

Sermon Growth Guide

June 2, 2024

Rest for the Weary - Help We Need

Mark 2:18-28

Key Verse: Mark 2:27

Then he said to them, "The Sabbath was made for man, not man for the Sabbath."

Big Idea: Let Jesus be Lord of your Sabbath!



rest for the weary

Foundations

During this series, we are taking a close look at biblical rest. This week we open up the invitation (and command) to take sabbath rest.

In Exodus 20:8-11 and Deuteronomy 5:12-15, the Lord commands his people to remember and observe the sabbath day and keep it holy. If you have time, read these passages.

Ruth Haley Barton writes this about sabbath: "The point of the sabbath is to honor our need for sane rhythm of work and rest. It is to honor the body's need for rest, the spirit's need for replenishment and the soul's need to delight itself in God for God's own sake. It begins with a willingness to acknowledge the limits of our humanness and take steps to live more graciously with the order of things." (Sacred Rhythms, chapter on Sabbath).

As we enter this new season of summer, is there an invitation God is making to you to enter sabbath in a new and delightful way?

Here are a couple questions from Barton to consider as you think about shaping a sabbath day:

- What activities will I refuse to engage in so that it is truly a day of rest, worship and delight?
- What activities bring me delight and how will I incorporate them?
- Put a start date on your calendar and see where it begins to lead you!

Understanding God's Word

Together, read Mark 2:18-28

What do you hear, observe, notice about these 2 stories? How are they connected?

Identify the questions being asked of Jesus. What are the people and the pharisees concerned about?

What is Jesus trying to communicate as he answers their questions? What is the new wine and the new wineskins metaphor pointing to?

Applying God's Word

Read Genesis 2:1-3. What do we learn about God from these verses? What do we learn about the seventh day? How do you respond each week to God's invitation to rest on the seventh day?

Witnessing God's Word

When we keep a sabbath day, and allow Jesus to direct us in that 24-hour period, what becomes possible?

Does your neighbor see you as a person of "rest" or a person of "restlessness"? How does embracing the gift of sabbath change how we relate to those around us?

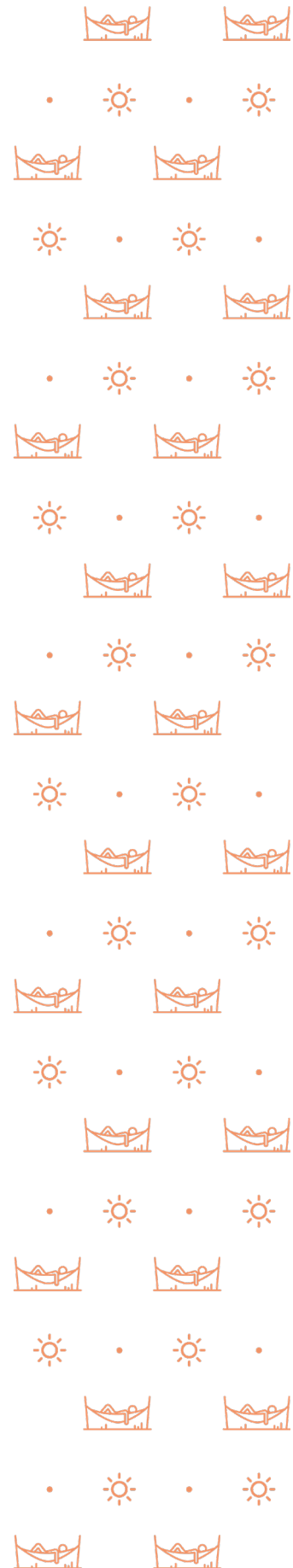
Really? A hammock? In times like these? What kind of a church sends out an invitation to lounge in a hammock when the whole world is falling apart? Yes, the challenge of this series is the Lord's own invitation to rest. "Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy and my burden is light." (Matthew 11:28-30) A yoke is a large wooden saddle that tied oxen together [picture]. It isn't that our burdens disappear, but that Jesus is with us carrying the load. If you are yoked with Jesus, that means your partner is a being of inestimable power. That's good news. It also means you need to learn to keep in step with Him. If I try to run ahead, bad. If I fall behind, bad. If I'm in step with Jesus, imagine. Jesus issues this as an invitation. Come to me. How are we obedient to the call of Jesus in this instance? Obedience is to draw near to Jesus and learn rest. In a world that is rushing so fast, pushing and hurrying and racing along, rest is resistance. We get the idea that our only value is in what we produce and how quickly we can run. Sabbath is sabotage to that idea. Christian musician Sandra McCracken said recently, "In an anxious age, stillness just might be one of our greatest acts of worship." Rest is resistance. Sabbath is sabotage. The couch is countercultural. Amen!

Years ago, some of you might remember, I suggested that instead of CrossFit we should start something called NapFit. A few of you even had t-shirts and hats made up! You say, "I knew I liked this church. Other churches are out there launching evangelistic campaigns, building homeless shelters, raising up orphanages for children displaced by war. My pastor just gets up there and tells us to take a nap!" Listen, we will do all those things, we are doing all those things, but we don't do them out of desperation or anxiety. We are able to do things like these that change the world (our participation with Springs Rescue Mission; our Sierra High School Food Pantry and Southeast COS hydroponic farm; our partnership with the Sudanese Children's School in Cairo) we do this stuff not out of anxious

desperation to prove our worth to one another or to God, we are able to do these things only from a position of true rest in Christ. George Mueller was a tireless evangelist, preacher, and founder of orphanages in Bristol, UK, in the 1800's. He cared for over 10,000 orphans in his lifetime. He said, "Above all things, see to it that your souls are happy in the Lord. Other things may press upon you, the Lord's work may even have urgent claims upon your attention, but I deliberately repeat, it is of supreme and paramount importance that you should seek above all things to have your souls happy in God Himself. Day by day, seek to make this the most important business of your life. The secret of all true effectual service is joy in God." So, yes, a hammock. **Rest for the Weary.** And today, we see that Jesus, far from dismissing the Sabbath, Jesus is **Lord of the Sabbath.**

"Now John's disciples and the Pharisees were fasting. Some people came and asked Jesus, 'How is it that John's disciples and the disciples of the Pharisees are fasting, but yours are not?'" (Mark 2:18) Fasting is refraining from food or some other material need for the sake of increasing spiritual attention. Fasting is a spiritual practice for our good, but Jesus points out in this passage that we do not enslave ourselves to this practice. Our joyful relationship with Him takes priority. Still, it is a spiritual practice we can take up freely for our good. Sabbath is also a spiritual practice. It is a command that we are to observe. That means changing our habits, altering our way of life. But Jesus does not intend that we enslave ourselves even to this practice. We have a difficult relationship with God's commands. God's commands are good. "His commandment is eternal life." (John 12:50), Jesus said. But we tend to take the extremes. We either dip toward legalism, using the practice as a way of currying favor with God, or we slide into licentiousness, dismissing all of God's commands as frivolous in the light of grace (cheap grace). What would it look like to receive sabbath for what God intended, a command that brings life and an invitation to be restored?

"One Sabbath Jesus was going through the grainfields, and as his disciples walked



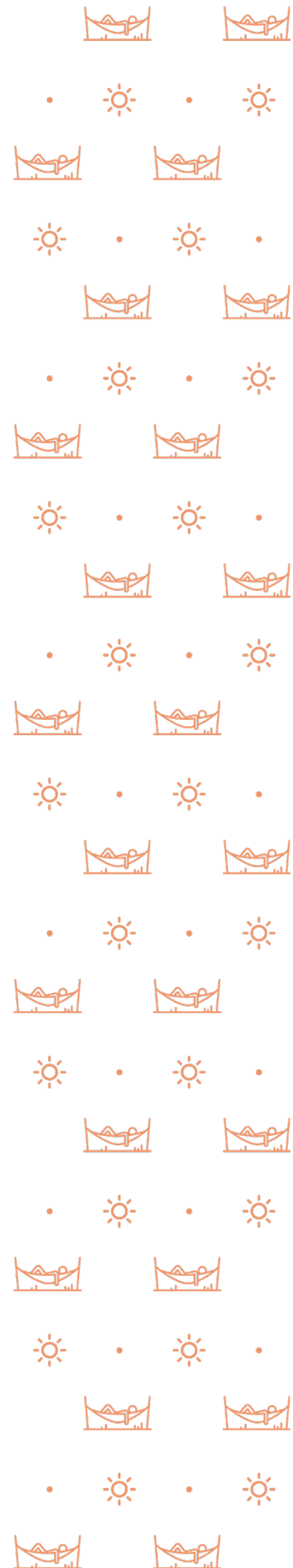
along, they began to pick some heads of grain. The Pharisees said to him, 'Look, why are they doing what is unlawful on the Sabbath?'" (Mark 2:23-24) The crime wasn't taking the grain. That was allowable under the law. The crime was reaping on the Sabbath day, working on the day of rest. This is the Fourth Commandment: "Observe the Sabbath day by keeping it holy, as the Lord your God has commanded you. Six days you shall labor and do all your work, but the seventh day is a sabbath to the Lord your God. On it you shall not do any work, neither you, nor your son or daughter, nor your male or female servant, nor your ox, your donkey or any of your animals, nor any foreigner residing in your towns, so that your male and female servants may rest, as you do. Remember that you were slaves in Egypt and that the Lord your God brought you out of there with a mighty hand and an outstretched arm. Therefore the Lord your God has commanded you to observe the Sabbath day." (Deuteronomy 5:12-15) It's the longest of the commandments, with the most explanation. The Sabbath is not for work. Do you know who breaks this one the most? Pastors. It's always a little fun to say, did you know, pastor, if you fail to stop work for one day a week, you are committing a sin equal to theft, adultery and murder? That's true. And I have to say here that everything I teach about Sabbath is aspirational. I'm not doing this well either! Let's lean into it together. Observe the Sabbath day by keeping it holy.

The Pharisees believed that if all God's people kept all God's commands for just one day, the Messiah would come, and the Romans would be expelled. They not only observed Sabbath but came up with hundreds of detailed, extra rules and appointed themselves the morality police over others. Jesus explained that his friends were not "working," they were just eating. Don't let the letter of the law trip you up. Don't add to the law. Don't use the law as fuel for a legalistic obsession to gain acceptance from God relying on your own obedience. "He answered, 'Have you never read what David did when he and his companions were hungry and in need?'" (Mark 2:25) This is part of the origin story of King David when

he was first being chased down by Saul (1 Samuel 21-22), and the origin story of High Priest Abiathar, when Abiathar's father gave David holy bread, the Bread of the Presence, to eat and was killed for it by Saul. Don't put bread over life. Don't use sabbath rules to dehumanize others, don't put your rules over people. "Then he said to them, 'The Sabbath was made for man, not man for the Sabbath.'" (Mark 2:27) God's intent with the sabbath commandment is the wellbeing of mankind, the flourishing of the human being, not the perfect execution of the law for the law's own sake.

But Jesus is not jumping to licentiousness either. "So the Son of Man is Lord even of the Sabbath." (Mark 2:28) Jesus doesn't say to dump all commandments for whatever is comfortable. Jesus declares that He is Lord of the Sabbath. It is worth remembering that from the very beginning sabbath is a gift. The Hebrews worked seven days a week as slaves in Egypt for four hundred years. When they were given a new identity, God gave them new rules. Now, suddenly, here is a people on the face of the planet whose God tells them to stop, rest, take delight. That's new! We, the church, are that people now. Jesus is our Lord. He declares an end to our slavery to the rat race. The reminder is that this command is life, all God's commands are life, and this command is a gift. It is not something to serve, but something God gave to serve you. Jesus wants to teach us this rhythm. He is Lord of the Sabbath. When we bend the knee to this Lord, we find the restoration we need.

Jesus wants to rule over our practice of Sabbath. What could this look like? We were not made to run constantly with no breaks or stops. I remember when I used to turn my phone off at night. I don't even do that anymore! Run, run, 24/7. What if I bend the knee to Jesus and trust Him to be Lord of my Sabbath? Pete Scazzero in Emotionally Healthy Leadership writes, "Biblical Sabbath is a twenty-four-hour block of time in which we stop work, enjoy rest, practice delight, and contemplate God." It doesn't have to be Sunday, but it should be one day in seven. I try Thursday to Friday. Twenty-four hours to do four things:



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(1) Stop. Just stop. That's actually the hardest thing to do! Cease work. Cease striving. Cease your constant race to ultimate efficiency and super-productivity. Be efficient and productive, dedicated to your work, but then, stop. It's hard. It causes us to remember, "God is God and I am not." God knows our tendency to become our own gods. Stop. Remember you are a child of God, not measured by your performance or your production or your impact. You are loved and valued just because God has chosen to love and value you. Nothing else. He needs nothing else from you in the end. Stop.

(2) Rest. When we stop, we find rest coming to us, coming up behind us. God settled into rest on the seventh day. We were made to work and rest in regular rhythms. Yes, it actually makes you more productive, but that's not why God says to do it! It serves you, it serves others, it honors God when you rest. Rest is resistance.

(3) Delight. This spiritual practice is not about emptiness, but fullness. When God sat on the seventh day of creation, He enjoyed what He had made. It is very good! Jesus, Lord of the Sabbath, invites you to create a container of space and time in your week to take up the good gifts of life that you enjoy. A walk, a hike, a conversation, a book, a movie. What fills you up with delight for the gift of life?

(4) Worship. If it is Sunday, gather with other believers. If you are on your own, take time to deeply contemplate the character of God, to turn your attention to His Word, to sing songs of praise that lift the soul, to take in creation and people and food and art all as gifts from God.

What would it look like for you and your family to attempt such a thing? Some families light a candle at 6:00 on Saturday night and blow it out at 6:00 on Sunday. (Check with the fire chief). Set a day aside for the Lord of the Sabbath. See if you don't feel the resistance rising up in you. Rest is resistance. Sabbath is sabotage. The couch is countercultural at times. Rick Warren, a famous pastor in California, was once asked how it made it through 30 years of ministry without breaking down.

He said he practiced a rhythm: Divert daily, withdraw weekly, and abandon annually. It was his way of remembering God is God, Rick is not. Every day turn your mind away from work. Weekly, withdraw into sabbath rest. Annually, walk away and let God take over for a while.

Do we have to do this to please God? No. God's pleasure is won by what Jesus did for us. Do you hear that? Do you believe that? God will never love you more than He loves you right now. His love is eternal and infinite. His pleasure with you is not based on your performance. He claims you, He accepts you, He take delight in you, and it is all from His own heart of grace expressed in sending His Son Jesus who died for you on the cross, taking your failures on Himself, so you could take His glories. God is pleased with you. Now we are invited by Jesus to find life in new and countercultural rhythms. Come and enjoy.

