

Theme: True freedom embraces the rhythm of work and rest, for body and soul, that God built into creation.

I. Intro - COVID and the Rhythms of Life

- A. COVID disrupted so much of life - including rhythms
- B. Some had work; some worked from home and had too much! For everyone, the rhythm of life seemed lost!
- C. What is the human rhythm of life? Of work and rest?

II. Humanity: Created To Work

- A. Humans are workers like God

Then God said, “Let us make man **in our image, in our likeness**, and **let them rule** over the fish of the sea and the birds of the air, over the livestock, over all the earth, and over all the creatures that move along the ground.”

²⁷ So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them. ²⁸ God blessed them and said to them, “Be fruitful and increase in number; fill the earth and **subdue it. Rule over** the fish of the sea and the birds of the air and over every living creature that moves on the ground.” Genesis 1:26–28

- 1. Humans are created in the image of God
 - 2. Part of the image is the work of ruling creation
 - 3. This is reiterated in the command in v28
 - 4. As those created in the image of God, the Almighty Maker of all that exists, it is part of our very nature to work.
- B. Humans are given the task of work for God
The Lord God took the man and put him in the Garden of Eden to work it and take care of it. Genesis 2:15

- 1. Humans are placed in a garden home and given work to do - to cultivate and care for it
- 2. This is the beginning of fulfilling the command Genesis 1:28, to continue the process of bringing fruitful order out of unfruitful chaos.
- 3. This is all BEFORE the fall - showing that work is not a consequence of the fall, but is essential to the nature of creation and humanity.
- 4. See the discussion guide for a number of teachings that develop the idea of calling and work, and the meaning of ruling, subduing, and caring for creation.

- C. Humans are created in the image of the God Who works, and therefore it is inherent to our nature that we work like God and for God.

III. Humanity: Created To Rest

- A. God “rested” after creation and gives rest to us
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 And God blessed the seventh day and made it holy, because on it he rested from all the work of creating that he had done. Genesis 2:1–3
- 1. God finished the work of creation and “rests” or “stops” (Hebrew שבת - Shabbat)
- 2. The basic idea of the word is to cease
- 3. God says “Enough” and ceases working - rest
- 4. God does not need “rest” - but we do, and He sets the example for us and gives us time to rest

B. Humans are called to Sabbath - cease and rest

1. God builds the rhythm of work and rest into creation
 - a. The pattern of day and night - time for work and rest
 - b. The pattern of six days of labor & a day of Shabbat
Remember the Sabbath day by keeping 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, neither you, nor your son or daughter, nor your manservant or maidservant, nor your animals, nor the alien within your gates. ¹¹ For in six days the Lord made the heavens and the earth, the sea, and all that is in them, but he rested on the seventh day. Therefore the Lord blessed the Sabbath day and made it holy. Exodus 20:8–11
 1. Keep the Sabbath holy - God made it holy (Gen 2:3)
 2. Six days of work, then cease - just like God did
 3. Clearly referencing Genesis 1-2 as the example
 - c. Israel also had regular festivals as a time for rest
 - d. The cycle of Sabbath years and Jubilee - God's gift of rest to humanity and creation
2. Creation, including humanity, is created to be fruitful, to work and grow, but a necessary part of this is rest, a ceasing from labor to rejoice and be refreshed.
3. See the discussion guide for a number of teachings regarding the biblical concept of sabbath and rest.

IV. Applying the Word: Embracing A Rhythm of Work and Rest

A. True freedom includes meaningful work

1. Work is not part of the curse but is integral to human nature.
2. Certainly, the curse added drudgery and frustration to our labor, but labor itself is good and a necessary part of humanity and therefore freedom.
3. Note that 'meaningful work' is not just a paid job, but any labor through which we serve our neighbor.
4. The Scripture has much to say about laziness, and we must heed its warnings
As a door turns on its hinges, so a sluggard turns on his bed. ¹⁵ The sluggard buries his hand in the dish; he is too lazy to bring it back to his mouth. Proverbs 26:14–15
5. Believers need to understand that our work is part of our calling from God and a key way we serve God by serving others.
6. If you are interested in a deep dive look at God's callings in our lives, see the series "Called" (2012).

B. True freedom includes rest

1. God built rest into the very fabric of creation, and Himself "rested" as a model for us.
2. True rest is not laziness or sloth, but rather an essential part of our nature.
3. Human beings are not machines - we must rest or it will slowly destroy us.

C. True freedom includes rest for both body and soul

Six days you shall labor and do all your work, ¹⁴ but the seventh day is a Sabbath to the Lord your God. On it you shall not do any work, neither you, nor your son or daughter, nor your manservant or maidservant, nor your ox, your donkey or any of your animals, nor the alien within your gates, so that your manservant and maidservant may rest, as you do. ¹⁵ Remember that you were slaves in Egypt and that the Lord your God brought you out of there with a mighty hand and an outstretched arm. Therefore the Lord your God has commanded you to observe the Sabbath day.

Deuteronomy 5:13–15

1. Sabbath called for normal work to cease so that everyone - including even servants and animals - can rest their bodies.
2. Note: this is different than Aristotle who thought for one person to rest and fulfill their human nature required others to slave away incessantly.
3. Our bodies need rest and refreshment or they will begin to break down through sickness and injury.
4. But note that Sabbath was a time to remember that God is not only our Creator but also our Redeemer.
5. Simply ceasing bodily labor is not the rest for which we were designed. Because we are body and soul, we need rest for body and soul.

Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest. ²⁹ Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. Matthew 11:28–29

- a. Jesus calls out to us in our weariness and offers us real rest - especially for our souls

- b. Merely taking a day off from physical exertion but having our soul and mind cluttered with worry and clutter falls far short of the biblical call to Sabbath rest that is necessary for us.
- c. Fahrenheit 451 - a world of constant stimulation so no one had time to think - a great danger today!
- d. Those who can not quiet their soul can never experience the true rest that is necessary for human flourishing and freedom.
- e. For a Christian, this includes gathering with God's people to remember our redemption in Christ and be refreshed through corporate fellowship, teaching, singing, prayer, and the sacraments.

D. True rest is a sign of trust in God's provision for us

1. When we rest and cease our labors, both in body and soul, it is a sign that we trust that our ultimate provision is from God, not ourselves.
2. When we cease our labors and simply rest, we resist the urge to believe we must always do more. As God rested and rejoiced in the goodness of creation, we too cease our labors and simply rest and rejoice in God's goodness, and trust His provision will care for us apart from our labors.

E. True rest reminds us that our identity is found in Christ, not our labors

1. We are tempted to find our identity in our work rather than in being the image of God.
"I suspected busyness was an issue more when I became a pastor. It did not matter where or with whom the conversation was - congregants, colleagues, friends - everyone talked about being pressed for time. The common question "How are you?" was often answered with "Busy," usually said with a small sigh. Yet many of us were secretly pleased; busyness is a mark of status and importance." Arthur Boers, Living Into Focus

2. When we cease our labors and simply rest, we resist the urge to find our value in that status of what we do, and simply find it in being the image of God.

F. A plan for Sabbath rest in our lives

1. We need daily Sabbath (evening and morning cycle)

- a. Americans are bad about trying to have no rest for long periods, and then trying and make up for it.
- b. We do this with vacations and our thoughts on retirement
- c. We were created with an inherent need for daily rest
- d. It is essential that we do not let “life” crowd out sufficient daily rest for our bodies, including sleep.
- e. It is essential that we do not let “life” crowd out daily time with God in His Word, prayer, and worship.
- f. How can I build rest into my life each day this week?

2. We need weekly Sabbath (one day each week is Sabbath)

- a. Make a conscious decision to set aside Sunday as a day of NO work - our job or even menial chores - so that your body may be refreshed.
- b. Make gathering with God’s people a first-rank priority - so that your soul may be refreshed
- c. You may want to include a digital detox - stay off social media and anything else that clutters your soul or mind.
- d. Let Sunday be a day very different than every other day of the week, a time to let your body and soul rest, be refreshed, and reset for the new week.

- e. What do I need to do to make Sunday different and to make sure I use it for rest - body and soul?

3. Extended Sabbath seasons (festivals, Sabbath years)

- a. Consider a longer season of rest and refreshment
- b. This might include vacation, but it can also be simply cutting out activities to allow a period of rest, reflection, refreshment, and reset.
- c. What extended Sabbath time can I plan now so that I get extended rest for body and soul to get deep refreshment?

4. Embrace the “limit” of Sabbath - and enjoy freedom!

G. The Table of Freedom: Christ’s Work and Our Rest

1. Here we remember and receive the work of Christ
2. Were we receive rest for our souls
3. Here we are refreshed to labor and rest for God!

The Freedom of Work and Rest

Genesis 1:28; 2:1-3; 2:15

March 7, 2021

Communion

Psalm 90:17

Teaching keywords: Freedom; humanity; Lent; calling and work; Sabbath and rest

May the favor of the Lord our God rest upon us; may He establish the work of our hands for us — and grant us rest to rejoice and be refreshed. Psalm 90:17 (paraphrase)

Then God said, “Let us make man in our image, in our likeness, and let them rule over the fish of the sea and the birds of the air, over the livestock, over all the earth, and over all the creatures that move along the ground.” ²⁷ So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them. ²⁸ God blessed them and said to them, “Be fruitful and increase in number; fill the earth and subdue it. Rule over the fish of the sea and the birds of the air and over every living creature that moves on the ground.” Genesis 1:26–28

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