

Luke 13:10-17 "Sabbath Topical"

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[0 : 00] You are listening to a message from Southwood Presbyterian Church in Huntsville, Alabama. Our passion is to experience and express grace. Join us.

Open your Bibles, if you will, to Luke 13. I'm going to be reading Luke 13, beginning of verse 10, down through verse 17.

Luke 13, beginning of verse 10. Now, he was teaching in one of the synagogues on the Sabbath, and there was a woman who had had a disabling spirit for 18 years.

She was bent over and could not fully straighten herself. And when Jesus saw her, he called her over and said to her, Woman, you are freed from your disability.

And he laid his hands on her, and immediately she was made straight, and she glorified God. But the ruler of the synagogue, indignant because Jesus had healed on the Sabbath, said to the people, There are six days in which work ought to be done.

[1 : 14] Come on those days and be healed, and not on the Sabbath day. Then the Lord answered him, You hypocrites.

Does not each of you, on the Sabbath, untie his ox or his donkey from the manger and lead it away to water it?

And not this woman, a daughter of Abraham, whom Satan bound for 18 years? He loosed from this bond on the Sabbath day?

And he said these things. As he said these things, all his adversaries were put to shame. And all the people rejoiced at all the glorious things that were done by him.

Let's pray together that the Father would give us understanding of his word. Father, we thank you for your word. Your word is a light into the depth of our souls.

[2 : 16] Your word pierces down through all of our defenses, all of our justifications. It pierces down to places that we don't even know are there.

And that's what we need. But your word also shines upon and shows the light of your glory and the wonder of your grace.

And as we see ourselves, we also desperately need to see your grace. So would you shine the light in both ways that we would see honestly who we are, but also see the glory of grace and be drawn more deeply into the knowledge of Jesus and all that he has done for us.

Give me words from your spirit. Help me in the weakness of my own words in such a way that by your spirit, we will hear you speak to us.

And we pray in Jesus' name. Amen. Amen. And some of y'all saw the gift, or the title of this sermon, saw the gift of the Sabbath, you may have been a little anxious because there are certain sermons that you can preach that are automatically guaranteed to inspire guilt.

[3 : 48] You know, one of those is on prayer, one of those is witnessing, and this is another one. And I don't think in all my years that I have heard a good, balanced, uplifting, encouraging sermon on the Sabbath, especially in a church that emphasizes so strongly God's grace.

You know, I appreciate, you know, the way that we go through, we are going through the Gospel of Luke because probably if the topic was just left up to us, we would have gone here.

But when you go through the text, you can't avoid it because, you know, in the place of just a few verses, not only here in Luke 13, but you get over in a couple weeks, we're going to be seeing it again in Luke 14, beginning of verse 1, and we've already seen it back earlier in Luke.

You can't avoid this subject. So, you know, it seems like there's no single command that Jesus has had to deal with and runs into so much trouble with the Pharisees than this whole idea of the Sabbath.

And so, you know, at the heart of Jesus' teaching here, what he's having to deal with, with the Pharisees, again, over and over and over again, is simply their abuse.

[5 : 31] It's not the idea of the Sabbath, but it's their abuse of the law itself. And this is one of those places in the law that they have majored on.

And so Jesus is dealing here with the Pharisees and their whole concept of the law. And in that day, there were these rabbinical writings.

It was called the Mishnah. And in that Mishnah, there were about five volumes. One whole volume of this was devoted just to Sabbath keeping. So in a sense, what Jesus is dealing with is not so much their misunderstanding of the law, but it's the way they were dealing with the traditions even around the law.

They had turned the Sabbath law more than almost anything else into a means where they could show off, not just to God, but to the world, to the culture and society, their own goodness, their own religious zeal, their righteousness.

And they were quite proud of it. But at the same time, and this is where we struggle, you know, at the same time, we, a lot of us, wouldn't put ourselves in that camp.

[7 : 07] But Jesus is not throwing out the Sabbath. Not in any way. What he's dealing with is the abuse of the Sabbath law.

You see, our struggle is typically just in the other direction. I mean, we, we're people of grace. We're not under the law. We don't have to keep all these rules and regulations.

In fact, there's some people would say, but you know, even in the New Testament, we're not even commanded to keep the Sabbath anymore. So it really, it doesn't even apply. I mean, why are we even talking about this?

Well, I would counter that the Sabbath is deeply rooted in many ways in the gospel itself. And in reality, as we reject all the rules and regulations of the Sabbath, we find ourselves more closely aligned with the Pharisees than we would want to know.

So what I want to do this morning is we're going to do an overview of this whole Sabbath principle. And then next week, Will is going to come back and deal with the specific context here of Jesus healing this woman.

[8 : 33] But because it comes up so often, we need to take a look at what the Bible really says about the Sabbath. So what we're going to do is we're going to do basically a quick overview and a Bible study of what is taught here.

Because a lot of us, I don't think, I really don't think we know. And then we're going to see from that then what are the implications for us.

You know, for Christians, you know, what are we supposed to do with the Sabbath? The Sabbath is a gift that we rarely take advantage of.

So, let's look at Scripture and see what it says. First, I mean, we have to begin all the way back in Genesis, particularly in Genesis chapter 2. In Genesis 2, verses 2 and 3, we read this.

And on the seventh day, God finished His work that He had done and He rested on the seventh day from all His work that He had done. So, God blessed the seventh day and made it holy because on it God rested from all His work that He had done in creation.

[9 : 49] Here, all the way back at the very beginning in the act of creation, the Sabbath is instituted. It is not instituted in the Ten Commandments.

It is instituted way before the Ten Commandments. And it was a principle that should have been governing all of life in God's creation.

But in these, in this couple of verses, there are three things that God says that we need to look at just quickly. One is that God celebrates. You know, what we did not read is the end of chapter 1 in creation where God looked over all that He had created and He said, behold, it is very good.

God looked over His creation, all that He had made from the world and the animals and the plants and man Himself and said, yeah, this is good.

God, and so when He gets to the seventh day, He rests. But part of that rest is He's looking back and He's celebrating.

[11 : 06] He said, look, my glory in creation. and that's one of those points about that seventh day that we just miss.

It's a day of celebration but then He's, and at the culmination of that, then He blesses that day. You know, God is ceasing His creative work.

He blesses this day. He is satisfied with all that He has done and that satisfaction then leads Him to the next thing which is He rests.

Not because He's tired. He doesn't cease working because, I need a break. He's resting because He looks and He's satisfied.

It's done. It's good. You know, it's like an artist who would paint this glorious painting and they work and they work and finally they stop painting and they look at the work and say, there's nothing more to do.

[12 : 14] And so God rests. He simply ceases from His work. And then thirdly, in that celebration, in His rest, He sanctifies it. He makes it holy.

He sets it apart from every other day and establishes this now as a pattern. as we have six days to work, to do our work but yet there's this seventh for celebrating and being satisfied with all that God has done is creation.

celebration. And I think, again, it's this whole idea of blessedness and celebration is one of those key ideas about the Sabbath that we miss because we look at the Sabbath, we look at, you know, whether it's Sunday or Monday or Saturday or whatever, I'm not dealing with that part of the issue. But we look at it as a burden. We look at it as something, oh shoot, I gotta do this, I can't do this, I can't do this, okay. This is a day for celebrating.

It's kind of like, you know, in a sense, we never feel burdened over our birthdays. Our birthdays are to be celebrated. I made it another year.

[13 : 39] But here God's celebrating something so much greater, all that he's done. There's another passage a little bit later, still back in the Old Testament, Exodus 16.

I'm not gonna read this whole passage, but there's something that God does here. And the passage is particularly focused on God providing manna in the wilderness.

But this idea of Sabbath comes into play. And what God is doing here is that he's telling people how to, he's feeding them in the middle of the wilderness out of nothing.

And he says, every morning, I want you to go out and you're gonna find scattered all over the ground, basically, it's this heavenly bread, this manna, that they are to gather.

But he gives them very strict rules, particular rules on how to do this. And he specifically tells them, he says, this is a test. I'm gonna test you.

[14 : 40] He says, you're to go out, gather enough for one day. Don't gather two. Don't gather enough for three. You're not storing it. You're not packing it away in Tupperware.

You're gathering enough just for that day until you get to the sixth day. And on the sixth day, you gather enough for two days.

Only on the sixth day. And there was a reason why he was doing this. What he wanted them to do was to trust him.

He says, I'm gonna provide for you. I'm gonna supply all your needs. I'm gonna do it from one day to the next. But a day in the week, that seventh day, you're gonna rest.

You're not gonna go out and gather. You don't have to. You're gonna stay put. And I'm gonna provide for you then as well. And so he sets apart the Sabbath as a different day.

[15 : 43] But it's a test. A test for them to demonstrate that they actually do trust in their father's provision.

That's Exodus 16. You go on a little bit farther in Exodus 31 verses 12 through 17. And I'm gonna read just a couple of verses from that.

He says, And the Lord said to Moses, you are to speak to the people of Israel and say, above all you shall keep my Sabbath for this is a sign between me and you throughout your generations that you may know that I, the Lord, sanctify you.

There's a couple of statements in there that draws my attention. One he says, he says, above all. Wow.

That is a pretty strong statement. He didn't say that about adultery. He didn't say that about anything else. He says, the Sabbath is above all.

[16 : 52] which is raising the importance and the value of this significantly. And now, why are they to keep it?

Well, here, in this passage, the emphasis is that it's a sign. It's a sign of what? It's a sign that really is a sense that God is gonna set them apart apart from all the other nations around them.

All these other nations that don't know anything about keeping the Sabbath. But he's going to, in a sense, make Israel peculiar. He's gonna make them different.

He's gonna set them apart. He says, this is what you're gonna do. because I sanctify you. I'm the one setting you apart and you are mine. It's a sign of ownership that these people are now, because of the way they treat that seventh day, they are going to distinguish themselves as God's people, not like any other people.

people. And this is indeed a serious matter. Now we get to probably one of the places where most of us would start when we think of the Sabbath, and that is when you look at the Ten Commandments, but particularly I'm gonna look at those from Deuteronomy chapter 5.

[18 : 29] You'll find it back in Exodus 20, a little bit different, but specifically in Deuteronomy 5, verses 12 through 15, this is what we see. Observe the Sabbath day to keep it holy, as the Lord your God commanded you, you shall remember that you were a slave in the land of Egypt, and the Lord your God brought you out from there with a mighty hand and an outstretched arm, therefore the Lord your God commanded you to keep the Sabbath day.

Now here, we have a different emphasis. it is a celebration, but not so much about what God did in creation, it's a celebration of what God does in redemption.

They are to set apart this one day in their week and remember. They are to remember we used to be slaves.

We used to be under the yoke of Pharaoh. We used to be helpless, but God with a mighty hand and a mighty arm broke the power of Egypt and delivered us and made us his own people.

And so here, I mean the emphasis, I mean it is on work and rest, but the reason why is so that we can celebrate God's work at setting us free, setting us free from our slavery, setting us free from all of that which would oppress us in Christ, looking ahead at the ultimate redemption that was coming.

[20 : 30] We rest on the Sabbath day, especially in light of redemption, we rest on the Sabbath day as a way of saying our labors, our work, the strength of our hand does not give me freedom, does not give me satisfaction, does not supply my needs, my rest comes in Christ himself.

And here, because I celebrate redemption, I can rest. But this is talking about a rest that's deep, not just physical. A rest that goes down in our souls where I can rest from my striving to be good enough.

I can rest for my striving that God would smile upon me. I can rest. And I would venture to say that most of you, or at least, a lot of you, are tired.

Maybe you're tired because you've been working non-stop. Maybe you're tired because you stayed up last night until almost midnight at a rock concert, like some of us.

Maybe you're tired for chasing your kids around all over the community, but I would say there's a deeper tiredness. We are all in the business of self-justifying because we want that smile of God.

[22 : 08] We want God to say, I am satisfied. And we don't get there. But we keep working. We keep working because we're not sure he's going to provide.

We keep working because we're not sure we've done enough. We keep working and striving to earn that place that Christ has already finished.

finished. And so we celebrate the redemption and the rest that Christ gives us.

And I think this is where, if you go back and look at the Pharisees and their struggle, this is where the Pharisees missed it the most. Because the whole reason why they're keeping all these rules and all of these laws is that they're working hard, endlessly working, to keep their good standing before God.

And in their working, they missed the boat completely. Instead, they should have been resting in him and then fulfilling the call for justice and mercy, which is what Jesus does here.

[23 : 33] Which kind of leads us into the last passage, which we're going to look at, and that's up into Isaiah, Isaiah 58, particularly verse 13 and 14.

And it's interesting because in Isaiah 58, the whole chapter is a rebuke. This is a chapter that the Pharisees should have known. It was a rebuke of Israel because of their Sabbath keeping.

It was a rebuke because they had turned to their religion and their ritual and the performance of the ritual of thinking that was enough. But the problem was when they prayed, God wasn't answering.

They kept calling and praying and all they got was silence. And they're wondering, what's wrong?

We're doing everything we're supposed to. And then we get these words in verse 13 and 14, which you'll see there on the screen.

If you turn your back from the Sabbath and from doing your pleasures on my holy day and call the Sabbath a delight and the holy day of the Lord honorable.

[24 : 49] If you honor it, not going your own ways or seeking your own pleasure or talking idly, then you shall take delight in the Lord.

And notice the point here is they're doing all of the religious stuff, but their hearts are directed somewhere else. And the focus is not so much on the specific duties they do, but what they really want.

And so the message of this that really Jesus gives to the Pharisees, and I think he gives to us, self-absorption can take many forms.

It can take the form of being highly religious, very particular in our following the codes and the rules. It can also take the form of doing whatever we want.

But it all comes from the same place. I'm trusting me. I'm looking at me. I'm the one that provides.

[26 : 17] I am the one that satisfies. I am the one that will give myself the most pleasure. It's all about me. And God simply says, I give you the Sabbath to tell you it's not about you.

so to sum things up, the Sabbath is a day of rest.

It's what we see from the beginning, from God rested. It's a day of celebration. It's a day of celebrating all that God has done in creation, but also in redemption, what he's done to bring us back into fellowship with him.

And this is a point that we may think strange because we so often see the Sabbath as a burden, but John Piper says something interesting.

He explains it this way. He said, if we spend the day focused on Jesus, the most pleasurable and the most desirable one there is, it is impossible that that day would become a burden.

[27 : 33] It's a burden because we're still working. We're still striving. It's all about us and it's all up to us. The Sabbath is to be set apart from all other days, made special for these purposes.

It's a day of focused concentration and worship and celebrating what God has done. It's a day we remember all that God has done. It's a day that we remember our dependence and it's a day we turn away from our self-sufficiency.

So, that said, how are we going to live as Christians? As those who embrace God's grace, how are we supposed to live then in light of the Sabbath?

I think there's three things. The first is just avoiding the extremes. The extremes are really two things, two directions.

One is that highly legislating what you're supposed to do in the specific acts. In here, you can go to such extremes. I got into a conversation once.

[28 : 54] I was doing a presbytery exam with a guy and we were talking about this whole Sabbath principle and asked him, he says, well, what can you do and what do you think of the Sabbath? What can you do? What can you not do on the Sabbath?

And he says, well, I don't think going to a Braves game on the Sabbath fits with what the Sabbath means. because that's doing commerce.

And he says, well, what if you buy your ticket on Saturday? Can you go then? Well, what about if you go on a Saturday night game but you stay out so late, it's a double header and it goes into extra innings and you're totally exhausted.

Is that? Can you do that? Or can you go to the game and not buy hot dogs? Or you see, if we start asking the questions, if we even begin to ask the question, what specifically can I and I cannot do on the Sabbath, you get into a quagmire.

So we need to avoid that approach because it's hopeless. You'll never get to the end. But there's another extreme.

[30 : 08] The other extreme is we throw it out altogether. And that misses the point as well. The Sabbath is a gift.

It's given to us. It was not thrown out when Jesus came. He put it back in its rightful place as a place for us to celebrate.

And so the day is a day to be special and set aside. where we can express our faith, our trust in the one who provides.

So avoiding the two extremes. The second thing is embracing it as a gift. God gives us a Sabbath as a gift of rest but I think it's a bigger gift than that.

And it's not just that physical rest. Some of you need some physical rest. Some of you need to quit carting your kids around town, quit running to the store, quit work for one day, quit studying and just rest.

[31 : 23] But we're talking here about something more deeply. And the gift that God gives us on the Sabbath is actually a gift that protects us from our idolatries.

It first protects us from this idolatry of self-dependence. By telling us not to work on one day, it simply tries to break that hold of I am the one that has to make it happen.

If I don't work, I won't eat. And God says, uh-uh. You eat because I provide. You have all you need because I give.

And so the Sabbath is a way to protect our hearts from that kind of self-dependence of thinking it's all up to me. It also protects us from the idolatry of acceptance.

What are your neighbors going to think? What are your kids' friends going to think when they can't do travel sports on Sunday?

[32 : 43] They said, man, y'all a bunch of weirdos, a bunch of religious freaks. You're going to be looked at as different and weird.

Yeah. In some ways, that's part of the point. Our acceptance doesn't come from other people.

Our identity, our sense of belonging doesn't come from somebody else's smile and pat on my back. It comes from the Father who has set me apart as his own.

And I am different. I don't belong here in this world. If that's news to you, we are citizens of another kingdom.

We don't belong here. And when we follow Christ, we are different. We can't help it. And so, in a sense, this guards us from this idolatry that we have of other people's approval.

[33 : 53] The third thing, it guards us from this idolatry of self-determination. The Sabbath, in a way, is a line. And all you have to do is draw a line in front of someone and then they're going to feel there's a fence, there's a barrier, and then they want to cross it.

So, don't put a barrier up to me. Don't restrain me. I am self-determining. I am the one who rules.

You know, and Paul himself said in Romans 7, all you got to do to tell somebody, if you want to get them to sin is tell them don't do it.

There's the fence. And that rears up in us this self-determination that we have. And the Sabbath is one of those things where God gives us and says, no, you don't.

This is not about you. This is the place where you hear my word and you say, I trust you. it. And so this is one of those gifts that we have that guards us.

But then the third thing we see as we celebrate the Sabbath is we celebrate a hope of something greater. See, we need rest.

[35 : 22] We need rest more than just one day. But in Hebrews, as Will's already read, a rest is coming. Where a rest from all of our striving, all of our working, all of our performing, we're going to get to rest ultimately, finally, completely, because it'll all be over.

A rest is coming where we will stand before God and we will see him smile, say, well done, good and faithful servant, enter into the rest of your master.

And when we celebrate the Sabbath together, we are saying, that is my hope. This is just a taste.

It's just a foretaste. This is not the end of the story. This just sets our sights on something much, much greater and more glorious to come.

God is to God is the gift of the Sabbath. And really, when we come to this table, when we come to the Lord's table, this is what we celebrate.

[37 : 03] We celebrate. We stop our rest, we stop our working, and we gather around the table as a feast. we rest in the work that Christ has done.

His broken body, His shed blood, has paid, and has earned, and established our rest.

And so we celebrate this together. So let me, this is the invitation. Those of you who are in Christ, come and remember the deep rest that has been given and provided for us through Christ.

But I will also acknowledge that some of you here may not know Christ, but I would also say, more than likely, you are exhausted, you are tired. Don't come to the table, but come to Jesus.

Come to the one who says, all you are weary and heavy laden, I have given you rest. So come to Christ, stop your striving to be good enough.

[38 : 26] stop your striving to provide enough. Come to the one who has done everything and is satisfied.

Come to the table and again and remember and taste the rest we have in Christ. Let's pray together. Lord Jesus, as we come, would you in a very tangible way help us to remember the rest that you've given?

Help us to taste it. Help us to sense it. Help us to know it. Come and meet us here. We are tired Lord.

And we don't have to be. Bring us into your rest. Through your shed blood, your broken body, it was all done for us.

We pray in Jesus' name. Amen. Let me read you these words from 1 Corinthians where Paul says, For I received from the Lord what I also delivered to you, that the Lord Jesus on the night when he was betrayed, he took bread, and when he had given thanks, he broke it and said, This is my body which is for you.

[39 : 54] Do this in remembrance of me. In the same way he took the cup after supper saying, This cup is the new covenant in my blood. Do this as often as you drink it in remembrance of me, for as often as you eat this bread and drink this cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until he comes.

The body of the Lord Jesus as we see in this bread was broken, took our judgment. His blood was poured out to wash us clean from all of our failure, all of our sin.

Come and eat, come and drink, and remember the gift of rest. For more information, visit us online at southwood.org.