

Lent 3
March 8, 2015

"Finding Sabbath Rest in Jesus"

EXODUS 20:8-11

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.

The other day I was returning from Atascadero. As I was starting to go toward the top of the Cuesta Grade, I noticed a spectacular rainbow off to my left and behind me. I wanted to exit the freeway to get a better view but by that time the rainbow was gone. God gives us rainbows and sunsets and flowers and birds singing in our backyards to brighten our day and to bring joy into our lives. Our loving heavenly Father wants us to take the time to stop and smell the roses he brings into our lives.

"Remember the Sabbath day to keep it holy." Think of the Sabbath Day as those moments in your life when the Lord says to you, "Stop what you are doing. Take some time to just look at all the blessings I have brought into your life, especially the blessings of peace and rest that you have in Jesus your Savior."

This past week I had the opportunity to talk to Luella Bestul a former member who is ninety six years old and living in Washington. As we closed our conversation, Luella said, "The more you know about Jesus, the more you want to know about him." That, I believe is the heart and core of what it means to keep the Sabbath day holy, finding our peace and rest in Jesus.

We need rest

God our heavenly Father knows how much we need rest. That is why he gave us the third commandment with the words, "Remember the Sabbath day to keep it holy." For God's Old Testament people that meant not working on the seventh day. "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, neither you, nor your son or daughter, nor your manservant or maid servant, nor your animals, nor the alien within your gates." God even told his people to let their land lie fallow without raising crops on it every seven years. "Dad, why are we not planting that portion of our land this year?" God wanted his people to think in terms of rest for the bodies, for their animals, for their fields and above all to find the ultimate rest that comes with remembering his many blessings to them.

The Hebrew word for "work" has the thought of labor or occupation. Jobs or occupations can be quite stressful and sometimes all consuming. After Adam fell into sin, the Lord told him that labor or work would have its difficult times as he earned his living by the sweat

of the brow and as thistles and thorns multiplied in the garden. Here is what Solomon said about work in Ecclesiastes, "So I hated life, because the work that is done under the sun was grievous to me. All of it is meaningless, a chasing after the wind." As you read through the book of Ecclesiastes you realize that Solomon is talking about work that is done without the Lord. Our God was so wise when he called for us to find rest time in the midst of our labors to focus on what an awesome God he truly is.

God's Old Testament people lost sight of this important Sabbath time when they went into the Promised Land that was flowing with milk and honey. As they prepared to enter the land the Lord warned them about forgetting about him. "When the Lord your God brings you into the land he swore to your fathers, to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, to give you- a land with large, flourishing cities you do not build, houses filled with all kinds of good things you did not provide, wells you did not dig, and vineyards and olive groves you did not plant-then when you eat and are satisfied, be careful that you do not forget the Lord your God, who brought you out of Egypt, out of the land of slavery."

How consumed they were by the new land the Lord had given to them! So consumed with their many blessings that they forgot the Lord. I believe one of the saddest verses in the Bible is found in Judges 2:10 which says, "After that whole generation had been gathered to their fathers, another generation grew up, who knew neither the Lord nor what he had done for Israel." In one generation they forgot the Lord and turned to the worship of false gods such as Baal. Where did the break down take place? The families lost touch with the Sabbath rest and the valuable time this rest provided to remind the new generation of the blessings the Lord had given to them and the blessings of a future Messiah who save them from their sins.

Our bodies need rest. We work hard during the day and then we sleep at night. That refreshes our minds and our bodies to begin the tasks of a new day. God wants us to find our Sabbath rest time. He wants us to have time to remember all the blessings he has given to us. We find this Sabbath rest time here in his Word. Here in his Word our God speaks to us tells us how much he has blessed us with everything we need for body and life, but especially the gift of his Son. "And when I think that God, his Son not sparing, Sent him to die, I scarce can take it in, That on the cross my burden gladly sharing, He bled and died to take away my sin. The sings my soul, my Savior God to thee, "How great thou art! How great thou art." The more you know about Jesus, the more you want to know.

We need God's rest

Now let's see how our ultimate Sabbath rest is found in God's rest. It says that God rested on the seventh day. "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."

God rested on the seventh day, not because he was tired and exhausted from all his work of creation, but because his work was completed and finished. The word for Sabbath has the thought of ending something. It is used in Psalm 46 to describe how the Lord causes wars to cease or end. The Lord our God did not have to add anything to his work because

it was done perfectly. The Lord looked at his work and saw that it was very good.

Does that mean Adam and Eve were not lower forms of life but fully functioning human beings similar to us today? Definitely! Does that mean the animals were fully developed and did not need to evolve? Definitely! So we sit in awe of God's creation, the amazing creation he completed in six days. Do you know that you have over 60,000 miles of blood vessels in your body? Do you know that your heart pumps about 2000 gallons of blood a day? Do you know you have 100 billion neurons or brain cells in your brain and each neuron forms 10,000 connections to other neurons? And you are capable of 1000 trillion synaptic connections? And so we sing "How Great Thou Art!" We find our rest in an awesome God who completed his work and rested on the seventh day. We join David in saying, "I praise you because I am fearfully and wonderfully."

Our children need to know what an awesome God we have. Dads and moms, grandmas and grandpas take advantage of the Sabbath rest times or special moments the Lord gives you to teach the next generation about the Lord. Let it not be said on our watch that a new generation grew up that did not know the Lord.

But now I would like to take you into the book of Hebrews to show you how our awesome God also rested when Jesus finished the work of saving us from our sin. Here is the verse from Hebrews 4: 9 "There remains, then, a Sabbath rest for the people of God; for anyone who enters God's rest also rests from his own work, just as God did from his." Hebrews chapter four speaks to us about finding our Sabbath rest. Our Sabbath rest is not found in keeping Sabbath laws as the Old Testament people did. Our Sabbath rest is found in God's rest. Our God rested when he completed the work of creation. He also rested when Jesus completed the work of salvation. When Jesus cried out from the cross, "It is finished" the perfect sacrifice that paid for our sin was done just as the work of creation was done.

Oh how we need to tell ourselves over and over again about this special rest we have in our Savior's completed work. My only hope of being saved and accepted by God is not the work I do but the work Christ has done for me. Jesus invites me to come to him for rest. He said, "Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest." We work at our jobs to do the best we can and we meet with frustration. We work at our relationships with people and find ourselves falling short, especially with the people we love. Ingrained in all of us from the fall into sin is the thinking that I need to improve my standing with God just as I improve my performance at work or my relationship with people. We become weary and burdened from always falling short. Jesus invites us to come to him to him for rest. He invites us to look at his completed work of paying for sin as he cries out from the cross, "It is finished." The more you know about Jesus and his completed work, the more you want to know. You cannot get enough of this special peace and rest that only Jesus can give.

The Lord let me see a rainbow in the sky. The Lord let me hear Luella say, "The more you know about Jesus, the more you want to know." Think of all the wonderful rest times the Lord is planning for you. Open your Bible. Read and meditate and ask the Lord for his blessing. This will bring you close to your Savior and his completed work. You will find a Sabbath rest and peace that this world cannot give. Amen.