

## REMEMBER THE SABBATH

*EXODUS 20:8-11*

Well, good morning. My name is Ben etc. intro. Pastor Mike's Birthday Party.

It was the summer of 1924, and the eyes of the world were squarely fixed on Paris. The city was on the cusp of the eighth Summer Olympic Games. Britain's gold medal hopes for track and field were firmly placed on the athletic shoulders of their two star runners: Harold Abrahams, an English Jew from Cambridge, and a Scottish Presbyterian from Edinburgh named Eric Liddell.

In training leading up to the games, the two of them had been Britain's best sprinters and close rivals. The expectation across the British Commonwealth was that Abrahams and Liddell would finally showdown in the Olympic 100m final to decide the title of world's fastest man. There was only one possible obstacle to this epic finale. Liddell, the Scottish Presbyterian, because of his firm conviction to honor the Lord's Day, wouldn't run if the race fell on a Sunday.

Liddell was obeying God's words in the fourth commandment in Exodus 20:8: "Remember the Sabbath, to keep it holy."

We are in our third week in our series on the Ten Commandments. You'll remember that a couple of weeks ago Pastor Mike set this foundation for us of the great indicative that the ten commandments begins with. This epic statement of who God is and what he has done. Before God ever commands anything he reminds his covenant people that he is the God who has rescued them. "I am the Lord your God who brought you out of Egypt."

And it's in light of the rescue that has already happened that God starts to lay out what it looks like to live as his rescued and redeemed people. And Pastor Mike unpacked the first two commandments for us. God says these two things, "You shall have no other gods before me... and... You shall not make for yourself a carved image." God is getting to the heart of our sin problem. Martin Luther said that this first commandment really summarizes the entire law. You can't violate any other commandment without first violating this. Breaking any command starts with worshipping a substitute god.

Then last week we took a look at the third commandment, what it means to not take the name of the Lord in vain. Sermon website. And this morning we come to this fourth command: "Remember the Sabbath, to keep it holy."

The word Sabbath itself means “to cease”, or to “rest.” In Ex. 16 God instructs Israel that the seventh day of the week, Saturday, is meant to be “a day of rest, a holy Sabbath to the Lord.”

This theme of Sabbath runs right through the Bible. It is incredibly important to the Bible’s storyline.

Throughout Israel’s history, even today, the details of what you can and can’t do on the Sabbath, this day of rest, have been painstakingly parsed out.

In Jesus day there was a well known debate among Jewish religious leaders surrounding what was permissible to do on the Sabbath. And it went like this: If you went out to your chicken coop on the Sabbath morning and found an egg under one of the hens, could you eat it? Now if the egg had been laid before the Sabbath began, it was permissible to eat, but if the hen laid it on the Sabbath it would have to be thrown away. But when you go out on the Sabbath morning, how do you know which it is? And so this became a bit of a theological dilemma.

Even today, if you’re in Israel on the Sabbath and you’re in a building with an elevator you’ll find a line out the door to use Sabbath elevator. You see the Sabbath elevator stops on every floor without having to press any buttons.

Any good Jewish family makes sure to keep the switch that controls the light in their household fridge taped back so the light doesn’t turn on when you open the fridge on the Sabbath. Because turning on or off lights is prohibited on this day of rest. I just saw this week that there is even a new Sabbath Texting app for Android that allows Orthodox Jews to text without violating any Sabbath law.

The point is that for the Jewish people, how you behave, the things you do or don’t do on the Sabbath are incredibly important.

But what does this command mean for us as Christians today?

Most Christians seem to fall somewhere on this spectrum of how we treat the Sabbath. On the one end of the spectrum Christians can treat the Sabbath like a Saturday interrupted by church, and on the other end there are Christians who advocate a strictness applies an extended list of rules to Sunday. So what do Christians do about the Sabbath? How does this day of rest apply to us today?

Well, let’s unpack this command and then there are four things I want us to see about Sabbath rest. We’re going to see the *rhythm* of rest, the *roots* of rest, the *reason* for rest, and the *realization* of rest. So let’s dive in together.

## 1. The *rhythm* of rest.

Look at verses 8-10. "Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy. Six days you shall labor and do all your work, but the seventh is a Sabbath to the Lord your God."

God is commanding his covenant people to set aside a day especially for rest and remembrance. That is what it means to keep this day holy. Literally it means to sanctify it, to set it apart for sacred use.

And there is a rhythm involved in this. Every day is not meant for rest and remembrance, nor is every day meant for work. God has made a rhythm to the pattern that we need of work and rest. Six days a week are made for work and one day out of the week is supposed to look different. It is set apart.

But notice that this commandment isn't just about rest, it's also about work. Look at v. 9: "Six days a week you shall labor and do all your work." Our work matters to God. God gives us 85% of our week to focus on our work.

Now sometimes people think that work is just a result of the fall. In a column for *Time* magazine, Lance Morrow claimed, "When God foreclosed on Eden, he condemned Adam and Eve to go to work. From the beginning, the Lord's word said that work was something bad: a punishment, the great stone of mortality and toil laid upon a human spirit that might otherwise soar in the infinite, weightless playfulness of grace."

Now Lance Morrow is totally wrong. Work was not the result of sin and the fall, it was God's good gift to us. But difficulty in our work, Trials and challenges in what we do, is part of the effects of sin on our work.

So God created us to work, but he also created us to have a rhythm between our work and our rest. Six days are for labor, one is set apart for rest and remembrance.

Think of how radical this would have been for the people of Israel. They have just spent 400 years in slavery, doing back breaking work every single day of their lives, and what does God say to them? I am a different master. I am not a slave driver, I am not a task master but a good and gracious God who will give you rest. God's institution of the Sabbath says something significant about who he is.

God made us to have rhythm but we're really bad at it. We don't know how to balance work and rest well. We don't rest well because we don't work well, and we don't work well because we don't rest well. Both our work and our rest can be hectic, sporadic and chaotic. We often don't find joy in either. Life feels constantly overwhelming. We keep ourselves busy because it makes us feel important, valued, needed. We end up getting bogged down in what one pastor calls the "thingyness" of life. We are entrapped by the stuff, the very activities and object we think will free us actually hold us captive.

Technology only adds to this problem. We mix work and rest because we have this taskmaster in our pocket. Our work day is peppered with Facebook updates and ESPN articles and cat videos on YouTube and we spend our evenings watching TV while answering emails and text messages. We're never

completely “on” and never totally “off”. As Kevin DeYoung puts it, “our facet is on constant drip.” There is no consistent rhythm to our lives.

If you’re retired you face this too. You don’t have a job anymore, but the lines between work and play are blurred. Even in retirement God has made you to live with a purpose, a calling for those six days that goes beyond serving yourself. You need to find that rhythm too.

We’re meant to live in a rhythm of work and rest. We’re meant to live in a Sabbath pattern.

God wants us to be a people of rhythm, because he is a God of rhythm. We see this in verse 11 when we see the roots of rest.

## 2. The roots of rest.

Look at v. 11. We’re given the reason God’s covenant people should have this rhythm of work and rest. “For in six days the Lord made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that is in them, and rested on the seventh day. Therefore the Lord blessed the Sabbath day and made it holy.”

We are called to this rhythm of work and rest because we serve a working and resting God. This command is rooted in creation. God’s pattern of work and rest in creation sets the pattern for us.

And God’s story in Scripture continues this Sabbath pattern. Think about the rhythms that God instituted for his people. There was a regular cycle for Israel of festivals, days of celebration and rest. Every seventh year was to be a Sabbath year where fields were to lie fallow, and every fiftieth year a year of Jubilee where land was returned to its original owners and slaves and bond servants were set free. Do you see that God is all about this rhythm, this pattern of work and rest?

But let’s go back to creation for a moment. And I want to ask the question: Why did God rest? I mean, God creates for six days and then he takes a day off, but why? God doesn’t get tired. What is this day of rest all about?

Well, if we go back to Genesis 1 and 2, the whole creation account here really mirrors many of the Ancient Near-Eastern patterns for the inauguration of a temple. That in cultures like Egypt, when a new temple was built, for six days the instruments of that temple, the things that would be in the temple and would serve in the worship of the deity of that temple, would be put in their places, assigned their roles, set apart for the task they were prepared for. And always, on the seventh day, the deity of the temple would be brought in and enthroned in the midst of the temple and begin the task of ruling and reigning.

And so when Moses is writing Genesis he is pointing to Yahweh as God and all of creation as his temple. All of creation is designed to serve in the worship of the Lord. For six days God places these instruments made to worship him where he wants them to go. And then on the seventh day God is enthroned in the midst of his temple. He sits down on his great throne, not to take a nap, but to begin the task of ruling and reigning. Do you see what God is doing? You see, God’s rest is not because he is tired, it’s not because he needs to be replenished. It’s because he is finished his creative work and chooses

to admire it. He's finished his task of making all that is, and has entered into to his sovereign kingly work of ruling over what he's made.

Well, why am I even sharing that with you? What does that matter? Brothers and sisters, this helps set for us the *reasons* for our rest. Rest is about more than just physical recuperation. There is more going on here.

So I want to give you three reasons this morning. Three reasons we are to set apart a day for rest and remembrance and what that looks like.

a.) The Sabbath is a day set aside for *worship*.

I know, you're thinking, "aren't we supposed to worship God every day?" And the answer is yes, but there is something especially meaningful about the Sabbath, the Lord's Day. (After Jesus' resurrection the disciples began meeting on the first day of the week instead of the seventh because it's the day Jesus rose again.) What does the command say? It says remember.

Now when God says "remember the Sabbath," he is not just saying remember facts. Remembrance is more than just an intellectual exercise. It involves more than just our memory, it demands the engagement of our whole selves.

You see, remembering the Sabbath is kind of like remembering your anniversary. Think about this. On my anniversary, if I were to simply say to my wife, "Hey honey, it's our anniversary today!" and left it at that. Like no chocolate, no date, no dinner, no special event, no romance, I would be in big trouble. Here is a day that God has set for us to pay special attention, to remember him, to celebrate his works, to rehearse what he has done in rescuing and redeeming us. This weekly anniversary is about more than just waking up and saying, hey Sunday today. It's a day set apart for a particular use, to worship.

That worship involves gathering with God's covenant people. The worship God asks of us on the Lord's day isn't at bedside baptist or pillow Pentecostal, but at a local gathering of believers. We can't substitute a sermon video and NFL Redzone for the church gathered. But the New Testament equivalent of the fourth commandment is this. Don't neglect to meet together. Don't neglect to meet together.

This gathering is how God has designed his covenant people to meet with him. There is something mysterious about what happens when we come together. I said it last week. This is a conversation. Theologians much smarter than I am call this dialogical worship. It's a dialogue between God and his people. God calls us in to worship him together and we respond, we speak to him and praise him and worship him in the words we sing. And then we come under his word together to hear what he has to say to us as the Bible is preached. And this is not something that we're supposed to neglect.

So how do Christians follow this command? We go to church, and we're consistent about it.

Let's go back to the anniversary picture for a moment though. If it was my wife's anniversary and on the day of I just kind threw together a plan to grab dinner at McDonalds and go watch the latest Avengers movie, would she be happy? No, I learned early on in my marriage that my wife's love language is planning. There is something to taking the time to make a moment meaningful, to think about it well ahead of time, that makes all the difference.

How we celebrate the Lord's Day is the same. So many of us are waking up, scrambling to get our kids out of bed, get us out of bed, get the sleep out of everyone's eyes, shove some toast or cereal in everyone's mouth, make sure everyone has shoes on the right feet, that we get to church and our hearts are not in a state to worship. But preparing our hearts for Sunday should happen way before our alarm goes off on Sunday morning.

Saturday night we ought to begin preparing our hearts and our minds and our bodies for what God does as his people gather on Sunday. If you have kids, this is something that can involve them. It might only take ten minutes, but it's turning our hearts toward God. Picking up his word, praying for our own hearts and the hearts of others as we prepare for Sunday. And then it's practical stuff. Getting to bed early so you're physically ready. Preparation. Christians can obey the fourth commandment by regularly going to church and regularly preparing our hearts for what God does as his people gather. The Sabbath rest is a day set aside for worship.

b.) Related this this is that it's also a day set aside to *allow others to worship*.

Look back at Exodus 20 again. Let's read starting in v. 10. "but the seventh day is a Sabbath to the Lord your God. On it you shall not do any work, you, or your son, or your daughter, your male servant, or your female servant, or your livestock, or the sojourner who is within your gates." God was liberally dispensing this gift of rest and worship and he wanted everyone to be a part of it - even the cows. And so part of how this looks for us is that we make room for others to worship.

There are young moms in our congregation who haven't been in a full church service for weeks. Their kids are sick, and so they have to stay home, and then the one Sunday they do come it's because they are scheduled to be in the nursery looking after kids. As we serve one another though, we're not just looking at how the Sabbath looks for us and our worship, we're looking to how we can help others worship. Even a church this small takes a lot of people volunteering their time on Sunday, and at times foregoing their full engagement in what goes on in the service to help others worship. That's part of what this command is all about. Obedience to this command means that we don't just think about ourselves, we think about others. We serve and we volunteer and we facilitate others engaging God.

But it goes beyond action to our words as well. Right after Hebrews 10 tells us to not neglect meeting together, it instructs us to encourage one another daily. When you show up at church are you just thinking about what you are going to get out of it, or are you thinking about how God might use you in another person's life. We come to worship God, but also come to minister to one another in this

community of grace. I mentioned last week one way that can look as we pray for one another. Another way - cards.

Obedying the fourth commandment means we serve others and allow them to worship - we do things that turn their eyes to see the greatness and the grace of God.

c.) The third reason for rest is this: Rest teaches us to trust God's sovereign rule.

We have a hard time with this. We have a hard time putting down our work, because either our work needs us or we need our work. Taking a day without it just doesn't seem very practical. This was Bill Gates problem with religion. When he was asked why he didn't believe in God, Gates answered: "Just in terms of allocation of time resources, religion is not ver efficient. There's a lot more I could be doing Sunday morning."

When we lay aside those pressing things that we feel we have to do, there is a surrender to the reality that God is ultimately in control. That God is the one holding the world together and he'll keep holding it together even if I lay down for a nap. It's a way of saying, "I trust you God. You'll be ok without me."

Mark Buchanan says that, "unless we trust God's sovereignty, we won't dare risk Sabbath." And I think he's right. When I look at my own life and the difficulty I have in putting down the tasks I have to do, the root of it is a lack of trust in God's sovereignty and goodness to move life forward without me. Rest teaches us to trust in God's sovereign rule.

So how do Christians obey this fourth commandment? Well, we go to church on Sunday. We prepare our hearts on Saturday, We get enough sleep. We show up to serve others. And we make Sunday different. Sunday isn't just Saturday interrupted by Church. It's different. It a day set apart for rest and remembrance.

And I know you're saying, well Ben, that's great for Sunday morning, but I still don't know what to do with the rest of my day. I want the can and cant's. And the reality is that even for Old Testament Israel this command was left very open.

For example, can you cut the grass on Sunday? Well, if the grass needs to be cut because you didn't have a chance on Saturday and you have a busy week coming up, maybe it's best to leave the grass. Rest in God's sovereign hand sustain your family even if the grass doesn't look perfect the next week. But if the grass needs to be cut and this is one of your favorite, most relaxing chores, then by all means, cut the grass on Sunday.

If you work a desk job all week, Sunday might not look like sitting in a La-Z-Boy all afternoon. You need something different. You need something active. On the other hand, if you work a very physical job, the best thing you might do Sunday afternoon is take a nap and read a book. Whatever the rest of your week looks like, make Sunday look different.

So there you go. There's your list. And if you want to be a good Christian, that's what you need to do. I could end like that - there are a lot of pastors who would end here. But if I do that you're going to miss the whole point of the Sabbath. Because ultimately the Sabbath is only pointing us to something greater. A more ultimate *realization* of rest.

#### 4.) The *realization* of rest.

There is a scene in Matthew where Jesus and his disciples are walking through the grain fields on the Sabbath, and they start to pluck the heads off of the grain stalks and eat them. Well, the religious papparazzi is following them and they pop out of hiding and point the finger at Jesus and go back to the man made list of Sabbath rules and say to him, "Look, your disciples are doing what it's not lawful for them to do on the Sabbath." In other words, their breaking the almighty list.

And what does Jesus say to them? He reminds them of an OT story. You see, King David and his men, when they were on the run from Saul, went in to the tabernacle and actually ate the bread that was to be set before the presence of God. And Jesus says to them, something greater than that that tabernacle is here. The Son of Man is lord of the Sabbath. Jesus is saying, I am the Lord of the Sabbath. You know this Sabbath that has been one of the central signs of our covenant with God, that has been so important to who we are as a people, that has been about rest and remembrance, a day for the worship of God? That Sabbath is all about me.

Colossians 2:17 says that the Sabbath was merely a shadow of what was to come, but the the substance, the real thing, is found in Christ. Jesus is the true and better Sabbath. It's in him that we enter in to true worship. It's in him that we finally find rest from our work. It's in him that we will one day enjoy a rest that is eternal.

We don't have time to unpack the whole thing, but Hebrews chapter 4 shows us that Jesus is the fulfillment of every the Sabbath pointed to. Heb. 9-10 says this: "So then, there remains a Sabbath rest for the people of God, for whoever has entered God's rest has also rested from his works as God did from his."

All of us are laboring. We're working for meaning, for significance, to get noticed. We're wanting to justify our existence, to justify ourselves. To prove ourselves to be good people so God will take care of us and bless us. But Jesus comes and he says, "Come to me all you who are burdened and heavy laden and I will give you what? Rest. For my yoke is easy and my burden is light, and in me you'll find rest for your souls.

Obedience to the list will never give you life, because you can never follow it perfectly. Jesus is the life giver. He fulfilled the law perfectly on our behalf in order that we can rest in him forever.

Do you remember Harold Abrahams and Eric Liddell? Well, their story is told in the Oscar Award winning movie Chariots of Fire. And the movie really contrasts these two sprinters. You see both



Abrahams and Liddell are training and working and disciplining themselves in order to go for gold, but for different reasons. Abrahams is out to prove himself. There is one point in the movie where he says that once that gun goes off to start the 100m sprint, he says "I have 10 seconds to justify my existence." He's working to prove himself.

Liddell is different. His purpose is simply worship. To do what God has made him to do. One of my favorite lines in the movie is when Liddell says, "God made me fast, and when I run I feel his pleasure." Here is the difference between the two of them - Abrahams was weary even when he was rested but Liddell, he was rested even when he was exerting himself.

As Abrahams and Liddell boarded the plane to Paris, Liddell got word that the qualifying heats for the 100m would be staged on a Sunday. He wouldn't run. Despite pressure from British Track and Field and the public Liddell stuck by his convictions. You see, Liddell had found a greater rest that didn't require his performance to justify his existence. He knew Christ, his Sabbath rest.

Abrahams won gold in the 100m final, and Liddell went on to win a bronze in the 200m and gold in the 400m, a race he'd only run a handful of times in competition. The year after the Olympics Liddell left as a missionary to China where he spent 18 years until his death in 1945 in a Japanese internment camp.

Liddell knew the Lord of the Sabbath.

Sabbath rest in new heavens and new earth. Earthly Sabbath rest is a foretaste of this.

Transition to communion.