

## **Introduction: The Discipline of Rest**

This week we launch into the first spiritual discipline. The first way that we are to train ourselves for godliness. The first step in toiling and striving toward greater depths of Christian maturity. And this first discipline is rest. The first way that we train for godliness is obeying the Biblical command to rest.

I know that last week there were many of you who came away thinking to yourself, “I am not sure how I am going to handle being told each Sunday one more task to add to my already over scheduled life.” Maybe you felt a bit overwhelmed by the thought of the disciplines. On the other hand, I know that there were some of you who were fired up. Ready to dive head on into the work of growing in your faith. “I am ready to read chapters and pray for hours and serve on every committee.”

Yet we come this morning to the word of God and see that from the very beginning the Lord has established a schedule for his people. A cycle of time based upon a one in seven pattern. Six days of work and one day of rest. And if we would grow in godliness, we must commit ourselves to the discipline of rest.

We live in world that expects work without end. And the advent of digital media and communication has given work and activity an unprecedented opportunity to invade every moment of our lives. We now work in bed, at the family dinner table, and in our cars. We work in the morning, at lunch, in the evening, and on weekends. You ask the average person how they are doing, often the reply is, “Busy.”

But the Lord has given to his people the gift of rest. He has created a gift of grace that one day in seven we would rest from our work and rest in his work. That we would put aside the tasks and thoughts and worries of the world and gather with God's people to find refreshment for our souls. If we would discipline ourselves toward greater depths of godliness we will have to make this dedication to sever the flow of constant work so that we might receive the blessing of Christ's work.

Today we come to the Gospel of Luke to see what it means to enter the rest of the sabbath. In verses 10-17 we read of how one woman faithfully put aside her work to be healed by the work of Christ.

### **Setting: Sabbath Rest Promised (10)**

What would happen if Jesus showed up for Church one Sunday? What might he do or say to us? What type of crowd might gather? And what might you sacrifice to make sure that you were there to see and to hear him? This is exactly what happens in our passage for this morning. Jesus shows up for Church. That is, he comes to a local synagogue and teaches us the true importance of the weekly day of rest. Look down at verse 10. It says,

*“Now he was teaching in one of the synagogues on the Sabbath.” (Luke 13:10 ESV)*

Now we are not told exactly what Jesus was teaching but the rest of the book of Luke gives us a clear picture of what his message would be. In Luke 4 Jesus says, *“I must preach the good news of*

*the kingdom of God... for I was sent for this purpose” (Luke 4:43 ESV).* Jesus has come to preach the gospel, the good news of the Kingdom.

Earlier in Luke Jesus is teaching in the synagogue on the sabbath and preached,

*“The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me to proclaim good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim liberty to the captives and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty those who are oppressed, to proclaim the year of the Lord’s favor.”  
(Luke 4:18–19 ESV)*

Jesus preaches the promise of a future sabbath rest. For the sabbath was a picture of liberty, healing, and forgiveness. It was a picture of a future existence in which our toil has ended. In which all sin is wiped away and all pain will be relieved.

Throughout the Bible the word sabbath means more than just the one day a week that we are to stop work and gather for worship. Rather it is a means of communicating the blessing of life in God’s presence. It speaks of creation paradise before Adam sinned. And it speaks of the coming Kingdom of God. Therefore the book of Hebrews says, “there remains a Sabbath rest for the people of God...”

What would happen if Jesus showed up to Church? He would preach the promise of a sabbath rest. Of a coming kingdom of liberty, healing, freedom, and forgiveness established through his work on the cross.

Why give yourself to the discipline of weekly sabbath rest? Because this is the place where we hear the message of Christ. This is the place where the Kingdom is promised. Where the Word of God is proclaimed. And if you desire to grow in your relationship with Christ then you must discipline yourself to weekly come and rest in this promise. For it is through hearing the promise of Christ's work that faith is birthed and strengthened. We discipline ourselves to be in church each week because each week our faith in Christ is strengthened as we hear his Word.

### **Crisis: Sabbath Rest Needed (11)**

Now as soon as this message of sabbath rest is promised it is tested. Look down and see what happens in verse 11. It says,

*“And behold, there was a woman who had had a disabling spirit for eighteen years. She was bent over and could not fully straighten herself.” (Luke 13:11 ESV)*

Jesus has just promised that he will bring rest and relief. Now stands before him a woman who needs the promise fulfilled; to be released from the brokenness of her body.

We need to hear the promise of rest each week, but we also must be reminded of our need for rest each week. We must discipline ourselves toward weekly worship because we so often forget our need of the work of Christ.

When we see this broken woman we might think, “Well she is the exception; an outlier. She really did need Jesus to heal her. But me I am fine. I don’t need rest. I don’t need help.”

Sleep deprivation is serious business. It impairs your ability to think clearly or even to move or speak. Your emotions become heightened and your reflexes weakened. Lack of sleep can lead to heart disease and effect your blood pressure. And the only thing that can help sleep deprivation is sleep.

Now many of us think the reason that we are not fulfilled and satisfied, the reason that we are struggling is because we aren’t working hard enough that we haven’t put enough effort into self-improvement. We are like the college student who stayed up all night studying but fails the test because he is falling asleep while he reads the questions

The truth is we are deprived of spiritual rest. We must stop and see that we need to recover. We need to heal. We need a sabbath rest.

Why weekly sabbath rest? Because we are in such desperate need of it. We have been bruised and broken by the fall. We are sheep who have wandered. We are children who have squandered the inheritance. And so, we need a weekly anchor; We need to be brought back to this place where we see our need for Christ. Where we can lay down our weary head.

**Rising Tension: Sabbath Rest Experienced (12-13)**

So, what will Jesus do? Can he make good on his promise? Can he bring rest to this woman toiling under brokenness and pain? Throughout the gospel of Luke Jesus has been strongly rebuked for his work on the Sabbath day. He had healed a man with a withered hand and for his troubles the Pharisees began to plot how they might have Jesus killed.

The Sabbath was a very important aspect to the Jews relationship with God. It was instituted on the seventh day of creation. God commanded that his people work six days and rest on the seventh. But once sin entered the world the Sabbath day became more than just a remembrance of God's good creation. It was now also a promise of the redemption that was to come. It was a promise that God would set his people free from the bondage of sin and give to them a new sabbath day. He would redeem them from the broken sabbath and give to them a redeemed sabbath rest. This is what the author of Hebrews means when he says, "There remains a Sabbath rest for the people of God." The sabbath that was, looked back on the paradise of creation. The sabbath that remains, looks forward to the paradise of redemption.

And the sabbath is not rightly understood or celebrated without this forward look to the redemption that is to come. It is just a dead memorial if it only remembers and never experiences the power of Redemption. So, what does Jesus do? He imparts the power of the coming sabbath rest. Look down at verses 12 and 13,

*"When Jesus saw her, he called her over and said to her, 'Woman, you are freed from your disability.' And he laid*

*his hands on her, and immediately she was made straight, and she glorified God.”(Luke 13:12–13 ESV)*

Some may think that Jesus was violating the sabbath and showing that it was no longer commanded by God by this and other healings. “The sabbath is Old Testament, but no longer commanded for us.” But that is not at all what Jesus is doing. The people of God are to continue to obey the command to remember the sabbath. Jesus did not abolish the sabbath. Rather he fulfilled the sabbath. We are to remember the sabbath, but we are to do it in the proper fashion. We are to look forward to the redemption won in Christ. To remember not just God’s creation but even more than that to receive the power of Christ’s redemptive power. Turning for our work to his work.

The Sabbath is a day for rest to be experienced by God’s people. And so, by the power of his word and the comfort of his touch Jesus brings rest to this woman’s life. He shows that his words are not empty, but they have power. And you who are burdened by the brokenness of this world; who toil under the weight of sin know that there is a day of rest for those who hear the word of Christ and believe. You may feel that it will never come. But this day, the sabbath day, is a promise; a foretaste of the rest that remains for God’s people.

Why come to weekly worship? Why discipline yourself to rest? To experience a foretaste of the rest that is coming. To touch heaven and feel its power even for one day in seven. To practice the blessing of the rest that remains.

**Resolution: Sabbath Rest Applied (14-16)**

But just as true sabbath rest is experienced it is quickly rebuked. The synagogue leader did not understand that the sabbath was not just meant for remembering what had been, but also for celebrating and tasting what is to come. Look down at verse 14. He says,

*“But the ruler of the synagogue, indignant because Jesus had healed on the Sabbath, said to the people, “There are six days in which work ought to be done. Come on those days and be healed, and not on the Sabbath day.” (Luke 13:14 ESV)*

I like the way that this man addressed the problem that he saw. A classic passive aggressive move. He is indignant with Jesus but instead of taking up his issue with him, what does he do? He turns on the people. And in doing so he reveals a profound misunderstanding of sabbath rest. He figures that people like this woman have been sick for several years why not just wait till an appropriate day to give her relief. But in saying this he is missing the point of the Sabbath.

It is like saying on the fourth of July, “There are 364 other days to set off fireworks and sing the national anthem, so please do it then.” What? You don’t ruin the fourth of July by singing the Star-Spangled Banner. Why? Because this day was designed to do just that. It is meant to celebrate our country and so we sing about our country’s independence.

This synagogue leader did not understand that it was not just okay to heal on the sabbath. It was the most appropriate thing in

the world for Jesus to do on the sabbath. For on the sabbath we rest in Christ's work

See how Jesus defends his actions and the people who receive healing in his name.

*“Then the Lord answered him, “You hypocrites! Does not each of you on the Sabbath untie his ox or his donkey from the manger and lead it away to water it? And ought not this woman, a daughter of Abraham whom Satan bound for eighteen years, be loosed from this bond on the Sabbath day?” (Luke 13:15–16 ESV)*

It is important to see that Luke uses the title *Lord* for Jesus. He was speaking as the Lord of the Sabbath. He is declaring his judgment on this conflict concerning the Sabbath. He begins by showing that the Pharisees were inconsistent in their application of sabbath rules. They would show mercy to their animals by giving them water. But they would object to the work of Satan being undone. Yet the sabbath is a day when the paradise of creation is restored and the work of Satan is destroyed.

And therefore, we see that to properly observe the sabbath day the message of redemption must be applied. We are to hear the promises of redemption in Christ. We are to hear of the promise of salvation to all who hope in the name of Jesus for the forgiveness of sins. But it is not just a day to hear about the promise of redemption it is also a day to receive the redemption promised. Today is the day to receive the healing that Jesus has won for his people. Today is the day to give your life over to him and trust that in his work. For he bore the sin of his people

on the cross and he won our salvation from death when he rose from the dead.

Therefore Christians now celebrate the sabbath on Sunday and not Saturday. From creation to the cross it was celebrated on the last day of the week, because God's people were looking back on the paradise that was. But once Christ rose from the dead on Sunday God's people began to worship him on the first day of the week, looking forward to the paradise that is to come. Tasting what our eternal sabbath will be like. The very good creation redeemed by our crucified and risen Lord.

What is a proper application of the sabbath? Some will get caught up in the particulars like these Pharisees. Yet it need not be that difficult. The Sabbath is a day when we cease our work in this world and enter the rest of Christ's work to experience the world to come.

### **Conclusion: Sabbath Rest Praised (17)**

And this is what we see in verse 17 a picture of the Sabbath to come. Look down at the verse,

*“As he said these things, all his adversaries were put to shame, and all the people rejoiced at all the glorious things that were done by him.” (Luke 13:17 ESV)*

First, those who oppose Christ will be put to shame. That means that they will be shown to be wrong. All those who stood against God and his people, all who would withhold the sabbath rest will submit to the Lord of the sabbath.

But all of God's people will rejoice in the redemption that Jesus has won. That is they were filled with joy at the work of Jesus.

And this is what our sabbath should be, a day when we rejoice in the redemption won by our Lord and savior Jesus Christ. A day when we sing praises to his name for the sabbath rest that he has won for us his people.

Why give yourself to the discipline of weekly sabbath rest? Because here is where you praise the Lord Jesus for his work of redemption. Where you join your voices with others to glorify God.

For this is what we will do when we enter the eternal sabbath rest which we practice each week. The book of Revelation tells us about that coming sabbath that,

*“No longer will there be anything accursed, but the throne of God and of the Lamb will be in it and his servants will worship him.” (Rev 22:3)*

We will sing,

*Worthy is the Lamb who was slain, to receive power and wealth and wisdom and might and honor and glory and blessing! (Revelation 5:12 ESV) Great and amazing are your deeds, O Lord God the Almighty! Just and true are your ways, O King of the nations! Who will not fear, O Lord, and glorify your name? For you alone are holy. All*

*nations will come and worship you, for your righteous acts have been revealed.” (Revelation 15:3–4 ESV)*

In a world that works twenty-four seven it may be the most important discipline we can practice. The discipline to lay down our burdens and hear the call of Christ Jesus,

*“Come to me, all who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.” (Matthew 11:28 ESV)*

Would you make this dedication to sever the flow of work; To guard the Lord’s Day as the day to receive the rest Christ offers.