

FIVE FORKS BRETHREN IN CHRIST CHURCH

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SERMON: *Sabbath*

SERIES: *Hurry Up*

SCRIPTURES: *Mark 2; Genesis 2:1-3, 15*

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**Credit to John Mark Comer (Ruthless Elimination of Hurry); Walter Brueggemann (Sabbath as Resistance); Bible Project; Rob Bell "Nooma Video"*

Well good morning. It so great to worship with you. Want to say welcome to all of you in this room and to so many gathered on-line, at home, tuning to the live stream.

A few weeks ago we started this series talking about a most significant threat to our spiritual lives...and it's not secularism or temptation or materialism or threats to religious freedom...according to Dallas Willard it's our hurried, overly-scheduled lifestyles (**SERIES GRAPHIC**).

Willard writes that **"Hurry is the great enemy of spirituality in our day. You must ruthlessly eliminate hurry from your life."**

And so we talked a little bit about **hurry sickness** in our world. How it shows up in our lives. We talked about how hurry is incompatible with love and therefore the Kingdom of Jesus. We also talked about an incredible invitation that Jesus offers us *"come to me all you who are weary and burdened and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you..."* Jesus offers us his life-style and as we take up his lifestyle we find rest, comfort, security.

And as part of taking up the life-style of Jesus we're looking at a few spiritual disciplines that we must become ruthlessly intentional about including in our own life-style.

Last week we said if we're going to pattern our lives after Jesus we must practice **solitude and silence**. Jesus was regularly "getting away" to the eremos for peace and quiet and to refocus.

This morning we want to talk about another key practice in taking up the lifestyle of Jesus. This morning we want to talk about Sabbath. What it is and how and why you need to put it into practice if you are going to eliminate hurry from your life.

The concept of Sabbath has taken a hard hit in modern society. Probably two ends of the spectrum. On one there are a lot of people who think about Sabbath as a bunch of do's and don'ts. **Legalistic**. Must go to church. Dress nicely. Must not mow your lawn. No grocery shopping. No going out to eat. And then on the other end of spectrum, Sabbath simply has become **just another day** in the week. Maybe go to church if it fits the schedule but Sunday is primarily about getting extra yard work done, or athletics or family gatherings. Again, none of those things wrong, just that they become the primary focus of Sabbath. And in the process...either end of the spectrum...we have missed out on actually practicing Sabbath as God intended. And so this morning we just want to talk about getting back to the true heart of Sabbath. Why we need it in our hurried lives.

And again as I warned you, it's not gonna be easy. We are talking about lifestyle change. Changing some of your patterns in life. And your mind, body, will, your normal schedule, your family...are likely going to rebel against it. And I suspect if you attempted last week with solitude and silence, you got a taste of what I'm talking about. But please stick with it.

Writer of Hebrews says (**Hebrews 4:1&11**)

Therefore, since the promise of entering his rest still stands, let us be careful that none of you be found to have fallen short of it...¹¹ Let us, therefore, make every effort to enter that rest,

Writer is saying...Sabbath is available to you...make every effort, be intentional, be ruthless about practicing it!

Alright, just as with solitude, you may be surprised to learn that there are multiple stories in the Gospels of...

I. Jesus and the Sabbath

Turn to Mark 2 for just a moment.

In this story, Jesus is walking through some grain fields with his disciples on the Sabbath. And while on this walk, the disciples get hungry. They start picking some grain to eat. The Pharisees catch them, **“Look your disciples are doing what is unlawful on the Sabbath.”** The issue here is not theft by the way...its work.

Remember Jewish law forbid working on the Sabbath. And there were great debates about what qualified as work. To eat the grain, you had to pluck the heads and then rub them together to remove the husk and separate out the grain. And harvesting grain was forbidden on the Sabbath. But minor food preparations were allowed. So where does this fit on the spectrum of work? Some said what Jesus disciples did was work. Other's said it's not. Some said, if you only use your fingertips to separate the out the grain, you're ok, but don't use your whole hand. They got legalistic about the Sabbath.

Jesus responds with this line:

“The Sabbath was made for man, not man for the Sabbath.”

In other words, **The Sabbath was designed by God as a gift to humanity...not humans created to see if they can follow Sabbath regulations.**

And so to get back to the primary purpose of the Sabbath we need to turn in our Bibles to very beginning and the creation of the world. Turn to Genesis 2...

Thus the heavens and the earth were completed in all their vast array.

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.

First, I want you to notice that the...

A. Sabbath is HOLY

³ Then God blessed the seventh day and made it holy,

The Hebrew word is **kadosh**. Say that with me...Kadosh...

Interestingly, in all of creation, the Sabbath day, is the only thing God deems as *kadosh*. The earth, space, land, stars, animals — even people — are not designated as *kadosh*. Only the Sabbath day is holy.

Now sometimes holy is a word that get's a bad rap. It seems like a prim and proper church word, "*probably not for ordinary people like me.*" You may think, priests and robes...you may think of things like "*holy water*" and "*be very careful that you don't desecrate it or mess something up.*" It's not something a lot of people today are really into. And it's true there is a sense in which holy means "sacred." And we want to be careful about being not being "flippant".

God, for example is called “HOLY HOLY HOLY”.

And the most important place in the Temple the dwelling place of God was called the Holy of Holies.

But in the original sense of the word, it simply means “**set apart**” from the normal or usual. Set aside for a specific purpose. In the Bible, all kinds of things can be holy.

Remember the story of Moses and the burning bush...God shows up and says to Moses, take off your shoes, you are standing on “holy ground.” Do you know where that holy piece of ground is, it wasn’t in the Temple...the desert! The middle of nowhere...this piece of lifeless, dry earth all of a sudden became Holy.

That Sabbath day, is a day set aside for a special purpose.

Think of it a little bit like your birthday. You are, as a person, inherently valuable important, every moment of every day. You are just as valuable today as you are on your birthday. But...we set aside one day every year to celebrate you...on your birthday. It’s like your personal Holy day.

Or take today as an example. It’s Valentine’s Day. It’s a day set aside to celebrate romantic love. It doesn’t mean that Jenny and I don’t love each other just as much every other day of the year but there is something “holy” about Valentine’s Day as a celebration of that love on this particular day.

In the case of Sabbath, God says there is a day each week that is to be set apart from the rest of the days. It’s not just another day of the week. It has its own unique and specific purpose.

One of my favorite heroes of the faith is a man by the name of **Eric Liddell (PIC OF LIDDELL)**. There's a movie about Liddell's life called "Chariots of Fire". Even if you've never seen the movie I'm sure you've heard the music...Da da na da da da. Da da na da da... Anyway, Liddell was a Scottish Olympic runner in the early 1900's. His specialty race was the 100M dash. But in the 1924 Olympics, the heats for the 100M dash, were being held on a Sunday. Liddell, believed that Sunday was a "Holy Day" and therefore personally convicted he should not run. No joke, Liddell gave up his opportunity to run for a gold medal, in his specialty event because the Sabbath was set apart.

What makes Liddell's story so incredible is that he decided to run in a different event. The 400M run. If you know anything about track-n-field. These two events are extremely different. No runner in history, for example has ever won the 100M dash as well as the 400M dash. It's never happened. In 1924 Liddell switched to the 400 at the last minute. He won the gold medal.

Now, I'm not saying you shouldn't run on Sunday. I run on Sunday. I play soccer on Sunday. And I'm not saying Sunday is THE Sabbath day. We don't want to become legalistic with our rules. Jesus spoke against that. But, there is a principle here...since the creation of the world, there should be a day set aside in your 7 day week, that is sacred, holy, set apart for a different purpose...if you don't you can be sure hurry sickness will consume your life.

So there is to be a day set aside in your week for a special purpose. What is that purpose? What makes that day unique, holy? Let me just offer two primary purposes of Sabbath.

B. Sabbath is a time for rest.

Genesis 2:2 - 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.

The word Sabbath comes from the Hebrew word **SHABBAT** here in Genesis 2 and literally means to stop working...resting from work. Like when you clock out, your shift has ended. You're done until you clock in again. One day set aside to not work.

And notice this is something God did. He took a Sabbath rest. The same concept is recalled in Exodus 31:12-17, where it says literally God "refreshed himself" on the 7th day. God did not show up to the office on day 7, to do one more thing. God is not a workaholic and the well-being of creation does not depend on endless work.

And you were made in His image. Created to follow His pattern. That every week, you need a time to stop showing up. To recover, to refresh.

Now this was a unique concept in the ancient world.

Think a little bit about Israel's history and their enslavement in Egypt, under Pharaoh. Pharaoh, was a hard-nosed production manager whose production schedule was inexhaustible.

Exodus 5:4 - Pharaoh said, "...why are you taking the people away from their labor? Get back to your work!"

Exodus 5:5 - ⁵ Then Pharaoh said, "Look, the people of the land are now numerous, and you are stopping them from working."

Exodus 5:6 - ⁶ That same day Pharaoh gave this order to the slave drivers and overseers in charge of the people: ⁷ "You are no longer to supply the people with straw for making bricks; let them go and gather their own straw. ⁸ But require them to make the same number of bricks as before; don't reduce the quota. They are lazy; that is why they are crying out

Exodus 5:9 - ⁹ Make the work harder for the people so that they keep working and pay no attention to lies.”

Exodus 5:13 - ¹³ The slave drivers kept pressing them, saying, “Complete the work required of you for each day, just as when you had straw.” ¹⁴ And Pharaoh’s slave drivers beat the Israelite overseers they had appointed, demanding, “Why haven’t you met your quota of bricks yesterday or today, as before?”

It is a system of efficiency and productivity. It is ruthless, grueling, and tiresome! And in such a system there is no time for Sabbath rest. No rest for Pharaoh, no rest for his taskmasters and especially no rest for the slaves....all are caught up in the grind of endless production. Humans are simply cogs in the wheels of production to be exploited for labor.

Not, unlike our own world of constant efficiency and productivity. Ours is a system of more, more, more. The more you are able to produce, the more valuable you are. You are rewarded with economic and financial benefits. But it is a relentless system.

“In one generation, Sunday evolved from a day of rest and worship to a day to buy more stuff we don’t need, run errands, eat out, or just get a jump-start on our work for the week ahead.” (34).

Think about how the concept of Black Friday shopping has evolved in the past few years. It used to be a one day blitz that started early on Friday and ended at the end of that day. But employers and businesses realized if they extended their deals beyond just that one day, they could be more productive. And so we just kept adding to Black Friday. Black Friday is now several days long.

For 400 years, Israel lived enslaved in the system of Pharaoh and Egypt...work, work, work...no stopping...thinking that’s the way life is. I wonder if we too are in a similar

situation. Have we wondered back into Egypt? Work, work, work for more, more, more...thinking this is the way life is.

It is into this kind of world that Yahweh, the God of Israel, erupts with a whole new life system that flies in the face of the grueling, cycle of endless production and slavery.

“I have heard the weary and burdened cries of my people.” (Their hurry sickness.)

He rescues them from Pharaoh, leads them out of Egypt into the barren desert and foot of Mount Sinai. Where he gives his people a new rule for life. The 10 Commandments. The 10 most important rules for his people to follow and do you know what one of God’s 10 most important rules is? Rule# 4...Don’t work too hard, for too long. One day every week, just stop and rest.

How often do you hear that in our world? Don’t work too hard for too long.

In fact, God takes more time to explain the Sabbath command at Sinai than any other command. He knows 400 years of Pharaohs lifestyle is going to be hard to change.

It’s shocking. It’s countercultural. It’s life-changing for a people who have spent 400 years without a Sabbath. God actually commands his followers as part of their holy, sacred law to Shabbat...to stop working.

“The Sabbath rest of God is the acknowledgement that God and God’s people in the world are not commodities to be dispatched for endless production...”

(Brueggemann pg.6)

Are you weary and burdened? Are you searching for rest in your soul, contentment, peace? You're locked in the system of hurry with no escape? Part of the answer you are looking for is the discipline of Sabbath.

The Sabbath day is intended as God's gift to you. A reminder that you are not just a cog in the wheel of production. Your value is not dependent upon what you can earn or accomplish.

Sabbath is the primary discipline by which we cultivate the spirit of restfulness in our lives as a whole. The Sabbath is to a spirit of restfulness what soccer practice is to a soccer game or band practice to a show. It is how we practice and prepare for lives of restfulness.

So part of Sabbath means to stop. A day to stop. Stop working. Stop wanting. Stop worrying. Just stop...and rest.

We're not gonna legalistic about it. What is rest vs. work? We may be convicted in different ways about that.

In fact, the word Shabbat actually carries the idea of not only resting but **“delighting in something”**. It's this dual idea of stopping, but also joying in God and our lives in this world. For some people mowing the lawn is restful and joying.

Alright, second primary purpose of Sabbath is...

C. Sabbath is time for God.

There is another Hebrew word for rest...**nuakh**. Nuakh means to dwell or to settle down. *“This type of rest is like sitting in front of a fire with a loved one or unpacking a suitcase at Grandma's house to stay for the holiday's.”* Not just to stop working but it's about **being restfully present**.

Nicholas Herman, Parisian Monk (better known as Brother Lawrence) called it **“practicing the presence of God.”**

Today we might use the phrase “spending quality time with someone you love.”

God institutes this naukh rest at about the same time he institutes Shabbat rest.

Genesis 2:15 - ¹⁵ The LORD God took the man and put him in the Garden of Eden...

He settled them down...rested them...in the Garden of Eden with His presence.

“It seems like the idea of Shabbat and nauakh are meant to work together. God leads by example as he rests from work and then dwells together with his people.” (BIBLE PROJECT)

Sunday is set aside as HOLY, because on Sunday we are to give quality time to God and His presence with us. And in giving your time to be present with God. He is able to re-center you. Fill you up. God is able to “wrap his arms around you” and grow in you a spirit of love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, gentleness, contentment, rest.

Too many of us missing out on Sabbath because, we do it out of habit or guilt or legalism. It’s mandatory. You want to stay on God’s good side. To keep the family happy. Your parents make you.

One author says for many of us Sabbath is not about intentional loving relationship with God instead it’s about **“making an appearance at the right place, at the right time, wearing the right clothes, so you can be seen by the right people.”**

Isaiah wrote (29:13)...**“These people come near to me with their mouth and honor me with their lips, but their hearts are far from me. Their worship of me is based on merely human rules they have been taught.**

You aren't going into the office on Sunday, but you aren't practicing nuakh rest in God's presence. But you see, Sabbath was never about an empty ritual, it was intended as intentional time in God's presence.

Think about it like this, today is Valentine's Day. Suppose I bring some flowers home to Jenny today after the service. And when I bring them into the house, she is like *“Oh thank you so much. These are beautiful.”* And suppose I say, *“Well, I'm supposed to right, it's Valentines day. That's what your supposed to do, your supposed to bring flowers home. And it was convenient anyway. I pass the flower shop on my way home. And they had a big sign out front that 'flowers on sale today.' So I didn't even have to spend much on them.”*

Now do you think Jenny want's those flowers anymore. No, of course not. Because it was never about the ritual. In the end it was always about our loving relationship.
(Rob Bell)

You can't do Sabbath simply as a ritual (that hour on a Sunday), but never practice being restfully present with God and expect to be changed person...expect to receive the life of Jesus. It's not about ritual and the rules we think we're supposed to follow, it's about the nuakh...being restfully present with God that changes us.

Now, just one important clarification on this...this is a nuanced conversation. I'm not saying, *“Sunday we are present with God. And then we can ignore Him the rest of the week.”*

Rather just the opposite...I'm saying if we set aside Sabbath intentionally and give our focused attention to God as a habit on this day, that helps us to remember His presence with us throughout the rest of the week.

Sabbath is practice for being fully aware of God's presence every moment of every day.

“People who keep the Sabbath, live all 7 days differently.” (Walter Brueggemann).

Has Sabbath become just another day for you...no longer set apart for a special purpose? Has it become a habit? Has it lost its sacred nature as time with the almighty creator? Maybe it's more about the songs we'll sing that morning and whether it's my style or not? Maybe it's about getting it done, so we can get on with the rest of the day?

Is it an intentional time of worship? Do you prepare for meeting with the almighty before you get here? Do you quiet your heart? Do you talk to Him about how he might show up? What you'll learn about Him today? How you'll get to just be with Him? Do you ask Him what he's trying to teach in your life?

Are you practicing the nuakh rest of God's presence every week?

Sabbath was intended as a gift to you, a day set apart for rest and intentional time in God's presence. If you don't practice this...hurry sickness will consume your life.

COMMUNION Transition...

(Ask worship team to come forward...) We are going to close our time today by sharing communion.

Did you know that **bread and Sabbath** have something in common? When God's people were delivered from the system of endless work in Egypt, they were taken into the desert...where there was no food.

They were completely reliant on God to provide. So God provided food...bread from heaven. Each day the people were to go out and gather that bread. They were to work, in order to eat...with one exception. The Sabbath. On the day before Sabbath, God provided two days' worth of food. So that on the Sabbath, no one had to work in order to eat. Even in the wilderness with scarce resources, God mandated a pause for Sabbath rest. And each Sabbath without any exertion what-so-ever, God's people received bread, to give them life, as a gift of God's grace. The bread eaten on the Sabbath was a symbolic reminder that true provision and sustenance come, not from doing more work, human productivity...but ultimately by God's grace.

Many years later God would send an even greater bread of life, Jesus.

In the breaking of this bread, we are invited to remember, Jesus, the bread of life that God provides as a gift on our behalf. As we receive Jesus, know, love and follow Jesus he gives us abundant life, true life. In the same way, that Israel freely received God's provision in the desert, we too can freely receive Jesus provision...without accomplishment, achievement or qualification.

In communion, we acknowledge our dependence upon God. Let's pray this prayer together:

"Most merciful God, we confess that we have sinned against you in thought, word, and deed, by what we have done, and by what we have left undone. We have not loved you with our whole heart; we have not loved our neighbors as ourselves. We are truly sorry and we humbly repent, for the sake of your Son Jesus Christ, have mercy on us and forgive us; that we may delight in your will, and walk in your ways, to the glory of your Name. Amen"