

Finding Real Rest in Our Gracious God

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- [0 : 0 0] The scripture reading comes from Deuteronomy chapter 5. Please follow along on the screen. Verse 1. And Moses summoned all Israel and said to them, Hear, O Israel, the statutes and the rules that I speak in your hearing today, and you shall learn them and be careful to do them.
- Verse 6. I am the Lord your God who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of slavery. You shall have no other gods before me.
- You shall not make for yourself a carved image or any likeness of anything that is in heaven above or that is on the earth beneath or that is in the water under the earth.
- You shall not bow down to them or serve them. For I, the Lord your God, am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers on the children to the third and fourth generation of those who hate me, but showing steadfast love to thousands of those who love me and keep my commandments.
- You shall not take the name of the Lord your God in vain, for the Lord will not hold him guiltless who takes his name in vain. Observe the Sabbath day to keep it holy, as the Lord your God commanded you.
- [1 : 2 9] 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.
- You or your son or your daughter or your male servant or your female servant or your ox or your donkey or any of your livestock or the sojourner who is within your gates, that your male servant and your female servant may rest as well as you.
- You shall remember that you were a slave in the land of Egypt, and the Lord your God brought you out from there with a mighty hand and an outstretched arm.
- Therefore, the Lord your God commanded you to keep the Sabbath day. Honor your mother and your father as the Lord your God commanded you, that your days may be long, and that it may go well with you in the land that the Lord your God is giving you.
- You shall not murder, and you shall not commit adultery, and you shall not steal, and you shall not bear false witness against your neighbor, and you shall not covet your neighbor's wife, and you shall not desire your neighbor's house, his field or his male servant, or his female servant, his ox or his donkey, or anything that is your neighbor's.
- [2 : 5 5] These words the Lord spoke to all your assembly at the mountain, out of the midst of the fire, the cloud, and the thick darkness, with a loud voice, and he added no more.
- And he wrote them on two tablets of stone, and gave them to me. This is the word of God. Great. Good morning, Watermark.
- And for those of you who may be joining us for the first time, or watching from further afield, welcome. My name is Kevin. I'm one of the leaders here at Watermark, and it's great to be with you together this morning.
- Let's pray right away as we respond to God's word, and pray for our time together. Will you join me? Gracious Father, loving Son, Holy Spirit, we come before you this morning, to calibrate and align our hearts with who you are.

We come before you this morning, to worship you, and to adore your name, to give you the praise that you are due. God, we come before you this morning, because you are God, and we are not. Because the things in our lives, we tend to hope and trust, and God cannot save us, they cannot satisfy us, they cannot revive our heart and soul, as we sang about this morning.

[4 : 18] But you, God, can. You, God, can. And so, Lord, you are the one true God. You're the living God. Jesus, as the apostle said, you have the words of life. Where else should we go?

And so, God, this morning we come, and we carve out this time, to reorientate our hearts to you. We do this because it's right to praise you, and to worship you, as your creation, and your creatures, as God.

It is right that we worship you, and adore you, but we do it even more than that, because we need it, God. We so desperately need it. And so, God, this morning, as we look at these words for abundant life, I pray that you do give us abundant life, as we respond with simple faith.

God, won't you revive our heart and our soul? God, won't you give us the faith, to trust you, to obey these words, God, to walk in obedience to them. Help us, God, where we are fearful, where there are things that get in the way, where we are tempted to trust in ourselves, our own way.

God, we pray, give us faith, Lord. Help us to trust you, Lord. God, we pray also for ourselves, at this time, when there's so much uncertainty, going on in our world, in our city.

[5 : 28] God, we pray for our hearts. Oh, God, this morning, give us rest, we pray. Give us rest, Lord, where we're fearful and anxious, where anxiety and despondency have gripped our hearts, where the future for some of us may seem bleak and hopeless.

God, remind us that you are on the throne. God, give us peace this morning. Give us rest. God, I pray that just as I do my best to unpack these words, and to look at this word for abundant life, won't you be with me?

I pray, God, may anything I say that is not of you and your heart, may it fall away, God. Stop me saying things that are not of your heart. And God, even things that I haven't planned to say, God, would you lead us in your truth?

We want to know your truth, not my truth, God. We want to know what you have to say to us, not what I have to say to us. God, we bring the next 30 minutes before you and say, God, come and lead us, we pray.

We pray these things in your wonderful name. Amen. Amen. Amen. Well, we are continuing our series, these 10 words for abundant life, more commonly known as the 10 commandments.

[6 : 39] And this morning we are looking at the fourth of these, and this is how it goes. It says, observe the Sabbath day, keep it holy as the Lord, your God 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 do no other work, you or your son or your daughter, your male servant or your female servant, or your ox or your donkey, or any of your livestock, or the sojourner, the foreigner, who's within your gates, that your male servant and your female servant may rest as well as you.

Now, when we think of the idea of Sabbath, a couple of things might come to mind. This idea of doing no work, checking no emails, unplugging from the regular rhythms and demands and routines of life, that may sound very archaic.

If not something from another planet, then at least something from a whole nother century. You may have an idea in your mind of people dressed in very traditional clothing, sitting quietly around the table, sipping tea, not talking, doing no fun, no laughter, very serious, traditional view of life.

Or maybe, maybe it's not so much a view that is archaic or old school. Maybe when the idea of a Sabbath comes to our mind, in this high-paced technological world, maybe the problem with the idea of observing a Sabbath, of taking a day to unrest and unplug from the rhythms and the demands of life, just sounds completely boring.

[8 : 20] What on earth would you do with 24 hours, with no email, no WhatsApp, no Facebook, Instagram, TikTok, Netflix, the idea of unplugging just sounds completely boring.

In a city like ours, that has 500 million things to do on any given day, why on earth would you want to unplug? As we've spoken over the last couple of weeks, God's word to us, these 10 words for abundant life, are given for our joy.

As we sang earlier, to revive our souls. They're given for our flourishing, and our benefit. God gives these words to his people, not to constrain our joy, but to maximize it.

Not to hinder our joy and our happiness, but to see it grow, to see it flourish, to see it in its fullness. These 10 words are given for abundant life.

And so, listen up. So this morning, as we look at this idea of Sabbath, I want us to look at three things. The first, what is the Sabbath all about? Why is it so hard?

[9 : 26] And then finally, how are we going to apply it to our lives today? So, let's dive in. Firstly, what is the Sabbath all about? Well, the word Sabbath literally means to abstain from working.

It's the stop working day. You could read it like this. Observe the stop working day, to keep it holy, as the Lord your God commanded you. Six days you shall labor, do all your work, but the seventh is a stop working day, to the Lord your God.

And notice how it says we are to observe the stop working day. To observe means more than just ring it on your calendar. In Exodus, it says, remember the Sabbath. That's more than just work out which day of the week it is.

It's to engage in it. It's to prioritize it. God says, keep it holy. It's to recognize that there's something different, something distinctive, something sacred about this day that God has called us to set aside.

And notice in verse 14 of our passage, the egalitarian nature of the Sabbath. You see, sometimes in the old days, someone might've said, okay, fine, I'll abstain from working, but my son, he's going to work hard.

[10 : 41] The farm needs to carry on being tended to. Business needs to tick over. I need to sell my wares. My son's going to work. And God says, no, no, not you, not your son abstain from working.

Okay, fine. My daughters, they're going to, they're going to have to work hard. God says, no, not your sons, not your daughters. Someone may have thought, okay, fine. Well then my servants, if I can't work, if my family can't work, they're going to work doubly hard today.

And God says, no, not your sons, not your daughters, not your male servant, not your female servant. Okay, well, what about the foreigner? What about the foreign domestic worker? God's commanded, they're going to work doubly hard today.

God says, no, not the foreigner within your midst. What about the animals? I mean, there may not be anybody to help them plow straight. The fields may be a bit crooked. They may eat a little bit too much food while they're plowing the fields, but at least let the animals work.

At least let the machines run. At least let the technology do what it needs to do. And God says, no, not your animals, not your crops, nothing. It is to be an entire day of rest, a stop working day for everyone under your sphere, your household.

[11 : 51] This wasn't just a class thing. It wasn't just for the upper class, the wealthy, those that could afford it. All people in society were to observe and enjoy the Sabbath day of rest.

Now the question is, okay, if they were to do this, what were they to do on this Sabbath day of rest? What did it involve? Well, look at what this passage says.

In fact, actually the 10 words of abundant life are given twice in the Old Testament. The first time they're given in Exodus 20, and the second time in Deuteronomy 5. And there are slight differences in emphasis.

Look at what it says in Exodus 20. God says, you shall remember the Sabbath for in six days, the Lord made heaven and earth, the sea and all that's in there and rested on the seventh day.

Therefore, the Lord blessed the Sabbath day and made it holy. So what's God saying here? Well, the scripture is telling us that God in his creation, he finished creation and he specifically stopped working to enjoy his creation.

[12 : 54] The picture here is of God seated on his throne. He is resting, but he's ruling and he's reigning. Now, of course, God is still at work in the world, but he's not frantically running around, juggling a million plates, trying to keep the world going.

God is at rest. He's ruling and he's reigning. He's on the throne and he's not frantic or worried about what's going on in the world. All things are under his control.

And God then instructs his people to set aside some time, one day in seven, to remember that God is on the throne and that all the world is under his control.

But additionally, God builds into the way that the world works, this period of rest, not because he needed it, but because he knows that we need it.

And so to observe the Sabbath is part of the way that we are hardwired. It's part of our design. It's to celebrate our design. To violate the Sabbath is to violate the way that God has designed us.

[13 : 57] And therefore, the Sabbath commands or calls us to rest, to rest, knowing that God is on the throne and that we aren't.

But then look at the passage in Deuteronomy chapter five, which Claire read to us earlier. Moses gives a slightly different emphasis. He says this, you are to observe the Sabbath. And now here's the reason.

Verse 15. For you shall remember that you were slaves in the land of Egypt and that the Lord your God brought you out from there with a mighty hand and an outstretched arm.

Therefore, the Lord your God commanded you to keep the Sabbath. So what's God saying in this passage? Well, previously he rooted the command to rest in creation.

The fact that God rested and instituted this for our good. But here he's commanding it not so much in creation, but in redemption. The Sabbath is not only the way we are wired.

[14 : 54] It's also a reminder of God's mercy and his saving grace. It's not just a sign that God has created us this way. It's a reminder of his magnificent salvation and his mercy towards us.

Sabbath is a reminder that we are his people, that he's called us out of our former way of life, and that now we belong to him. And therefore, to celebrate the Sabbath is to celebrate God's saving grace, and it calls us to worship.

To worship. And these two things of rest and worship, rest and worship, are constantly portrayed throughout the Old Testament, throughout the Scripture.

God calls his people to set aside time in his weekly rhythm and pattern to rest and to worship. But then there's a third thing we see in this passage.

Do you remember how the passage called not just the head of the household to rest, but everyone in the family to rest? What's going on here? The Sabbath calls us to community.

[16:01] Your children, your foreign workers, domestic helpers, aunts, uncles, everyone was to rest. It was a stop working day for the entire family.

Now we sometimes miss this because of the intensely communal aspect of the Old Testament. And we can sometimes think, yeah, God's rest is just for me. I go take a day walking in the mountains and I pray.

But actually, in the Bible, to Sabbath was an intensely communal affair. Every Friday night, from the setting of the sun to Saturday evening, when the stars appeared, the entire family, aunts, uncles, cousins, grandparents, everyone would gather, pray together, eat a big meal, celebrate God's goodness, worship, rest, celebrating one another and God's goodness to their family.

The Sabbath calls us to rest, calls us to worship, but it calls us to worship together. These two things, to rest and worship, are throughout the Old Testament principle of Sabbath.

But they're not to be done mechanically, they're not to be done ritualistically or superstitiously, they're not to be done full of faith, trusting the Lord, by ceasing from work and gathering with our family to worship together.

[17:19] We rest in part so that we may be free to worship God undistracted from the demands of life. And we worship God in part by ceasing from our work and resting.

And the significance of this being tied to creation is that God is saying, this isn't just something you do once in a while or when you have the time or when work's not busy. This is part of a weekly rhythm, a rhythm that you put in your life to rest and worship together.

Kevin DeYoung summarizes the Sabbath like this, rest, rejoice, repeat. Rest our bodies and souls. We revive our hearts by worshiping God, by rejoicing in who He is.

And we repeat this every single week. Now, what about the New Testament? That's the Old Testament. How do Christians practice this in the New Testament?

Well, things get a little bit interesting here. And Christians have debated this over the ages. But generally, we see three things. The first thing we notice is this. Jesus never violates the Sabbath principle.

[18:26] Now, at the time of the New Testament, the religious leaders came up with a whole bunch of other rules and regulations about how the Sabbath applied. In fact, they came up with about 39 categories of what you could or couldn't do in order to honor the Sabbath.

And each one of those categories had about 10 rules themselves. So there's about 400 extra rules that they came up with. You can't pick a flower. You can't smell a rose.

You can't throw water out your window in case that falls on a seed and then the seed starts to sprout and then you've been growing plants on the Sabbath. So all these rules that they came up with. Jesus has no problem breaking those human rules.

But the Sabbath principle of taking time to rest and honor God, worship God, Jesus never violates the Sabbath. Second thing we see is this. The New Testament apostles seem to untangle some of the superstition and the rigidity of the Sabbath that was prevalent in the church.

So some people viewed the Sabbath highly superstitiously. There's some things that you can do and there's a whole bunch of things you can't do. And the apostles write and say, no, that's not the honor.

[19 : 37] That's not the heart behind the Sabbath. Honor the principle. But some people think this day is holy. Some people say that day is holy. Actually, these are things that we shouldn't fight about. You don't need to be so superstitious and meticulous around it's from 6 p.m. on Friday to 6 p.m. on Saturday or it's 6 p.m. Saturday to 6 p.m. Sunday.

There's a bit of grace and freedom in the way that you apply it. But the third thing we do see is this. Early on in the New Testament and in church history, we see something else taking place.

Rather than Christians applying the gospel to the Saturday Sabbath to the seventh day of the week, which is what would happen in the Jewish culture, Christians gathered on the first day of the week to celebrate the gospel, to celebrate Christ, to take communion together, to worship together, and to be community together.

We see this in Acts chapter 20. The Christians gathered after work at the end of the day on the first day of the week, which they called the Lord's Day, to celebrate communion, to listen to Paul preaching, and to worship God together.

We see this in 1 Corinthians 16 where Paul writes and he says, when you gather on the first day of the week, take up a love offering for the churches that are in Judea and are struggling financially. And so the Christians gathered on the first day of the week, the Lord's Day, on Sunday, to celebrate communion, to listen to God's word, and to worship together.

[21 : 07] By the end of the first century, church history shows us that many Christians had actually stopped observing the Saturday Sabbath and were working on the Sabbath and were now observing the Sabbath on the Sunday, gathering on the Lord's Day for community and worship.

And why did they do that? Well, because the Lord's Day, the Sunday, was the day that Jesus rose from the dead. It was the day that Jesus rose in resurrection, power, and glory. Interestingly enough, in John's Gospel, Jesus rises from the dead on Sunday, appears to his disciples, and then the next time he appears to them again is seven days later on the next Lord's Day, the next Sunday.

Now, is Sunday the new Sabbath? Is Sunday more spiritual than any other day of the week? No, not necessarily. In Romans chapter 14, Paul writes, and he says, don't make a big deal about one day as opposed to other days.

Every day, in some ways, is the day we celebrate God and worship Him and align our hearts to Him. If you have to work on a Sunday, let's say you're a pilot and you're rostered to fly on a Sunday, should you insist that you will do no work on a Sunday ever and refrain from flying?

Well, Paul says there's freedom, there's grace to do that. We shouldn't be superstitious about Sundays, but what we should do is make sure that as a weekly rhythm, we are gathering with God's people, resting and unplugging from the regular demands and rhythms of life, worshiping God, not just on our own, but with God's people.

[22 : 42] The issue is to set time aside, to rest, to worship together, to remind ourselves that Jesus rules, work doesn't, to remind ourselves that Jesus is on the throne, not us, to remind ourselves that our lives and our family's lives are in God's hands, not our own.

Now, second thing is this, why do we find this so hard? I'm sure you agree with me, most Christians, even gospel-centered Christians like Watermark tries to be, we're pretty bad at this.

Why is that? Well, I think there's a couple of reasons. The one reason is because we're fearful. We're fearful of what we might miss out on. While this is true of everywhere, there's probably very few cities in the world in which this is more prevalent than the city of Hong Kong.

Because of just the extreme competitiveness of our city, the idea of setting aside time to rest, to switch off, to not answer your phone, to not answer emails or WhatsApp messages, to not be on call, on demand, just seems absolutely crazy.

The ethos of our city is that if you're not going to be the fastest, the best, the hardest working, just get out the way and let somebody else in your place. And so the idea of switching off your phone, not checking emails, closing shop, means we could miss out.

[24 : 14] There's the fear that I could miss out on profits, I could miss out on income, I could miss out on bonus, I could miss out on recognition, I could miss that promotion that I've been longing for and needing.

That maybe switching off from Facebook or Instagram or social media means I'm going to miss out on what's happening with my social circle, what friends are up to and my social credit.

But friends, what this means of course is that we are slaves. Anybody who cannot say no is a slave. Is it possible that we've become slaves to the culture of our city?

Friends, the truth is that even for ancient times the fears were no less. If you were a farmer, you had to get your crops in when harvest was due, before the rains came and destroyed your crops.

When traders were coming through the village, you had to sell your wares before they moved on. In the ancient times, the fear of missed opportunity was no less. And yet God makes this promise that if you'll trust me enough to rest and to worship, I promise I'll take care of you.

[25 : 18] God promises his people that he is faithful and he'll take care of us. Maybe for some of us, the fear is not so much the opportunity cost, the fear is something else.

For many of us, it may just seem too scary, too daunting to have to deal and face the things in our lives, the things in our hearts, the anxiety, the loneliness, the despondency.

Any prolonged quietness or stillness means that we need to face the insecurities and the addictions in our lives. It's easier just not to go there. And so we mask over the fears in our hearts and the anxieties and insecurities with constant busyness, never able to switch off, never able to put our phone down, never able to be quiet and rest because the voices and the fears and the worries of our hearts are just too loud.

Now, of course, the problem with this, friends, is that that means we never deal with it. They're still there. They just push down deeper, waiting for another time to surface. And over and against these two fears, God gives us this gift, this incredible gift of freedom, this gift of Sabbath rest.

It's a day in which we declare our freedom, that we are not slaves to our culture, not slaves to our families, to our schools, to our bosses, to the stock market, not even slaves to our own fears and insecurities.

[26 : 50] God gives us this gift where we declare and stay our freedom, knowing that if we are free in Christ, we are free indeed. But God also gives us this gift of faith because the Sabbath is meant to be a day where we lift our eyes off of the circumstances around us, off of the things that demand our attention.

We lift our eyes to heaven and we remember, we behold our God and see that he is on the throne. It's this gift where we remind ourselves what's true in the world and what's real and where our lives really are.

God commands us to obey the Sabbath but he also gives us the gift of Sabbath. And so the Sabbath is both a command and a gift. I want us to take a few minutes now and to reflect on two questions.

And if you're with somebody else, maybe take some time to discuss these questions with them. If you're on your own, maybe take a journal and jot down these questions. Let's take two minutes to think about these two questions.

Firstly, have you ever thought of how the Sabbath applies to you? Have you ever thought it does apply to you? Secondly, what stops you from taking time to unplug from the rhythms and the demands of life and to rest and to worship and to Sabbath well?

[28 : 11] Let's take a few minutes to do that. Let's take a few moments to three scuration.

Thank you very much. Had to do that. Thank you. Listen.

backpack. Yes. These seven evenings remind you of the upper stairs for the aid for the injection of the water stadium Thank you.

Thank you.

Thank you.

[30 : 20] Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. And the reason I'm saying that is because I really want myself and you and for us as a church to take this seriously.

It's an outstanding book that's going to help us practically think about this. So add that to your list. Okay. Finally, how should we do this practically? How should we apply this to our lives?

Now, as I said earlier, the New Testament isn't strictly saying that the Sunday is the new Sabbath. But we do tend to see this principle. If there is another way that you can do this, that you can gather with God's people in community to rest and to worship, be free.

But what is critical to the idea of the Sabbath is these three things of rest, worship, and in community with God's people. Feeding your soul. Reminding ourselves that God is on the throne, not me.

That Jesus rules, not work, not social media, not culture. And so find time to do that. How should we do it practically? Well, in order to do this well, there's four things that we need to do.

[31 : 32] In our family, we've been trying to do this the last couple of months and it's been so good and life-giving. We haven't got it perfectly down yet, but we're trying our best and I'll tell you a little bit about that in a minute.

Four things we need to practically do. First thing, you need to prioritize it above everything else. You need to look at your calendar. If you're married, talk to your spouse.

Otherwise, look at your calendar and prioritize this time above everything else. What is the time when you and your family are going to Sabbath? And you need to guard it as if your life depends on it.

And the reason is because your life does depend on it. It really does. If you have to quit some things to fit it in, do that. If you have to leave some clubs, if you have to give up some hobbies, if you have to make some changes, do whatever is required to prioritize a set time weekly in your calendar when you can rest, revitalize your soul, and connect with God.

You know, one of the things we like to do is to tell our children, hopefully we do this, that Christ is King. Jesus is God. But it's hard to convince our children of that when soccer practice, piano lessons, tuition, needlework, housework, Netflix, Instagram, social media, cooking, every other thing takes priority.

[32 : 56] When following Jesus and gathering with his people, when getting into God's word is 17 on our priority list, it's hard to convince anyone in our family that Jesus is King.

Friends, I want to encourage us to do whatever it takes to prioritize this Sabbath time in our weekly schedule. Second thing is this. You need to turn off your phone and disconnect from all connectivity.

Now, I know that sounds like I live in the dark ages and that I don't know which city I live in and which century I'm part of. But honestly, our culture is absolutely addicted to our cell phones.

There's all sorts of books and research about that, about the addiction that mobile phones are having on our culture and the effects that it's having. Now, whatever your views are of social media, what is unquestionable is the way that mobile phones and connectivity have absolutely hijacked our minds and our hearts and us as human beings.

And we know the results of this. Teenage anxiety, depression, suicides are absolutely off the charts. Cultural analysts that have tracked teenage anxiety and depression throughout the decades have tracked the rise and suddenly in 2010 with the advent of the smartphone, anxiety and depression have absolutely gone off the charts.

[34 : 18] Friends, many of us spend more time looking at our screens than we do at our kids in the eye. Many of us spend more time looking at our phones than we do at God's Word. Our phones have hijacked our hearts and our souls.

And so, for some of us, it may not be social media. It may be checking emails or WhatsApp messages or other forms of communication. Can I plead with us for the sake of our soul, for the sake of our sanity, for the sake of our humanity, for the sake of your children and your marriage, whatever Sabbath looks like, turn off your phone and disconnect from the demands and the connectivity of our world.

In our family, because Sunday is a workday, we try and do Sabbath from 5 p.m. on Friday evening till Saturday lunchtime. And so, in our family, at 5 p.m. on Friday evening, sorry, 5 p.m. Friday evening, all cell phones get turned off, all iPads get turned off, computers get turned off, TV gets turned off, all digital equipment gets put away in the drawer.

And from 5 p.m. Friday evening till Saturday lunchtime, nobody is allowed to look at a screen. And though sometimes it's hard, it's been the best thing for our family. As we get to engage and pray together and have a meal and celebrate one another and what God is doing in our lives.

Third thing is this. You need to find out what relaxes you, what revives you, what refreshes you, and do that thing. For some people, it may be hiking. Some people, it may be an extended time of reading.

[35 : 51] Some people may be being on the water, in the beach, baking. For some people, it may be playing guitar, playing a round of golf. Find out what makes you grateful to be in God's will and a part of His creation and do that thing.

But here's the fourth thing and the most important thing. You need to tune your heart to worship Christ. In the book of Hebrews, the writer is talking about the way that God's people in the Old Testament and the leadership of Joshua were going towards the promised land.

And under Moses, they were going from the wilderness, this place of being nomads, this place of danger and armies and battles and enemies. And they were on their way towards the promised land.

And the promised land is described as this place of milk and honey. It's a description of luxury and rest and perfection. This place where there's no more battles to fight.

This place where your heart is full and satisfied. And so for 40 years, God's people are anticipating getting to the promised land. Finally getting there and being able to rest from the journey, but also being able to rest from warfare and battles and from manna and quail.

[37 : 05] Finally, they could get to the promised land. But Joshua says, the book of Hebrews says this, What's the writer saying?

He's saying that even though God's people finally got to the promised land, their hearts were not ultimately at rest. He's saying that the perfect circumstances of our lives don't give us rest.

He's saying that rest, true rest is not found in circumstances, it's found in a person. It's found in the person of Jesus. What Hebrews is telling us, friends, is that if you managed to buy a perfect island in paradise, and you had servants waiting on you all day long, you had all the money in the world, you had all the food you could possibly eat, you could wake up in the morning, go for a run on the beach, you had a sailing boat waiting there for you.

If you had the most perfect, idyllic life that you could ever possibly dream of, your heart would not be at rest. That would not guarantee that your heart would be rest and satisfied.

Friends, how many people say, I'll work hard, I'll make a ton of money, and once I get \$5 million, \$10 million, \$20 million, I'll kick back, and I'll relax. You know what?

[38 : 51] No matter how much money you make, your heart's not going to be at rest. Because true rest, ultimate rest, is found in our hearts and our souls, coming to the one that knows us the best, who made us for a relationship with him, and calibrating our hearts to him.

In the Old Testament, Joshua did take them into promised land. They were no longer wandering throughout the wilderness and the desert, but they got to the promised land, this land of milk and honey and luxury and of plentiful, and they still were not satisfied.

Because though they got there, they'd wandered away from the God who knew them and made them. Friends, in Jeremiah, chapter 6, God's people are in the promised land, and things are going bad because they've wandered away from God.

And so Jeremiah gives this amazing verse. He says this, Stand by the roads and look. Ask for the ancient paths, where the good way is, and walk in it, and you will find a rest for your souls.

Friends, I know that the idea of taking a Sabbath, of carving out time in our busy city, sounds absolutely ridiculous. I know it may even sound like something from the dark ages. But if the mental health statistics, if the divorce rates of our city are anything to go by, if the burnout and the anxiety and the loneliness of our city is anything to go by, friends, maybe we need to stop, look for the ancient paths, find out where the good way is, and walk in them.

[40 : 24] Maybe that's the way to find rest for our souls. Jesus picks up on this verse in Matthew chapter 11, and he, speaking to his disciples, who would have known Jeremiah, he takes this verse, and then he applies it to himself.

And he says this, and this still applies to us all these years later, Friends, some of us here are frenetic, and anxious, and worried, we are angry, we are stressed, we have explosions of anger, because we've never come to Jesus.

Friends, maybe you've been part of church for many years, you've sang the songs, you've given your offering, you've been part of a Bible study, but you've never really come to Jesus. You've never really surrendered your heart to him.

You've still wanted to be in control of your life. You've felt that your life is ultimately in your hands. Friends, Jesus calls us today, today, to find our Sabbath rest in him, to surrender to him, to maybe for the very first time, to admit, Jesus, you are God, and I am not.

God, you are on the throne, and I am not. My life is in your hands. Friends, you cannot save yourself from your sin, but you also cannot save yourself from your anxiety, and your worry, and your fears.

- [41 : 55] Only Jesus can. Friends, come to him, and find your rest in him. Come to him and align your hearts to him. Come and worship him. Come and let him be your God. Let him be your king.
- Come and surrender your life to him. Friends, maybe the reason why you've never rested, is because there's an idol that you've served, called yourself, or an idol called work, or an idol called money.
- Friends, those idols are going to destroy you. There is one God who can save you, not only from hell, that's true, but also from the anxiety, and the worry, and the despondency of our hearts.
- There is one God and king, who can give you rest. His name is Jesus. Friends, come to him today. Come to him this morning. Don't go another minute, another hour, still being God and in control of your life.
- Come to him and find your Sabbath rest in him. Friends, I know it's a fearful thing, to cut out time, to say no, to switch off your phones and our emails.
- [42 : 54] I know that maybe there's a fear of losing out. Of course there is. Friends, Jesus is more than adequate to look after you. He's more than adequate to look after your family.
- He's more than adequate to look after your children. Friends, your life is not in your boss's hands. Your life is not in your client's hands. Your life is not in the stock market. Your life is in King Jesus.
- Trust him. Trust him. And then for those of us that are so fearful, to engage the stuff in our hearts. It's scary to take a Sabbath because we don't know what we'll find in our lives.
- Friends, maybe confronting the pain and the agony is a fearful thing. Don't you see? Jesus is a good physician. Jesus is the best counselor you'll ever come across. Jesus is the great physician.
- He is there to heal your heart. He's there to bring you freedom. Friends, Jesus died on the cross, not just to save you from hell, but also to bring healing to our lives and our souls.
- [43 : 54] Friends, Jesus is the one who invites us to come and to bring our burden to him. Jesus says here, come to me, those of you who are burdened and anxious and worried and frightened and fearful.
- Come to me. I will give you rest. Friends, bearing those things with the business of life will never deal with him. Come to Jesus. Come and find your rest in him.
- Friends, can I beg you? The frenetic pace of this city is killing us. It's killing our marriages. It's killing our children. It's killing our hearts. It's killing our peace.
- We're on the treadmill and it's getting faster and faster and faster. And those things that we are hoping and trusting, and not only are they killing us, even if we get them, they will not satisfy us.
- They cannot save our souls. They cannot satisfy us. Jesus says, come to me. All you who are weary and heavy laden, come to me and I will give you rest.
- [44 : 52] Let's pray together. God, sovereign God, gracious King, majestic Lord, God, we come to you this morning.
- We are anxious and worried, fearful and frightened, worn out, burnt out. God, we've come to the end of ourselves.
- And the amazing thing is that we've done this, God, because we've trusted in false gods, other idols. And though, God, that alone means that we deserve to be banished to hell forever.

We've kicked you out of our lives and trust in other things. God, in your incredible mercy, in your outstanding grace, you come to us and say, come, my children, my sons and daughters, come and find your rest in me.

Jesus, though, we are like prodigal sons and daughters that have run off to a faraway country to try and find our satisfaction in all sorts of things. God, many of us have come to the end of ourselves.

[46 : 08] We've realized, God, that coming back to you, even being a servant in your house would be better than serving some false idol that is killing us. And yet, God, as we come back to you this morning, we find you as a father that is waiting for us, that is running towards us, that is throwing his arms around us and saying, my son, my daughter, welcome home.

It's so good to have you. God, you didn't just slaughter the fattened calf and I returned.

You let your son be killed. You let your son hang on the cross for us. Jesus, as we read earlier, better is one day in your house than a thousand elsewhere.

better is one day, God, with you than all the pleasures that this world could offer. God, I pray, won't you give us the faith to trust you, to unplug from the demands of life, to switch into you, God, and to switch off from the regular rhythms of life.

Help us, I pray. God, won't you open the eyes of our hearts to see you, to adore you, and to come back to you. We need you, Jesus.

[47 : 35] Amen. Amen.