

Remembering Rest

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Preacher: Andrew Price

- [0:00] Well, I hope, having missed last Sunday, I hope all those mums out there had a restful Mother's Day last Sunday. I don't know if you were one of those. Here are some kids who tried to give their mum a restful Mother's Day.
- Take a look at this video. You get orange juice, you get the bread.
- I can't reach it. Watch out.
- Just go get two eggs. Please. No, I was supposed to take the tray, Mom.
- No, I was. You get the door. No, I was. Give it to me. No, I'm supposed to take it. Mom. Mom. Whoa. Wait, where's Kyle?
- [1:24] You get the fun. They say it's the thought that counts. I'm not sure how restful that Mother's Day would have been for their mum.
- But whether you're a mum or not, I wonder what the idea of rest means for you. Does it mean a sleep-in or a sunny holiday? I wonder what it means for you.
- I asked that question to some people from church, and one of them said their idea of rest was, and I quote, It's lying on a banana lounge by a white sandy beach with some sun, a gentle breeze, and the sound of the waves softly rolling up the shore.
- We all went, oh. I then asked another person who had young kids what rest was for them, and they said it was a distant memory. Well, today we come to the fourth commandment, which is all about rest, as we return to Exodus after last week.
- And the word Sabbath means rest or cease. And we're looking at this commandment on its own because of all the ten commandments, Christians are most divided about this commandment.
- [2:41] From the Seventh-day Adventists, who don't do any work on a Saturday, because Saturday is originally the Sabbath day for Israel, still is for Jews today. And so you've got Christians at that end.
- To other Christians for whom Sunday is the new Sabbath. And so they won't do anything on a Sunday. Like Eric Liddell. Do you remember that movie, Chariots of Fire? Eric Liddell, true story.
- His Olympic race was put on a Sunday, so he refused to run on it because for him it was a Sabbath. And then, spoiler alert, he ran in a different race and still got gold.
- But there's division because it is a bit tricky. And so we're going to look at this commandment on its own. And as we do, I want to do something a little bit different. I want to give you a model to teach you how to apply any Old Testament law that you read in the Bible for yourself.
- But we need to begin by understanding the Sabbath law itself. So at point one and then verse eight to ten in Exodus 20. So have a look there. Here God's command was to remember the Sabbath day by keeping it holy.
- [3:48] Here God's command was to remember the Sabbath day by keeping it holy.

Holy. The word holy means to be set apart, whether that's being morally set apart as pure, which is quite a big idea, a dominant idea, I think, in the New Testament. Or distinctly set apart as different.

Well, Tuesday is not more morally pure than Wednesday. I mean, we all love Fridays, though, of course, don't we? So it's not talking about being morally holy.

It's talking about being distinctly holy as different. How? Well, by not doing work on the seventh day like you do on the other six days. And notice that doing this was a Sabbath to the Lord, your God.

Verse 10 says that the Sabbath is to God. It's resting for God. It's part of loving God. As we saw God save them by grace and some response to his grace, they are to love him, including resting on the seventh day.

[5 : 14] And so even if they wanted to work, even if they felt they had to work, like at harvest time, when, you know, it's kind of brushing the clock to get all the harvest in, they could not work.

And they had to trust God that their world wouldn't fall apart if they stopped work for one day, which is not a bad lesson for us workaholics today, is it? They were to rest on the seventh day.

And it's here that God seems to institute the seven-day week. In ancient Egypt, where Israel had been living for many years, Egypt had a 10-day week.

Can you imagine that? Working for 10 days, that's only three weeks, only three weekends off a month. How would you feel about that? Ripped off, I would feel. But here Israel was to have a seven-day week where the seventh was set apart to God.

But because God is good, his day was actually for their good, that they might enjoy his rest.

[6 : 14] As Jesus goes on to say in the New Testament, mankind was not made for the Sabbath, but rather the Sabbath was made for mankind, for their good.

And so verse 11, Israel was to rest on the seventh day for or because 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. And now this is more than just imitating God. You know, God rested on the seventh, so you rest on the seventh.

Rather, it's also about remembering God's rest at creation. Creation. You see, in Genesis, God saw all that he had made and it was very good on the first sentence there on the screen.

And there was evening and there was morning, the sixth day. And then on the seventh day, God rested from creating. But he didn't rest in order to start another project, you know, build another world.

[7 : 16] He rested in order to enjoy this world. And my son cooked this sensational chicken dish as part of his food tech class. He had to do a practice at home.

And once he'd finished creating his MasterChef dish, he rested from his cooking, not to make another dish, but to enjoy that dish.

And we got to enjoy some of it too. It was beautiful. In fact, some have enjoyed it so much so we enjoyed the bit he set aside to show his teacher. But the point is, the seventh day is not just about God resting from creating.

It's also about resting in order to enjoy that creation forever, actually. Because if you read through the Genesis account, each of the first six days has an evening and a morning.

But do you know what? The seventh day doesn't. There is no evening and morning for the seventh day. It's as though this rest that was meant to be enjoyed should last forever.

[8:24] And this forever rest was like a package deal. It involved Adam and Eve living together as God's people in right relationship with him.

In God's place, the Garden of Eden, enjoying all God's blessings, both spiritual and physical. Forever. Forever. God's rest, in other words, is about enjoying life as God created it to be.

Of course, sin spoiled everything. Sin is the great party pooper, isn't it? And so Adam and Eve had to leave God's place to live outside the garden in a fallen or cursed world.

But God gave this Sabbath command so that Israel might look back and remember what life was meant to be. Remember God's rest at creation.

Remember by firstly setting aside some time, like the seventh day. And then secondly, by recalling God's rest at creation. Life as God meant it to be.

[9:32] And then thirdly, enjoy a taste of that life. Life in right relationship with God. For their good, actually. Enjoying God's blessings as God's people in God's place.

This is what we see with the other Sabbath wars, actually. So later on in Exodus, it talks about obeying the Sabbath again. So that even the foreigner living among them may be refreshed.

Have the blessing of refreshment. And they're going to enjoy God's blessings together as God's people, which is why on the Sabbath day, each Sabbath, they were to hold a sacred assembly.

That is church meeting together as God's people. And part of being God's people is in being right relationship with God. And so certainly in the wilderness, they were to offer burnt offerings every Sabbath that they might know the blessing of forgiveness and continue to be God's people with God dwelling amongst them.

And just like at creation, enjoying God's blessings as God's people was meant to be done in God's place, which for Israel was the promised land, wasn't it? So when Moses speaks to them, the next generation, he says, you have not yet reached the resting place, the promised land, the inheritance that God is giving you.

[10:59] Because when you get there in the land, God will give you rest from all your enemies and you'll enjoy the blessing of safety.

In fact, when they get to God's place, the promised land, it would flow with God's blessings. Because do you remember how the promised land is described elsewhere in the Old Testament?

A land flowing with milk and honey, rich prosperity. You see, this commandment was about remembering God's rest. It's by setting aside a day a week to recall God's rest at creation life as it was meant to be and to even enjoy a taste of it.

And they got close to this life under King David and Solomon in the promised land, didn't they? But there was still death. And there was still sin, the great party pooper, which struck again.

In fact, Israel's sin was so great that instead of continuing to enjoy God's rest, God was forced to exile them, wasn't he? But because God is good, he still wants us to enjoy his rest, to enjoy life as it was meant to be.

[12:17] After all, it was the goal of his creation. And so he sent his son to deal with the party pooper called sin, so that all who believe might receive God's rest.

And in so doing, Christ changes this law. So we're at point two now. And you might want to follow along in the outline because it will require a bit of thinking as I track through the logic of the Bible.

And so first, Jesus realized or fulfilled this law. Jesus himself said that he has not come to abolish the law, but to fulfill it, like this commandment.

Or as Paul writes on the next slide there from Colossians 2, that the Old Testament things, including Sabbath day, were just a shadow of the things that were to come.

And the reality, however, is found in Christ. It's kind of like this picture of a Snickers bar.

[13:24] Here is a picture. It says it really satisfies, unless you're allergic to nuts, I suppose. But as nice as that picture might look, it's not the real thing, is it? It only points to the real thing.

And in fact, I do have the real thing, but I left it in the office. Anyway, I was actually going to open the real thing and start to eat it in front of you. And then none of you would be looking at the picture. You'd be looking at the real thing, wouldn't you?

That's the point, isn't it? When the real thing arrives, the picture is replaced. And so it is with Christ. And the Sabbath law, in fact, the whole law pointed to Jesus.

He came not to abolish it, but to fulfill it. And so now Christ is the one we come to to find God's rest. Remember that famous verse that Jesus says?

Come to me, all who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest. In that context, it's especially rest from trying to make ourselves right with God, because Jesus does that for us.

[14:27] His death pays for our sins so that we can be forgiven and find God's rest, find life as God created it to be.

That would last forever. In other words, find life eternal, which is often the way we're used to thinking about it. And for Jesus, he gives us this package deal of rest, doesn't he?

He makes us one of God's people in right relationship with God now, to enjoy God's blessings, partly now and fully later in God's place of the new creation.

And so the first application really is, have you come to Christ? Have you put your trust in him? He is the one who fulfills or realizes the law.

He is the reality. He is the one in whom we receive God's rest. Have you come to Christ? And if you have, then do you realize that we've now been released from the law?

[15:34] If Christ has fulfilled it, if the reality has arrived, then the shadow is replaced. We've been released from the law. As Paul says in Romans on the screen there, we have been released from the law so that we serve in the new way of the spirit and not in the old way of the written code, the Old Testament law.

This means that we actually don't have to obey any Old Testament law. Did you realize that?

We're actually free from every Old Testament law, including the Sabbath law, whether it's a Saturday or a Sunday. We're free from all 613 Old Testament laws, which is a great relief we should thank God for, because I don't know about you, but there's no way I can keep all those 613 laws.

Can you? But don't mishear me. That doesn't then mean we ignore our Old Testament. It doesn't mean that the law has nothing to say to us.

It does. Because the third thing Jesus has done is to reapply the heart of the law, which is love. He tells us where to still love.

[16:51] I mean, what are the two great commandments? Love God, love your neighbor, or love others. And do you remember what Jesus went on to say after that? Love God, love your others, because on these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets.

In other words, those two commandments about love sum up the whole law, because love was always at the heart of the Old Testament law. And that's what Jesus reapplies to us.

We're to still love. As Paul writes in Galatians 5, for example, Brothers and sisters, you are called to be free, and in the context it's talking about free from the law, but do not use your freedom to indulge the flesh to sin, but rather serve one another humbly in love.

Or as we saw before, we're to serve in the new way of the Spirit, as the Spirit prompts our conscience to love God and to love others. And so we don't reapply this Sabbath law like this kid in the cartoon, who decided to remember the Sabbath day and keep it holy all seven days a week.

Therefore, he could get out of chores and do nothing according to his logic. No, that's to indulge laziness, isn't it? But we've been released from the law rather to serve in love.

[18:15] Which means while we don't have to obey this Sabbath law, we might choose to apply parts of it that help us love.

Which is how to apply all the Old Testament laws. You apply those things that help us to love God or to love others. So point three, here's some questions that you can ask for any law.

But we're going to use the Sabbath as a case study. So firstly ask, who does this law help us love? You know, God or others? They're the two great commandments, remember? Well, in this case, it's a Sabbath to the Lord your God.

It's about loving God. Well, how? Well, by setting aside time. For Israel, it was a day, a week. To record God's rest at creation, life as it was meant to be, and to enjoy a taste of it.

To enjoy God's blessings as God's people in God's place. Does the New Testament give us any other pointers or say anything else about this law?

[19:17] Well, yes, we've seen that it's fulfilled in Christ like every law. And that Christ is now the one in whom we find God's rest. That Christ is the one who's made us God's people to enjoy God's blessings, partly now and fully later in God's place of the new creation.

And so with those kind of concepts in mind, how might this law help us to love God today? Well, by remembering God's rest in Christ. That is, setting aside time to recall the rest he's given us in Christ.

Rest from trying to make ourselves right with God. Rest from in terms of every spiritual blessing and many physical ones too. Setting aside time to recall God's rest in Christ and enjoy a taste of it.

With thanks. It doesn't have to be the seventh day because we're released from the law, aren't we? It could be any day. In fact, it could be every day. You know, for example, you know, part of God's rest is God's blessings.

And so we can take time each day to remember the blessings he's given us in Christ and to thank him for it. Whether it's the spiritual blessings we have in Christ, like his grace, his spirit.

[20:36] Or whether it's, and we can do that during a quiet time or even at a meal time. It doesn't have to be the seventh day of the week. We can even take time to enjoy and thank God for some physical blessings.

Whether it's the outdoors or good food or even a coffee. Last week, one of the upsides of having to isolate once I was feeling better. I was still stuck at home.

And so I had time. I sat on the couch in our back room with the sun streaming through the window. And a nice, hot, smooth, rich cup of coffee in my hand.

Oh, thank you, God. This is so good. Thanking God for his blessings and enjoying a taste of them. It can be as simple as that.

We can love God by setting aside time to firstly recall and enjoy his blessings in Christ. Every spiritual one we have, plus many physical ones too.

[21:35] Of course, God's rest included enjoying God's blessings together as God's people. And so secondly, we can set aside time to enjoy God's blessings as God's people.

Like coming to church. Like coming to church. Which is why it's so easy to connect the Sabbath with Sunday. Because that's normally when we have church, isn't it? But that's just part of the story.

But that's just part of the story. Where we meet together to thank God for forgiveness in Christ. And where we meet together to enjoy our unity in Christ. That's another blessing God's given us. And so that's why, as much as possible, we should try and meet face to face.

As much as possible. I know there's all sorts of reasons. I'm not having a go at anyone. But as much as possible, if it's safe enough, we should try and gather together as God's people. But we can also gather together, not just at church, but outside of church, to enjoy physical blessings together as God's people.

Like enjoying food or going out together on an excursion or for a coffee. It's one of the reasons we're keen to do morning tea again. So that we have a chance to, you know, have a hot drink and enjoy our unity together as God's people.

[22:50] And as Vijay said, it gives us a chance to encourage one another too, doesn't it? I know hospitality is harder now with COVID. And everyone is out of routine.

Out of practice. But it's worth getting back into. Because it's one way we can love God. Whose goal for us at creation was to enjoy his blessings together as his people.

But God's rest in his creation also involved living in God's place, didn't it? For Adam and Eve, it was Eden. For Israel, it's the promised land of Canaan.

And for us, it's the new creation. And so thirdly, we can love God by setting aside time to help each other get to that place of the new creation.

In our second reading, the writer of Hebrews talked about the fact that the promised land that Joshua led Israel into was not the ultimate rest. Otherwise, God wouldn't have spoken about another day, another Sabbath.

[23:54] And so he says, there remains a future place of rest for God's people, for us. And then he said at the beginning and end of that reading, that we are to make every effort to enter that rest.

In fact, in verse 1, which I've highlighted, he actually says, Let us be careful that none of you are found to be fallen short of it.

In other words, we're not just meant to look after ourselves and help ourselves get to that rest. We're meant to help one another so that none of us are found to be fallen short of it.

And so that means taking time, setting apart time to encourage one another, to hang in there as a Christian, that we might make it to that day of rest.

Whether it's by setting aside time to encourage others at church, you know, I'm going to make time to, I haven't seen that person for a couple of weeks, I'm going to make time to make a beeline and just catch up with them, see how they're going.

[24:57] Encourage them to hang in there. Or whether it's by sending a message or making a phone call during the week or reaching out if you know someone who's doing it tough.

Back when my son had COVID, which was a few months ago now, we had to isolate. This was before the rules changed, of course. And someone from church rang me to see not only how my son was going, but how I was surviving locked in my house yet again, which I thought was very kind and very encouraging, especially considering that they were actually locked down in their own aged care accommodation and had struggles of their own.

And I actually said to them, I'm supposed to be ringing you to encourage you and you're ringing me. I was so humbled and encouraged. But that's just one great example of setting aside time to help others hang in there.

So we'll all make it to God's place. Of course, the hard part about applying this Sabbath law, you know, is about setting apart time, isn't it?

Whether it's to thank God and enjoy his blessings or meet with God's people or encourage others to get to God's place. It all requires time. And I don't know about you, but it can be a struggle to set apart time for this, can't it?

[26 : 16] Whether it's because of work or family or even just health issues that demand our attention and demand our time. Yet part of loving God means setting apart time to remember his rest in Christ.

To recall it with thanksgiving and enjoy a taste of it. The amount of time or day of the week doesn't matter. We've been released from the law. Instead, it's all about love.

And so out of love for God who saved us, will you set apart time to remember his rest in Christ for us? Let's pray.

Our gracious Father, we thank you so much for your rest. That is life as you created us to enjoy. Life with you as your people in your place.

Help us, we pray, Father, to set aside time to remember your rest in Christ. All the blessings we have in him. To remember it as your people.

[27 : 24] And to encourage one another that we may all make it to your place, the new creation. Help us in this, we pray, in Jesus' name. Amen. Amen.