

SABBATH-KEEPING

Rest & Celebration for Modern Christians



I. Is There Rest for the Weary?

Genesis 2:1-3

“1Thus the heavens and the earth were finished, and all the host of them. 2And on the seventh day God finished his work that he had done, and he rested on the seventh day from all his work that he had done. 3 So God blessed the seventh day and made it holy, because on it God rested from all his work that he had done in creation.”

Engage: *Write down a few things that are taking up space in your life and leaving you restless.*

Matthew 11:28-29

“28Come to me, all who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. 29 Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls.”

“Last in creation, first in intention...the end of the creation of heaven and earth.”
-Abraham Joseph Heschel

Engage: *What was your experience with the Sabbath growing up? What did your family do on the weekend? How did your family celebrate birthdays, holidays, or vacations?*

II. Not a Regulation

Matthew 12:1-21

1 At that time Jesus went through the grainfields on the Sabbath. His disciples were hungry, and they began to pluck heads of grain and to eat. 2 But when the Pharisees saw it, they said to him, “Look, your disciples are doing what is not lawful to do on the Sabbath.” 3 He said to them, “Have you not read what David did when he was hungry, and those who were with him: 4 how he entered the house of God and ate the bread of the Presence, which it was not lawful for him to eat nor for those who were with him, but only for the priests? (1Sam 21:6) 5 Or have you not read in the Law how on the Sabbath the priests in the temple profane the Sabbath and are guiltless? (Number 28:9-10) 6 I tell you, something greater than the temple is here. 7 And if you had known what this means, ‘I desire mercy, and not sacrifice,’ (Hosea 6:6) you would not have condemned the guiltless. 8 For the Son of Man is lord of the Sabbath.” 9 He went on from there and entered their synagogue. 10 And a man was there with a withered hand. And they asked him, “Is it lawful to heal on the Sabbath?”—so that they might accuse him. 11 He said to them, “Which one of you who has a sheep, if it falls into a pit on the Sabbath, will not take hold of it and lift it out? 12 Of how much more value is a man than a sheep! So it is lawful to do good on the Sabbath.” 13 Then he said to the man, “Stretch out your hand.” And the man stretched it out, and it was restored, healthy like the other. 14 But the Pharisees went out and conspired against him, how to destroy him.

III. An Invitation into Celebration

Deuteronomy 12:7

“And there you shall eat before the LORD your God, and you shall rejoice, you and your households.”

Engage: *What has your experience of rejoicing been like at the Easter Vigil or some other worship service?*

- ✦ The Lord
- ✦ The Family of God
- ✦ A Feast
- ✦ Creation and re-creation

“To celebrate a festival means: to live out, for some special occasion and in an uncommon manner, the universal assent to the world as a whole.”

-Joseph Pieper

The Sabbath is about being with the Lord and celebrating the saving acts. Whatever leaves you feeling out of time and out of breath, the Lord has an invitation for you: enter my rest; meet with me; eat with me; celebrate with me. This is an invitation from the Lord to you and your family. He wants to have you over for dinner. He wants to party. And he calls this Sabbath-keeping.

IV. How Do We Keep the Sabbath?

How do we accept the Lord’s invitation to spend a day with him? What do we need to say “no” to so that we can say “yes” to God?

Exodus 20:8-11

8 “Remember the Sabbath day, to keep 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, you, or your son, or your daughter, your male servant, or your female servant, or your livestock, or the sojourner who is within your gates. 11 For in six days the LORD made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that is in them, and rested on the seventh day. Therefore the LORD blessed the Sabbath day and made it holy.

- ✦ Hallow
- ✦ Cease
- ✦ Celebrate

A Collect

O God, you wonderfully created and yet more wonderfully restored the dignity of human nature; grant that we may share the divine life of your Son Jesus Christ, who lives and reigns with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God now and for ever. Amen.