

Work with Vigor, but Learn to Rest

Work Matters

Exodus 20:8-11

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I appreciate so much the excellent teaching Josh has done on the topic of work over the past month. If you have been on vacation or have missed one or more of the four messages so far, I would strongly encourage you to go online and read or listen to each message. Work is a topic that touches every one of our lives every day. It impacts the vast majority of our waking hours. If we understand and follow God's perspective on work, our lives are immeasurably enhanced. If we do not, they are immeasurably impoverished, if not financially at least spiritually.

One of the most profound things Josh has shared came in the second sermon, when he talked about the dual tendencies toward either idolatry or idleness—overwork or underwork. Both are distortions of God's design. Some people turn their work into an idol through what we call workaholism. Their entire lives revolve around what they do, and their identity becomes centered in it. Workaholism is driven by many things—the pursuit of the American dream, materialism, financial security, or simply an attempt to bolster one's self-image, but make no mistake about it, it is idolatry.¹ Others follow a different distortion, however, by making an idol out of leisure, and they become slothful. They look for excuses to not work, or do just enough to keep their job and get a regular paycheck. Even the American dream of a long, leisurely and self-indulgent retirement can reflect this idolatry of idleness.

I want to address this morning the issue of how to find the right balance between work and rest. I personally love to work. I revel in the feeling of being totally exhausted from productive physical or mental labor. I got that from my grandfather and my mother, two individuals who were constantly energized by work. In fact, my mother's greatest frustration at age 96 is that she no longer has the physical ability to get things done, even though she really has nothing to do. However, I must admit that I'm not nearly as good at knowing how to rest and relax.

God makes it clear that we must do both. We must work with vigor *and* learn to rest. To violate the rhythm of work and rest—in either direction—leads to chaos in our lives and in our world.² God speaks to this issue most clearly in the Fourth of the Ten Commandments. Often called the Sabbath Commandment, it is well-known for the limits it places on work, but what is perhaps less known is the fact that before it tells us to rest it commands us to work.

My primary text this morning is Exodus 20:8-11. I invite you to open your Bible. It's on page 61 in the pew Bible, which, by the way, is our gift to you if you do not have a Bible at home.

Exodus 20:8-11³

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

¹ Nelson, Tom. *Work Matters: Connecting Sunday Worship to Monday Work*. Wheaton, Ill: Crossway, 2011, 43.

² Keller, Timothy J., and Katherine Leary Alsdorf. *Every Good Endeavor: Connecting Your Work to God's Work*. New York: Dutton, 2012, 243-244.

³ Scripture quotations are from The Holy Bible, English Standard Version® unless otherwise noted.

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.

I'm going to do something unusual this morning. I'm going to ask you to take the outline in your bulletin and go over it with me. There is a logic to this sermon that I don't want you to miss, and I think it will become more evident if I tell you where we're going before we go there.

I have two points in this sermon: Six days of work and one day of rest are the standard God has established, and both are optimal for physical, emotional, and spiritual health. We *must* work, we must work even in retirement, and we must work heartily. But we must also rest. God commanded Sabbath observance in the OT. While he does not require *Sabbath observance* in the NT, there is still a *sabbath principle* that we violate to our own detriment. So that's where we're going, and we're going to move rather quickly, so fasten your seatbelts. I will be sharing lots of information but hopefully some inspiration as well.

The first truth I wish to communicate is found in verse 9:

SIX DAYS OF WORK ARE REQUIRED AND ARE OPTIMAL FOR PHYSICAL, EMOTIONAL, AND SPIRITUAL HEALTH.

I've read at least a dozen books on the Ten Commandments plus countless sermons, but the ninth verse of Exodus 20 is almost universally ignored. The focus is almost always on the limitations to work required on the Sabbath. But before God gets to the issue of resting one day he first makes it clear that we are to work six days. Furthermore, while there is a lot of evidence that the Sabbath part of this Commandment was rescinded in the NT (which we will discuss a little later this morning), the requirement to work is never rescinded. In fact, a great deal is written in the epistles about the necessity of hard work.

***The rhythm of six days of work followed by one of rest
is a divine plan that cannot be improved upon.***

Many have tried. During the French Revolution an attempt was made to go on a ten day week—working nine and taking the tenth off. It was abandoned quickly when worker productivity fell off dramatically. In the first half of the 20th century the western world established a five-day work week, and more recently in some industries the four-day work week has become the standard. About ten days ago I heard Carlos Slim, the second richest man in the world, a billionaire 80 times over from Mexico, advocate a three-day work week—3 eleven-hour days. (I doubt if he became a billionaire by working three days a week!)

I don't know what the long-term effects of such a proposal would be on worker productivity, but I am fairly sure that the ultimate effect would not be positive if the resulting four-day weekend were consistently used entirely for leisure and pleasure. That's not how God made us. That is not what contributes to our fulfillment and happiness. We were made to work six days a week.

Now let me hasten to add that doesn't necessarily mean we have to work *at the same job* for six days. I did that for almost 40 years, and I am very grateful today to have a variety of jobs to fill my week. I

am a pastor, a farmer, a builder, and a grandpa, with the latter being my most gratifying job. If a person has a five-day-a-week job and the sixth day is filled with honey-do's, gardening, or volunteering service to others, that is perfectly consistent with the Fourth Commandment. What does not seem consistent is 4 or 5 days of work and then routinely spending 2 or 3 days golfing or fishing or chilling out. (The term "routinely" there is important because God has given us a lot of freedom! We don't need to be legalistic about this).

What about retirement, that holy grail many seem to be longing for? I want to suggest to you that

We are made to work even in "retirement."

I put "retirement" in quotes because the only mention of retirement in the Bible I can find concerns a certain category of clergy who were required to retire at age 50. Listen to Numbers 8:23-26: Retirement of the Levites "And the LORD spoke to Moses, saying, "This applies to the Levites: from twenty-five years old and upward they shall come to do duty in the service of the tent of meeting. And from the age of fifty years they shall withdraw from the duty of the service and serve no more. They minister to their brothers in the tent of meeting by keeping guard, but they shall do no service. Thus shall you do to the Levites in assigning their duties."

The Levites charged with the service of the tabernacle had a task that demanded the peak of their energy and ability. Only those at the height of their strength—between 25 and 50—could serve the Lord in this ministry. But even they were to do guard duty after retirement. To retire from one's job, even taking early retirement, can be a positive thing, but to retire from work can be fatal. Jerry Lott retired at age 52 but he's one of the hardest workers I know—not only working around his own farm and helping to care for his daughter who has suffered debilitating strokes, but also volunteering to help his neighbors, serve at the church, etc. Another friend who took early retirement has been using his gifts and talents for the past 20 years in a variety of ways. I've asked Jim Gustavson to come and share about how God has led him in retirement.

I'm Jim Gustavson, a retired CPA. Mike asked me to talk about how God had led me in my retirement. I'm happy to do so and hope that my story will be an encouragement to those who are considering retirement or have recently retired.

I don't like to use the word retirement as I don't believe it is Biblical as Mike mentioned in his message. However, I can live with the word after looking at a definition in the dictionary that says, "To withdraw from one's occupation." It doesn't mention anything about quitting work which seems consistent with the Bible passage Mike referenced.

Caveats

Although I don't like to admit it, we accountants are like attorneys in that we usually have some caveats to what we say. I offer the following caveats with regard to what I am going to say. One, My comments are based on my own personal experience and aren't to say this is the only way or the best way to approach retirement. Retirement experiences can depend on many circumstances; this just happens to be the way it worked for me. Two, I believe my story is one of many in this congregation. We have a very active group of retired people that are serving the church and other ministries and institutions in many ways, including our pastor who is preaching today.

When and why did I retire?

I retired in 1995 at the age of 58 after working 36 years in public accounting as a CPA. I worked for a large international firm which required that we retire by age 60 and offered full early retirement at age 58. I was tiring of increasing rules and regulations and thought my retirement would open up an opportunity for a promising younger CPA in our office who might not get that opportunity if I hung on longer.

My plans for retirement

Although Psalm 90:12 suggests that we should make the most of our remaining days since they are so few, I didn't have any specific plans for retirement, but I had two principals that I intended to follow. One, I would not stay in bed past 6 am. If I did so, I thought I would be tempted to sleep in later and later and I sure didn't think that was right. Two, I intended to listen to God and follow His leading, however that worked out. In that regard, I thought that I might be offered a position in the private sector or for a not-for-profit organization, but that didn't happen. God had a different plan for me and it started in 1995 before I had actually retired.

God's plan

I had never considered a short-term missions trip, but in the summer of 1995, Irv Penner presented us with an opportunity to do a short-term mission trip to Poland. That opened up a whole new world that encouraged us to make two other mission trips to the Czech Republic. What a blessing those trips have turned out to be.

Soon after retirement I became involved with a group of other retirees who met monthly for fellowship. You need that when you retire as your past relationship may soon dissipate. One day George Fooshee confronted our group with the idea that there was a need of biblical financial counseling in the community. We decided to take it on as a group and underwent some training to learn how to do personal financial training. We hung out our shingle, so to speak, in early 1996 and that led to many years of volunteer financial counseling some of which we are still doing although on a much more limited basis. We've gotten older. Several retirees in this congregation were involved in that ministry.

In connection with the financial counseling, Peter DeGraaf, Stu Feffell and I conducted annual training sessions for new financial counselors which developed over 100 additional counselors for the kingdom.

Somewhere along the way I was asked if I would consider being a Trustee. That wasn't on my radar, but I thought that was my knowledge and experience so it would be selfish not to use the experience God had given me for the service of the church. I can't remember how many years that lasted, but I must have done okay as I didn't get impeached.

Sometime later I was asked if I would consider being an Elder. I flinched on that one. Being an Elder was an awesome responsibility and I wasn't sure that I was really equipped to handle that. But, I prayed a lot and was encouraged by a book entitled, Spiritual Leadership by J Oswald Sanders. I concluded that God wouldn't have asked me to do that if He hadn't equipped me to do so. I served several years as an Elder, took last year off, and am back on the Elder Board this year.

This service to God though First Free has been and is a real blessing. I truly respect and love the people with whom I serve and admire their commitment.

One other major activity in which I have been involved in retirement in the Kansas Childrens' Service League, a state-wide organization that serves the needs of children. While I am no longer involved with that organization it did provide exposure to another area of life in which I had never been involved.

Conclusion

That is a brief look into the life of a CPA that has been put to pasture. It has been and still is exceedingly rewarding; much better than anything I could have imagined. But, isn't that the way that God works; His plans always are better than ours.

If you are thinking about retirement, I encourage you to read the book, Half Time by Bob Buford who is the founder of Leadership Network. I love his quote that says, "My passion is to multiply all that God has given me and in the process, give it back." That thought has guided me in my retirement.

I am convinced that God has prepared each of us for whatever He has planned for retirement. Just stay alert to the opportunities He presents and receive His blessing.

Thank you, Jim. As pastor to the senior adults here at First Free, I greatly honor the many retired folk who serve God and this church in phenomenal ways.

So far we have talked about the value of working six days and of working even in retirement. We are also to work hard or with vigor.

We work best when we work heartily.

I want to direct your attention to several NT passages that speak to this issue. While these passages don't quantify work in terms of six days a week (probably because it was just assumed), it is clear that they establish the principle of hard work. Let's start with Col. 3:23-24: "Whatever you do, work heartily, as for the Lord and not for men, knowing that from the Lord you will receive the inheritance as your reward. You are serving the Lord Christ." Josh has referred to this passage several times, so I just want to remind you of two truths. First, work should be done heartily. That means diligently. Don't be a slacker. Second, the motivation is not to be a people-pleaser but a God-pleaser. Some people work like fools when the boss is watching but slack off completely when he is gone. That is not an option for a believer.

We're building a house, and I have enjoyed immensely watching the various sub-contractors perform their specialties. A crew of three guys came in to mud and tape the sheetrock, and they were incredible. They literally ran from room to room, applying tape so fast I couldn't even get a decent video of it. And they did it well. One day their boss showed up on the job and I bragged to him about his workers. "These guys hardly ever take a break. They just work, work, work." He said, "You know why? I'm paying them by the job. When I give them an hourly job they don't get half that much done." That's fulfilling only half of Colossians 3:23-24.

Another passage about work that comes to mind is 2 Thessalonians 3:6-10.

2 Thessalonians 3:6-10

⁶ Now we command you, brothers, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that you keep away from any brother who is walking in idleness and not in accord with the tradition that you received from us. ⁷ For you yourselves know how you ought to imitate us, because we were not idle when we were with you, ⁸ nor did we eat anyone's bread without paying for it, but with toil and labor we worked night and day, that we might not be a burden to any of you. ⁹ It was not because we do not have that right, but to give you in ourselves an example to imitate. ¹⁰ For even when we were with you, we would give you this command: If anyone is not willing to work, let him not eat.

This is a touchy passage to address in our culture. When approximately 100 million Americans are receiving some form of public assistance, I would say it's safe to assume that something's gone wrong in respect to the biblical work ethic. At some level the spirit of this passage is being seriously violated.

Please note the Apostle says, "If anyone is *not willing* to work, let him not eat." Some are willing to work but can't, either temporarily or permanently, because of disability or illness or age or chronic unemployment, but if they are not even willing to work, they shouldn't eat. Apparently for Paul there is something worse than hunger and poverty—and that is a spirit of laziness or idleness. This entire passage clearly reinforces the Fourth Commandment, which starts with a command to work.

But if there are some who don't follow the biblical injunctions about work, there are also those who don't follow its advice about rest, and we now turn our attention to that part of the Commandment. We must take this part just as seriously as the other.

ONE DAY OF REST IS REQUIRED AND IS OPTIMAL FOR PHYSICAL, EMOTIONAL, AND SPIRITUAL HEALTH.

The obvious place to begin is with the fact that...

God commanded Sabbath observance in the Old Testament.

This is indisputable. We see it first in that...

Moses laid out clear and uncompromising restrictions and sanctions on Sabbath work. God told his people through Moses (Exodus 20, verse 8) that they were to remember the Sabbath day by keeping it holy. That means they were to set it apart from all other days. Then he defined exactly how they were to keep it holy—by refraining from any work. This applied to everyone--men and women, adults and children, servants and masters. It also applied to any of their animals and even to non-Jews in their midst.

The punishment for violation of the Sabbath is clearly stated in Exodus 31:14, where we read, "You shall keep the Sabbath, because it is holy for you. Everyone who profanes it shall be put to death. Whoever does any work on it, that soul shall be cut off from among his people."

As tough as the Mosaic restrictions were, the Scribes and Pharisees developed over 1,500 additional rules and regulations for the Sabbath. In effect...

The Scribes and Pharisees turned the blessing of the Sabbath into a burden. You've heard about some of their legalistic shenanigans that are well documented in Jewish history, but allow me to review just a few of them. One could lift a child on the Sabbath, but not if the child had a stone in his hand, for the stone was a burden even if the child was not. A doctor could take steps to keep a sick man from getting worse, but he could do nothing to make him better. One could not cook a dinner, use one's false teeth, or rescue a drowning man on the Sabbath.

What did Jesus think of this kind of legalism which surrounded the Sabbath in his day?

Jesus refocused attention on the purpose of the Sabbath. He taught that the Sabbath was a gift from God. He said that "The Sabbath was made for man, not man for the Sabbath" (Mark 2:27). Frequently he went out of his way to violate the Pharisaical rules and regulations about the Sabbath—in the process establishing two major exceptions to the Mosaic prohibition of work on the Sabbath. He taught that works of mercy and works of necessity can and ought to be done on the Sabbath. His point was that the letter of the Law must not be allowed to overshadow the spirit of the Law.

With that brief summary of Sabbath observance from Moses to Christ, allow me to move to the issue of Sabbath observance for today. What may surprise some of you is that I believe . . .

God does not require Sabbath observance in the New Testament.

The requirement is missing from the NT, even where it would be expected. There are many places where it would have been appropriate to mention the Sabbath Commandment if it were still in effect, but the NT writer never does. For example, in Acts 15, there was a major dispute as to how Jewish the early church should be. Did new Gentile converts have to be circumcised? Did they have to adopt Jewish laws and customs? The Jerusalem Council, with the approval of the Apostles, elders, and the whole church (sent an official letter to the new Gentile converts with the following message (Acts 15:28-29): "For it has seemed good to the Holy Spirit and to us to lay on you no greater burden than these requirements: that you abstain from what has been sacrificed to idols, and from blood, and from what has been strangled, and from sexual immorality. If you keep yourselves from these, you will do well."

These four things would cause unnecessary offense to their Jewish brothers and sisters, so they were forbidden. But this would have been the perfect place to mention abstaining from Sabbath violation, because that, too, offended the Jewish people a great deal, but the letter doesn't mention that. The fact is no verse in any New Testament epistle commands Sabbath-keeping, and Sabbath-breaking is never included in any list of sins in the epistles. That's impressive but it's still an argument from silence. What is even more impressive is that . . .

Sabbath observance is actually contradicted in the NT by both teaching and example.

Consider two specific passages. First, Romans 14:5, where Paul is dealing with debatable issues in the Christian life: "*One person esteems one day as better than another, while another esteems all days alike. Each one should be fully convinced in his own mind.*" Friends, it would have been impossible for any prophet or leader of Israel in the OT to say something like that. The Fourth Commandment does not have a phrase in it that says, "keep the Sabbath holy if and when you feel like it." Apparently with the death of Christ and the establishment of the NT church something changed in regard to the Sabbath part of the Fourth Commandment.

Another passage is Colossians 2:16-17: “Therefore let no one pass judgment on you in questions of food and drink, or with regard to a festival or a new moon or a Sabbath. These are a shadow of the things to come, but the substance belongs to Christ.” In the OT God *ordered* his people to judge one another in regard to Sabbath days, even to the extent of putting a person to death if he violated it; now they are no longer even *permitted* to judge one another regarding Sabbath observance.

But not only does the NT teach that observing the Sabbath for rest and worship is no longer required; it also demonstrates by example that the early Christians did not do so. The Sabbath is Saturday, of course, and the Apostles frequently went to the synagogue or temple on Saturday, because that’s where and when they would find large groups of Jewish people to evangelize. But when the church met for worship, it was on the Lord’s Day. Undoubtedly that was because Jesus rose from the dead on Sunday and they considered that a more appropriate day to worship.

One might conclude that the early Christians merely transferred the OT Sabbath requirements from the seventh day to the first day of the week. But not so.

Refraining from work on Sunday was treated by the early church and the Reformers as a matter of personal conscience, not obligation. Clearly the early believers did not refrain from work on Sunday because they didn’t have that option. Those who lived in Jewish communities undoubtedly rested on Saturday because that’s commerce shut down, but they worshiped on Sunday—generally in the evening, after work. And those who were from the slave class probably had no day off at all.

It wasn’t until A.D. 321 that Emperor Constantine passed the first law against work on Sunday, exempting only agricultural workers. And it wasn’t until the 13th century Thomas Aquinas made it a matter of church law: “The Sabbath is changed into the Lord’s Day.” At that time all work on Sunday came to be viewed as a breach of the Fourth Commandment.

While this was going on in the Catholic Church, however, the Reformers were unanimous that the Lord’s Day and the Sabbath were not the same, and they were equally unanimous that the 4th Commandment was, for the Christian, no longer in effect. In his Larger Catechism Luther insisted that people have a day of rest and refreshment, and a day when they could gather to hear God’s Word, and to praise and pray. But in principle it was of no importance to him what day that was. Calvin was equally clear.

With the advent of Puritanism in England and the adoption of the Westminster Confession, however, the 17th century Reformers reverted to a strict Sabbatarianism. It was not long before the church was drawing up additional prohibitions for Sunday as detailed as the Scribes and Pharisees ever did for Saturday. Blue laws were passed in many Christian countries to enforce the Christian Sabbath. Not only was work forbidden, but also virtually any kind of amusement, sports, dancing, or singing—essentially anything that anyone might possibly find enjoyable. Jonathan Edwards once resolved never to utter anything humorous on the Lord’s Day. (I don’t think Edwards was much of a comedian anyway, but he sure was a great theologian!) In the church I grew up in it was considered a violation to read the Sunday comics on Sunday.

I would suggest to you that this whole movement to see Sunday as the Christian counterpart to the OT Sabbath is wrong-headed. Allow me to quote some strong statements from William Barclay:

The Sabbath day and the Lord's Day are different days and commemorate different events. The Sabbath is the last day of the week and commemorates God's rest after the toil of the week of creation; the Lord's Day is the first day of the week and commemorates the Resurrection of our Lord. Here we must be very plain and very definite. For the Christian the Sabbath has ceased to exist...

...this fourth commandment is not binding on the Christian at all, for there is no evidence in Scripture that the rules and regulations which govern the Sabbath were ever transferred by divine authority to the Lord's Day. The Sabbath is not a Christian institution, the Lord's Day is.

Later he adds,

Every time we become involved in arguments about what may or may not be done on the Lord's Day we are, in fact, being Jewish instead of Christian.

I essentially agree with Barclay. But that raises an interesting question: Do we have the right to eliminate one of the Ten Commandments? Well, yes and no. Yes, we have the right to drop the Sabbath commandment, but no, we don't have the right to drop the sabbath concept altogether. Why not? Because . . .

***While the Sabbath command has been rescinded,
there is still a sabbath principle that we violate to our own detriment.***

Essentially what I am suggesting to you is that the Sabbath Commandment (capital S) is no longer in effect but the sabbath principle (small s) still is. After all,...

The sabbath principle predates the OT, going all the way back to creation. The sabbath principle is that God established a divine rhythm to life at Creation, namely six days of work and one day of rest. In fact, the sabbath principle was first observed by God himself. In Genesis 2 we read, "Thus the heavens and the earth were finished, and all the host of them. And 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. 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."

I confess I don't fully understand why God needed to rest, because he certainly wasn't tired. I guess he rested just because his work was done. He primarily set an example for us—because we needed rest, not because he needed it.

The values of sabbath observance are many and varied, among them rest, worship, joy, and service. The divine rhythm demands one day in seven for rest and recharging, and there is no known substitute. We are a harried society. We are going full speed, only we often don't know where. We are stressed out and uptight, often working not for the love of work but so we can afford to buy more things that end up stealing more of our time and causing even more stress.⁴

⁴ For some people rest almost has to be consciously scheduled or it won't happen. Even our leisure activities have a way of wearing us out. As much as we might enjoy a day at the stock car races or at a Shockers' game, do we really come home rested and refreshed, or are we even more worn out by the noise and the tension? We must not confuse play and projects with rest and reflection. We need to learn to enjoy silence, practice meditation, and center ourselves on the Lord. Set times of rest are necessary for that to happen.

Of course, rest does not necessarily mean inactivity. If you work at a computer all week, going out and chopping wood on Sunday afternoon might be the most restful thing you could do. Let each one interpret the word “rest” as his needs demand.

On Friday Judy Hollander forwarded to me a blog post entitled “Guarding Sabbath for our children,” by Jen Wilkin. I will include a link to the entire article,⁵ but I simply must read a paragraph or two of it for you.

My oldest son started high school this fall. At his orientation the counselors took a portion of the program to speak to parents about the greatest challenge they see students face in school. I expected to hear about poor study habits or substance abuse, but to my initial surprise, these were not at the top of the list. Apparently, the greatest challenge presenting itself in the office of the high school guidance counselor is a growing number of kids struggling with anxiety and depression. Can you guess why? A combination of over-scheduling and sleep deprivation, linked to two main contributors: electronics use and extracurricular activities. We were encouraged as parents to go home and talk to our teenagers about setting boundaries in both these areas.

Activities: So many to pursue, so little time. Don't be fooled: the proliferation of activity options for children is a reflection of our cultural affluence, not of a child's need to be well-rounded or socialized. Gobs of money are being made off of our misplaced desire to expose our kids to every possible talent path. How can we choose activities for our family in a way that doesn't compromise Sabbath principles?

Because the four Wilkin kids are extremely close in age, our schedule and our finances forced us to limit activities to “one or none” for each child. Not all families need to impose a limit this low, but it has taught us something our grandparents probably knew: children who participate in no organized activities at all still lead lives full of activity and joy. To many parents the idea of a child on no sports team, in no music lessons, at no club meetings is completely foreign and a little frightening: Won't they get bored? Won't they drive me crazy lurking around the house? Won't they miss out on an NFL career and blame me? Or, my personal favorite: Won't other parents think I'm a bad parent? I would answer all of these questions with “Maybe, but who cares?”

A second component of the sabbath principle is worship. The Sabbath was the day when the people of God in the OT gathered together to worship, as was the Lord's Day in the NT. Worship includes teaching, prayer, fellowship, praise, music, and gathering at the Lord's Table. We are not required to do these things on Sunday, but we must do them sometime. One of my neighbors started the Cowboy Church at The Prairie Rose. It meets on Monday night since a lot of people on the rodeo circuit are busy on Saturdays and Sundays. That's OK. The writer of Hebrews tells us, “Forsake not the assembling of yourselves together.” It does not say, “Forsake not the assembling of yourselves together *on Sunday*.”

Another issue that deserves to come to the fore in sabbath discussions is joy. God took great satisfaction in his Creative handiwork when he rested on the Sabbath, and we need to find time as well to sit back and enjoy both his creative handiwork and our own. How often do we take the

⁵ Wilkin, Jen, “Guarding Sabbath for Our Children.” Blog post, The Beginning of Wisdom, October 13, 2010. <http://jenwilkin.blogspot.com/2010/10/guarding-sabbath-for-our-children.html>

opportunity at the end of the week to look back and reflect with joy on the fact that we are able to work, that we have jobs, and that we are able to make a difference for eternity. This too is part of the sabbath principle.

And I must not close without mentioning service. One of the ways in which Jesus irritated the Pharisees the most was by healing on the Sabbath. He taught us here by example that one of the great purposes of the sabbath principle was for us to serve one another. We have largely become selfish with our sabbaths—our free time is for us and our families. I believe many of us might find our sabbath time much more productive, fulfilling, and even ultimately restful, if we spent a portion of it serving others. This might be through hospitality, teaching a children's class, mentoring a teenager, or visiting a retirement center. We need a culture of service in the Body of Christ. That is an appropriate way to live out the sabbath principle.

In conclusion, let me share with you about a sabbath rest that is infinitely more important than the one of which Moses spoke in Exodus 20. In the Book of Hebrews, the author speaks at length about the superiority of Jesus to Moses. After mentioning the seventh day that God established as holy in the OT, he tells us that God has now established another day as holy. Do you know what that day is? It's not Sunday. It is *Today*: "Today, if you hear his voice, do not harden your hearts... So then, there remains a Sabbath-rest for the people of God... Let us therefore strive to enter that rest." (Hebrews 4:7, 9, 11). We can rest, friends, because Jesus worked.⁶ His work for you is finished—on the Cross.

It is our privilege this morning to celebrate the finished work of Christ and to symbolically enjoy his rest by dining with him at the Lord's Table.

Benediction

Matthew 11:28-30

²⁸*Come 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.* ³⁰*For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light.*

⁶ Keller, 247.