

DAY 1 (Beginning Monday 22 October 2018)**Read: Mark 2:23-28**

Jewish law was entirely legal. It was a law that governed everything the people did. Jewish law was first and foremost about obedience – or else!

Perhaps this was the greatest point of conflict between Jesus and the Jews. Jesus said it in verse 27 “The Sabbath was made for man, not man for the Sabbath”

Nothing angered Jesus more than to see His people being enslaved by rules and regulations that sucked the life out of God’s people. He reminded the Jews that their own King David had broken the law when they picked grain and ate it because they were hungry.

The Sabbath was meant by God to be a day of rest and not hunger. The Pharisees had turned the Sabbath into a day of oppression rather than rest and relaxation. When Jesus came all of the temple rules and sacrifices became unnecessary. Jesus was the true temple.

So, as we begin this week, let us remember that, in God’s eyes, the Sabbath is a day of rest, refreshment, renewal and blessing. A day to put away the cares of the week, and simply rest and relax with our families and friends. I suppose that it is a cliché to say that even God rested on the seventh day, but it’s true, isn’t it?

We should also note that there are different interpretations of what day constitutes the “Sabbath”. Let us simply remember that God created the heavens and the earth in six days, and rested on the seventh. Nowhere in scripture is the seventh day defined as Saturday or Sunday, other than to call for the “seventh” day to be a day of rest!

Meditation: Which day will best suit me for my Sabbath?

DAY 2**Read: Hebrews 4:1-11**

Think about this, God says more about the fourth commandment than all the other commandments combined! Why does God have so much to say about the Sabbath, and rest, and recreation? Maybe it’s because even God rested on the seventh day!

As God led the people of Israel out of Egypt He knew exactly what the people needed. God needed to share His grand plan with them, a plan to build a godly nation with godly people. A plan to bless them, not harass them! They needed more than gold, they needed a goal to strive for in their relationship with him and with each other. Someone once said “Every road leads nowhere when we don’t know where we want to go”

Do we know that we need rest? Do we know we need to find a balance in our lives? Do we know that a day of rest is not an option for God? The fourth commandment reminds us of very important concepts.

One is to understand that it is God’s idea for us to find this balance, Sunday gives meaning to the other six days of the week. It is Sunday that reminds us that we are God’s creation.

Sunday gives us dignity, It is intended to reconnect us to the incredible and unspoiled beauty of God’s creation. Sunday is about re-creation. We Christians are connected to the re-creation, or the new creation. We belong to Jesus Christ, not to Caesar, nor to the company, nor the cellular phone, nor to the TV nor the World Cup!!

It is Sunday that is supposed to remind us whose laws we are really following.

Prayer: Lord help me to trust you completely as I need Your rest. Amen

DAY 3**Read: Hebrews 4:1-11**

Lloyd C. Douglas wrote these words in his great novel The Robe:

Like a navigator needs a north star,
Like a builder needs a plumb line,
Like a mathematician needs a square root,
Like a musician needs a fixed note,
So we who believe in a sometimes hectic and overwhelming world need a sanctuary and One who is the same yesterday, today, and forever.

Notice this about the fourth commandment. *Everything and everybody was commanded to rest.* There is no reference to "Master" or "servant" or "slave" or "alien". The Sabbath embraces all living things, including the animals. Even they did not work on the Sabbath. The Sabbath is intended to bring a sense of the sacred and the holy to life which can be so easily lost in our world which moves so fast and so coldly. It is one of the great gifts that Judaism gave to the world.

The Sabbath day reminds us that the world really does belong to God. The Sabbath day is holy because it comes from above. It reflects God’s design for life and creation. The Sabbath, like the metaphor of the tent, covers the rest of our days with its perspective and vision for life. God is always in the Temple on the Sabbath day. The purpose of the Sabbath is for the adoration of God, for the examination of our lives, for celebration, for acknowledging that God actually wants to spend some quality time with us.

Meditation: How sacred is my Sabbath?

DAY 4

Read: Hebrews 4:1-11

The great missionary, Gladstone, once said, "Tell me what the young men of England are doing on Sunday and I will tell you what the future of England will be".

Someone else once said "It was said our great-grandfathers called it the holy Sabbath, our grandfathers called it the Sabbath, our fathers called it Sunday, but today we call it the weekend."

Perhaps this mind-set explains the moral and social erosion that has taken place in our world. If holiness does not descend from above, it certainly will not ascend from below.

Sunday is designed to restore the divine rhythm of life, the rhythm of work and play, but we are being enslaved by a god who has no love, no compassion and no respect for us

Eugene Peterson said in one of his books that our ancestors went 400 years without a holiday in Egypt, never had a day off, and look what happened to them, they were no longer persons. *but slaves!* Comedienne Lilly Tomlin once said "The problem with the rat race is that even if you win, you're still a rat."

Interestingly, the concept of stress was introduced in the 1930s when a young scientist named Hans Selye was observing his lab rats. As he worked in his laboratory, he was constantly dropping the little creatures, chasing them around the room, and trapping them in the corner. He discovered that his rats kept getting ulcers and hormone imbalances. Dr. Selye coined the phrase "rat race" to describe how the pressures of daily life *can make us sick!* Did you know that the word 'Sabbath' means rest or cessation of activity...?

Lord please help me to desire Sabbath rest

DAY 5

Read: Genesis 2:1-4

What God is suggesting in this commandment is a proven tool and technique in the world of industry, *when observed*. A person or worker is more productive when they regularly take weekly intervals of rest and renewal.

But, having said all this, the real reason for the Sabbath day is to remind us that we human beings have meaning in life that goes beyond our work to be performed. It reminds us that there is something more to life than simply getting and keeping "stuff". The Sabbath is intended to be a delight, not a curse or a burden!

God is giving us divine permission to cultivate and enjoy life! Those of you who work with computers know that sometimes they crash! And all this computer hardware is absolutely worthless without software which makes it work.

Our body is our hardware, our soul is the software! and when they work together it is great. And when they don't - They don't!

However, once in a while even a computer needs to be turned off so it can rest. For many people today the drug of choice is not cocaine, but a ceaseless pattern of work that resembles slavery.

A 70-hour work week, a car phone and a beeper that makes us accessible at every moment are perceived to be status symbols. From a different perspective they might be seen as more of a curse than a blessing! A world which does not acknowledge the need to rest is an enslaved world. Is it not possible for us to have a rhythm of work and rest? Surely we can find a balance between the two? And surely, when we get this right, God will smile!

Lord, Help me to find a balance between work and rest. Amen

DAY 6

Read: Matthew 11: 25-30

Some of us may feel spiritually exhausted, worn out, weary of trying to please God by your own efforts.

Is it any wonder then that Jesus extends the invitation "*Are you tired? Worn out? Burned out on religion? Come to me. Get away with me and you'll recover your life. I'll show you how to take a real rest.*" [MSG]

Three things in this invitation are noteworthy if we are in need of a *real* Sabbath.

Jesus says "come to *me*..." we are not invited to anyone or anything other than Jesus. He is exclusive in this. When we find the one thing that works, we eliminate all others that don't work. Example; fuel in our car. It's amazing that we will be so precise when it comes to making decisions about our car, but so haphazard when it comes to make decisions about where we go to find the joy of Sabbath rest. Jesus says "**come to me.**"

Second we should give up on works of righteousness. The Jews were really burdened under the weight of religious rules and regulations. It is very tiring and wearisome to labour and be heavy laden in our efforts to please God. Jesus said to that kind of person, "come unto Me". And when we come unto Him, He has promised to give us rest.

Third, note that the Hebrew word for rest can also be used to describe a vacation after long period of work. It's time for a spiritual vacation. Jesus promises rest. What we need is not to look for rest from our spiritual life but rather to find rest *in* our spiritual life.

Prayer: Lord you know my coming and going. Help me take advantage of your invitation.