

Rest Weekly

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[0 : 00] Imagine that you are at school, for a while, a few of us. It's week four of school after the holidays and there is an impending assignment.

And you are already thinking of the end of the school term. How about this one? You've come back from your Europe trip, day two, sitting at the work desk, sitting behind the digger maybe, and you're already scrolling webjet, planning for your next holiday or your next cruise.

Does that sound familiar? We are all hungry for rest because at the bottom of this, you are yearning for more rest or perhaps what you want is respite from your work.

And so therefore perhaps the rest that you are pursuing aren't actually the antidote to your problem. Your problem is a lot deeper.

And so today we are unpacking rest and specifically God's vision for it. And by God's enabling, I pray that we might see and have illuminated in our hearts and minds the clarity of scripture that says rest is beautiful.

[1 : 21] Rest is a beautiful gift when you find it in Jesus. It's a resource to be stewarded regularly so that you might, like all the other rhythms of grace, behold Christ's beauty in your life.

For that is what these rhythms are indeed about. If you think that all these rhythms are purely just doing it because Jesus says to do it, then you're missing out on the grace of Jesus.

Reading the Bible is to gaze at God's glory, the wonder of Jesus who came to this earth. We gather right now as people who've been redeemed by Jesus to sing of the goodness of Christ the Redeemer.

And so too, rest is an experience of God's grace. So let's pray. Loving Father, we thank you that you are the creator of all things.

We ask that you might help us with our longing for rest. Lord, we want our life to seek the interests of Christ Jesus above our own. And by doing so, experience your promise of Jesus' purpose of coming for us to have life.

[2 : 34] Life to the full. Amen. So I've got three points. You'll find them also in the Paul's app, the outline there. Three points. Number one, the world story of rest.

Number two, God's story of rest. And your story of rest. But let's think of the world story of rest.

What do we see? Nearly 100 years ago, in 1930, John Maynard Keynes, an economist, suggested by the time that his children would grow up to be of working age, all people would be working only 15 hours a week.

And so you'd think, you know, his grandchildren would work even less than that. I mean, that sounds pretty good, right? So let's do an inspection on that said generation.

They did some research of his family and descendants. And they do this fun interview, and they talk about how long they're working for, right? And so the interviewer asks, so how many works a week are you, you know, working?

And then the descendant says, yeah, I work 15 hours. 15 hours. That sounds like Keynes finally has made it. His family are actually succeeding. And then you realise he actually hasn't stopped the sentence.

[3 : 48] 15 hours a day! And his family even say that Keynes, before he died, did not take his own advice because he was busy, stressed and overworked, trying to solve, I don't know what, some economic crisis.

And for you and I, I guess when we engage in small talk, there's this common phrase that you and I will hear. However, I'm good, but I'm busy. It's probably because you're trying to keep all the balls up in the air.

You've got your family commitments. You've got your friendships. You've got your work, your health, your appointments. You've got church, wellness, extracurricular, sleep, eating, hobbies. And you can often feel so overwhelmed.

And for me, when I get this inner agitation, I find myself blame work or some other externalised problem.

And don't get me wrong, that could be the case. There are lots of things going on in life. There might be cases when it comes to work that your role gets overloaded. Maybe there are office politics.

[4 : 54] Maybe there are problems with colleagues. Absolutely. But is this always the case? Let me put it another way. If I were to tell you, go and rest, you are probably thinking, all right, all I just need to do is just nothing.

Sit on the couch. Kids, go do your own thing. Watch Netflix. And for us, I think when it comes to stress management and rest from work, I wonder if our solution always tends to be to get rid of all the work things we do.

So we will have more days off. We'll have a holiday. We'll plan for retirement. Maybe we'll eat some food to find some comfort. Maybe we drink alcohol to forget our problems.

Even on your days off or those first few days on holidays, are you still restless? Still thinking about work?

There's a sense that you're worrying about friendships, a charity organisation that is floundering, your financial stability. And even maybe for some of you, you're like, well, I haven't worked in like 20 years.

[6 : 06] Let's celebrate that for you. But even if you are retired, it seems that retirement doesn't resolve this restlessness. Have you spoken to someone with retirement plans?

Keyword, plans. And they sometimes seem more busier than when they first started working because they've got all this limited time. They're like, let's cram it in with more and more and more.

Because also, you know, they've been wrote by their children to take care of their grandkids.

There's all these trips they want to go. They're the president of the Stamp Society. Who knows?

Why is this the case?

I wonder if it's because you are restless. The problem is not that you are just busy, but that your heart cannot rest.

Forget about doing nothing or going on and doing your hobbies and your leisure. Because if you feel restless and your mind is ruminating on life and you have this regular depletion of your mental bandwidth because of all the noise in your head, doing nothing means nothing.

[7 : 16] So resting equally doing nothing is not the antidote to your restless spirit. But I wonder if the Bible has the best answer. There is hope here because I think the feeling and experience of restlessness that we have is a sign.

It's a sign to turn to Jesus. It's a sign to turn to the one who says in Matthew 11, 28, Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest.

So let's look at the Bible's story of rest. And to understand the unfolding plan of God's salvation in the Bible, particularly on rest, we're simply going to put it in these three categories.

Number one, creation. Number two, fall. And number three, redemption. So creation. The reason why we start talking about creation first because it's at the very beginning, imprinted at the very beginning into its narrative is rest.

Now, if God is the creator of all things, he also creates rest. And if you know the creation account, it all begins in Genesis 1.

[8 : 34] God does the most amazing, wonderful, created, magnificent act. He creates the word purely from utterance. He speaks the very nature of creation into being.

So God makes the world in six days. Then he does what? Genesis 2, verse 2, it says, By the seventh day, God had finished the work he had been doing.

So on the seventh day, he rested from all his work. He rests. I think when you think of the musician who goes on tour and everyone gets dazzled by their music and the crowd wants more, what do they say?

Encore. One more song. And you might expect that God is going to make more. No.

God rests. But he doesn't rest from his work in the sense that he does nothing. It's the kind of rest that says he has finished. He's accomplished creation.

[9 : 44] God says, wow, about his work. His creation in 2, verse 3, he says, Then God blessed the seventh day and made it holy, because on it he rested from all the work of creating that he had done.

You see, God's picture of rest is so beautiful, isn't it? Rest is holy. Holy simply meaning set apart by God for his purpose.

In other words, the day of rest is not just an experience that God has, but one that his creation, his world is to behold and experience.

Because rest propels the rest of the story. In fact, God ordains rest as a part of the weekly cycle for his people. It's one of the Ten Commandments.

It's Deuteronomy 5, verse 12. It says, Observe the Sabbath day, the rest day, to keep it holy, as the Lord your God has commanded you. And Jesus later himself summarizes all the Ten Commandments into two sections.

[10 : 49] Matthew 22, verse 37. It says, And do you know where the Sabbath rests?

That commandment. Where does that fall? In the two summaries. If you look closer in Deuteronomy, God informs Israel as to why they rest. What should they remember to encourage rest for the rest of your life?

Deuteronomy 5, verse 15. 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. Love God. Love God.

The centerpiece of the Sabbath rest in the Ten Commandments begins with who God is. You rest. You cease striving because of who God is.

[11 : 58] God is the one who saved the Israelites out of Egypt. They just needed to rest and lean into trusting in God. They did nothing. Absolutely nothing. They didn't part the Red Sea.

They didn't change Pharaoh's mind. They didn't control him. It was all God. And so too by every other measure. God is sovereign and he sustains all things.

That's the premise of rest. Yet we've already discussed, and we can simply see from the experience of our lives, of what we spoke earlier, that despite knowing the goodness of rest, we still feel restless.

And there is a deep longing in our hearts that we are trying to fill. We're still yearning for this deep rest. And when there are the good days of work, there can also be plenty of weary and difficult days too.

In Genesis 3 verse 17, we see the result of humanity's sin, that work is tainted because of brokenness, because of the brokenness of the world, work isn't perfect. And so of course, rest for our soul is also endlessly difficult.

[13 : 13] We're forever chasing the next high or wanting some fleeting escapism. We are chasing everything that God's rest was designed to fill, our longings.

Augustine of Hippo said, our heart is restless until it rests in you. Friends, the good news is that this is not the end.

You don't have to have the restlessness. There is one to look to. There is a future hope. If you are one who trusts in Jesus, you know that Jesus becomes the pinnacle to everything.

He changes everything. And so too is Jesus the pinnacle of rest. If you don't know Jesus, my prayer is that you listen to this story, this wonderful story of Jesus, that it might bring encouragement, and curiosity of who Jesus is to you.

So this story is about Jesus hanging out with two ladies, Mary and Martha, and we see this in Luke chapter 10. It's clear in verse 38 that it is Martha, not Mary, Martha who invites Jesus in.

[14 : 31] So you might assume, oh, Martha is opening her house to the Lord and Savior of the world. She's doing the best thing. And understandably, hands up for me, when it comes to hospitality and people coming over and my house is a mess, I don't want anyone to be there.

I want to make sure that everything's clean. So what does Martha do? She does homely preparation. Maybe she's cleaning, maybe she's cooking, getting a meal ready, who knows? But in her exasperation, she exclaims to the Lord, she's doing it all by herself.

She says, Luke 10, 40, Lord, don't you care that my sister has left me to do the work by myself? Tell her to help me.

Because surely if she doesn't do it, Mary won't, because all she's doing is lying down, hanging out, chilling at Jesus' feet. And what you must understand here is that Martha is doing practically what is

expected of her, of her culture.

What the world says is expected when a guest comes over is that, you know, you'd prepare the house. Probably not dissimilar to us now. And so Jesus responds with something contrary to what the world expects of her.

[15:53] Luke 10, 41 to 42. Martha, Martha, the Lord answered. You are worried and upset about many things.

But few things are needed. Or indeed, only one. This is the king who removes all pretenses and just wishes to be in relationship throughout all the mess.

Don't worry about all the preparations for when there is time with Jesus. Nothing else matters. Sit and gaze at the glory of Jesus, God who is condescended.

Only one thing matters. Notice again how clearly Jesus is trying to speak to her. Martha, Martha, you are worried and upset.

Friends, Martha's issue is not simply that she's doing things. In fact, notice that Jesus doesn't even talk about her actions at all. It's that she's worried and upset.

[17:04] She's restless. When faced with the image of the invisible God, the firstborn over all creation, instead of hanging out with him, she goes and does something that is probably good.

It's important, but it's not the best. In our claims for doing good and seemingly important things, making our kids happy by taking them to every extracurricular there is under the sun, appeasing the boss with the phone of our...

The boss calls us during a non-emergency, and we answer the phone on a rest day. We have to ask, is it the best thing I could be doing with my time?

Good is good, but are you living in the best? Is your calendar filled with good options that overshadows the best? Jesus is the greatest best you can choose.

In fact, the Bible says in the passage that was read out for us in Hebrews 4, chapter 1 to 11, starts by saying, verse 1, therefore, since the promise of entering his rest still stands, let us be careful that none of you be found to have fallen short of it.

[18:21] The writer of Hebrews here is pretty much saying, there are all these people who were trying to enter the rest of God, but this ultimate rest and peace that they wanted, they were not able to have.

In verse 2, it says, for we also have had the good news. The implication here is that the good news, the gospel, leads to rest.

The good news for God's chosen people now and then is rest. But how do we receive the gospel's promise of this rest?

full verse 10, for anyone who enters God's rest also rests from their work. You rest from your work. Why? It's because Jesus died on the cross. It's his great work. It's his great accomplishment. He was the one who said, it is finished.

[19:24] You don't need to work. You can't work to earn God's favor. You rest. Jesus worked so you could rest. You see, if Jesus is the one who died on the cross, you don't need to do anything.

That is grace. It is the undeserved gift that Christ paid for. You didn't earn it. It was simply a gift for you to receive. And if that is Jesus' grace, then there is actually a logical conclusion you can make about rest.

The logic of grace is simple as this. If you have received the grace of our Lord Jesus, then you rest in Jesus.

Your rest begun when you first took a glimpse of the gospel. For you trusted in Jesus and not your works. The logic of grace is rest.

If this, then that. If grace, then rest. Now, when it comes to the story of our rest, your rest, I think it's important to understand what you are resting from.

[20:39] And I hope that as we were talking about the world story of rest, it was clear that what we are to rest from is work. But what exactly qualifies as work? Spicy topic, I know.

What is work? And I want to hold loosely to this definition, but for this exercise, let's call work success or striving.

We're in an aspirational culture here in Chatswood, and so I just want to ask you, what is it that you are striving for? How are you trying to make it in this world?

What things are you doing to bring you purpose and meaning? Because maybe you're not working, employed by a boss. Maybe you're self-employed.

Maybe you're the parent at home. Or you are studying or you are retired. People might not think it's work. But let's go with our definition of work.

[21 : 36] What is it that you invest your energy, your mind and your heart, your resources towards? That's your work. That's where you need rest. You need rest from the Martha heart that cannot stop worrying.

Have you gotten to the end of the day? Gone to bed and still just been wired? Do you feel like you are in this endless cycle of working because you are defining yourself in what you do? I need not just a body that can cease striving, but a heart that stops worrying too. You can believe that you are saved by your works, but be in a habitual pattern of physically, emotionally, mentally exhausting your head, heart and hands by striving for your own agenda and what you are contending for.

And some of us know this. Ephesians 2, 8 to 10, for it is by grace you have been saved, not by works. So, why is it that you suddenly are striving for everything else in life?

And it makes sense logically. The reason why you strive and worry for everyone is because maybe if you don't do it, no one else will. Your boss, your friend, your parents, your spouse, your child doesn't care.

[22 : 56] And so, if you don't do it, no one will. And I can tell you all the theological reasons as to why rest is a good thing, but what is firmly lodged in your heart and mind is that you've got to be the one who holds everything together.

but what if I told you there is someone who has, someone who is in fact holding and sustaining everything together.

Colossians 1, 15 to 20 says that not only was Jesus there in the beginning of creation, but he too is the sustainer of all things. The reason that you are successful by any measure, the reason you have riches is because God has given it to you, not because you're pretty, not because you're smart, not because you're needy or a hard worker, it's because God is a generous God.

You've got to remember that God can do it better than you. He's a better sustainer than you. It all comes down to who he is, doesn't it? What good news is that?

Remember Jesus. He is not your fountain that begun your journey with Christ. He is the ocean by which everything has been formed and is still sustained.

[24 : 15] Your marriage is sustained by Jesus. Your super fund, your retirement plan, your mortgage is not solved by you, but by Jesus. And I think there are four intrusive thoughts you might be telling yourselves which are not true for the one who trusts in Jesus.

I am what I do. I need to prove myself. My meaning is from what I do. And if I don't do it, no one else will.

For me, there are places where I have this disbelieving power and I disbelieve the gospel in my life. I must admit for you that stopping is not actually something that I'm very good at.

In fact, I must confess, yesterday we had a training session here for our youth leaders and I was telling a few people, oh yeah, I'm preaching on rest tomorrow. And they're like, um, Ash, isn't Saturday your Sabbath?

And when it comes to busy weeks like this, I find I can be prayerless because I feel like I have to work on my own strength.

[25 : 24] Or even worse, I might overwork myself because I must do it myself. But friend, Ash, you cannot lean into Jesus, stop and come to the foot of the cross and lean on his sovereignty, provision, and kindness to you.

But you might have a different intrusive thought and we need to be actively preaching gospel truths, gospel glue in your brain. If you believe on the screen, I am what I do, trust in the better news that you are who God says you are, a beloved child of God.

If you believe in I need to prove myself, know that the gospel reality is that you have already been justified, you have been made right with God by faith in Christ.

If you're hearing, my meaning is from what I do, my prayer is that you experience that the good news makes really clear your purpose in life is to glorify God and enjoy him forever.

If you have this anxious feeling, the one that I get often, if I don't do it, no one else will, brother, sister, remember that Jesus has done it all and all that is necessary, the most important thing on the cross.

[26 : 52] He's dealt with your sin and punishment. Friends, preach the gospel to yourself regularly. And so, lastly, there's just three tips I just hope will propel you into having rest weekly, making it a rhythm in your life.

Good is the enemy of best. Your most powerful verbal tool you might actually have is the ability to say no. Because every time you say yes to something, you're actually saying no to another. Matthew 5, 37, let your yes be yes and your no be no. Your no means your biggest yes to what truly matters. Reality is, you and I are finite beings and we can't do everything.

In fact, I've got printed on the side of church over there a reflection document, a time audit to help you reflect on biblical principles and priorities and understand your time and where it's going and to help you run for the best yes.

Quick side note, make sure you're saying no to the things, sorry, restart, make sure you are not saying no to the things that propel God's mission.

[28 : 11] You're why that's driven by God's word. And I wonder, too often we get so tired and then we're forced to rest by our bodies and say no to the things that we are commanded by God to do.

Even I need to ask myself, Ash, why did you overcommit? Maybe you shouldn't have said yes to all that training and that party if it meant you weren't able to rest and you were preaching the next day. Good is the enemy of best. Number two, preach the gospel to yourself. If you want that hope of non-restlessness, those four things that we spoke about before, preach the gospel against those four things.

Read the Psalms like chapter 46 verse 10, be still and know that I am God. Rest by knowing who God is. Rest knowing he is your redeemer.

You don't need to prove yourself to him anymore. He likes you as you are. He is sovereign. He is the sustainer of all things. Put your work phone and emails down. Stop pottering in the kitchen.

[29 : 14] Let someone else do it. The world expects you to have your kids that are successful and happy, but all they need is Jesus. Model that rest for them.

Be still. And lastly, book in time to rest and create a rest action plan. In your magazines, you'll see that there is a helpful crawl, walk, and run table.

And from what we've already gathered about rest, it is clear that it is both ceasing your strivings, but a worship of Jesus. And so your day of rest should be ceasing, delighting, and worshipping.

Perhaps you are really good at the ceasing bit, but not the worshipping bit. And vice versa. And if you're stuck on things to do on your rest day, here's three ideas for you.

Number one, creation. Go out and have a look at the sky, the heavens, the trees, and see how magnificent God is. Be in awe and wonder of him.

[30 : 20] Second, avocation, not avocado. Anti-work, a vocation. What do you do for your works and strivings?

Do the opposite. If it's your hands, read a book. Join a book club. If you use your mind for work, do a painting. Learn to knit. If your work involves you by yourself, maybe serve in a team.

Join a soup kitchen. Engross yourself with being with God's people. And three, reflecting. Think.

Consider how God has been changing you over the last few days, weeks, and months.

How has he been doing it by teaching you from his word? Maybe the circumstances he's placed you in. What is he teaching you? How are you tracking in your relationship with him? Now, over to you.

What might you consider helpful for resting in Jesus? On the screen, you are going to see three questions on ceasing, delighting, and worshipping to ponder.

[31 : 27] And then the band will come up in a few minutes. But what I want you to do is take some time to jot something down. Thank you.