

Monday 23 March

Which is the longest of the 10 Commandments? It's the 4th. If you're still unsure – it's the command to keep the Sabbath holy. I recently listened to a 30 minute talk by a Bible lecturer on the subject of the Sabbath. The talk was challenging and useful. The last time I remember hearing anything detailed on this commandment was when I was a student.

Now, if you are up to date in reading the **Live Lent** booklet you will have just read this weekend the page entitled 'Rest for the Land.' When I read this page on Saturday morning, I looked up the reading from Leviticus 25 and was suddenly struck by the end of verse 5: 'The land is to have a year of rest.'



The previous evening, Friday, I had heard someone on TV talking about the Coronavirus disruption going on for a year. While we all just want life to get back to normal as soon as possible, it occurred to me that God is not mocked. In Western society we have gradually ramped up the speed of life so that not only are Sundays indistinguishable from any other day of the week, but God has been eliminated from more and more of our national life.

Is God sending us a message through the Coronavirus outbreak, causing us to slow us down and reconsider our frantic pace of life? In these days, many of us are having to slow down simply because most of our usual activities suddenly are unavailable.

The new situation in which we have suddenly found ourselves is, of course, a huge stress to the sick, their families, NHS workers, the many jobless, the homeless, and many more. But - we are all deeply concerned by the stress the earth is under, and our waste and over-consumption of resources cannot continue indefinitely. Uncomfortable as it is, we need to look at God's longest command for our lives as well as the Leviticus teaching on the need for the earth to have a rest.

Prayer: Our heavenly Father, teach us at this time of global crisis to trust in your unfailing goodness and to learn to call upon your name of love. Amen.