

SERMON TITLE: My Soul is Tired  
SCRIPTURE: Matthew 11:28-30

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What is rest, really? Have you ever thought about that question? Have you ever been confronted with exhaustion, lethargy, anxiety, stress, worry, fogginess, distant relationships, lack of intimacy? Sometimes it feels like we're right in the pocket and moving along and then all of a sudden, one day we wake up, and it feels like everything just seems "off". Have you ever been there? What if we did an inventory on our health? How's your physical health? What about relational? Emotional? Mental? Spiritual? What if I told you that so many of the wrinkles in our health could be smoothed out by rest? Would you believe me? For the longest time, I didn't believe that. In fact, I am still learning how to believe that. I am not good at resting. Historically, I have been abysmal at rest. But I am beginning to learn (the hard way) that if I break the rules of life long enough, they break me. I am beginning to expand my spirituality to include rhythms of rest - something I formerly thought was a good idea, but never good enough to actually practice. But Jesus is graciously revealing to me that it is more than a good idea, it is His way. If you've ever had a sobering moment where you realize that the rhythms of your life are off, and perhaps you have bought into the cultural ideas of what rest is, then this message is for you...and for me. Let's walk together.

## WHAT IS SABBATH?

1. Example - First, let's begin at the biblical idea of Sabbath. It is first modeled by God in Genesis in the creation account (Genesis 2:2-3). God rests, not because He is tired from creating, but because He is delighted or satisfied in what He has made. He blessed the seventh day and made it holy. This is an interesting concept because to bless is to give, and to make holy is to consecrate (or remove). So God is giving humanity a gift by removing one day from circulation. In other words, this day is distinctly different. The gift is that it looks different than every other day and is intended for us to partake in the rest of God.
2. Rule - As God uses Moses to lead his people out of slavery in Egypt he provides food for them (bread from Heaven). He tells them that on the sixth day they should gather double the amount they need so that on the seventh they don't have to worry about it. The seventh day was intended to be a gift, unique from every other day. A day of rest, delight, celebration, reflection, friends, family, and food. Sounds like a great party right? But, people disobeyed and gathered food anyway. (Exodus 16:22-28) Eventually, God would make the Sabbath a rule as a part of his covenant with his people. (Exodus 20:8-11) This was the fourth commandment.
3. Rhythm & Ritual - Fast forward to Jesus, God in the flesh. The religious leaders of the day were not big fans of Jesus, but they particularly hated the way He treated the Sabbath. It's worth noting that Jesus repeated the other 10 commandments, but never verbally taught about the sabbath. Instead, more than anything else, he modeled it with his lifestyle. This was a unique rhythm in the life and ministry of Jesus. The religious leaders had made Sabbath keeping all about restrictions, which became such a burden it actually had the opposite effect. No one could delight on the Sabbath because there was no freedom. Jesus fulfilled the laws perfectly and reminds us of the original intent of the Sabbath - it is meant for delight, resting in God, enjoying each other, food, family, friendships, celebrating, and pleasure. In fact, Jesus ruffled feathers so much in how he lived out the Sabbath, it became the fuel on the fire which eventually had him murdered.

## SO IS SABBATH STILL A RULE FOR US TODAY?

Jesus fulfilled the Old Testament Law, not abolished it; and through our faith in Jesus, we fulfill the requirements of the Covenant, as well. Keeping the Sabbath in the New Covenant is fulfilled through our relationship with Jesus - abiding and resting in Him so no, it is no longer a rule of our New Covenant. Jesus says in Matthew 11:28-30 that by coming to Him, He gives us rest. Not just physical rest, but rest for our souls. There is something inherent to our faith in Jesus and his presence in us that rests our souls. It's not about rule keeping or restrictions, but about the presence of Jesus.

Paul elaborates more on this in Romans 14:5-9 and Colossians 2:16-17. As the Gospel spread from Jewish cultures to Gentile cultures people were wondering, "So do we need to keep this Sabbath thing or what?" And Paul was basically

saying, "No, it's been fulfilled in Jesus. The Sabbath was a shadow Jesus is the substance. Our faith in him fulfills the *rule* of the Sabbath. However, if you still want to observe it, as a unique day, that's fine, if you don't, that's ok too."

#### SO IF IT'S NOT A RULE, WHY DO IT?

You may be at this point (if you've been gracious with my "not the most exciting" sermon notes so far) and thinking, "Wait a minute! What is the point of all this if it's not even a rule?" Great question. To clarify, it is no longer a *rule of the covenant* (every rule was fulfilled in Jesus and applies to us through our faith in Jesus), *but it is a rule of life and spirituality*. In other words, even though Jesus never verbally reiterated "Continue to keep the Sabbath day or else" He modeled through His lifestyle the necessity of the rhythms of rest as they pertain to our health and intimacy with the Father. Rest is a rhythm of life in all of creation. That's how God made it. If you break that rule long enough, it will break you. Everything needs rest. But this is not just a physical need, it is a spiritual one. Haven't you ever spent a day on the couch, lounging around, binge watching something, and at the end of the day you actually feel more tired than before. Why is that? It's because there's a difference between physical and spiritual. You are not just a body, you are a soul. If we only rest our body (through sleep or less activity), it does not translate to our soul.

#### SO HOW DO WE REST OUR SOUL?

The sabbath. One day in the week which looks distinctly different than every other day. Partaking in activities which intimately connect you to the Father and His presence, while also simply delighting in this life. Sabbath is a day in which we party. We celebrate with one another. It is a guilt free day of not working. To be clear, it is not meant to be a day where we go to church, come home, knock out a bunch of house projects or lawn work, stress about what Monday will bring, etc. It is not meant to simply be a "day off". It is meant to be a "day separate". God has given a gift by taking away its normalcy. It is unique. Sabbath is a day in which we remember the goodness of Eden while anticipating the glories of the coming Kingdom. We recreate the Garden and imagine Heaven. It is a day for delight and pure joy, not meant to be a day where you scratch off the to-do list of things you didn't have time for throughout the week.

And please hear me. I. Am. So. Guilty. Of. Getting. This. Wrong. I have gotten this wrong for so long and it has broken me. God is gracious and has been patient. He has waited on me to finally surrender to His ways and I am learning the life-giving power of Sabbath.

#### I WOULD SUGGEST THAT EVEN THOUGH IT'S NOT A RULE, IT SHOULD BE A RHYTHM OF EACH DAY AND A RITUAL OF EACH WEEK.

Jesus invites us to abide in Him - to remain in Him (John 15:1-11). That's the daily rhythm. Our rest is Jesus. He is our Sabbath. However, God still invites us into the ritual of rest which is creating a unique day set apart from all others in which we delight in the deepest joys possible this life can offer. That's the weekly ritual.

It requires trust (God's ways are better than mine) and dependency (I am not capable of providing everything I need for myself), but it is the most life-giving practice that God has woven into creation. Would you take the risk and create the rhythm and ritual? I have found these things to be true from my own practices: less worry, less stress, less irritability, a better attitude coming into Monday, a deeper sense of love and connection with my family and my creator, higher levels of energy and focus, more productivity throughout the week, a full soul, and anticipation for the party. Saturdays are my Sabbath and have become my favorite day of the week. I look forward to them Wednesday-Friday and think about them Sunday - Tuesday. Would you invite God to help you take the risk and set aside a day solely devoted to delighting in Him and others?

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#### For Discussion:

1. What is something that stood out to you from Matt's message this morning?
2. Have you ever struggled to have the rhythm and ritual of rest in your life? Why or why not?
3. What have you noticed about yourself (attitude, perspective, joy, love, peace) when you don't have soul rest? What happens to those categories when you do have soul rest?
4. Why does resting one day a week seem like such a challenging, scary, or unnecessary thing in our culture?
5. Have you ever felt weary, tired, or burdened (not just physically, but in your soul)?

6. Have you come to Jesus in faith for salvation, but not in rest for your soul? If yes, what have you discovered? If not, what's holding you back?
7. What do you need to surrender to God in order to take him up on his offer to rest? What needs to be restructured in your life?
8. Would you commit this very day to begin the journey of creating a ritual of Sabbath?