sabbath Economics” and “Household Practices” (Two booklets)

<http://goo.gl/veek6L>

“Why Sabbath Economics?” (Recorded webinar)

<http://goo.gl/G4MCJK>

BIO-A03: Introduction to Sabbath Economics

This online class includes the three resources above plus many more recorded webinars, Bible studies, articles, etc.

<http://www.chedmyers.org/BIO-A03-About>

Free online resources

Sabbath Economics Collaborative

Website: <http://www.sabbatheconomics.org/>

“Experimenting with a Household Sabbath Economics Covenant” by Ched Myers (4-page flier)

<http://goo.gl/4UhwZC>

A small sampling of related resources

Sabbath as Resistance by Walter Brueggemann

Resisting Structural Evil: Love as Ecological-Economic Vocation by Cynthia Moe-Lobeda

Laudato Si’: On Care for Our Common Home by Pope Francis

What Matters? Economics for a Renewed Commonwealth by Wendell Berry