

“Thank God for The Sabbath”

Deuteronomy 5:12-15 2 Corinthians 4:5-12 Mark 2:23-3:6

Deuteronomy 5: 12 – 15

¹²Observe the sabbath day and keep it holy, as the Lord your God commanded you. ¹³Six days you shall labor and do all your work. ¹⁴But the seventh day is a sabbath to the Lord your God; you shall not do any work—you, or your son or your daughter, or your male or female slave, or your ox or your donkey, or any of your livestock, or the resident alien in your towns, so that your male and female slave may rest as well as you. ¹⁵Remember that you were a slave in the land of Egypt, and the Lord your God brought you out from there with a mighty hand and an outstretched arm; therefore the Lord your God commanded you to keep the sabbath day. ¹

2 Corinthians 4:5-12

For we do not proclaim ourselves; we proclaim Jesus Christ as Lord and ourselves as your slaves for Jesus' sake. For it is the God who said, "Let light shine out of darkness," who has shone in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ. But we have this treasure in clay jars, so that it may be made clear that this extraordinary power belongs to God and does not come from us.

We are afflicted in every way, but not crushed; perplexed, but not driven to despair; persecuted, but not forsaken; struck down, but not destroyed; always carrying in the body the death of Jesus, so that the life of Jesus may also be made visible in our bodies. For while we live, we are always being given up to death for Jesus' sake, so that the life of Jesus may be made visible in our mortal flesh. So death is at work in us, but life in you.

Mark 2:23-3:6

One sabbath he was going through the grainfields; and as they made their way his disciples began to pluck heads of grain. The Pharisees said to him, "Look, why are they doing what is not lawful on the sabbath?" And he said to them, "Have you never read what David did when he and his companions were hungry and in need of food? He entered the house of God, when Abiathar was high priest, and ate the bread of the Presence, which it is not lawful for any but the priests to eat, and he gave some to his companions." Then he said to them, "The sabbath was made for humankind, and not humankind for the sabbath; so the Son of Man is lord even of the sabbath."

Again he entered the synagogue, and a man was there who had a withered hand. They watched him to see whether he would cure him on the sabbath, so that they might accuse him. And he said to the man who had the withered hand, "Come forward." Then he said to them, "Is it lawful to do good or to do harm on the sabbath, to save life or to kill?" But they were silent. He looked around at them with anger; he was grieved at their hardness of heart and said to the man, "Stretch out your hand." He stretched it out, and his hand was restored. The Pharisees went out and immediately conspired with the Herodians against him, how to destroy him.

When I was growing up the first order of business on Sunday's, after I found my shoes, which were supposed to be shined on Saturday night right after I read my Sunday School lesson for the next day, and when found way under the bed, shined my shoes and did my best to get the shoe polish off my hands, was for everyone get everyone ready to go to church. It was cereal on Sunday mornings which was tough because most of Sunday dinner was already underway. Then, make sure the oven is off, and everyone piled in the station wagon and off we went. If at Sunday school one of the other kids was to ask us if we wanted to go to a movie that afternoon -- or come and play ball -- or almost anything -- we knew not to even ask. You didn't do those things on Sundays. Chores that were necessary were done quickly and minimally.

Sundays were for worship, study, youth fellowship and family. Although most everything that was family had to do with church. Except for for the aforementioned Sunday dinner. It was a whole lot better than plucking grain in the field. Sunday lunch was the biggest and best meal of the week. There were usually extra people around the table and a definite air of celebration for a family that had just participated in the most important element of their week. We had worshiped together. Five kids on the pew, all shiny and polished in our Sunday best, with Mom, Dad or both in the choir. Sunday was a Holy day -- set aside and apart.

I didn't know it growing up, my Dad and Mom certainly did, but we were following an ancient biblical principle of taking a day, and setting it aside. We were practicing Sabbath. Some of you remember.

Sabbath literally means to cease, to stop; and Sunday was sabbath day -- day to cease the usual weekday activities for rest, church, family, and quiet play. On Sundays we mostly rested, just as God had rested after six days of hard work making the heavens and the earth and plants and animals and us. As for me, who wasn't all that fond of Saturday kind of work to do, I thanked God for the Sabbath!

In other words, sabbath is a day set aside to focus on the one who gives the Sabbath as a gift. It's not about me or you. Even though it is for me and you. Sabbath is indeed a time for rest, but it is for rest that renews us and our relationships as a human family, and with our God.

But in our culture you, too few, who gather here with wonderful consistency are the exception. Most families probably don't teach any more that Sunday is a special day. Sunday is a day to do anything but rest. How often are children in our culture taught that the place to be on Sunday morning is the church? And far more influencing that the explicit way we communicate about the day -- is the implicit. When as adults we decide to participate in Sunday School and worship not based on the fact that as Christians we are called to do so, or even if we want to be more legalistic

commanded to do so, but do so based on how we feel when we get up, or what the weather is like, or because we aren't too pleased with the preacher right now, or because we've had a squabble with someone in the church, or because our Sunday School teacher is boring (certainly NOT the case here at Highlands), or because they never sing any of the old songs anymore or because they talk too much about money, or because I just can't tolerate to be around so and so, or because its just too much trouble to get the family up and ready to go by 9 o'clock, or because it is a pretty day, or because it's a rainy day -- so let's skip today -- and next Sunday we have that thing -- and the Sunday after that.... XXXX

But Dave, you're beginning to sound a little like the Pharisees. OK. How about this, the best reason we should come to church to worship and study and fellowship has nothing to do with the fact that God who made us expects it of us -- commands it of us in the ten commandments no less-- the best reason to come is why the man with the withered hand was at the synagogue that day.

One fateful sabbath day, just like all the others, when he was just where he was supposed to be -- where se always was on the Sabbath -- there Jesus was -- the son of the living God -- and all his years of consistent worship, praise, and presence were crystallized into one moment -- one

instant in the presence of God in Christ and he is healed -- he is made whole and well.

Have you looked in the mirror lately? Have you noticed the slight forward roll of your shoulders -- the way they look as if there is invisible weight there -- the weight of your anxiety about your life, your health, your work, your retirement, your children, your children's children. Do you notice that when you hear the evening news there is a heaviness that clings to you -- a kind of despair? Do you feel the pressure of making your life work in the competitive world in which we live?

Have you looked at your kids lately? In our effort to make them happy and normal and whole have we piled so much on them that they are burdened and unhappy and even at tender young ages question things about life you can't even remember questioning?

Each week, in this very place we have opportunity to come and to meet here the one who gladly takes upon himself our burdens -- and who is even willing to take the heat for doing so on Sunday. Do you have a withered hand, a burdened heart, are you facing complications in life, has it been an awful hard week, or do you have joy to share? It's not a rare occurrence. Jesus is here every week. And like the man with the withered hand, one of these weeks, he'll say something just you need to hear. To make you whole again.

And look -- there's a table set for the family on this Sunday -- this Sabbath.