

“Celebrating The Sabbath And Keeping It Holy” by E A Terry Delivered 8/26/18

Isaiah 58:13 – 14; Exodus 31: 12 – 17; Hebrews 4: 1 – 13;

Mark 2: 23 – 3:6 (Sermon)

We have been looking at the meaning of The 10 Commandments for the past two weeks.

The first 4 commandments deal with our relationship with God and the last six commandments deal with our relationship with other people.

Today we will be looking at the 4th Commandment

The 4th Commandment states: 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.*

In Exodus 31 we read that celebrating the Sabbath is to be a lasting covenant between The Lord and His people. (Exodus 31: 16)

We also read that death was the punishment for breaking The Sabbath.

“Whoever does any work on the Sabbath must be put to death.” (Exodus 31: 15)

From the beginning God commanded that one day out of seven be set apart as holy for rest and worship.

From the giving of The Law at Mt. Sinai until Jesus’ resurrection, the 7th day of the week was set aside for rest and worship.

However, since Jesus’ resurrection was on the first day of the week and Jesus appeared to His disciples on the first day of the week, the early church set aside Sunday as the day to rest and a time to come together to celebrate Jesus’ resurrection.

We see that in Acts 20:7 and 1st Corinthians 16:1-2.

Now some people will be very quick to say that Christians do not live under the Law.

Christians live under grace.

While that is absolutely true, please note in Exodus 31:17, God said the Sabbath is a perpetual covenant between Me and My people.

In 1st Corinthians 10:6 we read that the events of the Old Testament are recorded for us as examples so we will not sin as the children of Israel did.

In Matthew 5:17 Jesus said, ***“I have not come to abolish the Law but to fulfill the Law.”***

And in Matthew 12:8 Jesus said, ***“The Son of man is the Lord of the Sabbath”.***

This means Jesus is the originator of the Sabbath.

So if Jesus Christ is Lord of the Sabbath and if Jesus is our Lord then it means that Christians are to set aside one day each week for rest, worship, and fellowship with The Lord.

Today we need to be very careful so we do not fall into the same trap that the Scribes and Pharisees did.

The Scribes and Pharisees only looked at the letter of The Law.

They did not look at the spirit of the law.

They were so intent on rules and regulations that they missed the point of the Sabbath which was to be a time to enjoy fellowship with The Lord.

Jesus plainly said, ***“Man was not made for the Sabbath but the Sabbath made for man”*** (Mark 2:27).

God instituted the Sabbath to benefit man by giving him a day to rest from his labors and to be a time for spiritual blessing to all mankind.

The Pharisees turned the Sabbath into a burden and made man into a slave of rules and regulations.

You see we are to be subject to Jesus, not the day of the week.

We are to worship Jesus, we are not to worship the day.

Notice Exodus 20:10 states; ***“but the seventh day is a Sabbath to The Lord your God. So this day is to be set aside for The Lord.”***

The Sabbath is a day to be spent with The Lord.

It is to be a time to enjoy being with The Lord.

Just a rest from work and / or a time of inactivity on the Sabbath is a violation of the 4th Commandment.

God created time and God created us. From the very beginning God told man to set side one day a week as a day of rest and refreshment and a day to spend with Him.

In The 4th Commandment God declares that He is sovereign over time and we are accountable to The Lord for the way we use the time He gave us.

You see everybody observes the Sabbath.

The question is *“how do you observe the Sabbath?”*.

The Pharisees had devised numerous rules restricting what a person could or could not do on the Sabbath.

The Pharisees were infuriated when Jesus healed people on The Sabbath. (Mark 3:5; Luke 5:13, 13:13, & 14:4; John 5:9, 7:23, & 9:14)

In John 9: 16 we read that some of the Pharisees concluded that Jesus was not from God because Jesus did not keep their rules for keeping the Sabbath.

By healing on The Sabbath Jesus was teaching that works of healing and redeeming were appropriate Sabbath activities.

In Mark 2: 23 – 27 we read about Jesus' disciples picking some grain to eat on The Sabbath.

The Pharisees questioned Jesus why His disciples broke The Sabbath by working.

Jesus defended His disciples and David for eating the consecrated bread by saying; *“the Sabbath was made for man, not man for The Sabbath. So The Son of Man is Lord even of The Sabbath.”*

Jesus was teaching that works of necessity, such as eating, are appropriate for The Sabbath.

In Luke 13:15 Jesus said even under the Pharisee's strict laws they feed and water their animals on The Sabbath and in Luke 11:5 we see that the Pharisees allowed rescuing a child or animal from danger on The Sabbath.

Jesus was saying works of mercy are appropriate for The Sabbath.

So you see the question is not a matter of what can I do or not do on Sunday but rather is what I am doing honoring The Lord and bringing glory to Him.

The Sabbath is also a day for worship. Our Book of Order defines worship this way. *“Christian worship joyfully ascribes all praise, honor, glory, and power to the triune God. In worship the people of God acknowledge God's presence in the world and in their lives. As they respond to God's claim and redemptive action in Jesus Christ, believers are transformed and renewed. In worship the faithful offer themselves to God and are equipped for God's service in the world.”*

In worship we respond to God's love by offering ourselves to Him.

Luke 4:16 tells us that Jesus went to The Synagogue on the Sabbath as was His custom.

Gathering for worshipping God and studying God's Word on the Sabbath are not optional for God's people these activities are a necessity.

For the Christian, celebrating the Sabbath is not an obligation.

Celebrating the Sabbath is a great privilege.

We all need to ask ourselves *“am I misusing God's gift of the Sabbath?”*

The bottom line is *“Is Jesus truly the Lord of your Sabbath?”*

Hebrews 10: 25 warns us ***“not to give up meeting together, as some are in the habit of doing, but encouraging one another.”***

We have seen the Sabbath was to be a day of rest, a time of fellowship with The Lord, and a time to celebrate our new life in Christ.

Our bodies and our minds need rest and our souls also need refreshing.

Do any of you tell your boss, *“I would rather work than observe a paid holiday?”*

As Christians Jesus is our boss and Jesus has commanded us to set aside one day week to rest and as a time to be spent with Him.

The Lord has promised to bless richly us if we obey all of His commandments.

So the question is: Are we going to be obedient disciples or are we going to reject God’s gift to us?

In The New Testament God tells us that ***“the disobedient and the unbelieving will not enter into The Lord’s rest”***. (Hebrews 3 and 4; Revelation 14)

We also need to remember the physical in the Bible points to a spiritual truth.

So God’s rest is much more than rest from physical work.

God’s rest is also means rest from worry, rest from fear, rest from want, rest from searching for our creator, rest from working for our salvation, resting in God’s power and resting in God’s abilities.

God’s rest is knowing God is working for us and trusting that The Lord will take care of us both now and throughout eternity.

God’s rest is enjoying being in The Lord’s presence both now and throughout eternity.

Next we need to think about what are we celebrating on the Sabbath?

We are to celebrate our physical and our spiritual creation.

In 2nd Corinthians 5:17 we read, *“Therefore if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation.”*

We are to celebrate our salvation.

We are to celebrate our freedom from the power of sin and celebrate being spared from the penalty of spiritual death.

We are to celebrate God’s gift of The Holy Spirit.

We are to celebrate our inheritance in Christ’s eternal kingdom.

We are to celebrate all of God’s promises to His people.

We are to celebrate God’s gift of rest.

We are to celebrate by responding to everything that God has done for us.

And we do that by worshipping God.

Have you thought about the kind of witness you are to your neighbors by the way you celebrate the Sabbath?

You see the way we celebrate the Sabbath is very serious business.

In chapter 8 of the Westminster Confession we read, *“The Sabbath is then kept holy unto the Lord when men offer a due preparation of their hearts and ordering of their common affairs beforehand, do not only observe a holy rest all the day from their own works, words, and thoughts about their worldly employment and recreation, but also are taken up the whole time in public and private exercise of His worship, and in the duties of necessity and mercy.”*

This gives us a clear mandate for prior preparation before coming to worship.

Did you read the scripture lessons that are listed in the newsletter before you came this morning?

Did you pray for God to reveal Himself to you in a special way?

Did you pray for your pastors and those people leading worship?

Did you arrive early so you could have time to block out all distractions before the worship service started?

Did you come with excitement expectation, and knowing you would be with people who love you?

Did you come expecting The Lord to speak to your heart, to convict you, and to change you?

We learn several very important things about the Sabbath this morning:

- As God’s people we are not only commanded to observe the Sabbath we are to celebrate the Sabbath
- Observing and celebrating The Sabbath reaffirms our covenant with The Lord
- The Sabbath is to be set aside as a day of rest and as a day of worshipping God
- The way we observe the Sabbath is either a positive witness or a negative witness to the unsaved people around us.
- The children of Israel who desecrated the Sabbath were to be put to death and anyone who worked on the Sabbath was to be cut off from the community of believers.
- The way we observe of the Sabbath is very serious business.

AMEN

