Surgeries to fix ACL tears in the knee or to fix shoulder and elbow joint injuries in teenage athletes have increased 500 percent since the year 2000.[[1]](#endnote-1) Orthopedic surgeons put the blame for this epidemic on one factor – lack of rest. Dr. Frank Cordasco says, "The current emphasis on playing one sport all year long leaves no time for muscles and joints to recover from the microtrauma that occurs during practice and play."

The epidemic isn’t just limited to teens, however. Last year 14 Major League Baseball players had the elbow reconstruction surgery known as Tommy John surgery.[[2]](#endnote-2)

Doctors blame lack of rest during the formative teen years as a reason these pitchers need these surgeries as well.

Our bodies weren’t created for overuse – to work continuously at the same task without rest. Neither were our souls. All week long our bodies and souls focus on work – whether it’s paid work or whether it’s unpaid daily tasks we do in retirement. God’s gift of the Sabbath is designed to help us recover. In response to that gift, we are called to consecrate a portion of our time to keep our bodies and minds free from the demands of work and to allow that time to take on a distinctive character of worship.

Of course, the Sabbath isn’t the only time we worship, and for many of us, work itself is a form of worship. But, according to Grant MacAskill at Theologyofwork.org, the Sabbath principle allows us time to focus on God in a different way than the working week allows, and to enjoy his blessing in a distinctive way. Crucially, too, it gives us space to allow our worship of God to manifest itself in social compassion, care, and love. Our worship on the Sabbath flavors our work during the week.[[3]](#endnote-3)

This call to consecrate our time doesn’t mean that we can’t help others in need on the Sabbath; in fact, as we would see if we continued our Gospel reading a little further, Jesus healed on the Sabbath. The holiness of the Sabbath is honored if we help others. The call to consecrate our time also doesn’t mean we starve rather than preparing food to eat on the Sabbath. It also doesn’t mean that those of us who have to work on Sundays lose our Sabbath --- it simply means we need to be creative in finding another day for our Sabbath. In fact, none of the very rigid rules that the Pharisees had placed on the Sabbath are requirements. Jesus freed the Sabbath from human restrictions and restored it so that every person can be the beneficiary of the divine intentions and true purposes of sabbath rest and joy.[[4]](#endnote-4) We keep the Sabbath when we intentionally set apart time for rest, restoration and reflection.

That means that one person’s observation of Sabbath might look different from another’s. Certainly, I hope that most of us begin our Sabbath with worship with our faith community. In the afternoon, some people would find a hike of the Niagara gorge to be a very holy time, set apart from the demands of work and a distinctive form of worshipping God in creation. For others, this would be too much work – or too much like their daily routine. Reading or spending time with family would be a better way for them to keep the Sabbath.

W.A. Elwell and B.J. Beitzel describe our call to keep the Sabbath in this way. “Freed from time-consuming everyday work, man should accept the seventh day as a blessing from his Creator (using it to recall all God’s goodness in creation and to praise him for it), and recognize the claim it makes on his life. As a day ‘set aside,’ the sabbath is a reminder that all time is the Creator’s gift.”[[5]](#endnote-5)

God is lavish in gifts to us – including the gift of the Sabbath, which restores us and helps to prevent our bodies and souls from becoming sick or injured from overuse or from the microtraumas of life. In response we are called to ensure that we consecrate a portion of our time as Sabbath, keeping it free from the demands of work and allowing it to take on a distinguished character of worship of our Creator.

Amen

1. *Matt Woodley, Editor, PreachingToday.com quoting: Heidi Evans, "Anterior cruciate ligament tears plague teenage athletes ..."*The New York Post*(8-20-13); Howie Espenshied, "Of ACLs, Tommy Johns, and 'One Fine Day,'"*Mbird*blog* [↑](#endnote-ref-1)
2. <https://howtheyplay.com/team-sports/How-Many-MLB-Players-Have-Had-Tommy-John-Elbow-Reconstruction>, dated May 1, 2018 accessed on May 30, 2018 [↑](#endnote-ref-2)
3. Synthesis A Weekly Resource for Preaching and Worship in the Episcopal Tradition, PNMSI Publishing Co., Inc**.** June 2018. [↑](#endnote-ref-3)
4. Hasel, G. F. (1992). [Sabbath](https://ref.ly/logosres/anch?ref=biblio.at%3dSabbath%7Cau%3dHasel%2c%2520Gerhard%2520F.%7Ced%3dFreedman%2c%2520David%2520Noel&off=40081&ctx=lee+on+the+sabbath.%0a~In+short%2c+Jesus+decl). In D. N. Freedman (Ed.), *The Anchor Yale Bible Dictionary* (Vol. 5, p. 855). New York: Doubleday. [↑](#endnote-ref-4)
5. Elwell, W. A., & Beitzel, B. J. (1988). [Sabbath](https://ref.ly/logosres/bkrencbib?ref=biblio.at%3dSabbath%7Cpg%3d1874%E2%80%931879%7Cvo%3d2&off=4813&ctx=bserve+the+sabbath.+~Freed+from+time-cons). In *Baker encyclopedia of the Bible* (Vol. 2, p. 1875). Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House [↑](#endnote-ref-5)