

What do we turn to for rest? We turn to entertainment. We turn to travel. We turn to the quiet and brilliance of nature. We turn to community. We turn to solitude. We turn to our lazy boys, couches, and beds. Each of these options, and anywhere else you might look to get recharged, they meet certain needs. They can refresh us in a certain way. But none of these yet are truly Sabbath.

We know that Sabbath, as commanded by God, involves Himself. As Luther puts it in his catechism, “we should fear and love God so that we do not despise preaching and His Word, but hold it sacred and gladly hear and learn it.” Which, call me a heretic if you will, I don’t think covers the entirety of what God intends when He commanded the Sabbath, but this certainly is the heart and source of all the rest that we would ever need.

This is easily the most bizarre of the commandments—not in terms of how it sounds, because coveting your neighbour’s manservant or maidservant, ox or donkey, this one takes the cake in terms of sounding strange and out of place in today’s context. No, the third commandment is strange because it is weird and wild that we would have to be commanded to rest. You’d think that this would come naturally. Sure, to lazy people it should be a breeze, but even to those who work hard and put their blood, sweat, and tears into everything they do, they collapse after a day in order to recover. Who would think that we need to be commanded to rest.

But everyone, from the most driven to the gold medalist of couch potato-ing needs to be told to rest. Our society has pushed the value of productivity as a core value. You need to either be working on your career or your hobby, your mind or your body, your spirituality or your mindfulness, your house or your yard or your car. To sit idle is nearly a cardinal sin in today’s society—unless sitting idle is something you’re working on, in which case—good for you for becoming productively restful.

This idea that we, as individuals and as a society, must be constantly getting better, in this is the first reason we are told to rest. In probably my favourite Biblical tid-bit that was highlighted to me in the past year, I’ve come to really appreciate that when Moses reiterates the Ten Commandments in our

Deuteronomy reading today, he gives a vastly different explanation to the third commandment. The first time he communicates God's commands to the people in Exodus, he commands them and their children and their servants and their livestock and even the sojourners among them—everyone is to rest from their work. All good here between Exodus and Deuteronomy so far.

But they are to rest because the Lord made the heaven and earth and everything else that is in six days and then He rested on the seventh. Therefore He blessed that day and made it holy.

If your God, the One in charge of everything, can sit back and cease from His working, surely you His creatures can too. And if He has commanded you to rest, then He certainly doesn't secretly want you out here on the Sabbath outperforming everyone else, sneaking in an extra 8 hours to prove yourself a harder worker than the bunch.

There is a God, and you are not Him. So you are not required to act like God.

Instead, by His example and at His command, as He created the world perfect in 6 days and then gave a day of breathing space, this day of rest should include enjoying the world He has made. You don't have to maintain all of creation. You do your part caring for the world for a time, and then you get to enjoy it. So to feast with friends is a good thing. To play ladder golf or scrabble or read a book or take a hike or put on the water skis once more is a truly good thing. Especially when it is done in light of and faith in the God who has created all this and then said that you, humans, are the crowning jewel, the purpose of all this. Sit back and revel in the world He has made for you.

But we don't. Not perfectly. Not faithfully. Instead of trusting that God loves us without our unending toil, instead of believing that our lives will continue just fine without a few extra hours of this work or that task (and I get it—that's not a lie a lot of the time—our jobs or our homes require this of us, but that's because we as individuals and society have placed that extra need on ourselves, working it into our already full schedules). Because we cannot Sabbath, we stumble into God's explanation through Moses attached to the third commandment in Deuteronomy.

Instead of commanding Sabbath because God also rested on the seventh day, He commands them to rest because they know what is like to have been deprived of rest. They and their families and their servants and the sojourners among them are to take a day off because there was a time when they had no time off and God had saved them from that.

They had been saved from their slaving away to the Egyptians, but they were also saved from the threat of death and constant misery. The Exodus, fleeing Egypt led by God, walking across the bottom of the Red Sea while Pharoah and all his hosts are swept away, this becomes the image of God's salvation throughout Scripture. So when God commands rest because they had been brought out of Egypt by His might, He is commanding them to rest because He has saved them. He has even saved them from their inability to faithfully keep the Sabbath.

Paul, in Second Corinthians, says "For God, who said, 'Let light shine out of darkness,' has shone into our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ." The message of Paul, and indeed of the whole church, is the message of this rest and restoration—God created light by His voice and He has given this gospel light to us. He has created and He has redeemed. God watches over all His creation, and in Christ He speaks an even greater, even more comforting Word of redemption and hope to all who will hear.

We even see this with Jesus today—He sees the greater need of the sustenance of His disciples, eating being more important than strict Law-following. And then we see His redeeming work, the sinless Son of God healing one broken by a sinful world. The Sabbath day is to care for mankind as they observe it.

Thus we do not need to be a slave of the Sabbath, aiming to fulfill the Law so perfectly that God would finally be pleased. David could not do it. If the Pharisees were honest they didn't do it either. Only Jesus understood the Law so perfectly and then had the strength and determination and the righteousness to actually fulfill it. And He did that for you.

So now you get to rest as the Sabbath was intended—as Sabbath was made and commanded for your sake. The particular day no longer matters because you won't do it perfectly—Christ already did. Now you just get to reap the restful rewards of His Sabbath, on whatever day, in whatever moments you find yourself Sabbath-ing. You rest in God's Word, in Christ's actions and promises, and this rest allows you to relax and enjoy the rest of creation that He has made for you.

Your Sabbath is twofold; beginning in the righteousness, the confidence that Christ has given you, that your sins are forgiven, that you are welcomed into the rest of the New Creation even today, that you are beloved all because of His death and resurrection in your place. And out of that confidence you can enjoy a BBQ or a boat ride, a walk in the park or an afternoon nap in the Sun. Enjoy the gift of rest, in your soul and in your body, because the God who has created you and re-created you will be faithful to watch over you, all the days of your life.

In His Name.

Amen.