

Sermon: The Sabbath of the Lord

Scripture: Exodus 20:8-11

Text: Leviticus 23:3

Work can be done for six days, but the seventh day is a Sabbath of special rest, a holy occasion. You must not do any work on it; wherever you live, it is the Sabbath of the Lord.

Blurb: Looking forward to your Labor Day weekend? It's the national holiday honoring the work we do all year long. Yet God thinks that His people need to do this more often...actually, once a week. We don't do this very well. We are so busy that all our days--including our days off--are full and busy. This Sunday we'll discover why God says we need to do a better job of this! Make a point to take a break from it all, and attend worship. You'll be glad you did!

Opening: "Be Still, My Soul"

Welcome: Pastor David (Invitation to open Communion)

Worship Songs Set: "Everlasting God"

"It is Well"

"You Are Good"

Worship Prayer

Kids are invited to Kid's Church

Grow Moment: Financial Peace University - Andrew

Message: Pastor David

PP#1: The Sabbath of the Lord

"Work can be done for six days, but the seventh day is a Sabbath of special rest, a holy occasion. You must not do any work on it; wherever you live, it is the Sabbath of the Lord."

-Leviticus 23:3

The Sabbath of the Lord. Leviticus 23:3, "Work can be done for six days, but the seventh day is a Sabbath of special rest, a holy occasion. You must not do any work on it; wherever you live, it is the Sabbath of the Lord."

PP#2: *Image of a person in a hammock, and Labor Day identified, by name or calendar.*

This is Labor Day weekend. Our country calls a day to honor all the hard work we do all year long, that makes our lives and country so successful, by taking a day *off of* work. I've always thought this a bit odd. We celebrate how importance our work is by not doing it!

But there is some wisdom here. It's not just a day off, a free day. Somehow, it is in the resting that we gain a different appreciation for our work, a different perspective. We can stop and reflect on our work, and its role in our lives, and if we gain purpose and meaning from it as we ought.

One thing I've been reflecting on is the cultural shifts around work. If you are older than I am, you are comfortable in a culture where you are primarily identified by your work. I'm a pastor. You're a retired teacher. She's a lawyer. Your work, in a very important way, identifies who you are.

PP#3: *Image of a 60-year-old busy behind a desk, and a millennial enjoying not working*

But if you're younger than I am, the culture is different. You tend NOT to identify yourself first with what you do for work. Your self identity comes in many other ways, like a personal

characteristic, what you enjoy, or what you do during your free time. I'm an intuitive thinker. You're a chocolate enthusiast. He's an entrepreneur. She's a hard core mountain biker. I *work* as a pastor. She *works* as a nurse. Notice that slight change in how we think about work?

In fact, millennials tend to place much less importance on work in general. For starters, there's less need to have all that money can buy. There's less desire to be independently successful. Many millennials have no problem moving back home and living with their parents after college. No urgent desire to devote yourself to your work. There'll be time for that later. Right now, enjoy what life has to offer at this moment, and that can mean working less and doing other things more. Only about a third of millennials consider themselves hardworking, compared to about three-fourths of boomers.

PP#4: *A frazzled nurse or someone who is overwhelmed with work, or hates their job.*

Another reflection on work: there is the cultural belief that we are supposed to *love* what we get paid to do. It's meaningful because it touches the very core of who we are. Perhaps we can see that with teachers and nurses. But it's really not true for everyone! "I was *born* to pave roads." Really? "God made me to make slick, shiny Excel charts to help the big wigs figure out where to put their investments." "My life's calling is to put mail in mailboxes."

The lie here is that in our culture, rather than seeking our value and meaning from God, we look to other places for that, like our work. Just look at TV. The people who are fulfilled there are those that love what they are doing for work. But who *loves* collecting the garbage or fixing plumbing? There is a bit of a deception here, for we come to believe that we will feel fulfilled when we get paid for doing what we love.

But in reality, all honest work is good work. The reality is that for many of us, work is what we do to make life happen. It pays the bills. We do it well. We can take pride in getting in there and getting it done, even if the only lasting result is the way we spend the paycheck. It provides for us and those we love. That's honorable. That's respectful.

From my look at Scripture, I see that all honest work is godly work. Each part plays a role in the whole. My work as a minister of the Gospel is no more or less important than that of a homemaker or home painter. I think from a biblical perspective, that although most of us are called to work, the work we do is not necessarily as important as *how we do it*. That's because how we do it becomes part of our witness to God. We do all things as doing them for God.

PP#5: The Sabbath of the Lord

Genesis 2:15 "The Lord God took the human and settled him in the garden of Eden to farm it and to take care of it."

So, as we think about the value of work, this morning, here at worship, we seek God's teaching on work. This helps us to live meaningfully and in a fulfilled way.

The most important Scriptural teaching on work comes in the commandment of the Sabbath. Sabbath is the break from work. It's kind of like Labor Day! God's teaching on the importance of work comes in a day off from it!

We go back to creation. God made everything in six days, and then rested on the seventh. Why? Did God need to rest? No. He was laying the cycle, showing the pattern, modeling the cadence, that the people He created need to follow.

God made the world and people. Genesis 2:15 "The Lord God took the human and settled him in the garden of Eden *to farm it and to take care of it*." See? God created people to work. In paradise, Adam and Eve worked. Work is good! But good work, to be healthy, must have its limits.

PP#6: Exodus 20:8-11

[8] "Remember the Sabbath day by keeping it holy. [9] Six days you shall labor and do all your work, [10] but the seventh day is a Sabbath to the Lord your God. On it you shall not do any work, neither you, nor your son or daughter, nor your manservant or maidservant, nor your animals, nor the alien within your gates. [11] For in six days the Lord made the heavens and the earth, the sea, and all that is in them, but He rested on the seventh day. Therefore the Lord blessed the Sabbath day and made it holy.

So, in the 10 Commandments, the foundational rules that God lays down for all people, for all time, for all places, has a rule about work. It's the rule of Sabbath.

Exodus 20:8, "Remember the Sabbath day by keeping it holy." OK, what does it mean to keep it holy? Let's keep reading! This commandment, you may be surprised to learn, is actually the longest of the 10 Commandments. Verse 9, "Six days you shall labor and do all your work," Pause. See? The fourth commandment actually begins with the commandment to work! You must work for six days! The Sabbath command is not just about rest. It's about working!

Verse 10. "But the seventh day is a Sabbath to the Lord your God." So, what does it mean that the seventh day is a Sabbath? Let's keep going, "On it you shall not do any work, neither you, nor your son or daughter, nor your manservant or maidservant, nor your animals, nor the alien within your gates. For in six days the Lord made the heavens and the earth, the sea, and all that is in them, but He rested on the seventh day. Therefore the Lord blessed the Sabbath day and made it holy."

PP#7: The Sabbath of the Lord

1. You shall work!

The pattern of a fulfilled life—so important is it that God modeled it for us, and then commanded it—is to work most days. Part of this may be our careers. Part of it is doing the work of life: cleaning, running errands, shopping for necessities, and so forth. Six days we *tend* our lives.

For some of us, this may mean putting more emphasis on work than we have. And that means that all kinds of honest work is pleasing to God. It all has its place...careers and personal work.

PP#8: The Sabbath of the Lord

1. You shall work!
2. You shall rest!

But that work must not fill *all* our days. We were created with a cadence of work and rest. Just as our bodies must sleep a third of the day, so must our lives rest from work one-seventh of our days.

The ongoing pattern of our relationship to work is the Sabbath routine. We work six days and we rest one. Why? We need it! Even when we don't think so, we need it. We are fooling ourselves when we try to cheat this one. And, by the way, I think this is the most broken commandment! We wouldn't think of robbing a bank or murdering our neighbor. Yet we routinely violate the Sabbath!

What's happened is that our paid work has kept to a five day professional week. But then we have filled our weekends with so many things, that it takes two days to get it all done. Sometimes we get away for the weekends, but most of the year, our weekends are filled with obligations, appointments, chores, shopping, and projects. Most people, most of the time, don't protect a Sabbath. And most people, most of the time, self-describe as being stressed out and living chaotically.

Now, you pay me the big bucks to point this out, so here goes: Most Christians don't keep Sabbath, and most Christians in America feel overwhelmed and stressed out. I think there just may be a connection! Let me earn my salary: If you feel over busy and stressed out, you may need to give God's Sabbath an honest try! As trite as this may sound, I am convinced it's the very thing most Christians need to gain peace in their lives. How can we claim to live for God, when we compromise on His ground-floor 10 commandments? How can we accuse God of not giving us inner peace and steady assurance when we don't follow the prescriptions He's laid out for us?

So, on this labor day weekend, let's take some serious time to consider how we can get our lives back into a healthy rhythm. How do we need to put parameters on our weekly activities so that we can feel centered, calm, and have capacity to handle what comes our way with a God-like witness? What is one thing you're going to do as this school years starts up again, to stay rested?

PP#9: The Sabbath of the Lord

1. You shall work!
2. You shall rest!
3. Keep it holy!

Exodus 20:8-10 "Remember the Sabbath day *by keeping it holy*. Six days you shall labor and do all your work, but the seventh day is *a Sabbath to the Lord your God*."

One more reflection. The other thing so many of us do with Sabbath is that we make it a family day. Sounds good, right? Noble? Spend it with your family, doing family things. But as we look a little closer, we see that Sabbath is not a family day! Spending it out on the lake is not keeping the Sabbath. Sabbath is two things: it's a day of rest, and it is a holy day for God.

Now, spending time away with family is not a bad thing. But be careful that you don't re-interpret God's Sabbath. Resting can include spending time with family. But resting is not the total of Sabbath. Look carefully. It says keep it *holy*, not with family. It says that it is a Sabbath *to the Lord*, not to your personal time, or your Pokeman Go!

PP#10: Exodus 35:2 "For six days work may be done, but on the seventh day you shall have a holy day, a Sabbath of complete rest to the LORD."

Leviticus 23:3 "Work can be done for six days, but the seventh day is a Sabbath of *special rest, a holy occasion*. You must not do any work on it; wherever you live, it is the *Sabbath of the Lord*."

Exodus 35:2 explains that rest is not "me-time" but rest *to God*. It's your time with God. That's why we have worship once a week. We come away from our daily lives to reconnect to God. We rest, not just from our work, but we specifically rest in God. We need this! I need this. You need this! This is what keeps our lives from becoming overwhelming! Not just rest, but rest in God!

Leviticus 23:3, "The seventh day is a Sabbath of special rest, a holy occasion...it is a Sabbath *of the Lord*." One of the ways we rob God is by making His day, our day. We switch it from being a time we spend with God to a time we spend on what we want. Sabbath becomes our day, rather than God's day. This is dangerous! We are emptying our lives from the inside out!

PP#11: Isaiah 58:13-14 "13 If you stop trampling the Sabbath, stop doing whatever you want on my holy day, and consider the Sabbath a delight, sacred to the Lord, honored, and honor it instead of doing things your way, seeking what you want and doing business as usual, 14

then you will take delight in the Lord. I will let you ride on the heights of the earth; I will sustain you with the heritage of your ancestor Jacob. The mouth of the Lord has spoken.”

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When we give our Sabbath back to God, then He will lift us up, overcoming all that challenges us, giving us the inner peace, and sustaining us through it all, just like our ancestors. This is God’s promise!

PP#12: *An image for truly resting in God.*

Sabbath is about stopping doing things our way, and starting doing things God’s way. And when we do, *then* we will finally find true rest. You want that deep, inner peace, that solid rest, the capacity to handle whatever comes? Give your Sabbath to the Lord! Yes, you can spend it with family. Yes, you can do things that you enjoy. But all that must be done as you connect yourself to God; go climb into His lap! That means worship. That means prayer. That means reading God’s word. That means spending quite time with God, listening to His still, small voice. That means telling your family about who Jesus is to you, and why He makes such a difference in your life.

What is one thing you are you going to do, as we go into this school year again, to give your Sabbath to God? You need it. You were made for it. Stop conforming to this world’s pattern. Conform your life to God’s. And you will finally find rest!

PP#13: Matthew 11:28-29, [Jesus says,] “Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find *rest for your souls*.”

In a moment we’ll be celebrating Holy Communion. It is in Holy Communion that we proclaim that Jesus has won for us the way of true and full life. We celebrate what Jesus did for us, so that we might finally be whole. He offers us a swap. He takes our stressed-out, weary lives, and He gives us peaceful and restful ones. When we take Jesus’ life, we can live in a way that we will find rest for our souls.

Spend some time, making your confessions of business to God. Confess how you have compromised His Sabbath. Ask Him to put you back on a healthy pattern of life. Give up your weary and burdened hearts. Ask for rest for your souls.

After a moment, we’ll pray a prayer out loud together on the screens. But for now, pray in your hearts.

[Silent prayers.]

PP#14: “Let Me Rest” by Christine Sine

Let me rest in the place of stillness,
Where God fills my body
With the peace that is beyond understanding.
Let me rest in the place of quiet,

Where God fills my spirit
With the peace that is beyond understanding.

PP#15: Let me rest in the place of trust,
Where God fills my heart
With the peace that is beyond understand.
Let me rest in the presence of God,
Where all that I am and all that I do
Is filled with the peace that is beyond understanding.
Amen.

PP#16: “Serve” icon from the web site.

[Children invited into the sanctuary.]
Prayers over the Head Start quilts, offering Sabbath for their days.

PP#17: Holy Communion
“Be Still” - Andrew Bonsell

Closing Song: “Build Your Kingdom Here”

Benediction: – Pastor David