

Introduction:

- Good morning!
- Well, we were expecting to gather together for our Sunday Central Gathering this morning like normal. But the weather had other plans.
 - So as you're watching this, assuming you're watching this Sunday morning, January 5th, our decision to cancel will either seem like wisdom (due to the significant amounts of ice and snow outside your window)
 - Or it will be another Kansas Weather Strikes Again scenario where we cancel in advance due to an ominous forecast, only for it to turn out a near total bust.
 - Maybe the sun is shining and the roads are clear and dry.
 - But in my heart of hearts, I hope it's full of snow!
- But either way, this morning's disruption of our regular gathering gives us an opportunity to engage with a question that itself is often disruptive:
 - HOW ARE YOU at RESTING?
- How often do we truly rest in our busy, fast-paced, digitally-connected, production-obsessed, full-calendared, anxiety-ridden world?
 - Chances are, if you're honest with yourself – or if you asked those closest to you – you're like me, and you struggle to truly rest as a regular habit... as a lifestyle.
- **Illustration/Story:**
 - Share a brief story or analogy about the challenge of resting—maybe about a person overwhelmed by work, responsibilities, and the constant need to be productive.
 - There have been times in my life when I've been pretty good at resting. Slowing down and choosing to do something I delight in... something that's not productive.
 - It's especially easy when it's snowing outside!
 - I love to stay in my soft clothes
 - Grab coffee or even sometimes hot chocolate
 - Keep the Christmas Tree on
 - And read a good book.
 - Or watch a movie with my family.
 - Or work on a Lego set
 - My most recent set is a creative mural of our Milky Way galaxy.
 - SO FUN!
 - And I even let Annie help me find pieces.... Sometimes
 - But more often, if I'm honest, it's hard for me to really rest.
 - I find myself itching to fix something around the house
 - Or work just a little more on the computer
 - Or fire off a few more texts

- I've noticed that in even brief moments of slowing, I reflexively reach for my phone and start clicking. Sometimes even on apps that I didn't consciously choose.
- Maybe you can relate to that compulsion.
 - The intrusion of technology with its false promise of burden lifted, but it delivering burden increased as we are always ON for work and always primed for the pressure to produce. Or at least distract.
- Life can be wearying
 - When you're always on
 - You've got young kids
 - Demanding jobs
 - And trying to prioritize Christian Community in the midst of it all can be significantly challenging.
 - Not to mention those who volunteer to serve and lead in various ministries of the church.
- The Bible speaks foundationally and often about our need to rest. God calls this need and practice, SABBATH
- **And in the Scriptures**, Sabbath rest is not meant to be a burden, but a gift from God, offering physical and spiritual refreshment, deep connection with Him and others, and an invitation to trust in His provision as a ongoing lifestyle.
- **As with many things worth doing, it initially takes more work.**
 - Who has ever learned to play a musical instrument, especially a classical instrument like the piano.
 - Initially the student may not have been excited about it.
 - And it took practice.
 - And wasn't always fun.
 - Imagine looking out the window at the other kids playing outside as she had her practice.
 - And though some things got easier quickly, others took longer.
 - Years!
 - By the time she is on the concert stage she's got years of practice and discipline in her rearview mirror.
 - But then, she begins to play.
 - And her fingers caress the keys. And transcendent beauty fills the concert hall.
 - And its then that you realize (and perhaps SHE realizes) that all that discipline and practice didn't restrict her, they FREED her to play
 - Her hands and fingers are now freed to delight in making beautiful music.
 - FREED. In a way, Finally, at rest. Relaxed into the freedom of release.
 - Where TRUE productivity becomes possible.
- THAT'S WHAT IT'S LIKE with Sabbath rest.
 - It takes work. Practice. And often it's not initially fun.
 - Seems less efficient. Like you're being restrained. Unable to do and be what's best.

- But if you stick with it. Over time, you discover the surprising Gift of God – the freedom to be and do from a place of profound rest
 - FREED to BE. (and Not Be)
 - Freed to be me as I was made (limited and dependent, beloved and secure).
 - Freed not to be god. Not to be the securer of our own lives
 - Today as we're disrupted by the weather, and unexpectedly forced into a Sabbath rest at home, let's take this opportunity to lean in and consider the surprising Gift of God: Sabbath Rest.
-

I. Understanding Sabbath Rest: A Divine Command (Exodus 20:8-11)

1. The Basis of Sabbath Rest

1. In the Ten Commandments in Exodus 20, God commands His people to "
 - ⁸ **"Remember the Sabbath day by keeping it holy. ⁹ Six days you shall labor and do all your work, ¹⁰ but the seventh day is a sabbath to the LORD your God. On it you shall not do any work, neither you, nor your son or daughter, nor your male or female servant, nor your animals, nor any foreigner residing in your towns. 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.**
 1. Holy means – set apart as special. For a special purpose.
 2. Dedicated to God and his purposes
- It was SO important that God made The Sabbath not merely an optional practice; it is a divine command, rooted in creation.
 1. We're to emulate our Father.

2. A Pattern Established by God

- God rested on the seventh day after creation, not because He was tired, but to set a pattern for humanity (Genesis 2:2-3).
 1. ² **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 Then God blessed the seventh day and made it holy, because on it he rested from all the work of creating that he had done.**
- Rest is a holy act that reflects God's perfect design for human flourishing. The Sabbath day isn't just a mere utilitarian break to recoup our strength
 1. it's a day set aside to intentionally enjoy God, His creation, and rest in His provision.

3. Sabbath as a Sign of Covenant

- Sabbath was given as a covenant sign (Exodus 31:13). It is a mark of God's people and a reminder that He alone is our sustainer.
 1. ¹³ **"Say to the Israelites, 'You must observe my Sabbaths. This will be a sign between me and you for the generations to come, so you may know that I am the LORD, who makes you holy.**

4. Application:

- Rest is not just for the body; it's a reminder to our souls that we are not self-sufficient and that we depend on God – and that he is faithful to provide what we need.
-

II. The Purpose of the Sabbath: Spiritual Refreshment (Mark 2:27-28)

1. Sabbath Isn't meant to be Legalistic

- Jesus' words in Mark 2:27-28 are key: **"The Sabbath was made for man, not man for the Sabbath. So the Son of Man is lord even of the Sabbath."**
- Sabbath is not meant to be a rigid rule, but a gracious provision. A gift from our King Jesus.
 1. A SURPRISING GIFT!
 2. And we're invited into the spirit of the gift, more than the letter of it.

2. IT RESTORES OUR PERSPECTIVE

- It is a reminder of what's real and true.
- A chance to repent and reorient our priorities back to the way things truly are – God's World under His Gracious care

3. IT RESTORES OUR STRENGTH

- Our bodies and minds need regular rhythms of rest
- Resting from our work, the persistent pressure to "Be On" to secure our life, to stave off disaster, to prove ourselves worthwhile
- We were not made omnipotent, but limited. And as many of us have found out, we blow past our limits to our own peril.

4. Restores Our Relationship with God

- Sabbath rest is an invitation to reconnect with God. In the midst of work, it's easy to lose sight of our Creator.
- Through intentional rest, we cultivate a deeper relationship with God and remind ourselves of our dependence on Him.
- We MAKE SPACE for that relationship to breathe and grow

5. Restores Our Relationship with Each Other

- Sabbath fosters relationships—family time, community worship, and fellowship are central to the Sabbath.
- So it's not synonymous with silence and solitude, Sabbath Rest is meant to be experienced together!

Application:

- Sabbath is not only physical, but a deeply spiritual reset. Instead of viewing it as a limitation, we can see it as a gift that enables us to draw closer to God and others, reorient our priorities, and restore our souls.

III. The Surprising Gift of Sabbath: A Call to Trust (Matthew 6:25-34)

²⁵ “Therefore I tell you, do not worry about your life, what you will eat or drink; or about your body, what you will wear. Is not life more than food, and the body more than clothes? ²⁶ Look at the birds of the air; they do not sow or reap or store away in barns, and yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not much more valuable than they? ²⁷ Can any one of you by worrying add a single hour to your life?

²⁸ “And why do you worry about clothes? See how the flowers of the field grow. They do not labor or spin. ²⁹ Yet I tell you that not even Solomon in all his splendor was dressed like one of these. ³⁰ If that is how God clothes the grass of the field, which is here today and tomorrow is thrown into the fire, will he not much more clothe you—you of little faith? ³¹ So do not worry, saying, ‘What shall we eat?’ or ‘What shall we drink?’ or ‘What shall we wear?’ ³² For the pagans run after all these things, and your heavenly Father knows that you need them. ³³ But seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well. ³⁴ Therefore do not worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will worry about itself. Each day has enough trouble of its own.

1. Sabbath is a Trust Exercise

- In a culture driven by productivity and anxiety, the act of resting feels countercultural.
- Yet God calls us to trust Him, even when we're not working.
- Jesus reminds us in Matthew 6 that God cares for the birds and the flowers—how much more does He care for us?
 1. The implication is LOTS AND LOTS MORE
- Resting on the Sabbath is an act of trusting God with our time and our work.

2. Sabbath Challenges Our Idolatry of Productivity

- Our society often values busyness and productivity over rest and reflection. Sabbath offers us the freedom to let go of that pressure.
- It challenges us to believe that God can do more in six days than we can accomplish in seven.
- Resting on the Sabbath is a refusal to idolize productivity and our own efforts to secure our lives.
- Rest is at root about worship.

3. Sabbath Rest Reflects the Gospel!!!

- Sabbath has always been pointing us toward something greater
- Hebrews 4 teaches us The ultimate Sabbath rest was secured through Christ's finished work on the cross.
 1. Jesus provides eternal rest for all who come to Him, freeing us from the striving of self-sufficiency.
 2. WE don't have to be Atlas, striving and straining trying to hold up the world on our shoulders

1. Even though we try to be
 2. But God didn't make us that strong
 3. And so we crack, and break under the weight of a burden we were never meant to carry
- The GOSPEL – the Good News – is that Jesus is God, and You are not.
 1. And he has moved heaven and earth to rescue us from our burden.
 2. And invites us to set down the world, and risk letting him carry it for you
 3. Invites you to find your rest in Him
 4. St Augustine of Hippo (lived ~350 yrs after JC) famously wrote in his CONFESSIONS:
 1. *"You have made us for yourself, O Lord, and our heart is restless until it rests in you."*
 - Jesus Himself is our rest.
 - **Matthew 11:28-30:**
 1. **"Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy and my burden is light."**
 2. The image here is of two oxen who are yoked together to do the work of plowing a field
 1. The older stronger ox would be yoked to a young weak one. TO TEACH THEM HOW TO WORK WELL
 2. They would shoulder the burden. And teach the younger ox the slow steady pace.
 3. JESUS SAYS THIS IS ME WITH YOU.
 4. Let me teach you how to live.
 1. Not with the striving way of religion, where you need to try to earn God's favor.
 2. But the gentle way of walking alongside your God who loves you, slowly teaching you the way of grace.
 5. Eugene Peterson's famous paraphrase of the Bible, THE MESSAGE, renders this passage this way (I love it)
 6. ²⁸⁻³⁰ **"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. Walk with me and work with me—watch how I do it. Learn the unforced rhythms of grace. I won't lay anything heavy or ill-fitting on you. Keep company with me and you'll learn to live freely and lightly."**
 - Sabbath points us forward to the eternal rest we will experience in Christ
 1. The Gospel in full flower
 2. The Kingdom of God finally and fully here
 3. Not a cessation of effort or work – indeed we're made for GOOD WORKS – but not for striving, nor a futile attempt to earn.

4. We're going to be unimaginably productive for eternity on the New Earth
 1. But we'll do it all from a place of deep rest in Him

Application:

- Choosing Sabbath rest is an act of faith. It says, "I trust God with my work, my time, and my life," even when it feels like we should be doing more.
-

IV. Living Out the Gift of Sabbath: APPLICATIONS

1. Sabbath as a Weekly Rhythm

- Sabbath rest is not just an annual event or occasional practice—it's a weekly rhythm of life that aligns us with God's design.
- It requires intentionality.
- We must create space in our calendars and our hearts to rest in God's presence.
- TAKE A STEP WITH SABBATH
 1. Start by trying out taking a Sabbath rest for 2 hours one day.
 1. I call this tawG
 2. I got to the bakehouse
 3. Get a latte
 4. Maybe a ham and cheddar crassant
 5. And my journal and kindle
 2. Plan ahead. No cell phones. No work. No house projects.
 3. Plan to do things that truly restore your soul.
 4. And help you connect with God and others
 5. And if it goes well, you can step it up to a half or whole day.
- WHEN WILL YOUR SABBATH BE?
 1. Mine is Monday – I need to get better about more regularly protecting it!

2. Resting with Purpose

- Remember the goal is trusting rest in God as your good father and provider.
- You're free to experiment with whatever helps you toward those ends.
 1. Could be a nap
 2. A planned family game
 3. A walk outside with the dog
 4. Extroverts and Introverts often have differences when it comes to whats truly rejuvenating. And that's ok
- Rest in God's word and his promises.
 1. Could be sitting in silence in nature and contemplating God
 2. Could be worship songs at the gym
 3. Could be choosing to get down on the floor with the kids instead of getting that porch light fixed.

3. Rest is an integral part of Discipleship!

- Who are you inviting to speak into this area of your life?
- Who is keeping you accountable to taking steps with Sabbath Rest as a lifestyle?
- What are chewing on to stretch you in this area?
- **Recommended Resource:** Sacred Rhythms by Ruth Haley Barton (CH 8: Establishing Rhythms of Work and Rest)

4. BE PATIENT with yourself – Grace Abounds

- We're not naturally GOOD at resting. Not TRULY resting. Deeply resting in Christ.
- But take heart. Practice makes a difference.
- With little ones, sleep begets sleep. Counterintuitively. And so with all of us.
 1. Rest begets rest.
 2. By God's great grace.

• WHAT'S YOUR NEXT STEP IN EXPERIMENTING WITH SABBATH RESTING?

• Closing Prayer:

- Pray for the congregation to receive the gift of Sabbath rest, to trust God with their time, and to experience His peace as they observe this holy day.
-