

# The Purpose Driven World

*Disclaimer: this is an automatically generated machine transcription - there may be small errors or mistranscriptions. Please refer to the original audio if you are in any doubt.*

Date: 08 October 2006

Preacher: Canon David Short

[ 0 : 00 ] Now we have made it to Genesis chapter 2, which is on the second page of your Bible. If you'd like to follow along, there's something very lovely and appropriate on this Thanksgiving weekend in coming to think about the Sabbath rest.

Thanksgiving weekend is a great time to stop and step aside. Remember that there's more to life than safe way, stongs and choices. And so it's a great moment to think about the Sabbath rest.

We have been moving through Genesis chapter 1 and the creation of this world. And last week, as we finished day 6, we saw that the creation of humans is not the climax of the creation story, but the seventh day is.

That's right, day 7, the Sabbath rest. That's the point of creation, which comes as very good news, because we live in a culture which is addicted to the urgent, the most workaholic culture that's ever been, some commentators say.

And I include myself in this. We find it very easy to take time off with an easy conscience because we've been encouraged to find meaning in being productive. In fact, the best person is the person who has so much on their plate, they can keep the balls in the air and still be productive and get things done.

[ 1 : 29 ] We're 24-7 people. And even the newspapers now tell us that there is something deeply sick and unhealthy about our attitude to work. And technology now means that we can be frantic and desperately and online anywhere and everywhere and it comes into every area of our lives.

I had a meeting the other day in North Vancouver with three other guys and as soon as we got to the table, they pulled out their little electronic things and showed photos and beam things to each other.

I felt rather left out, really. I did point out that my tatty paper diary will reboot after dropping in water and that I can scroll to any page at any time.

But that's beside the point. There is, I think, underneath it all, a deep restlessness. And the Sabbath rest comes to us as a life and death issue.

And mind you of these words, we read in Genesis chapter 2, Three times we're told this is the seventh day.

[ 2 : 54 ] No other day gets three mentions, simply because this is far more important. This is at least three times as important as any other day and as all the days put together.

In fact, this day seven is the reason for all the other days. This is where it's been moving right from the very first word. This seventh day, this Sabbath day, stands apart from all the other days and from all the rest of creation.

Do you notice there's no evening and morning on the seventh day? And that is because we are still somehow in God's rest. On day six, you remember God made humans in his image, as his image.

And now the first full day for humans is not a day of work, it's a day of rest. Isn't that lovely? The first full day for humanity is a day of Sabbath rest with God before they go into the garden and till and care for it.

And that is why rest, this Sabbath rest, is more important in the end than all our work. What is this rest? What is this Sabbath rest? And I think these verses give us two clues as to what this rest means.

[ 4 : 07 ] And the first is this, rest means blessing. So God blessed the seventh day and made it holy. Now you will know that the Bible has an enormously high view of work, gives work great dignity.

God is a worker, which makes him very unusual in the world of gods, so that when God became flesh and dwelt among us, he became a carpenter, not a great king or a warrior.

And in this chapter, he sets man and woman in the garden to till and care for it because God is a worker. But this day tells us that he's more than a worker. And after these six days, he sets aside a day for blessing and ceases his work to do something different, which tells us that there is more to life than work.

Yes, work is very important, but it's very strange, isn't it, this creation account? Because what gives us true blessing does not come from our work. It actually comes from ceasing our work.

And the blessing of God on this day shows that Sabbath is much more than just stopping. It's more than just putting down tools and relaxing and having time off. Do you remember every time blessing is used in Genesis 1 and 2, it refers to the potential for life, the potency and procreating power.

[ 5 : 33 ] You see, blessing, this seventh day, God has given to this seventh day, this blessing of life and possibility where real life is nurtured and cultivated and increased.

And what is this rest? What does God do? I never even thought about this. When God rests, it's not because he got tired. He wasn't weary.

He didn't suddenly take, you know, after six days, it's been a bit tough making this world. I think I need, I need to recoup, I might overextend myself. He's not doing that at all, is he?

No, no. Do you remember, this is the pattern. Every one of the six days, God steps back from the day and he looks at what he has done and he says, it is good, it is good, it is very good.

And that is what it means to rest. See, God makes the seventh day as the capstone of creation. And he enjoys and is fully satisfied with what he's done.

[ 6 : 40 ] And to enter into the Sabbath rest for you and me means that we are to stop and step back and look at our lives in the same way that God looks at his and to look at our work in the same way that God looks at his and to say, I am utterly satisfied.

It is good, it is good, it is very good. And that is a very difficult thing to do. What God is saying, he's inviting us to put our restlessness down for a day.

Not to find our health and meaning in ourselves, but to find joy and satisfaction in him alone. And that does not come automatically if you just put your tools down.

One of the best illustrations I've heard of Sabbath rest comes from a Presbyterian preacher in New York who likens it to sleep. I am a terrible sleeper, like many of you, I'm sure.

And I've been to the BC Sleep Clinic. And they explain to me that there's different kinds of sleep. There's surface sleep and there's this thing called deep REM sleep.

[ 7 : 45 ] And unless you get enough deep REM sleep, you're going to die. And so what they do is they send you home. That's what they said. You don't believe me? Is there a doctor in the house?

They send you home with a monitor. And this monitor is a metal clamp that you stick on the end of your finger when you go to bed at night. Now, if you have trouble sleeping in the first place...

It's a strange thing. I lay in bed with my finger going to sleep with wires coming out with this machine on the side of the bed, blinking red and green.

And I thought, I'm not going to get any REM sleep tonight. However, I digress. REM sleep, very important. Do you understand the point? Well, let me say this.

You see, without REM sleep we die. And without deep Sabbath rest for our souls, we die. We dismiss God and we disobey God.

[ 8 : 44 ] And our rebellion against God creates a wearying restlessness which brings death. We're constantly trying to prove ourselves.

We're constantly trying to say to ourselves, it's not enough, it's not enough, it's not enough. Which is why we need this deep REM rest for our souls. And that is something, brothers and sisters, that every vacation in the world and every holiday and day off cannot give us.

What we need is Sabbath rest. The only way to have that is to stop and to join God to recognise that He is the Creator and Lord of all, that He holds the world in His hand and I don't have to make the world go round for a day.

It means putting down every weight and every burden and every guilt and everything I haven't done and to be a receiver as we are made to be. And what we receive is His blessing, the life of God.

So you see, rest and blessing go together. And the second clue is also in verse 3, that rest and holiness goes together. God blessed the seventh day and made it holy.

[ 9 : 56 ] This is the first thing in all the Bible that's called holy. And for you alert people, you'll know that the six days are good, but the seventh day is holy.

It's different, set apart, unique. Gives meaning to all the other six days. That is one of the reasons why we Christians are so different. If you are a materialist or if you are a hedonist, every day is the same.

It's just another time period for you to pursue your pleasure and your life goals. Life just cycles on, it really goes nowhere. You see, for those who are disciples of Jesus Christ, there is a day set aside where we are not in control, where we are not productive, where we are not useful.

It's a day which is holy to God. It's a day where we turn aside from our idols and our compulsions and our drives, you know, money or family or all the good things in our life and worship God alone.

See, days one to six, God works with space. But on day seven, God works with time itself. He creates a different kind of time for us to enter into.

[ 11 : 12 ] He makes it for us and he gives it to us. He doesn't just rest and enjoy it himself. He invites us. He makes it holy for us and invites us in. We might share his life.

So you see, the fact that it's holy demonstrates that there's much more to it than just recuperating. It's a gift from God to us to free us from all that binds us, to apply ourselves to God, to dedicate ourselves, to learn what it is to rest in him.

That's why the Sabbath day is not about leisure, ultimately. It's not about sport. It's not a few hours to do all those things that we have failed to do, which we are too busy to do, but now we have time to do because we were too busy earlier.

And, you know, those of us who are parents have a wonderful opportunity in this to teach our children what it is to have some holy space and holy time. This is a wonderful illustration. Someone in this congregation wanted to have his son learn rugby.

So he rang the rugby club and said, you know, made inquiries. And the person on the phone said, well, our rugby practice is on Sunday at 10 a.m.

[ 12 : 21 ] And he said, oh no, we go to church. We're a church family. We go to church on Sundays at 10 a.m. And the person on the other end said this wonderful thing, which I think is just brilliantly clear. They said, we used to go to church on Sunday mornings, but in our family, we decided that rugby is far more important.

That's a wonderful West Coast thing to say, I think. The point I'm making is that we are not just creatures of space, but we're creatures of time.

And our love of technology has given us this artificial sense that we control our space. And the more that we do that and the more that we are addicted to doing that, the more we pay a cost in terms of time, in terms of the essence of ourselves.

Let me put it this way. We spend time to get things. And to have more does not mean to be more, because all the time that we have is a gift from God.

And this Sabbath rest is holy. It shows that we have come from God and that when we stop and look to Him, all of a sudden we realise that we participate in something that's eternal.

[ 13 : 30 ] It's a different kind of time, you see. It's the kind of time that you spend when you stand at the side of a grave of someone you love. And you realise, you know, what's precious in life?

What's important in life? We had a baptism at our nine o'clock service. There's this lovely moment where the child looks at the congregation and just realise you're not in control. That's Sabbath time.

And what the Bible is saying is that God has created this time and made it holy as a reminder and a recalibration of what is precious. It's got nothing to do with time management.

It's the opposite of time management. It's remembering who I was created for. That's why it's included in the Ten Commandments. And the Ten Commandments God gives twice in the Old Testament.

Did you know, have you ever noticed, that when God gives the fourth commandment about the Sabbath, the two times He gives different reasons. In Exodus chapter 20, when He gives the Sabbath, He says the reason you should do that is because God rested from His labours in creation.

[ 14 : 35 ] When you come to Deuteronomy chapter 5, the reason is not creation. He says, you were slaves in Egypt and I brought you out, I rescued you and I delivered you.

The Sabbath is not just a restoration back to the Garden of Eden. To participate in Sabbath is an act of liberation.

You see, if you do not rest, if you do not have this Sabbath rest, you are a slave.

If you cannot rest, if you cannot say no to things, if you're overcommitted and overbusy, and I include myself in this, you and I, we are self-imposed slaves.

We're slaves to our insecurities and to our needs and to our family and to the expectations of our culture. To take Sabbath rest means I'm always different.

[ 15 : 31 ] I don't live for something in this world like power and profit and pleasure. I live for the next world. I live for God. And every day of Sabbath rest shows that there is something infinitely more important to me than my failure or my success.

It's to know God and to enjoy Him. Now, some of us grew up in homes where this was applied very legalistically. How is this relevant today for us?

What difference does it make that Jesus Christ has come? You ever notice that when the New Testament opens, the early chapters of the Gospel are full of Jesus having conflict with the religious leaders about the Sabbath?

In fact, Jesus deliberately chooses to do this. He goes into the temple and He heals people and He does good to people. And when the Pharisees come to Him and get Him to defend Himself, He teaches them and He speaks to them.

And what He says is this. He doesn't say, I've come to fulfil the Sabbath, it's all gone, go back to work seven days. He says, I am the Lord of the Sabbath.

[ 16 : 42 ] Not, I've come to do away with the Sabbath. I'm all about the Sabbath. I invented it. I'm the one to whom it points. He says, I am the one who can give you that deep soul rest.

You hear? He's saying, I am the Lord of rest. It's only through Jesus that we can have true Sabbath rest. It's only through Jesus that we can step back and look at our lives and we can say, it is good, it is good, it is very good.

By myself, I can never say that. On my own, there's always things I've left undone. There's always things I've done that I ought not to have done and there is no health within me.

And the message of the Scriptures is this, that Jesus come and He has lived perfectly for me in my place and He has died perfectly for me on the cross and as He died, He cried out, it is finished.

And what Jesus did on the cross is He placed Himself between us and God so that now as God looks at us, He looks at Jesus Christ. Jesus took all my failure and all my striving and all my sin and God gave to me all the righteousness of Jesus Christ so that when God looks at us in Jesus Christ, He sees us as good, good, very good, absolutely satisfied and that is at the heart of Sabbath rest.

[ 18 : 19 ] It's not to rest on my achievements, on what I've done or what I haven't done. You go down that track, it's totally depressing. It's to rest on Him and what He has done.

The Sabbath is the Gospel and that's why in the book of Hebrews later in the New Testament we read this. There remains a Sabbath rest for the people of God for anyone who enters God's rest also rests from his own work just as God did from his.

Therefore, let us make every effort to enter that rest so that no one will fall away. If we begin to trust in Christ, we cease from trying to justify ourselves.

We don't need to prove ourselves to others or to God. The only person whose opinion really matters has been satisfied in Jesus Christ and that is the beginning of true rest and we celebrate a day a week of that rest in that faith and in that hope and coming to know Jesus Christ and celebrating that rest begins to fill our hearts with a hope and a longing for the day where our faith will be turned into sight.

We can, where we can put all our doing down and we can enter the rest of God and that is why we cannot find ultimate meaning in either work or leisure.

[ 19 : 42 ] If you do that, if you're seeking for that, you'll be always frustrated as you and I were made for something far richer to know God and to enjoy him forever and nothing outside Jesus Christ, nothing, can give us that deep, REM sleep of the soul.

I need to say that Sabbath is not a law. You know, if you give 23 hours a week to this instead of 24, you're not going to get zapped.

It's not a legalistic thing. We move from law to this life-giving joy but I just want to, I offer you this as we finish. I think the discipline of a Sabbath is very important.

It's a creation ordinance and the discipline of the Sabbath means saying no and yes. It means saying no to certain things.

The fact that it rolls around once a week is a weekly interruption of my favourite idolatries and compulsions and I have to say no to bowing down to myself.

[ 20 : 45 ] I'm not God. I don't keep the world spinning. It's a very helpful reminder. I don't even really make, supply the needs of my family. I'm not the one. What is true and what is real and what is eternal doesn't depend upon my feverish activity.

I have to say no. That's part of the Sabbath discipline. There's also a yes. We have to enter into the freedom that Jesus Christ has brought us through his death and resurrection.

It is coming to rest in him. It's a deliberate focused thing. It's delighting in him. It's resting in him. Laying aside my burden, laying aside my need for justification.

It means seeing my friends and my family and my own life through the eyes of God. Seeing myself as a child of God and finding my identity in him and not in my work and not in my play.

Seeing that the holiness of God is sharing his life with me and it is a foretaste of heaven. And I think on this Thanksgiving Sunday it's very important for us to hear these words afresh from Jesus where he says, Come to me all you who are weary and burdened and I will give you rest.

[ 22 : 03 ] 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 for my yoke is easy and my burden is light.

Amen.