

Sabbath Rest, part 2

7/17/2016

Before VBS, a sermon about Sabbath- rhythms and seasons.

Well, as a congregation,

we have just come through

one of those very busy seasons.

And you know what,

just as the church schedule cranks up for VBS,

“life happens” in a big way for so many of our members-

- 1. Family come to visit,**
- 2. You land on your tail bone,**
- 3. The house floods,**
- 4. Houses go on the market,**
- 5. Parents go to the hospital,**
- 6. Allergies and arthritis flare up...**

It's almost like Satan was trying

to derail our efforts.

The good news is that he didn't,

and a good VBS was enjoyed by all.

But now the week is done... well almost.

We still need everyone to stay after just long enough

for us to break down our sets from VBS.

But as soon as that is done...

it's time for rest, well-earned, wonderful rest.

A season of busyness and activity,

and then a season of rest...(Can I have an “Amen?”)

God based the cycle of 6 days work, and then a day of rest-
on HIS creative activity, bringing a universe into existence.

But then He also did something else.

Scripture says that (Gen.2:2-3)

By the seventh day God had finished the work he had been doing; so on the seventh day he rested from all his work.

³ And God blessed the seventh day and made it holy, because on it he rested from all the work of creating that he had done.

Because of what HE did, he took that day,
blessed it, and made it holy.

And then, in God's covenant with the Jews, (Exodus 20:8-11)

“Remember the Sabbath day by keeping it holy.”

(And how were they to do that? Keep reading.)

⁹ Six days you shall labor and do all your work,
but the seventh day is a Sabbath to the LORD your God.

(It's not just a “you” day.

It's a Sabbath TO the LORD your God.)

(KEEP reading...)

On it you shall not do any work, neither you, nor your son or daughter, nor your manservant or maidservant, nor your animals, nor the alien within your gates. (Why not?)

¹¹ For in six days the LORD made the heavens and the earth, the sea, and all that is in them, but he rested on the seventh day. Therefore the LORD blessed the Sabbath day and made it holy.

Now that was to be a very good thing, a day of rest,
that was dedicated to God.

But the Jews took a very good thing,
and by the time of Jesus,
had legalistically made it a very bad thing,
but for very good reasons.

The reason was good-
to honor the holiness and commands of God-
highly recommended after the Babylonian exile,
where God punished Judah for centuries of disobedience.

We DON'T want God to do that to us again,
so everybody behave themselves... got it?

But instead of
everybody applying that principle to themselves,
the Pharisees in particular become
the Politically Correct police for the whole nation,
applying THEIR interpretation
of the 4th Commandment on everybody else,
and making exceptions for themselves.

Can't work on the Sabbath-
Is travel work? "Sabbath's Day journey"-
about 2000 cubits (1,000 yards) according to the rabbis.

But you could get around it
if you placed a meal along your travel route
just short of a Sabbath Day's Journey's distance,
thus making that place a temporary extension
to your dwelling.

So you do that enough times
and you can get wherever you want to go- perfectly legal.

And as with traveling, so also healing, preparing meals,
and on and on-

39 basic activities in GREAT detail spelled out.

But what was God's intent?

Was it for people to engage in
incredible hairsplitting over details,
or to have a day for resting, as HE had done,
and to dedicate that day to Him?

In the same way that Jesus offers
a corrective of understanding
to what the rabbis had taught
in the Sermon on the Mount-
"You have heard it said to the people...but I say to you-

Here is what God had always intended.

The rabbis has gotten it wrong. Here's let's fix it.

Here's what God intended concerning

1. Murder... and hatred.
2. Adultery... and lust.
3. Divorce.
4. Oath-taking.
5. An eye for an eye,
6. Loving your enemies,
not just your presumed neighbors.

And Jesus goes on to clarify

what God intended for the Sabbath, as well.

He says in Matt. 12:1-8 that, like every other day-

1. God desires mercy over sacrifice on the Sabbath.

What does that mean to you?

**The situation is his disciples doing
what is perfectly legit any other time-**

- a. to pluck heads of grain,**
- b. to roll them in your hands,**
- c. and pop the kernels in your mouth.**

But it's a Sabbath. Jesus says, "Yeah, so?"

**The disciples are hungry, human need was never intended
to be trumped by the Sabbath.**

2. But then he concludes with-

"The son of man is Lord of the Sabbath."

Even on Sabbath days, Jesus is master of all.

3. Mark's account adds another important element-

Then he (Jesus) said to them, (Mark 2:27-28)

**"The Sabbath was made for man,
not man for the Sabbath.**

So the Son of Man is Lord even of the Sabbath."

**There is a boatload of serious thinking
that needs to go into how we read and apply God's Word,
based on what Jesus just said there.**

**Too often we apply God's Word
more like the rabbis and Pharisees,
then like the Son of God,
and yes, we need to be careful with all of this.**

**How do we keep the day holy, sacred,
and yet attend to human need?**

Or, is attending to human need
one way that we CAN keep the day sacred?

Matt. 12:9-13

⁹ Going on from that place, he went into their synagogue, ¹⁰ and a man with a shriveled hand was there. Looking for a reason to accuse Jesus, they asked him, “Is it lawful to heal on the Sabbath?”

¹¹ He said to them, “If any of you has a sheep and it falls into a pit on the Sabbath, will you not take hold of it and lift it out? ¹² How much more valuable is a man than a sheep! Therefore it is lawful to do good on the Sabbath.”

¹³ Then he said to the man, “Stretch out your hand.” So he stretched it out and it was completely restored, just as sound as the other.

Mark 3:1

Another time he went into the synagogue, and a man with a shriveled hand was there. ² Some of them were looking for a reason to accuse Jesus, so they watched him closely to see if he would heal him on the Sabbath. ³ Jesus said to the man with the shriveled hand, “Stand up in front of everyone.”

⁴ Then Jesus asked them, “Which is lawful on the Sabbath: to do good or to do evil, to save life or to kill?” But they remained silent.

⁵ He looked around at them in anger and, deeply distressed at their stubborn hearts, said to the man, “Stretch out your hand.” He stretched it out, and his hand was completely restored. ⁶ Then the Pharisees went out and began to plot with the Herodians how they might kill Jesus...

(for doing what? Good, for healing, on the Sabbath.)

So you are driving home from church,
and there is a car by the side of the road,
with steam pouring out from under the hood.
Nope, can't stop and help- it's the Sabbath, our day of rest.

Somebody needs an insulin injection on Sunday.

**Nope, can't give it or get it, that's healing,
and it's the Sabbath, our day of rest.**

Where's the balance, between working for profit,

every day is the same, no rest,

versus being so legalistic,

that we do evil instead of good, on the day of rest?

1. Worship on Sunday... good?

2. How about worship and Bible class?

3. How about worship and class and Care Group?

4. How about worship, Bible study,

Care Group and visiting folks in the hospital?

5. How about...

(who are you deciding for, someone else, or yourself?)

Are your limits, everybody's limits?

Does your understanding

need to be everybody's understanding?

What principles should decide Sabbath rest,

without it becoming a new law

that becomes enslaving instead of liberating?

Can I offer some to you this morning?

1. Take time off to rest.

2. Give your family members time off to rest.

3. Let it be holy time, not just free time.

4. Let each person and each family

choose what that means for them, before God.

- Taking a nap? - Working out?
- Hiking? - Yard work?
- Reading? - walking the dogs?
- doing a hobby? - mucking out stalls?

1. **My Father, who instituted the Sabbath as a day of rest,
still feeds the birds on the Sabbath.**
2. **Wounds still heal- on the Sabbath.**
3. **Crops still get sunshine and rain...on the Sabbath.**
4. **God who instituted the Sabbath,
still DOES good things on the Sabbath...
and so can we.**

AND we still need a day of rest.

God commanded it... so figure it out.

Got it? Good!

More Sabbath stuff next week!

SABBATH DAY’S JOURNEY Distance a Jew in Jesus’ day considered ritually legal to walk on the seventh day. This phrase appears only once in the Bible (Acts 1:12), describing the distance from the Mount of Olives to Jerusalem. Scholars have surmised that the expression came from God’s instruction to the children of Israel as they prepared to cross the Jordan into Canaan (Josh. 3:4). As they followed the priests bearing the ark of the covenant, they were to maintain a distance of 2,000 cubits from it. Earlier, while in the wilderness, they had been told not to leave home on the Sabbath (Exod. 16:29). Rabbis eventually interpreted these commands as limiting Sabbath travel to 2,000 cubits. That was the farthest that a loyal Jew should be from his center of worship on the Sabbath. The length of the cubit depended on who was counting. Greeks said it was one foot, six inches; but Romans claimed it was one foot, nine inches. Thus, 2,000 cubits could be from 3,000 to 3,600 feet, somewhat more than a half mile. Anyone who wanted to “bend” the rule could carry a lunch sometime before the Sabbath to a place about half a mile from his home. Then, by eating it on the Sabbath, he could claim that place as a “legal” home and go another Sabbath day’s journey¹

SABBATH DAY’S JOURNEY — the distance a Jew could travel on the Sabbath without breaking the law. This phrase occurs in the Bible in Acts 1:12, where Mount Olivet is described as being “near Jerusalem, a Sabbath day’s journey.” This distance is usually reckoned to be about a thousand yards (Josh. 3:4, NIV; two thousand cubits, REB, NRSV, NKJV), because of the distance between the ARK OF THE COVENANT and the rest of the Israelite camp in the wilderness.

The idea behind the Jewish law (see Ex. 16:29) was that every person within the camp or city would be close enough to the center of worship to take part in the services without having to travel such a great distance that the Sabbath became a harried and busy day. This law, although noble in intent, was soon abused by a strict legalism. In the New Testament, Jesus often clashed with the Pharisees because of their blind legalism over observance of the Sabbath (Matt. 12:1–9).²

The rabbis invented ways to at least double the distance. One could establish his home 2000 cubits away by carrying food sufficient for two meals: one to be eaten and the other to be buried—thereby to mark a temporary domicile. He might alternately fix his gaze upon a location 2000 cubits away as his legal home for the sabbath. He could, separately or in conjunction with a preceding modification, view the entire town as his home and so figure the sabbath day’s journey from the village limits.³

¹ Fallis, W. J. (2003). Sabbath Day’s Journey. In C. Brand, C. Draper, A. England, S. Bond, E. R. Clendenen, & T. C. Butler (Eds.), *Holman Illustrated Bible Dictionary* (pp. 1426–1427). Nashville, TN: Holman Bible Publishers.

² Youngblood, R. F., Bruce, F. F., & Harrison, R. K., Thomas Nelson Publishers (Eds.). (1995). In *Nelson’s new illustrated Bible dictionary*. Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson, Inc.

³ Elwell, W. A., & Beitzel, B. J. (1988). In *Baker encyclopedia of the Bible* (p. 1879). Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House.