



Sabbath

Joining with God's Rest

INTRODUCTION

What if human beings were not created to rest from work, but to work from a place of rest? The Bible introduces us to the gift of sabbath in the opening chapters of Genesis. Throughout scripture, sabbath remains an important and underlying theme of Israel's story. When Jesus arrives on the scene, sabbath begins to take on additional meaning. What does sabbath mean for us today? How are we to understand it and treasure it as the gift it is? This 6 part series unpacks sabbath.

Sabbath Rest

Sabbath Recreation

Sabbath Resistance

Sabbath Remembering

Sabbath Restoration

Sabbath Resurrection



Sabbath

“Sabbath Rest”

Opening Prayer

Eternal God you have made us to find our rest in you. We praise you and thank you for the gift of sabbath. We thank you for a cathedral in time through which we might be renewed and reconnected to your generous provision and grace. Help us to trust in the sufficiency of your love and care as the grounding of our lives so that whether resting or laboring, we might know who and whose we are. Amen.

Opening Question: How do you rest best?

Scripture: Genesis 1:31-2; Exodus 20:8-11

God saw everything he had made: it was supremely good. There was evening and there was morning: the sixth day. The heavens and the earth and all who live in them were completed. On the sixth day God completed all the work that he had done, and on the seventh day God rested from all the work that he had done. God blessed the seventh day and made it holy, because on it God rested from all the work of creation.

Remember the Sabbath day and treat it as holy. Six days you may work and do all your tasks, but the seventh day is a Sabbath to the Lord your God. Do not do any work on it—not you, your sons or daughters, your male or female servants, your animals, or the immigrant who is living with you. Because the Lord made the heavens and the earth, the sea, and everything that is in them in six days, but rested on the seventh day. That is why the Lord blessed the Sabbath day and made it holy.

Discussion

1. What is the connection between the command to keep the sabbath and the creation story in Genesis?
2. What might it mean for us that the beginning of our human existence in the Genesis story was rest, not work? (God created humanity, then the sabbath)
3. What do you think it means to be “human beings” not “human doings?”
4. How does sabbath rest help us properly understand the creature/Creator relationship?
5. What kind of “rest” do you think these passages have in mind? What constitutes sabbath rest?
6. What are the biggest things keeping us from resting with God today?
7. What would it look like to treat sabbath as “holy?” How can our rest be *holy*?

Big Idea

The sabbath is the seventh day of creation. In the Bible, seven is seen as completeness or wholeness. Human beings begin at rest with God in the creation story complete. Before we do anything, we’re just with God. Made in God’s image, we are yet creatures while God is Creator. Our identity should be working from a place of rest rather than resting from a place of work.



Sabbath

“Sabbath Recreation”

Opening Prayer

Eternal God you have made us to find our rest in you. We praise you and thank you for the gift of sabbath. We thank you for a cathedral in time through which we might be renewed and reconnected to your generous provision and grace. Help us to trust in the sufficiency of your love and care as the grounding of our lives so that whether resting or laboring, we might know who and whose we are. Amen.

Opening Question: What is your favorite kind of recreation?

Scripture: Genesis 1:31-2

God saw everything he had made: it was supremely good. There was evening and there was morning: the sixth day. The heavens and the earth and all who live in them were completed. On the sixth day God completed all the work that he had done, and on the seventh day God rested from all the work that he had done. God blessed the seventh day and made it holy, because on it God rested from all the work of creation.

Discussion

1. Why do you think God rested on the seventh day? Was God tired? Some other reason?
2. How might the description of what God made as “supremely good” give us clues as to why God rested?
3. Can you think of a time when you finished creating something you were very proud of? What did you do after you finished it?
4. If God rested to enjoy delight in, and spend time with what God made, what does that say about our practicing sabbath?
5. Recreation means activity done for enjoyment, for delight. How might recreation be a way of practicing sabbath?
6. How does recreation help us to delight in and pay attention to the good things God created and also to the God who created them?

Big Idea

Sabbath teaches delight in what God has made. It creates time and space for recreation—activity done simply for delight and for enjoyment, spending time with what God made and called very good. It’s not work, it’s delight in God’s work. We don’t get something done, we engage in activities that make us watch and be responsive to what God has done so that we don’t, as one Jewish prayer puts it, “walk sightless among miracles.”



Sabbath

“Sabbath Resistance”

Opening Prayer

Eternal God you have made us to find our rest in you. We praise you and thank you for the gift of sabbath. We thank you for a cathedral in time through which we might be renewed and reconnected to your generous provision and grace. Help us to trust in the sufficiency of your love and care as the grounding of our lives so that whether resting or laboring, we might know who and whose we are. Amen.

Opening Question: What’s the hardest thing for you to resist about your work?

Scripture: Exodus 5:8-9; 20:2, 8-10

But still make sure that they produce the same number of bricks as they made before. Don’t reduce the number! They are weak and lazy, and that’s why they cry, ‘Let’s go and offer sacrifices to our God.’ Make the men’s work so hard that it’s all they can do, and they can’t focus on these empty lies.

I am the Lord your God who brought you out of Egypt, out of the house of slavery.

Remember the Sabbath day and treat it as holy. Six days you may work and do all your tasks, but the seventh day is a Sabbath to the Lord your God. Do not do any work on it—not you, your sons or daughters, your male or female servants, your animals, or the immigrant who is living with you.

Discussion

1. Why do you think the sabbath command is connected to God delivering from slavery?
2. What characterized the system of Pharaoh in which the Israelites were enslaved?
3. What are some of the ways we hear the voice of Pharaoh today with all the pressures and demands of work, productivity, consumerism, and busyness?
4. How does that “voice of Pharaoh” affect our identity?
5. How was sabbath rest a form of resistance for the Israelites? What were they resisting?
6. How might sabbath rest be a way of resistance for us today? What are we resisting?
7. Old Testament experts have long noted that the sabbath command falls in the middle of the Ten Commandments. The first half relates to relationship with God and the second half relates to relationship with other humans. Why might that be significant?

Big Idea

The Ten Commandments contain a command to keep the sabbath. This command is rooted and grounded in the truth that God delivered the Israelites from slavery. God freed them from a system of oppression that was defined by production. Keeping the sabbath was resistance against that system that did not afford the chance to rest. When we practice sabbath, we resist the forces in our world that try to convince us to do more, buy more, work more, produce more.



Sabbath

“Sabbath Remembering”

Opening Prayer

Eternal God you have made us to find our rest in you. We praise you and thank you for the gift of sabbath. We thank you for a cathedral in time through which we might be renewed and reconnected to your generous provision and grace. Help us to trust in the sufficiency of your love and care as the grounding of our lives so that whether resting or laboring, we might know who and whose we are. Amen.

Opening Question: What is one thing you’ve told yourself you would never want to forget?

Scripture: Deuteronomy 5:12-14; 6:12

Keep the Sabbath day and treat it as holy, exactly as the Lord your God commanded: 13 Six days you may work and do all your tasks, but the seventh day is a Sabbath to the Lord your God. Don’t do any work on it—not you, your sons or daughters, your male or female servants, your oxen or donkeys or any of your animals, or the immigrant who is living among you—so that your male and female servants can rest just like you. Remember that you were a slave in Egypt, but the Lord your God brought you out of there with a strong hand and an outstretched arm. That’s why the Lord your God commands you to keep the Sabbath day.

Watch yourself! Don’t forget the Lord, who brought you out of Egypt, out of the house of slavery.

Discussion

1. Why do you think the sabbath command here is connected to remembering? What are they supposed to remember?
2. What might be the dangers of amnesia for Israel? For us?
3. What are some of the things we forget about ourselves and about God?
4. What might practicing sabbath rest help us to remember?
5. In what ways does practicing sabbath help us to remember those things?
6. What is the relationship between the Israelite’s rest, remembering, and their servants?
7. How is remembering connected to living well in the here and now?

Big Idea

When the Israelites are about to enter the Promised Land, Moses calls them to remember many things. In this review of the Ten Commandments, sabbath is connected to remembering God. There is danger in forgetting, particularly as it relates to our worship of and dependence upon God. When we forget, we deform into less than who God made us to be. Practicing Sabbath helps us to remember God’s saving love and presence in our own lives and not become selfish, conceited, or entitled. We look to God’s faithfulness and generosity and not our own clout.



Sabbath

“Sabbath Restoration”

Opening Prayer

Eternal God you have made us to find our rest in you. We praise you and thank you for the gift of sabbath. We thank you for a cathedral in time through which we might be renewed and reconnected to your generous provision and grace. Help us to trust in the sufficiency of your love and care as the grounding of our lives so that whether resting or laboring, we might know who and whose we are. Amen.

Opening Question: Name something in your life that you wish could have been restored.

Scripture: Matthew 11:28-30; Matthew 12:9-14

Come to me, all you who are struggling hard and carrying heavy loads, and I will give you rest. Put on my yoke, and learn from me. I’m gentle and humble. And you will find rest for yourselves. My yoke is easy to bear, and my burden is light.”

Jesus left that place and went into their synagogue. A man with a withered hand was there. Wanting to bring charges against Jesus, they asked, “Does the Law allow a person to heal on the Sabbath?” Jesus replied, “Who among you has a sheep that falls into a pit on the Sabbath and will not take hold of it and pull it out? How much more valuable is a person than a sheep! So the Law allows a person to do what is good on the Sabbath.” Then Jesus said to the man, “Stretch out your hand.” So he did and it was made healthy, just like the other one.

Discussion

1. What do you think Jesus means by giving us rest? What burdens does he bear for us?
2. What is the relationship between rest and restoration in Jesus?
3. What do you think Jesus wants to restore in us?
4. Where do we see restoration in the second passage? Why is it significant Jesus does it on the sabbath?
5. How might the practice of sabbath rest help us to experience Jesus’ restoration?
6. Another way to think about this is to think about restoration as a kind of re-tuning or realignment. How might sabbath help to retune or realign us?

Big Idea

Much to the dismay of the religious experts, Jesus heals a man on the sabbath. Unfortunately, they are missing the point. The one who offers us rest and offers himself to bear our heavy loads wants us to experience restoration like only he can give. Sabbath gives us the chance to be in proximity to Jesus so that we are restored and realigned to be the more whole and holy image bearers God created us to be!



Sabbath

“Sabbath Resurrection”

Opening Prayer

Eternal God you have made us to find our rest in you. We praise you and thank you for the gift of sabbath. We thank you for a cathedral in time through which we might be renewed and reconnected to your generous provision and grace. Help us to trust in the sufficiency of your love and care as the grounding of our lives so that whether resting or laboring, we might know who and whose we are. Amen.

Opening Question: What is the greatest victory or win you’ve ever been a part of?

Scripture: Luke 24:1-9

Very early in the morning on the first day of the week, the women went to the tomb, bringing the fragrant spices they had prepared. They found the stone rolled away from the tomb, but when they went in, they didn’t find the body of the Lord Jesus. They didn’t know what to make of this. Suddenly, two men were standing beside them in gleaming bright clothing. The women were frightened and bowed their faces toward the ground, but the men said to them, “Why do you look for the living among the dead? He isn’t here, but has been raised. Remember what he told you while he was still in Galilee, that the Human One must be handed over to sinners, be crucified, and on the third day rise again.” Then they remembered his words. When they returned from the tomb, they reported all these things to the eleven and all the others.

Discussion

1. What do you think the women were thinking and feeling as they went to Jesus’ tomb on a Sunday morning?
2. How might Jesus’ resurrection be the ultimate sabbath? How is it what sabbath was pointing to all along?
3. What added glory or hope does Jesus’ resurrection add to sabbath?
4. What does Jesus’ resurrection mean or accomplish for the world? What does it say about God?
5. How does thinking that every Sunday is a celebration of Easter change how we practice or understand sabbath?
6. What are the ways in which sabbath helps us worship the God who makes all things new? How do you celebrate the good news that Jesus is alive and reigns as Lord?

Big Idea

The most defining, significant, glorious, good event in the history of the world happened on a Sunday. Early Christians naturally began to celebrate on that day the joy of Jesus’ resurrection. Jesus’ resurrection was and is the sabbath of all sabbaths. The first day of the week ends up being the first day of God’s new creation project. It is a day to celebrate that Jesus is alive, that God in Christ is at work making all things new! In us and in the world. Jesus’ victory makes each sabbath of rest and worship a celebration of resurrection for us.



Sabbath

Wrap-Up

What is the biggest thing God is saying to you after this study and these conversations?

What are you going to do about it?

What are your next steps?