

God's Holy Day

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[0 : 0 0] We're going to be looking this evening at the topic of the Lord's Day from the Old Testament, but looking at it in the light of New Testament additions to that as well. And one of the things that's mentioned in the passage in Isaiah is how it should be a delight for us, in other words, an exquisite joy to participate in the Lord's Day, in the worship of God particularly. And here is a psalm that sets that out for us, where the people in the Old Testament rejoiced going to the place of worship, the house of God, as it's put there. So let's sing these verses and seek to have that joyful heart as we draw near to God. I joyed when to the house of God.

I joyed when to the house of God. Go up, they said to me, Jerusalem, within thy gate.

Jerusalem, as a city is, all are we built together, come to the place that I store, the times of God, O'er.

Jerusalem, as a city is, all are we built together, and to the house of God. Jerusalem, as a city is, all are we built together, and to the house of God. Jerusalem, as a city is, all are we built together, and to the house of God.

Jerusalem, as a city is, all is excellent to the house of sub-ordination. Jerusalem, as a city is, all are we built together, and to the house of God. Jesus is, all should put together, and to the house of God.

[2 : 1 6] His opportunity is filled together, and to the house of love. Trina, Jerusalem, they have peace and felicity.

Let them not love thee and thy peace, and still prosperity.

Therefore I wish that peace may still within thy bones remain, and never may thy policies prosperity retain.

Now for my friends and brethren say, peace be in thee and say, and for the hearts of God our Lord, I'll see thy good away.

Now let's join together in prayer. We're going to call upon the Lord in prayer. Let's pray. Amen. O Lord, our God, as we come to give thanks, that this is our privilege once again to draw near to you together in prayer and in worship.

[4 : 1 7] We give thanks, O Lord, for the opportunity and the promises that meet us as we come together in this way. We thank you for all the experience that we already had of your blessing in this place of worship, and for the way that we can look back over many years when you have been pleased, O Lord, to bless your people here in this place of worship.

May it be for us, O Lord, as it was for the people of the psalmist's day to go up to the temple, rejoicing because it was said to him, let us go to the house of the Lord. Lord, Lord, that we know that the people of God are his house in New Testament times onwards.

Yet, Lord, we associate this building with our gatherings for worship. And so we come, Lord, today to give thanks that we are able to gather here and that we are able to seek your blessing once again as we come together in this way.

Lord, help us, we pray, to worship you in the manner in which we ought, with the reverence, the godly fear, the joy, the expectation that should characterize us as we come together in this way.

We thank you that you are the God who lives in the midst of your people, who has promised to be your presence with them down through their journey through this world.

[5 : 40] We thank you that your presence with them is assured through all that you have done in the Lord Jesus Christ for us. And we give thanks, therefore, that your presence will go with your people on through death itself and resurrection and into eternity, and that God will dwell with his people forevermore, as your word tells us.

And we thank you, Lord, that we come around your word tonight. And we thank you for your word once again. Lord, when we are so familiar with your word and so much of its teaching, we pray that we may never be over-familiar with it, that it will always be for us the very voice of God and the manner in which we draw near to you as it associates with your word.

Oh, Lord, help us to receive your word with faith. We read of others, Lord, in your word, those who came through many years in the wilderness, who fell in the wilderness, who did not enter the promised land because the word was not mixed with faith in them.

And we pray that that word that tonight we receive into our minds and hearts will indeed be mixed with faith, that we will receive it believingly and enable us, Lord, to receive it trustingly, trusting in the God of the Word, trusting in the Holy Spirit, who is himself the author of the Word, as you moved human beings down through the years to put into writing those things we now have benefit from.

We thank you, O Lord, for the presence of your Spirit in the life of your church. We thank you for the way that we can say of ourselves that at many times we have seen the moving of your Spirit in our midst as a people.

[7 : 29] We pray that that will be the case increasingly, Lord, in our day. We recognize our need as a people. We recognize our need even as your people.

We recognize the need of those around us who do not come to worship you, who do not care for your day or for your cause. And we give thanks, O Lord, that we pray for them and to a God who is able to change their whole experience and their whole attitude to life as you did our own.

We pray tonight for them and ask that you would bless us as a people and as a nation. For we know that one of the characteristics, Lord, of our day as a nation, that we do not keep the Lord's day, that we do not honor the Lord's day, that we do not use the opportunities we have in the Lord's day as we ought.

We know that your day is so often trampled on and desecrated. We ask your forgiveness, Lord, for that. We pray that you would be pleased to turn us once again to a proper observance of your ways, not only your day, but the other aspects of your will revealed to us in your word.

And we pray for your Holy Spirit to work in our communities and help us, Lord, as a people who worship you to hold forth the word of life and to testify to your goodness to those that are our neighbors and work colleagues and friends.

[8 : 58] And we ask, Lord, tonight that you would equip us further to do so and grant to us, we pray, that tactful boldness that will set your word before the world of our day.

We ask your blessing once again for those who rule over us in our nation. Oh, Lord, we ask that you would bless them and bless your word to them, even if at this time they don't regard it as in any way significant.

Yet, Lord, you can enter their mind and give to them that change of heart that will come to realize the importance of your word and of the law and the gospel contained in it.

And we pray that you would bless them as they go about the responsibilities and burdens of high office. Help them, Lord, to realize that it is as we all are that we are accountable to you, that it is by you that we have come into whatever position in life we have in your providence and that we are answerable to you for it.

And so we pray for them and ask, Lord, that you would prosper us as a people in righteousness and in holiness of life. Forgive us for the many ways in which we have departed from your truth and for the way in which we have taken the wisdom of human beings and replaced your truth with it.

[10 : 18] We ask, Lord, for your forgiveness, for the spirit of repentance and turning to the Lord that we seek for ourselves too. And we pray, Lord, tonight for all who have difficulties of various kinds to contend with, not only in our own midst as a congregation, but in our communities as well.

Remember those who are struggling now through the cost of living increase. We ask, O Lord, that you would be pleased to lift us up out of these conditions.

And we pray that you bless the world and all that has affected this process at this time. We pray, O Lord, for renewed prosperity in a proper way to be our portion.

And we ask that you would graciously bless those in charge of our nation who are wrestling with these issues at this time. We pray, Lord, for those who have lost work, those who find it difficult to provide for their families.

We pray for the food bank and those who administer it. We give thanks for it and we pray that all the food banks throughout our nation, O Lord, will be supported and that use will be made of them.

[11 : 30] But we pray especially that you would provide days of employment, days of rich provision for us as a people, O Lord, and grant to those who are struggling at this time that you would reveal yourself to them and assure them, Lord, that the riches that are truly important are in yourself.

Nevertheless, we pray that you provide for them and the practical needs they have from day to day. We pray today for those who lost loved ones in recent times, those who are anticipating funerals and days to come, those, Lord, who look back upon days when loved ones who are no longer with them spent their time in family life with them and in the enjoyment of those things.

And we pray for them in their sense of loss and bereavement and sorrow. And we ask, gracious one, that you would draw them closer to yourself and channel your peace into their hearts, we pray, and your comfort.

Remember, Lord, those who have lost loved ones through suicide. When this is, O Lord, on our sheet this evening and when we are being asked to take part in this consultation, we do pray, O Lord, for those who have been through that trauma and are still traumatized from it.

And we ask, O Lord, even for those tonight too who may have suicidal thoughts at this present time, Lord, we ask that you would draw near to them, that you would assure them of your love for all those who place their trust in you.

[13 : 07] Give support to them, we pray, and grant that all the means of support available will be used by them. Remember their families, those who are anxious over them from hour to hour and from day to day and the pressure and stress, O Lord, involved.

Remember them, we pray. Grant your blessing too, O Lord, for all others that we commend to you tonight. We pray for those reaching out with the gospel and ask that you would provide blessing to accompany your word.

Remember Muriel in Cambodia. Again, we pray for her, O Lord, and ask that your blessing will be with her from day to day in her own situation. We commend her once again to you.

We ask too your blessing to follow the week that has gone by as so many children attended the club. Lord, we ask that your blessing will follow that teaching that they received of the gospel and of the importance of the Lord Jesus Christ to them.

and we pray that they and their families will know that blessing in days to come that would come from your own blessed truth. Now, Lord, we ask your blessing to be with us as we turn to your word and continue to sing your praises.

[14 : 21] Forgive us our sins, we pray, in Jesus' name. Amen. Let's continue to praise God this time we're singing in Psalm 32. Psalm 32 in the Sing Psalms version and that's on page 38, singing verses 7 to 11, from verse 7 to the end of the psalm.

You are my hiding place, O Lord, my true security. You keep me safe in troubled days. You circle me with joyful praise when you have set me free.

Psalm 32, verses 7 to 11. We'll stand again to sing. Amen. You are my hiding place, O Lord, my true security.

You keep me safe in troubled days. You circle me with joyful praise when you have set me free.

I will instruct you by my word and guide you in my way.

[16 : 04] My counsel, I will give to you my life will keep your path with you and watch you day by day.

Though we like the horse or mule which cannot understand, they must be firm and kept in shape as they and ridden turn their way to go where you to go where you command.

The wicked woes will much increase but those who trust the Lord political who teach sal duplicates that I have ever and Let's read from the Scriptures now from the Gospel of Matthew, chapter 12, the first 14 verses.

Matthew chapter 12, from the beginning, the first 14 verses. At that time, Jesus went through the grain fields on the Sabbath.

His disciples were hungry, and they began to pluck ears of corn and to eat them. But when the Pharisees saw it, they said to him, Look, your disciples are doing what is not lawful to do on the Sabbath.

[18 : 45] He said to them, Have you not read what David did when he was hungry and those who were with him, how he entered the house of God and ate the bread of the presence, which it was not lawful for him to eat, nor for those who were with him, but only for the priests.

Or have you not read in the law how on the Sabbath the priests in the temple profane the Sabbath and are guiltless? I tell you, something greater than the temple is here.

And if you had known what this means, I desire mercy and not sacrifice, you would not have condemned the guiltless. For the Son of Man is Lord of the Sabbath.

He went on from there and entered their synagogue. And a man was there with a withered hand. And they asked him, Is it lawful to heal on the Sabbath, so that they might accuse him?

He said to them, Which of you who has a sheep, if it falls into a pit on the Sabbath, will not take hold of it and lift it out? Of how much more value is a man than a sheep?

[19 : 50] So it is lawful to do good on the Sabbath. Then he said to the man, Stretch out your hand. And the man stretched it out and was restored healthy like the other.

But the Pharisees went out and conspired against him how to destroy him. Amen. May God add his blessing to a reading of his word.

Let's now sing once again in Psalm 119. 119, page 163. And the section beginning at verse 105. The tune is eventide.

Your word's a lamp that shines before my feet. It is a light that guides me on my way. The oath that I have taken, I have confirmed that all your righteous laws I will obey.

O Lord, you know that I have suffered much. Preserve my life according to your word. Accept the willing praises of my mouth. Instruct me in your righteous laws, O Lord.

[20 : 55] I will not disregard your holy law, though constantly my life is in my hands. Although the wicked set a snare for me, I have not left the path of your commands.

Your statutes are my heritage always. And every day they make my heart rejoice. My heart is set on keeping your decrees. And to the very end they are my choice.

These verses to the tune eventide. Your word's a lamp that shines before my feet. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.

Amen. Bealed. Amen.

Amen. Amen. Amen. The oath that I have taken I've confirmed, that all your righteousness I will obey.

[22 : 16] O Lord, you know that I have suffered much.

Please spend my life according to your word.

Accept the willing praises of my heart.

Insult me in your righteous laws, O Lord.

I will not dishearten you, O Lord.

[23 : 15] Though constantly my life is in my hands, O Lord, the wicked set us here for me, I am not left above you, O God.

Your statutes are my heritage always.

And every day they make my heart rejoice.

My heart is set on me in your defeat. And to the very end they are my joy.

Let's turn to read God's word again this time in Isaiah, chapter 58. And this is the passage we're going to spend some time on briefly this evening.

[24 : 46] Isaiah 58 and at verse 13.

Isaiah 58 and the last two verses, verse 13. If you turn back your foot from the Sabbath, from doing your pleasure on my holy day, and call the Sabbath a delight, and the holy day of the Lord honorable, 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 I will make you ride on the heights of the earth. I will feed you with the heritage of Jacob your father, for the mouth of the Lord has spoken it.

The weekly Lord's Day or Christian Sabbath, as it's now known since New Testament times, is of abiding relevance to human life.

Not just to the life of God's people, but to human life in its entirety. Because the Lord's Day, the Sabbath day, is not something that began with the New Testament.

[26 : 03] It's not something that began even with the Ten Commandments, although it is the fourth commandment in the Ten Commandments. It began at the creation.

You read about that in Genesis chapter 2, where God, when He finished His work of creation in six days, rested on the seventh day, and sanctified the seventh day to be a day of rest.

And ever since, it has become, for people, a day in which they rest from their usual occupations, apart from work that needs to be done, that's necessary.

But it's a day that has been, by the Christian church, observed as a day that is different to the other six. That goes back to God's own specification.

He sanctified this day. And although since New Testament times has come to be the first day of the week, due mainly to Christ's resurrection from the dead, it's nevertheless the same pattern of one day sanctified to the Lord to begin the week, and six days following when we're free to do our own activities in terms of our labor.

[27 : 19] So, in other words, because it began with creation, it's a creation ordinance. That's what theologians have called it down through the years, creation ordinance. Just like the ordinance of labor, tied, of course, to the Lord's Day as well, in terms of absence from labor being one of the characteristics of the Lord's Day.

But the ordinances of God, the creation ordinances, include also marriage, because marriage was set by God in the context of creation ordinance.

And all the creation ordinances, these three especially, are of abiding relevance to human life. So, you must never think that the Lord's Day or the Sabbath, the Christian Sabbath, is applicable only to Christians.

The gospel calls upon all human beings to set this day aside, to be holy to the Lord, to be different to the other days of the week.

You probably have heard many times of this saying. Now, it's not really, we're not really sure who wrote it, but it goes as follows.

[28 : 29] A Sabbath well spent brings a week of content and strength for the toil of tomorrow. But a Sabbath profaned, whatever is gained, is a certain forerunner of sorrow.

And that reminds us in itself, in its own pithy way, of how centrally important the observance and the sanctifying of the Lord's Day is.

And the Lord's Day, in fact, is itself a unifying ordinance. And by that I mean it's something that actually holds human beings together when it's rightly observed.

It binds us together, binds human beings together when they give the place to the Lord's Day that the Lord himself has called for it to be given. And it does that in a way that no other ordinance really can do in that way.

If everybody in the country was actually going to be true to the Lord's Day as God himself requires, just imagine the effect that would have on our society to bind human beings together, not in a way that is tyrannous, but in a way that really experiences the true liberty of God's salvation and of the worship of God in relation to him being our creator and our savior.

[29 : 48] And therefore, the Lord's Day applies not just to individuals, it also applies to nations, it applies to communities. And indeed our attitude to the Lord's Day is itself a very reliable gauge of the spiritual or moral state of any people.

And I need not tell you, you know yourselves, that when you apply that as a gauge to our own nation, our own nation fails very badly measured against or by that gauge.

Because the Lord's Day, far from being upheld and exalted and honored and sanctified, is treated no differently to any other day.

And indeed in many respects is desecrated and secularized and many other words you could use for people's attitude and practice on the Lord's Day.

I want us to think of the Lord's Day tonight. It's something probably that we really don't think of frequently enough in the teaching of the pulpit. Because it is of such central importance and so much else revolves around it.

[30 : 59] And it is connected, as I said, to so many aspects of human life that is vitally important that we actually keep it at the forefront of our minds. What the Lord's Day is for, what the Lord's Day is for a start, where it's come from, what it's for, how it's different to other days of the week, and therefore how we ourselves must in our attitude and practice observe the Lord's Day.

Not in a legalistic way, but nevertheless in a way that honors it as the day of God. And that's what we have in these verses in Isaiah chapter 38.

There are some differences in terms of things that are connected with the Lord's Day, as you move from the Old Testament to the New Testament, where it becomes the Christian Sabbath, or the Lord's Day as it's called throughout the New Testament.

But nevertheless, the principle of it remains exactly the same, that it is a day in contrast to the other days of the week that we are to consecrate to God.

That doesn't mean we don't consecrate the other days to Him and seek to be obedient to God on other days of the week. This is a different day in terms of how God Himself has specified it to be sanctified as His special day, as a day in which He is honored in ways that are not possible so much on the other days of the week.

[32 : 25] Now, you can see in these two verses, as you read through them, that you have the kind of thinking in them, or the kind of argument that begins with, if you do this, then certain things will follow.

In other words, what you have here are what you could call conditional blessings. There are a set of conditions, first of all. We're going to look at three of them or summarize it in three.

If you do this, if you turn back your fruit from the Sabbath, if you honor the Sabbath, not going your own ways or seeking your own pleasure, then you shall take delight in the Lord.

In other words, it's saying to us, if we fulfill these conditions, and it's not again in a legalistic way, if we fulfill these conditions, then these promises follow. The consequences are that we will then take delight in the Lord.

He will make us ride on the heights of the earth. He will feed us with the heritage of Jacob. And we'll see briefly what all of these mean. So that's the way the verses are set in relation to each other.

[33 : 29] The conditions specified, and then that leads us to the blessings promised. Let's look at the conditions then. If you turn back your fruit from the Sabbath.

Now, what does he mean by turn back your fruit or remove your fruit from the Sabbath? And there are various opinions among commentators as to what that means. Some think it might be a reflection on the Sabbath being regarded as holy ground that we are to regard with carefulness.

Just as Moses, when he came to approach the burning bush, was told, take off your shoes from off your feet. The place you're standing on is holy ground. And maybe that's the idea behind turning back your foot from the Sabbath, that it's regarded as holy ground that we have to regard as holy.

Sanctifying. And that's what it means to sanctify the Lord's day, to treat it as holy. I think it's probably better, the second way that people think of it as, treading down on the Sabbath day.

Treating it disrespectfully. In other words, when it says turn back your fruit from it, it's saying don't trample it down. Instead of elevating it, what you're doing is trampling it down.

[34 : 43] Standing on it. Treating it with disrespect. Disrespect. That's what he's saying here. Isaiah. God saying through Isaiah to the people of Isaiah's day. In other words, profaning the day. Not treating the day respectfully.

Not treating it as a holy day. As a different day. And if you read through Isaiah, you'll find that they were doing certain things on the Lord's day that were formally correct.

But the spirit in their heart was absolutely different to what it should have been. And the Lord was saying to them, yes, outwardly you might be observing certain things to do with the Sabbath day. But I despise your heart.

I can see in your heart that you're not in love with me at all. You're just doing things by rote or just as a matter of habit. Or even worse than that in an idolatrous way.

And so, you see, that's what he's saying here. If you turn back your foot from the Sabbath, if you don't tread down or trample the Sabbath or profane my day, then these things that I'm promising you will follow.

[35 : 43] Now, if you apply that to our society today, you can see today itself right now at this moment, as you look out, just confined to our own nation for one thing, you can actually see how much this is applicable to the world of our day.

Because instead of elevating this day, instead of having this day upheld and promoted as God's day, sadly, it's largely trampled down.

It's largely secularized. It's largely treated as a day when we can just do as we do on other days. And certainly a day when God doesn't really come into the picture at all.

Treading down on the Lord's day. Putting it, stamping it beneath your feet. Instead of actually elevating it and giving it the prominence and the special place that God Himself requires of us to give it.

That's the first thing. If you turn your foot from the Sabbath. Then He says, from doing your pleasure on my holy day. Now, as He goes through these various conditions, the one follows on from the other.

[36 : 55] The one helps to explain the other. If you turn back your foot from the Sabbath, if you stop trampling on the Sabbath. In other words, He's saying, that's doing your pleasure on my holy day. And you can see immediately that there's a very emphatic comparison here as you take these two words, your and my.

And if you emphasize those two, you'll get to the exact meaning of what God is saying through Isaiah to the people of His day. If you actually turn back your foot from the Sabbath from doing your pleasure on my holy day.

See, that's how God is emphasizing it. That's what the people of Isaiah's day were actually doing. They were doing their own pleasure on God's holy day. They were treating the day as their day, not as God's day.

They were treating the day as a day for their pleasure to be done, not what God actually required of them. That is the Lord's day for us, friends, today as well.

We are here today as worshipers of God to do the Lord's pleasure. That doesn't mean we don't take pleasure in it. And I hope we all do take pleasure in this worship in the Lord's day and in the day itself.

[38 : 09] And all the opportunities that we have in it to worship the Lord, to enjoy being together as worshipers of God, and being together as families to dedicate this day to God.

But it's a day of pleasing God. I say that's something we have to apply to every day, of course, but we're just confining this to the Lord's day specifically.

That's what the passage is really doing for us. It requires doing what pleases Him. From doing your pleasure on my holy day.

Now again, when you apply that to the world in which we live, you can see how appropriate, how relevant that description from long ago is to the world of our day and the Lord's day in our day.

Because that's what you see people there doing their own pleasure instead of the pleasing of God that He requires of us.

[39 : 11] There are just so many things, too many things involved in that to go into the specification of them. People doing their own pleasure, their own recreational pleasure, as a matter of whether it's sport or any other activity, whether it's things that they themselves think are just not possible on other days of the week.

We can actually summarize it this way. Doing our own pleasure, God says, on my holy day. Why are we here tonight?

We're here tonight because God is calling us to be pleasing to Him. And to be pleasing to Him ought to be pleasing to us. And to be pleasing to Him ought to be elevated above what we ourselves might say is pleasing to us in terms of our own ordinary way of thinking.

Here is what God was saying to the people of Isaiah. If you actually turn back your fruit from the Sabbath, if you cease trampling down my day and misusing it and not treating it as holy, and that means if you stop doing your pleasure on my holy day.

You see, that's why it's so difficult. And when you lose sight of the importance of the Lord's Day in any generation, in any society, this is what you come up against. You come up against it today, especially when you try to urge people, well, why don't you treat this day as a day that's different to the other days?

[40 : 43] Why don't you treat it as a day for worship to come together with God's people? Well, I'm in charge of my own life, and this is the only day I have for playing golf or whatever it is, and that's what I'm going to do.

It's for my pleasure. When you lose sight of God and pleasing God and what God has specified, that's what you end up with. That's where the people of Judah in Isaiah's day, that's where they were.

That's where they were at. And here is God saying, not only that, but He's saying, and call the Sabbath a delight, not doing your own pleasure on my holy day.

If you actually see that as well, it includes, further on in that verse, near the end of the verse, if you honor it, not going your own ways or seeking your own pleasure.

He's repeating that, so obviously that's of critical importance in the argument of the prophet. Or talking idly. Now, there's a challenge.

[41 : 48] What does talking idly mean? Literally, the Hebrew days just say, speaking a word. That obviously means more than just conversation.

Talking idly really means something like talking that's not suited to the spirit of the Lord's day. If we're sanctifying the day of God to be a day that's holy to Him, then we actually have to ask ourselves, is my conversation today, is it something that fits in with sanctifying this day to the Lord?

It's not going to be conversation about what the latest football results are. Conversation about what this or that activity is in the world as you see it.

So many examples you could give of that as well, but the principle of it is the same. Now, it doesn't mean that we have a minute specification of what is and isn't acceptable to do on the Lord's day.

It would be quite wrong to actually say, well, if you're going to be coming to church on the Lord's day, you have to be dressed in black. Men have to wear their suits. You have to wear a tie. All of that thing.

[43 : 00] These are specifics like the Pharisees actually were doing with the Lord's day where they had actually applied to the Sabbath their own regulations, where there was no background to that in terms of God's specification.

But the principle of it is there and it's the principle that we adhere to. And we have to ask ourselves, when we're spending the Lord's day at home or in church, are we actually engaging in conversation that contributes to the overall spirit of the Lord's day, what it's about?

Is my conversation sanctified in relation to the Lord's day as well? Am I talking about God? Am I thinking about His redemption?

Am I thinking about His worship? Am I giving thought to the things that glorify Him in terms of that worship or this day being separate from the others?

Those are the sort of things that He means, I think, by talking idly. And as I said, that is really a huge challenge. A big challenge, because I find myself very much caught up in this.

[44 : 09] Throughout the day, in between services or before or after services, what do we talk about? When we go out there tonight, after the service, are we immediately going into the kind of worldly conversation that has to do with, well, various things?

Soap operas, latest films, latest fashions, whatever. Not talking idly.

Not talking idly. It's a great challenge. But it's so important because it belongs to what's specified in terms of the Lord's day, the Sabbath day, the Christian Sabbath.

So, it's if you turn back your foot from the Sabbath from doing your pleasure on my holy day. And then thirdly, it says, if you call the Sabbath a delight and the holy day of the Lord honorable and honor it.

Call the Sabbath a delight. And the word in Hebrew there really means an exquisite delight. A delight that's unusually vibrant, if you like. That's exactly what the word means.

[45 : 17] If you call the Sabbath, call the Lord's day an exquisite delight. You see, a lot of people will say to us, well, you know, the Lord's day is all about don't do this and don't do that and don't do this other thing.

And if that's the impression we give, then it's our fault if we're giving that impression. Maybe some of us associate in our own background. Maybe that's how we were actually taught that the Sabbath day was really about things you don't do.

But you see, Isaiah is saying the main thing about the Lord's day and the Sabbath day is to delight in it. To call it a delight. To have an exquisite delight about it.

I mean, when we came to prepare for church tonight, was it something in our minds, my own in terms of leading the worship, yours in terms of being worshipers of God?

Was it in my mind as I left the house this evening or this morning, was it in my mind saying, I am going to do something of the most exquisite delight to my soul?

[46 : 18] It should have been. It should have been. Because that's what the Lord's day is about. That's what the character of the Lord's day is. That's what our thinking of the Lord's day should be about.

To delight in the day and its opportunities. To revel in this day and its opportunities. And you can see how different that is. How different that's going to make you from that world out there that wants to just treat the Lord's day as any other day and just trample it down and make it secularize it, get rid of all this religious stuff.

For you and for me, friends, call the Sabbath a delight. Make God's day something that's truly exquisitely delightful for you.

That you regard it as something that has such a connection with so many important foundational things in your life. After all, it's a creation ordinance, we said.

It's delightful to us because God himself found delight in resting on the seventh day from the work that he had done on the other six. It gave him great pleasure looking out over his finished creation and saying, It is all very good.

[47 : 32] Now I'm going to rest. And I'm going to make this day a day for my people to rest. For human beings to rest. To enjoy this day as a day different to others. A day of worship.

A day of consecration to God. A day of high joy. And think of it in terms of it united to Christ's resurrection as well.

Because redemption is very much part of what characterizes the Lord's day and should characterize our thinking. It's interesting when you actually compare the Ten Commandments in Exodus and in Deuteronomy.

But you'll find in the Deuteronomy version a specific reference to the Lord saving his people from Egypt. In other words, it's not just a creation ordinance as you find in Genesis 2.

It's also an ordinance connected with redemption, with salvation. That's what makes it, as well as being tied with God's own delight in it as something that ended his week of creation.

[48 : 33] It's something in which he says to us, Look, where should your greatest delight be but in redemption and the salvation that you have in Jesus? Call this Sabbath an exquisite delight.

Am I tonight delighting in Christ? Is my highest pleasure that Jesus has risen from the dead and given me to be united to him in that victory over sin and over death?

Do I have anything in my life? Do you have anything in your life that gives you greater pleasure than to know the Lord has risen from the dead? That gives you greater pleasure than to worship that God in a way that delights in him and delights in his day and delights in the opportunity of elevating the day as you elevate himself?

It's a redemption joy, you see. There's nothing here that suggests the Sabbath should be regarded as burdensome. That it should be a great burden to us that we just simply regard as in a negative way as saying, Well, I'll be glad when the Sabbath is over.

That's what some of the prophets were actually saying in later times as well. And saying to the people that they should look at themselves because what they were doing was looking at the Lord's day or the Sabbath day as it was then and saying, Well, we'll be glad when this is over.

[50 : 02] And go back to selling and going back to the various activities that we miss on the Sabbath day. Sabbath day, friends, should be for us the height of the week.

The height of our experience. A high day. A day when we delight in God and delight in his day as his day.

And that's what Isaiah is putting to the people. He's saying it's a holy day, the holy day of the Lord, honorable. And if you honor, when he says honorable there, it really means worthy of being honored.

If you actually treat the Lord's day, the Sabbath day, he says, as worthy of being honored, honorable, and you do honor it. Then these other things follow us will see in a moment.

Deserving of honor. And you see, it tells us one thing that's important to actually display, if you like, before the world that's watching us as we observe the Lord's day and worship the Lord.

[51 : 10] It's this. You're the holy day of the Lord, honorable. Because people will say to you, holiness is a really negative thing, isn't it?

Holiness, that really limits your choices. And that really spoils your pleasure. All this idea about holiness and being holy and treating the Lord's day as holy. Is that not just the most desperate negative view of life?

And you see, Isaiah is turning that on its head. And he's saying, no, you've got the negative view of life if God is not in place in your life. If God is not foundational to your life.

If you've never known the pleasures of redemption, of salvation, of having Christ as your Savior, you're the one that's in the negative camp. You've never experienced the positive life that Jesus gives.

And the positive nature of his day as a holy day. You see, holiness is not an enemy of joy. Don't ever think of them as in conflict.

[52 : 10] Don't ever think that to be holy and to follow holiness of life, you need to just get rid of all your joy. The highest joy belongs to the holiest people.

They are the people who are near God. They are the people who do not trample on the Lord's day. They are the people who don't do their own pleasure on the Lord's holy day.

Who seek to honor the day of the Lord. Because it is the day of the Lord. As his. And that's the way we want to be, friends, isn't it? That's where we want to maintain and keep before the world of our day.

Because, as we said at the beginning, our society, our people have lost sight long ago of what the Lord's day is about. And sadly, many elements in the visible church itself.

Some denominations have, in fact, mainstream denominations throughout the world have devalued the Lord's day. And really just taken it back from the place that scripture gives it.

[53 : 16] And it's no longer central. It's no longer a unifying ordinance. It's just something that's there and you just decide yourself how you use it. Let it never be that way for you or for me.

Always make it God's day and your special day. Always make it your delight to know the Lord's day and the Lord of the day.

And delight in him. Because that's what it's going on to say. And we just first of all came across a quotation there from Reverend David Strain. It's actually available on the Lagonia website as an article.

David Strain was brought up in Glasgow. And he went through the Free Church College as it was then. Or Edinburgh Theological Seminary it is now.

And then he took up a ministry in London, the Free Church in London. Colabby Presbyterian Church it was then. And then he went from there to America. He's now the minister of First Presbyterian Church in Jackson, Mississippi.

[54 : 20] This is what he says. Years later he says, I came to faith, but I saw the Lord's day as nothing more than a needless imposition upon my Christian freedom.

More reflective of old covenant convictions than new covenant joys. But when I went to college, however, that all changed.

After worship every Sunday, church families would bring students and visitors into their homes for lunch. There we'd be invited to spend the afternoon enjoying a veritable banquet, returning to evening worship with them at the day's end.

After lunch, the TV remained silent. Some dozed contentedly in a chair taking rest. Others went for a walk. Some brought a Christian book to read.

Often lively discussion would spill over from the lunch table to fill the afternoon. Sometimes we'd gather round the piano and sing hymns together. Conversation ebbed and flowed.

[55 : 20] Then he says this. Well before I ever could articulate a clear theology of the Lord's day, I contracted the happy contagion of joyful Sabbath observance.

That's a very, very good way of putting it. It's a holy contagion. It's a holy contagion. He says, long before I could ever articulate a clear theology of the Lord's day, I contracted the happy contagion of joyful happy, of joyful Sabbath observance.

If you turn back your foot from the Sabbath, then all the things that follow are then coming into place. Then you shall first of all take delight in the Lord himself.

Well Psalm 37 reminds us of that. Delight yourself in the Lord and he will give you the desires of your heart. Desires that are focused or centered upon him, of course that means.

And he says here, then you shall take delight in the Lord. And of course it works both ways. If we take delight in the Lord, then it follows logically that we will take delight in his day.

[56 : 36] And if we're taking delight in his day, it's because we're taking delight in the Lord himself. And if we're not taking delight in the Lord's day, if people are not saying of themselves, well I'm taking delight in the Lord's day, I don't like the Lord's day at all, then it's because they're not delighting in the Lord.

It is impossible, I tell you, if you delight in the Lord, not to delight in his day. Because when you have an active delight in the Lord, something that's active at that moment in your heart, you want to be for the Lord on that day, making it a day of delight and finding your delight in him.

Hence, that's what we were created for. Hence, that's what we were created for. And I'm sure that's why God specified this at the end of the creation, that there would be a day that would be set apart as a holy day.

We were made to enjoy God. We were made not to be gloomy or negative in relation to this day.

And if our delight is in the Lord, our delight will be in his day. And let's pray more and more that that will be the case. Let's pray that whoever it is that's watching us come to church, whoever it is that's watching us leaving church, or even looking at us from day to day throughout the week, will not be able to say of us, these are very gloomy people.

[58 : 06] And if they do say that, then they're lying. If we are indeed delighting in the Lord and showing it. Let it be for us as a congregation that one thing we absolutely are committed to is delighting in the Lord and therefore delighting in his day.

We're making it what God himself intends. Then he says, I will make you ride on the heights of the earth or the high places of the earth. In other words, that really means victorious or a lifted up people.

Remember elsewhere in the Bible, it says that righteousness alone exalts a nation, but sin is a reproach to any people. I'm not just talking about individuals.

He's talking about a people. He's talking about a nation. And if you look at the state of our nation, it doesn't take you long as a Christian, as somebody who is enlightened by the Bible, to realize that there's a lot of sin about.

There's a lot of dishonoring of God about. Far from being elevated, we're actually down in the gutter spiritually and morally.

[59 : 16] And here is God saying, well, if you take delight in my day, if you honor my day, there's more than that involved in it, of course, because so many other things are connected with that.

But then I will make you ride on the heights of the earth. How can we be uplifted as a nation? How can we rise above our ungodliness? Well, of course, all sorts of things come into that, like repentance and turning to the Lord.

But don't leave out delighting in the Lord's day and in the Lord, because that's what will elevate us. That's what will actually cause us to be lifted up by God himself, to be a righteous people.

Scotland largely doesn't see its need to be lifted up because it doesn't think it's fallen down.

You and I know that. You and I know it's true. And so we pray for our nation. We pray for our leaders. We pray that we will be elevated and exalted.

[60 : 23] And we pray that the Lord's day will again be central to that process, that we ourselves will be committed and promote that day to our neighbors and our friends.

We need to finish with the third thing, which is, I will feed you with the heritage of Jacob, your father. Now, what is the heritage of Jacob, their father in the days of Isaiah?

Well, that goes back to Genesis again, to Jacob's life. Jacob, the man that gave his name to Israel, the people. And in chapter 28, verses 10 to 15. Let me just read.

It's worth reading these few verses because it describes for us the heritage of Jacob that God promised him. Jacob left Beersheba, went on towards Haran. And he came to a certain place and stayed there that night.

Because the sun had set, taking one of the stones of the place, he put it under his head and lay down in that place to sleep. But he dreamed, and behold, there was a ladder set up on the earth and the top of it reached to heaven.

[61 : 22] And behold, the angels of God were ascending and descending on it. And behold, the Lord stood above it and said, I am the Lord, the God of Abraham, your father, and the God of Isaac. The land on which you lie, I will give to you and to your offspring.

Your offspring shall be like the dust of the earth. And you shall spread abroad to the west, to the east, to the north, to the south. And in you and your offspring shall all the families of the earth be blessed.

Behold, I am with you, and I will keep you wherever you go, and will bring you back to this land. For I will not leave you until I have done what I have promised you.

Now that inheritance of Jacob, the land of Canaan, was something that was itself a type, a representation of the inheritance spiritually that God gives to his people.

And what God is saying to us through this, if this is how we treat the Sabbath, if this is how we are with God, then this follows on. You will take delight in the Lord.

[62 : 28] I will exalt you. I will lift you. I will bring you to ride on the heights of the earth. And I will feed you. Your nourishment will be the promises of my covenant.

The fulfillment of my promises, God is saying. The heritage that I have promised to my people will be yours. You can feed on it.

You can actually have nourishment sustenance from it because it's full of spiritual vitality. And the Lord's Day is right at the heart of that promise.

And it's right at the heart of God, God's promise to us regarding the heritage that we will come to enjoy. The heritage of blessing.

The heritage of covenant blessing. The heritage that God has promised to his people. And that itself reaches forward right through to the end of time and even beyond.

[63 : 31] Because it's fulfilled ultimately in what Revelation, the book of Revelation calls, the marriage supper of the Lamb.

The reception in heaven that awaits God's people. And remember, Sabbath means rest. The Sabbath day means a day of rest.

Not inactivity, but spiritual rest. The rest that you have in Christ and his salvation. Rest in peace with God. And that culminates and ends.

And that culminates and ends. In the rest of heaven. The rest of being forevermore. At the marriage supper of the Lamb. Will we see each other there?

Will that be your portion? Will you be present? With all of God's redeemed people. To celebrate throughout eternity.

[64 : 31] What the Lord Jesus Christ has done. Well, if you will, and if that's your hope. Then your delight also will be in the Lord's day.

As a type of that rest. Let's pray. Lord our God, we do thank you for this day. And forgive us, we pray, for the misuse we make of it.

In our own lives privately. For our failure to commend it to those around us. The way we should. But Lord, let us not dwell on all our failures. Though we do confess them.

Help us to rejoice in you. To rejoice in your provision. To rejoice in your forgiveness and your love. To rejoice in your salvation. And Lord, we ask that the rest of which this day is typical.

Will be our portion in our experience. Help us, we pray, as we come from week to week. To regard the Sabbath as our delight. And to take delight in you.

[65 : 34] In all you have provided for us. Be with us then through this week, we pray. And all we ask is in Jesus' name. And for his sake. Amen. Amen.

Now, our final singing of praise is in Psalm 92. Psalm 92, we're singing in the Scottish Psalter. Page 353. The title of this psalm in the book of Psalms is a psalm for the Lord's Day or the Sabbath day.

And so we're singing verses 12 to 15. The tune is Effingham. And the great promise there is that those who are true to the Lord will come to flourish like the palm tree and grow like the cedar.

Let's sing these verses from verse 12. But like the palm tree flourishing shall be the righteous one. He shall like to the cedar grow. That is in Lebanon. These words to the end of the psalm.

The cedar grow. That is in the name of the psalm. And the great promise there is, we will be the righteous one. But like the palm tree flourishing Shall be the righteous one.

[66 : 56] He shall like to the cedar. The eternal that is in Lebanon.

Those that within the house of God are planted by His grace.

They shall grow up and flourish all in our holy place.

And in all days when others say they who still forth shall bring.

They shall be fat and full of star and give me fire in shame.

[68 : 28] To show that upright is the Lord, He is our God to be.

The Holy Spirit be with you now and evermore.

Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.

Amen. Amen. Amen.