

Equal with God

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[0 : 0 0] Now, if you're new with us, just to fill you in a bit, we've been doing a sermon series on the Gospel of John for 10 weeks now, and we've made it through four chapters.

So tonight we start chapter 5, so it would be helpful if you open your Bible back to page 890, 890. And if you were listening carefully to Sarah read the passage so beautifully, you will notice that everything in our passage happens on the Sabbath.

Sabbath is mentioned four times. The most pronounced time is at the end of verse 9. Now that day was the Sabbath. And then the end of verse 16, Jesus was doing these things on the Sabbath.

If you know your Bibles at all, you know you're supposed to work six days and you rest on the Sabbath day. And if you know your own heart and the heart of the church around the world at all, you know that there are few Christian practices more difficult to cultivate than keeping the Sabbath.

It's hard to be still and know that we, but He, is God. Not we, but He. It's hard to be still and know that God is God.

[1 : 2 6] It's interesting, when we ask people, how are you doing? So if you run into a friend and you just ask them, how are you doing? Or if somebody asks you that. We have lots of answers for this question, don't we? Good. Okay.

Not so good. But the most common answer is busy. I'm busy. I'm really busy. I'm way too busy.

I'm so busy I'm about to die. And we all experience it, right? Because we live in a fast-paced world. A world of rapid transit.

A world of high-speed internet. Susie and I are still trying to get that. A world of smartphones where people can contact us at any time, at any place, about anything.

A world full of busy schedules where we have business meetings and doctor's appointments. And a myriad of sports practices. And school papers and exams. And work projects and deadlines.

[2 : 2 4] And kids going all over the place. And Bible studies, let alone cleaning our houses and trying to cook meals for ourselves. We're in a world of constant information with texts and tweets and emails and calls and new feeds and YouTube videos.

We're in a world of relentless pressure to always do more with your time and be more productive. We're busy people with busy lives and a busy culture.

And I feel like a lot of you can identify with that. There's little time for Sabbath. Little time for rest, it seems. And therefore, little time for God.

Eugene Peterson, who used to be a pastor and professor at Regent, in his book, *In Christ Plays in 10,000 Places*, he explains how devastating the effects of this are on our lives.

He says this, If there is no Sabbath, no regular and commanded not working and not speaking, we soon become totally absorbed in what we are doing and saying.

- [3 : 34] And God's work is either forgotten or marginalized. He continues on, To not practice Sabbath means that our work becomes the entire context in which we define our lives.
- We lose God consciousness. We lose God awareness. And we lose the capacity to sing, This is my Father's world. And we end up chirping little self-centered ditties about what we are doing and feeling.
- All the while forgetting what God is doing and feeling. Amidst all of our work, no matter how noble and how good it is, it is really easy to lose sight of who God is.
- I was experiencing it just while writing this sermon. The time when I'm supposed to be paying attention to God most. And it was in the last hour of writing this sermon that God actually knocked on the door of my heart and said, Hey Jordan, I know you're working really hard here and you have lots of wise things to say.
- But have you ever stopped and thought about asking me what I want to say? We can so easily lose sight of it. And week in, week out, we need that renewed vision.
- [4 : 46] We need to say, Be thou my vision, O God. Be thou my vision. In some, we need Sabbath rest. And Sabbath, to put it simply, includes two things.
- It means stop doing what you normally do. Stop working for one day. And it means the second thing. Attend to what God is doing.
- Watch Him work. Listen. Adore what He does. Now I mention all this, the preamble, simply because I think John chapter 5, verses 1 to 18, helps us with this second movement.
- I think this passage actually shows us what God does on the Sabbath. When we stop, when we rest, and we attend to Him.
- So what I want to do is I actually want to start in verse 17. But I want to walk us through this passage as kind of a reflective meditation on what God does when we finally stop and attend to Him on Sabbath.
- [5 : 51] Let's begin in verse 17. Verse 17, page 890. Jesus says to the religious authorities of the day, My Father is working until now, and I am working.
- Now a little bit of background information for you. In the Bible, every human being is meant to work six days and then rest on the seventh day. That's clear enough.
- Why do you rest on the seventh day? Because you acknowledge that your work does not sustain your life, but God's work is what sustains your life. Ultimately. He gives you life.
- He gives you breath. He gives you being. But the second thing is Jews would have known in that time that there's only one person who's allowed to work on the Sabbath. Only one.
- And that's God Himself. Yes, God rested after He created for six days. But everybody knows that if God stops working utterly and completely, then everything will cease to exist.
- [6 : 51] Because it only exists by the fact that He works and sustains everything in being. So, every human being is supposed to rest on the Sabbath, except for God.
- God Himself is meant to sustain the whole created order while everything else rests. So, when we get to verse 17, and we hear Jesus saying, My Father is working until now.
- People would have been like, okay. God's working until now. They would have been surprised Jesus said, My Father. But they would have been absolutely flattened by the second half of that statement.
- When Jesus says, And I am working. Because He's making a huge claim there. He's saying, I am working just as the Father works on the Sabbath.
- So, no wonder in verse 18, the Jewish authorities are pissed off. It says, verse 18, This is why the Jews were seeking all the more to kill Him. Because not only was He breaking the Sabbath, but He was even calling God His own Father, making Himself equal with God.

[8 : 00] Jesus is essentially saying, When you see me in action, you're seeing God in action. When you see me at work, you're seeing God at work.

Because God, the Father, and I work in tandem. We work together. So, the question is, what sort of work does God and does Jesus do on the Sabbath?

And I want to suggest that God does a pursuing work, and He does a speaking work. And we see this happening twice in our passage.

We see God pursuing twice, and we see God speaking twice. First time in verses 1 to 5, God pursues broken people on the Sabbath. Verse 1, After this, there was a feast of the Jews, and Jesus went up to Jerusalem.

Now, where does God go when He goes up to Jerusalem? Does God go to His palace? Does He go to His temple? Does He go to His mansion? No. Verse 2, Where does God go on the Sabbath?

[9 : 29] He goes to the place where there's a multitude of invalids. It doesn't take much for us to imagine the atrocity of this scene. Colonades would have been long, open-aired hallways where they took all the blind and the lame and the paralyzed, and they put them there.

Hundreds of people. The sound of voices crying for help. The smell of human feces that hasn't been cleaned up for days all over the place. And the sight of an overwhelming human suffering and need.

I once visited Jamaica for about 10 days, and I actually got to go to one of these places in Jamaica. I got to go to a place, an infirmary, for three days. Where the society gathered all these people together.

They didn't know what to do with them. And I remember standing in this place with this long hallway. There's lots of long hallways next to each other. And they would have 50 people lined up next to each other on these hallways.

Just one after another. In one big room. And they would have one staff member per 50 people. And that one person would work eight hours a day.

[10 : 43] And that's a lot more than these people had back in the day. And you go and you see people in their need. Literally sitting in their feces for days on end.

Many of them lonely. With no one to talk to. Desperate and in need. And that's the kind of scene that Jesus walks into.

And notice the word that's used here in verse 3. They're called invalids. I think that's an apt translation.

Because that shows how society often views these people. Literally these people are invalid. In the eyes of society so often. I don't know.

Have any of you heard of a guy named Jean Vanier? Jean Vanier. He started these communities all around the world called L'Arche. Where caregivers and caretakers.

[11 : 43] Those with physical and mental disabilities. And those without. Actually live together. And do life together. And he wrote this book called Becoming Human. And he unpacks.

How our society relates to the weak and the vulnerable. And it's very insightful and searching. Listening to what he says. He says when we've constructed our lives around particular values.

The values of knowledge and power and social esteem. It is really difficult for us to accept those who cannot live by the same values. It's as if we are threatened by such people.

And then he goes on later. And he says we are all frightened of the ugly and the dirty in this world and in our lives. We all want to turn away from anything that reveals the failure, the pain, the sickness, and the death.

Beneath the brightly painted surface of our ordered lives. He says civilization is, at least in part. About pretending that things are better than they really are.

[12 : 47] We all want to be in a happy place where everyone is nice and everyone is good. And everyone can take care of themselves. We shun our own weakness. And the weakness of others.

That's heart searching insight right there. The amazing thing about our passage is that's not who God is. Not the God that we come to know in Jesus Christ.

The Lord Jesus Christ. He does not shun the weakness and the brokenness of humanity. He's not afraid of it. Rather in our passage we see he goes up to Jerusalem and he enters straight into it.

That's where he wants to go. Jesus goes right into the places of our society that are most difficult and the places of our lives that are most broken. Because he's not afraid to get into the mud.

Get into the messiness. Get into the pain. And get in the hurt. What does God do on the Sabbath? He enters into the messiness of our lives.

[13 : 50] But when we stop we are simply saying God come in. Where no other person can come into. And what does he do when he's there?

Well he speaks. He speaks words of healing in fact. Look at verse 6. Begins with a question. He says to this man do you want to be healed?

He says to this man do you want to be healed? God enters into this man's situation and then he asks him a question. Do you want to be healed? Do you want to be whole? Now how do you think this man felt when Jesus asked him this question?

38 years of desperation and hopelessness. And Jesus walks up to him and says do you want to be healed? I suspect this man experienced some sort of bewilderment and deep rage inside.

Like could there be any more obvious question with any more obvious answer in the whole entire face of the earth? How could you ask such a stupid question whoever you are?

[15 : 00] I mean this guy probably thought Jesus was patronizing him. Was he not? Rubbing salt in his wounds as he lays there desperate. Do you want to be healed? Interestingly in verse 7 this man doesn't say he wants to be healed.

Look how he responds. Sir I have no one to put me into the pool when the water is stirred. Now is the belief that the water next to them when it was stirred the first person to get into the pool would be healed.

What he's basically saying is I've had no one to get me to the only place that will heal me. I've been in utter desperation this whole time. And then he continues on.

He says and while I'm going towards the water another steps down before me. He says it's even worse. Not only can I not get to the pool but when I try to get there somebody gets there before me and leaves me in the dust.

So not only am I broken but people don't care that I'm broken. This man knows his situation.

[16 : 11] He's frustrated by his desires and plans not being granted and he's aggravated by Jesus' question I think. And yet Jesus decides he's still going to heal.

Verse 8. Three commands. Get up. Take up your bed. And walk. Jesus just speaks. John says in the very beginning of his gospel.

In the beginning was the word. And the word was with God. And the word was God. He was in the beginning. With God. And the word became flesh.

And now that very word speaks a command. And he expects it to happen. Get up. Take up your bed. And walk. As Kristen pointed out last week so beautifully.

Jesus speaks as a creator here. And he summons all the cells and all the ligaments and all the bones and all the muscles of this man's body.

[17 : 06] And says work the way I intended you to work. And when the creator speaks. What he speaks becomes a living reality. This man gets up.

We see in verse 9. At once. And he's healed. He takes up his bed. And he walks away. So what does God do on the Sabbath?

He not only enters into the desperation of our situation. But when he gets there. He speaks healing words. He speaks healing words.

He doesn't tell us necessarily what we would want to hear. And he doesn't necessarily do it on our own timing. He doesn't do it in our own liking. And according to our own plan.

But when he gets into the nitty gritty of our lives. What does he do? He speaks healing words. And so when we stop on the Sabbath. We come to receive and hear the voice of Jesus Christ.

[18 : 05] Wanting to restore. Wanting to speak. Wanting to bless. As the creator. Now for many of us.

We would be happy if the story ended here. This man got what he needed, didn't he? His body's healed. He's walked away. He's taken care of.

Isn't he? Well not according to Jesus. According to Jesus. This man's still sick. There's something deeper he needs still. So Jesus pursues him a second time.

Look at verse 14. This is the second round of pursual and speaking. Jesus pursues this man a second time. Verse 14. Afterward Jesus found him in the temple.

Jesus goes looking for this man a second time. What hope would there be for any of us. If Jesus didn't go looking for us. Second and third and fourth and fifth and sixth and seventh times.

[19 : 11] Over and over again coming to us. As the great hymn Amazing Grace puts it. I once was lost. But now. I'm found. And what we discover here.

Is that Jesus is not content. With simply healing this man physically. He actually. This man doesn't know who he is at this point. He wants to come into this man's life.

And say this is who I am. I want face to face relationship with you. I want face to face communion with you. I want face to face restoration with you. And I'm going to take you to deeper places of healing.

Than you ever expected. I was actually going to take you. God pursues this man. Brothers and sisters. I wonder if some of you. Actually need to hear that.

On this Sabbath day. Some of you. Maybe you aren't Christian. And you have no idea who Jesus Christ is. And you need to know that Jesus Christ. Is actually pursuing you right now.

[20 : 08] And he desperately wants you to know. Who he is. And to come into relationship with him. Some of you have tasted. Of his grace. You've tasted of his grace.

And you're finding it really. Really hard. To continue walking. In the paths of his grace. And you need to know. That Jesus Christ. Is coming after you today. And he's pursuing you.

To set you on the straight. And narrow path again. The paths of his grace. Some of you have tasted his goodness. And you are completely. Turning your back. And you're walking. 180 degrees.

The other direction right now. And Jesus is actually coming after you. And he's saying. Turn around. I'm going to restore you. And some of you are in the place.

Where you just go. You know what? I want to know Jesus. And I want to follow him. But I don't have the strength. In me. I feel like I can't even turn to him.

[21 : 05] Well Jesus. Is turning to you. He's coming for you. And what is he going to do. When he actually gets to you. Is he's actually going to speak. Fresh words to you. Look at verse 14.

Jesus says to him. Once he's found him. See. You are well. Sin no more. That nothing worse. May happen to you. There are three commands before.

And now there's one command. Sin no more. In the three commands earlier. Jesus spoke words of healing. And now in the one command. Jesus speaks words. Of holiness.

What we see is that. Jesus wants to completely restore. This whole man. Physically. And spiritually. And what we see. Is that healing and holiness.

Must always be held together. In the ministry of Jesus Christ. There are a million different ways. In which we want to pull apart. Healing and holiness. But Jesus doesn't allow us to do it.

[22 : 08] Do you guys remember the story of Jesus. The woman. John chapter 8. The woman who is caught in adultery. And she's brought by all the religious leaders. Of that time. All the men.

And thrown before Jesus. And they basically say. Jesus. She's committed adultery. They all have stones in their hand. And they say. Jesus. What are you going to do? Pronounce the judgment. We're ready to kill her.

She deserves it. And Jesus bends over. And he. Draws a line in the sand. And he says. You. Who is without sin.

Throw the first stone. And one by one. Each. Person. Drops their stone. And walks away from the woman. Until the woman. Is left utterly alone.

With Jesus Christ. And Jesus Christ. Gets up from the ground. And he looks this woman in the eyes. No doubt. Fearful. And tears. Running down her face.

[23 : 03] Condemned by many. And the one man. Who could condemn her. Says to her. Neither do I. Condemn you. Healing. And then what does he say to her?

Go. And sin no more. Holiness. They come together. In the ministry of Jesus Christ. Jesus Christ says. Get up. Take up your bed.

And walk. Healing. And he says. Sin no more. Holiness. I think we need to hear this. Brothers and sisters. Because the sort of. Healing work.

That Jesus wants to do. In our lives. Is he actually wants us. To bring us. Into a life. Of holiness. He wants to bring us. Into a life. Of holiness. If we emphasize.

Holiness. Without healing. Then we end up. In a place of legalism. We go around. Pointing our fingers. At each other. And everyone else. Saying sin no more. Sin no more. Sin no more. And we end up.

[23 : 58] In a place of legalism. We're harsh. With others. And ourselves. But if we separate. Holiness. And healing. And we emphasize. Healing. Without holiness.

Then we end up. In a place. Of cheap grace. And relativism. Where Jesus. Says. Don't worry about your sin. God loves you. Just the way you are. You're fine.

No transformation. And our sinful lives. Get baptized. In a healing. That doesn't lead. To holiness. Dietrich Bonhoeffer. Was really aware.

Of this. During World War II. He wrote this book. Called. The Cost of Discipleship. In the middle. Of World War II. And it's basically. He said. The church.

Is proclaiming grace. With no call. To discipleship. Healing. With no call. To holiness. And they've missed. Jesus utterly. And he writes this. In his book.

[24 : 52] He says. Cheap grace. Is the preaching. Of forgiveness. Without requiring. Repentance. Baptism. Without church discipline. Communion. Without confession.

Absolution. Without personal confession. Cheap grace. Is grace. Without discipleship. Grace. Without the cross. Grace. Without Jesus Christ. The living.

And incarnate. God. God. So what does God do. On the Sabbath. Brothers and sisters. What does God do. When we.

When we seize to work. And give up control. Of our lives. We discover. That God is at work. We discover. That God comes after. Spiritually. And physically. Broken people.

And he enters. Into the mess of their life. And speaks healing words. To them. We discover. That Jesus goes after. Broken. And hurting. People. In ways.

[25 : 47] That they never. Would have expected. Was going to happen. And we discover. That when those people. Taste his grace. And then still. Turn away from him. He goes after them. A second time. He finds them.

He establishes. Relationship with them. And we discover. That he speaks to them. Go and sin. No more. That nothing worse. May happen to you. Friends.

Where in your life. Is Jesus Christ. Speaking to you now. Speaking to you. Words of healing. That you need to hear. And speaking to you. In places of sin.

Sin. No. More. Walk in the newness of life. I'm offering you. Because I think. On this Sabbath day. That's what Jesus. Wants to say to us.

My father is working town now. Says Jesus Christ. In verse 17. And I. Am working. Too. Thank God. That Jesus works on the Sabbath.

[26 : 47] In the name of the father. And the son. And the Holy Spirit. Amen. Amen. Thank you.