


The Fallow Year
Hosea 10:12
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Sermon Notes for Aug. 30, 2020

 **fal·low**¹
/ˈfalō/
adjective

1. (of farmland) plowed and harrowed but left unsown for a period in order to restore its fertility as part of a crop rotation or to avoid surplus production.
"incentives for farmers to let the land **lie fallow** in order to reduce grain surpluses"

Similar:

Where do we find the word fallow in the Bible? It is only used in a few places (4 to be exact). The first instance is in Exodus:

For six years you shall sow your land and gather in its yield, but the seventh year you shall let it rest and lie fallow... Exodus 23:10-11

Of course, we know that the number 7 has spiritual significance in the Bible. Shabbat or Sabbath – means an intermission, stopping and resting. We read in Leviticus:

For six years you shall sow... but in the seventh year there shall be a Sabbath of solemn rest for the land, a Sabbath to the LORD. You shall not sow your field or prune your vineyard. Lev 25:3-4

In the seventh year God commanded the people and the land to have a Sabbath, a special year dedicated to God himself. In Hebrew it says a Shabbat, a Shabbat to Jehovah.

Fallow, Shabbat, solemn rest.

Could this be one way to view this year of 2020: a fallow time of stopping, a time to restore fertility and fruitfulness, a time of intermission?

How has God shown himself faithful to you in 2020?

- In this time of intermission from 'normal life', what has God been revealing to you?
- How has God been encouraging you or challenging you?

Sow for yourselves righteousness; reap steadfast love; break up your fallow ground, for it is the time to seek the LORD, that he may come and rain righteousness upon you. Hosea 10:12

The Good News Bible puts this verse: *'Plow new ground for yourselves, plant righteousness, and reap the blessings that your devotion to me will produce.*

Let's pause and silently reflect for a minute. As you think about this fallow COVID year, how would you answer these 3 questions:

- What new things have started that you want to continue?
- What things were you doing before Covid that you hope to do again?
- What things have stopped that you will NOT restart?

In other words, as we look ahead, what should I take hold of and what things should I leave behind?

Has this time brought you closer to God? Have you used this time to go deeper with Him? Or have you been trying to fill the time, entertain yourself, just waiting for things to open up?

Like Israel, we may appear to be prosperous, but maybe are not producing the kind of spiritual fruit that God delights in. Earlier in the book Hosea states this challenge to the people:

Let us know; let us press on to know the LORD; his going out is sure as the dawn; he will come to us as the showers, as the spring rains that water the earth. Hosea 6:3

How has God shown himself to you during this time? What fruit in your life is God delighting in? How are you using this Shabbat time for God's purposes? Let's challenge each other to press on to know the Lord and make the most of this fallow year.