

Remember the Sabbath so you don't forget God you worship

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

Date: 08 January 2017

Preacher: Daniel Ralph

[0 : 01] We began with a reminder of a very simple but a very important truth, and that is you are to remember to keep the Sabbath day holy, lest you forget the God you worship.

It is not a mistake when someone says that you have forgotten God when you've not kept the Lord's day holy. That's the only reason it can be. That's why the commandment begins with remember.

Because of our tendency to forget. So we are to keep the Sabbath day holy, not because God needs us to keep it holy. God is in need of nothing.

But he needs us to keep it holy because you need it, lest you forget the God who you worship. And the moment you choose something else over the Lord's day, you have to purposely set aside it.

You either know what you're doing and so you're setting it aside to do what you want to do, or you have no idea that the day has to be kept holy.

[1 : 06] But now you do. I have removed all ignorance. Six years ago when I preached on the Sabbath, and I'm removing all ignorance now simply by reading the word of God.

Not because I've said so, but because I've read God's word to you. You may say, I'm not sure I want to agree with God. Okay, but don't say you don't agree with me.

You want to shoot the messenger because messengers always get shot. But I am only saying what's being said. In fact, I don't know if you ever remember that when I had the interview to become your pastor, someone asked me several questions.

And I said, I have one rule about preaching that's very, very simple. In fact, if preaching doesn't come up to this standard, it doesn't come up to any. And that is, the preacher is not allowed to say anything of his own doing.

The point of the message must be the point of the passage, or else you're not hearing from God. Someone who takes a verse and then says what they want to say, you're not hearing God, you're hearing that person.

[2 : 14] We don't do that here. Well, we ought not to do that here. So God calls us to keep the Sabbath day holy, set apart from any other day, lest you forget the God who you worship.

And how many of us have actually forgotten the God to whom we are to give total worship to? I can remember growing up, being taken down to my grandparents when they're both alive, only one's alive now.

And being told, I can remember, it was just before I got a clip around the ear, it was just after I got a clip around the ear. That is no way to speak to your grandma.

The moment you forget who it is that you are before, you begin to change. Your language begins to change, your behavior begins to change, and you have to be biblically clipped around the ear.

Remember who it is that you are speaking to.

[3 : 27] Remember who it is that you come before this day. Now here's the important thing. This is what I said last week. God doesn't need your worship. God is in need of nothing.

And so there must be some other reason for why he wants you to worship him. If he's in need of nothing, and he doesn't need it ever, why are we to worship?

Well, we're to keep the Sabbath day holy because, firstly, God created the world in six days, and on the seventh day he rested as a pattern for man.

I don't know, I mean, it would have been nice to have been, Adam, the first day that you're made, the next day off. The next day is a day off. You don't have to do anything. I mean, that's the kind of God that I want to belong to.

Monday, however, you have to start work, and you have to get on, and you have to work the ground, but God factored in, into creation, not in the Ten Commandments. No, this is way before the Ten Commandments.

[4 : 26] He factored into creation, the day of rest. Okay? It is as significant as anything else you read. Now, for us to come before God this morning and to worship a God who is in need of nothing, and why did he even create us in the first place?

That's the question. God doesn't need you. God doesn't need anything. Why did he even create? Because in Exodus, he says he is the creator of all.

Six days he created, the seventh day he... But why did he create? Why are you here? Why has God invested so much if he doesn't need anything?

Well, there can only be one reason, I think, and that is because God is actually doing something that you need to understand. And so there's an important principle here, and this is what you should focus on.

When God created the world, need became apparent. But before God created the world, there was no need. If you don't create a man, man doesn't have any needs.

[5 : 44] If you don't create a world that doesn't need its garden tending, you don't create any need. But the moment you create a world and the moment you create a man, you create need. And so the world needed God.

It needed rain. It needed light. It needed holding together, as Colossians 1 says. It needed everything. And then God created man and woman, and they also needed...

They need God's continual care in exactly the same way the world does. But here's the important thing. And this is why we read from Isaiah 44. You begin to realize very, very quickly that the world needs man, and man needs the world.

Why? Because the man and the woman need to eat. They need somewhere to live. They need water to drink. They need food to eat. Where do you get that from? You get it from the world in which you live in.

You need this world. But also, the world, now that it is fallen, needs man. God created man to work the garden. So God created man to farm the land.

[6 : 54] So creation needs us as much as we need the creation. We need each other. What's the problem? What if there's something that one of us can't provide?

What about those things that we cannot get from the world? Who is going to provide them? See, the first thing you should realize by living in this world is that the world needs you and you need the world.

You need someone to live, something to eat, something to drink. And the world needs the sun, the light, the seasons. Seed time and harvest. In order to give you all of those things.

But where do all those things comes from? So it seems that God, who is in need of nothing, has created a world and created a people who are in need of almost everything. Our needs are plenty.

Back in the day, a man by the name of Irenaeus. It was the book that I found myself by total surprise getting for Christmas. I bought it myself.

[7 : 59] I didn't wrap it because I wanted it to be a surprise. Given my memory, it was. Irenaeus lived about 100 years after John, who wrote the book of Revelation.

John, Polycarp, was a disciple of that John. And Irenaeus was a disciple of Polycarp. So that's how close he was to the beginning of, or the end of the apostolic age.

That's how close he was. And this is what he had to say. God needs nothing. This is what made his teaching so clear to the present people. God is in need of nothing. This is what he said.

God himself, indeed, having in need of nothing, but granting communion with himself to those who stood in need of it. And sketching out, like an architect, a plan of salvation to those who pleased him.

In other words, Irenaeus understood. God, who is in need of nothing, created you so that you might come to share in himself.

[9 : 07] Which means that everything he did was an act of his will and love for you, because he's in need of nothing.

He doesn't need it. So now we look at creation. Now we look at the commandments. Now we look at the word of God as something that is declaring that everything here is not for a God who's in need of something.

But a people who are in need of everything. So why did God who is in need of nothing create you?

So that you might come to share in his goodness. And what better way of stating that than making you in his image?

What better way, what clearer way could there have been of God demonstrating to you that he's in need of nothing, but wants you to share in his goodness other than creating you in his very image?

[10 : 12] The reason you are created in the image of God is because God is telling you he wants you to share in himself. He wants you to share in his goodness.

That's the point. He doesn't need you. He doesn't need your worship. But he wants you to share in it. He wants it for you.

Which means that his will is a total act of love. It's not Spice Girl theology. Some of you probably have never heard of the Spice Girls.

I haven't. My wife told me. This is Spice Girl theology. Giving is good as long as you're getting.

You remember the song? Giving is good. That's Spice Girl theology. No, that's not what the Bible says. God says, I'll give because it's good.

[11 : 16] Giving is not good as long as you're getting. Giving is good, period. That's the God that we belong to. That's the God that Irenaeus understood.

A God who is in need of nothing. May sound like an awful message, but it is actually the very best message you could ever hear. Because he made you, not because he wanted something from you, but he made you to give something to you.

That's the difference. That's the God that we come and we worship. And that's why David says this in Psalm 139. We looked at it on Wednesday evening of how to make biblical decisions.

Your eyes saw my unformed substance. In your book were written every one of them. The days that were formed for me when as yet there was none of them.

In other words, this is what God is saying. That even before I started to exist within the womb, God knew I was going to be.

[12 : 20] Then he ordained every single one of my days. He planned them perfectly so that on this very day today, I could not be anywhere else other than where I am.

God's just not a God who is in need of everything. In need of nothing, sorry. He's a God who is in control of everything.

Now that makes you pray differently. You will pray completely differently when you understand that you belong to a God who doesn't need anything. You will also pray completely differently when you understand that you belong to a God who is sovereign over everything.

That every single one of your days are not just numbered but ordained and planned down to the finest details. Spurgeon said that God even holds that speckle of dust in its proper place.

God isn't absent. It's not as if he's created and then walked away and left you just to get on with it. He's not an absentee landlord that comes back periodically to see whether or not you're making a mess with the house that he let you live in.

[13 : 33] That's not the kind of God we belong to. No, he's intimately involved. He doesn't need us. But we need him.

He didn't create us because he needed something from us. He created us so that he could give something to us. And that's the reason. That's the only reason why we can come and stop and rest in God this morning.

Because our security is not in work. Our future is not in work. Our future is not in anything else other than God who ordains everything. That's why we can come and rest.

Because God doesn't need anything. We can come here today and he doesn't need anything from us. He wants you to be here today so that he can give something to you. You can rest.

Real rest. But how many of us actually take that opportunity to do it? How many of us actually come and worship God?

[14 : 38] Or have we forgotten the God that we are to worship? And we just so happen to be here today because we ought to show our face. You have forgotten the God who you are to worship.

Now here's how it all goes wrong. And this is why we read from Isaiah 44. What happens when the Sabbath day is not kept?

When the day is not set apart? When you don't worship God together like this? When you don't pray and or sing and worship God in spirit and in truth in this particular way? Have you come to forgotten God?

Forget God? Well, yeah, you've done that. You've suddenly forgotten who God is. Even if you remember who God is, you have forgotten who he really is if you're elsewhere doing your own thing.

God says today is not the day for doing your own thing. Today is to come to me and rest. Now that is for your benefit.

[15 : 41] But it does come from the Lord who asked you to do it. And here's the answer. The moment you replace God with something else, you can't rest.

The moment a person replaces God in their life with something else, there is no rest. And here's why. Because Isaiah 44 makes it very, very clear, as does Genesis 1 and 2, that the creation needs us.

And so if we begin to trust in anything else in creation, on anything else in creation, yeah, we need stuff from it.

But it's also going to ask something from us. Another way to put this is, does the thing that you trust in need you?

And if it does, then it's not God, is it? You're like the carpenter in Isaiah who cuts down the tree.

[16 : 44] And you use half of it because you need to, to cook your food, to start a fire and to cook your food so that you can eat. And the other half, you sort of bow down and worship at it.

You say, well, I don't do that. I don't take a piece of wood and chop it down and cook my food on it. And with the other half, I think, well, now it's a God. I mean, how silly is that?

Such is the foolishness of sin. So you may not find yourself doing that. But this is what you will find yourself doing, is that you have come to trust in the things that need you.

And the moment you come to trust in the things that need you, there's no rest. If you trust in your job, your job is going to set you an X amount of hours. If you've come to trust in your wage packet, you're going to have to work to get that wage.

If you've come to trust in other things, those things are going to demand things of you. There's no rest. You see, Irenaeus understood, we understand, surely, that to actually belong to a God who doesn't need us is the place where true rest is found.

[18 : 00] Because he gives everything. He truly does supply all our needs. We don't have to work for it. We don't have to put in the hours.

God even gives to a person who doesn't bother to pray. And don't take that the wrong way, as though now I've got an excuse not to pray. Okay, I was demonstrating God's grace and goodness, not your apathy.

God is truly good. He doesn't need it. But he wants to give it to you all the time. But the moment you come to depend on something other than God, that God, whatever it is, whatever else you have put in God's place, that idol is going to ask that it's Spice Girls theology.

Yeah, I'll give to you, but you have to give to me first. Yeah, I'll give you what you want, but first you have to obey my commands. So which would you rather obey?

An idol that needs you, or a God who doesn't? The answer should be God, who doesn't. Who created you to give to you.

[19 : 12] Now you might say, well, today is very different than the days of Exodus. You know, their life was not as complicated as ours. Their bill structure was not as complicated. They never had pensions.

They never had hospitals. So it sounds like it was a harder life, not an easier one. We want to say that it was easier back then, but when you truly think about it, was it really easier or was it harder?

But whatever conclusion you come to, it doesn't matter. And it doesn't matter for this one reason. Because it's the same God. God hasn't changed.

And these are God's words that we're listening to. The God who doesn't need you says, I want you to come and worship me lest you forget who I am. I want you to come and worship me so that you can truly rest, because I don't need anything from you.

In other words, look after your own spiritual well-being. You're fooling no one by doing anything else. When you truly understand that today is even ordained by God, you will pray differently.

[20 : 22] You won't look to other things to give you what you really want, what you really know deep down in your heart that only God can give. But what we do is when we don't get it from God, we go somewhere else and we look for it.

And sometimes it costs a lot of money. Sometimes it costs a lot of time. Other times it costs a lot of sacrifice. But here's the thing. God, who is ordained every single day, knows whether or not you're going to get it anyway.

He knows your desire. He knows your heart. But he also knows whether or not you have forgotten the God who you are to worship. We belong to a God who tells us to keep this day holy and set apart, not because he needs it, but because you need it.

I need it. We all need it. Here's the exhortation. How are you to rest? Rest. Well, you're to rest in God. And rest isn't just the absence of not doing other things.

God tells us in the New Testament that those who do acts of mercy on the Lord's Day are being like God. You are God-like by caring for others on the Lord's Day.

[21 : 42] Why? Because you're doing it not because you're in need of it, but because the other person has needs. You are being like God when you do acts of mercy on the Lord's Day.

But are you taking care of your own spiritual well-being? Have you forgotten the God that you belong to? Can you really say this morning that you are experiencing rest?

Now, I can answer that for you. You're going to have to answer it for yourself as to whether or not you know you're being spiritually renewed or whether or not you are maintaining the same spiritual plateau that you have for the last five, ten, whatever years.

I can't... Only you can answer that. I can see what I see after being here for six years. But I also know that the Bible teaches me that people change really, really, really slow.

You can't turn a shipping tanker like that. It takes miles and miles and miles before you can turn around and go in an opposite direction. I've been here six years.

[22 : 58] How long does it take to turn a church around? Even longer if people have forgotten the God to whom they are to worship. It may never happen.

So why are we to keep the day holy? Not because God needs it, but because you need it. Because you're going to wake up tomorrow morning and you're going to need him.

And if you wake up tomorrow morning without being here today, he might just be saying to you, and where were you yesterday? Where were you as we sung, we prayed, and we met together?

The only visible demonstration of the church is the Lord's Day, primarily. Everyone else sees a building. It's not until you come and look at the people do you see a church.

It is the only visible representation of what church is, people. I can take you to 20 churches in Wales that are now carpet warehouses.

[24 : 05] But they are buildings. The church went 50 years ago. You are the representation of God's people. That's why when you sit in here, you can take someone off the street to come in and say, what do you see?

And they say, I see a group of people in the church. They must be Christians. But if I took you out and put you in the center of Asda and asked that same person, what do they see? You lose your identity the moment you're no longer together.

And worshiping God and spirit and in truth on the Lord's Day. God knew that. And so do we. And we really think about it.

Tomorrow you will need God. The next day you will need God. You will need God always. God gave you this day to make sure that your footing and step was right for the following week.

That you can come and rest today and go out in the strength tomorrow out of today's rest. to trust him, to love him, to be spiritually renewed. Not because he needs it, but because you need it.

[25 : 14] And here's the most important thing as we close. As a final thought. You're to keep this day holy so that you don't forget the God who you are to worship.

You're to keep this day holy and rest in God because the world cannot provide all that you need. And that means you can provide all that you need if you're only going to the world.

You will get to that moment like Madonna did in her life where she says, I came down the stairs and I went to see what I had to look and I opened the cupboards and there was bear. Here's a woman who's done everything, had everything, and she says, I got to a point in my life where it was empty.

Well, when you spend that amount of time in the world, look, everything gets used up and it runs out. But not God.

And so what happens when Christians don't keep the Lord's day? I'll tell you what happens. They don't come rushing back to God. And they don't come rushing back to God because they've forgotten the God who they are to worship.

[26 : 28] So what happens? They settle for less. They settle for less. And you see this happen in the world.

It's a bit like someone who can't afford to buy a new house. So they put an extension on their existing one. You settle for less because you have to settle for less.

And so when you come to God, it's not about health, it's not about wealth, it's not about prosperity. It is, however, about coming back to a God who can supply every single one of your needs. That's the God that we worship.

That's the God that we have come to this morning. A God who doesn't need you, but who made you to give you everything. Amen. We're going to stand and sing the final song in Christ alone together.

Amen. Amen.