

Exodus 20:9-10 *“Six days you shall labor and do all your work, but the seventh day is a sabbath to the Lord your God.”*

Sabbath, Rest, and Forgiveness Pt. 2

One of the craziest things I have ever read in the Bible is about the Sabbath day. Think about all the men who were following Jesus around questioning him. Is that all they did? Were they hiding in bushes? A professor of mine wondered if they just popped out saying “Ha, I caught you!” God rested on the seventh day of creation. The sabbath day had been woven into humanity since the beginning of time. God will create and God does indeed rest. We are commanded to rest as well. Why did the religious rulers send spies all the time?

The parallel lines are all over the Bible. God rested in the beginning. What beginning? Our human beginning. From there is a command to keep the sabbath. Now I am mildly confused about Sunday rest. Yes, Christian tradition holds that the sabbath is Sunday. The Jewish sabbath is from Friday night at 6pm till Saturday night at 6 pm. The first day of the week is Sunday in the Jewish calendar. It’s also the day that Jesus rose from the dead. Personally, it makes zero sense to hold sabbath on Sunday. It’s the one day a week that pastors will be working!! Ushers work. Child care works. All Christians work on that day. I feel the Jewish observance would have fit much better. You can still worship Sunday.

Read Mark 2. Jesus heals and the religious grumble. Jesus saves sinners and the religious grumble. The disciples are questioned about fasting by grumbling religious rulers. Finally, around verse 23 Jesus and his disciples are hungry and glean some grain on the edge of a field (biblical). The religious rulers grumble that Jesus is breaking the sabbath law to rest. What is missing within all this grumbling is people. God didn’t create the sabbath to rest himself. I

suspect He didn't command it so that people would worship him on Sunday either. Instead, I think what we're failing to notice is God's heart for people. One of my biggest beefs is time off from church. They pound it out 52 weeks a year. They never ever rest. Is church about looking good for God or giving the people a little rest? I think that is the answer to the religious rulers. There is no rest for the grumbling wicked.

Leviticus 25:1 *"The Lord said to Moses at Mount Sinai, 2 "Speak to the Israelites and say to them: 'When you enter the land, I am going to give you, the land itself must observe a sabbath to the Lord.'"*

Mark 2:27 *"Then he said to them, "The Sabbath was made for man, not man for the Sabbath."*

I find it interesting that God commanded us to rest. You would think resting would come easy for people. Who wouldn't want a day off? Yet, through the centuries we have fought resting. I have read so many stories of a utopia. A place where we are free to rest. Don't we think heaven is a place of rest? Yet, as history has evolved, we have commandeered slaves, the industrial revolution and more. Why? Was it to make people work harder? They say that machines would replace us so that we could rest. Has that happened? How hard have people pushed to abolish Sunday off and cancel Christmas holidays? Humans hate resting. Even if it would kill them.

Two things I want to point out about the verses above. The first is Mark 2. Jesus said the Sabbath was made for man. Curiously, not man for the sabbath. We are not to use that one day off a week as we wish. I believe that included worship. Think about it. Friday night you get home from a long week of work. It's time to rest. Saturday is a great day to sleep in and rest. It

makes so much sense. The sabbath was made for man. Why? Because our bodies need it! I work out five days a week. My Job has me walking 20 km a day. I need rest. Yes, my body does love those days off even if my mind does not. Work serving on Sabbath Sunday too?

The second thing I want to point out is the relationship with the land. From the moment Adam and Eve sinned, the land was cursed. People say we were cursed. Yet, it was the land that became marred in thorns and thistles. In Leviticus 25, the sabbath is attached to the land. There needed to be land rest. Why? Technically, it's because a rested land regains its nutrients to grow stuff. I however, think it runs deeper. Busy man would run the land into the ground if it could. All we do is work, work, and work some more. There is no rest for the wicked.

Unfortunately, our sin and the land are connected. Humans have tried hard to ruin the land. Tell me one thing about creation we have not dirtied or soiled? Some have even said that humans are the plague that is destroying the earth. Yet, I feel it's got more to do with not honoring rest. Our bodies need it. The land needs it. I think creation needs it. I listened to a guy who takes a year sabbatical. He literally closes his business for a year. He swears that he thrives and has gained innovation through rest.

I can't tell you how many stories I have read about burnt out pastors. These men hire elders that run businesses that work seven days a week. They expect no less from their pastor. Stunningly, most business men work their pastor on little pay and high expectation. Rest is a four-letter word in church circles. At the end of Joshua 3 and the beginning of chapter 4 the Israelites stopped to make a stone alter to the Lord in the middle of the river. Manna fell for six days and then it rested. I would even say Jesus rested three days in the ground before rising. God is all about not worrying, resting, and being patient? Why are we trying so hard not to rest?

I thought this week we would be talking about forgiveness? What about Matthew 18 and more on the Year of Jubilee? Those themes are all connected to rest. Why did God need to command rest? It's because we hate to do it. I think there is a connection between the sabbath, rest, and forgiveness. People who don't rest have little time for relationships. That might include relationships with the land and people around us. Busy lives are good. Yet, they might start to miss what is important. Rest is important. Taking time to nurture relationships. Next week I am finally going to connect all these parallel lines to forgiveness, rest and the sabbath. Creation would we healthy if we slowed down, rested, and made time to forgive.