

Rediscovery in 2010 Part 9

It's spring break for our students. We've got part of the staff in Colorado skiing and no doubt students scattered everywhere for their break. It's good to take a break from all the pressure and stress and be able to get a little rest and relaxation isn't it? I think America should enact a worker's spring break. Everyone gets a weeks paid vacation to just rest and relax. I like that idea. You know, God had this idea for us all along. He intended for us to take a little break throughout the year and so he periodically scheduled feasts, celebrations when the people would stop their regular work and come together to worship and rest and eat and celebrate and acknowledge the blessings of God upon them and upon their land and the work of their hands.

He not only intended this in the regular feasts throughout the year, but he built this time of rest into their weekly schedule and he called it Sabbath. I thought about calling this message Rediscovering God's idea for Spring Break but it seemed a bit sacrilegious to me. His idea was so much better. This morning let's talk about

Rediscovering God's Sabbath Rest.

I am just going to assume that all of you own your very own copy of *Not Just Idle Words* and that you have read it and memorized the key passages in that book. But if that is not the case, then I would suggest that you find your copy or purchase a copy at the information desk this morning and read chapter 4, "It's About Time". It will give you an overview of what the Sabbath is all about in the Bible. Why God commanded us to keep the Sabbath and what that really means for the Christian today. It really will help you understand the concept of Sabbath. Just real quickly, Sabbath is a time set aside to affirm what is good and holy, a time when we discern between the holy and the profane in our world. In our Sabbath time we reflect on what God has done, remembering that he delivered us, saved us, blessed and prospered us. Sabbath is about affirming the holy usage of our time, that life is not all about work or play. Sabbath is about balance. It is not enough to take a day and then wear yourself out hurrying to play, it is about taking time to re-create, time for renewal, rest, relationships. Sabbath affirms God's plan for us, that he wants us to be healthy, whole, balanced in our life. That's what Sabbath is all about, but remember we are rediscovering God's Sabbath rest and I want us to see a couple of additional things about this Sabbath

concept for our lives.

To put it in its' simplest form: **God ordained rest for us**. The bible says we have been created in his image and the Genesis account tells us that after six days, God rested. The gospels show us numerous times when Jesus wisely escaped from the press of the crowds and the demands of ministry in order to rest. God has designed and created us in such a fashion that physically, mentally, emotionally, biologically, psychologically, spiritually, in every way you can think of, we require rest. We cannot adequately function without rest.

I spoke Tuesday night at Chicks and Chocolate and talked about the fact that God wants us to not be stressed but to rest in him. I told the ladies then they were getting a little sneak preview of today's message so here goes.

Turn with me to Isaiah 28. The prophet is issuing a warning to the people who have become so arrogant and prideful, who have rejected God and his word, who have insisted on doing things their way and not God's way. The Israelites were like many of us, thinking that if they didn't do it, it wouldn't get done. They didn't have time for obeying all of God's laws, no time for honoring a Sabbath. There was too much to be done and no time for rest. Look at this passage beginning in verse 10. **"For it is: Do and do, do and do, rule on rule, rule on rule; a little here, a little there. Very well then, with foreign lips and strange tongues God will speak to this people, to whom he said, 'This is the resting place, let the weary rest'; and, 'this is the place of repose' - but they would not listen. So then, the word of the Lord to them will become: Do and do, do and do, rule on rule, rule on rule; a little here, a little there – so that they will go and fall backward, be injured and snared and captured."**

Isaiah 28:10-13

Do and do, rule on rule, a little here, a little there. This is the sound of a busy life. Do and do, do and do. There is always something going on. We run from one meeting to the next, one activity to the next. I checked Tuesday I drove 140 miles just around Tulsa trying to get to everything on my agenda. Do and do. Rule on rule. Everything has an agenda, an order, a new regulation to be followed, a new policy manual to be studied. So many rules to keep and learn and obey. So many regulations to follow. Everyone and everything taking a little bit here, a little bit there

until there is only a little bit of us left and we want that for ourselves and there is nothing left for God.

And in the midst of that God says, “This is the resting place. I’ve created a place and an occasion for the weary to come to me and rest. I want you to discover the principle of a Sabbath. I want you to stop and rest and re-create. **God says, “I want you to rest and find Me and find yourself in Me once again.” Sabbath is a means to that end.** It is a means of quieting our heart and focusing upon the Lord, a means of experiencing his rest, his renewing, his refreshing, in his presence. God tells us “this is the place of repose.” It is a place where you can lie down safely and rest because you can trust God to care for you! (I don’t have time to preach the message I shared with the ladies Tuesday night, but read Psalms 3 and 4 about God giving you sleep while he protects you and keeps his shield about you.)

This is the Sabbath he has for us. Two chapters later Isaiah drives home the importance of this rest. **“In repentance and rest is your salvation, in quietness and trust is your strength, but you would have none of it. You said, ‘No, we will flee on horses. Therefore you will flee!’ Isaiah 30:15-16**

He offers us rest. Salvation is in obeying God. In resting and trusting in him and not in ourselves, trusting in his ways, his commands and not in our own strength or our own logic. But once again, the people said, “No we will trust in ourselves, we will do it our way. We will flee on horses. We will trust our own way, our own strength, our own ingenuity.” Their end was already determined: they would meet destruction when they trusted themselves.

God wants us to rest. He wants us to rediscover the blessings of his Sabbath rest. But it is so hard for so many of us. I have to confess to you, I am a Sabbath breaker. I don’t say that jokingly or lightly. You realize it is one of the ten commandments and yet I dare say most of us are Sabbath breakers. We don’t really honor the idea of Sabbath and truly resting and allowing God to restore our health and our life back to us each week. I don’t and I admit it is taking a rather unpleasant toll on my mind and body and spirit. I need a Sabbath. But I tell myself I can’t afford to stop and take the time to rest when I’ve got so much to do that has to get done and it’s really important stuff you know? Deadlines and sermons have to be written and that comes

every week, two or three times a week, and people are relying on me and...

I can't afford to take a Sabbath day off. Turn with me to Joshua 5 and let me show you something. When the kings heard what God had done in drying up the Jordan so the Israelites could cross over on dry ground, the bible says, "their hearts melted and they no longer had the courage to face the Israelites." Now was the time to attack right? Attack when you have the momentum, attack when you have the psychological edge, attack when you have the advantage. Everything was militarily right about heading straight to Jericho and taking that city right then, while the Amorites and Canaanites were all frightened. And look what the bible says in verse 2. **"At that time the Lord said to Joshua, "Make flint knives and circumcise the Israelites again. So Joshua made flint knives and circumcised the Israelites at Gibeath Haaraloth....And after the whole nation had been circumcised, they remained where they were in camp until they were healed." Joshua 5:2-3, 8.**

Are you out of your religious mind? Why would God do this? The writer tells us that a whole generation had died in the wilderness and these men who had been born in the wilderness had not been circumcised and God would not have them going off into battle without this covenant mark upon them. It was a mark of purity, submission, surrender, identification as one of God's chosen people. It was the final vestige of Egypt being purged from them as a people.

But can you imagine the fear in the walled city of Jericho as they are dreading the attack from these dreaded Israelites and then the spies' reports come in. "What are they up to?" "Well, you aren't going to believe what they are doing, in fact, I don't even know how to describe it, but I don't think they are going to be the trouble we thought they would be at first." The Israelites had to wait three weeks while the men healed. They couldn't attack their enemies and actually had placed themselves in the most vulnerable position possible to be attacked.

Everything said attack, but God deliberately put them in a situation where they had to rest. They had just come through 40 years of wilderness wandering. God knew they needed physical rest. He knew they needed emotional restoration. God knew they needed to rediscover their spiritual identity. **They needed to learn upon whose strength they could depend: theirs or God's!**

When he gave the 10 commandments and told them to keep the Sabbath day, in that particular command he said, **“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 5:15**

Part of the reason for the Sabbath was to remember that God delivered them from the slavery of Egypt, that he heard their cry when they were given no rest by the Egyptians. God wanted those Israelis to remember where they had come from before they began to take possession of the promised land because this generation only knew the wilderness, they didn't remember Egyptian slavery. You need to remember where he's brought you from in order to keep advancing forward in the kingdom. You need to remember only a regular basis what he's done for you. Recall it, recount the stories of God's faithfulness in your life so you can face the new day with confidence in the Lord. He's brought you from a mighty long way.

He wanted them to see where their strength came from so he took their strength away! He struck the men of Israel at their most vulnerable, at the essence of their virility and strength so they would learn to lean completely upon the Lord and his strength.

They rested and they learned and they remembered. And while they were there, they celebrated the Passover, and for the first time they ate some of the produce of the land which God had promised them, and they kept the Sabbath.

Everything said “Attack”, but God put them in a situation where they had to rest. He put them in a situation where they would remember how they got there, that God had delivered them and brought them there supernaturally and that's how he was going to enable them to possess the land as well. They thought they couldn't afford to stop and rest, but God knew they couldn't afford not to. They had to rest and remember in order to be able to trust and move ahead in his strength and not their own.

You think you can't afford to take time for Sabbath, to rest, to spend time with God? You can't afford not to. You'll approach the next week, the next battle thinking it's all up to you and you'll find yourself going backwards, falling, captured, defeated.

The victory is not in you pressing on in your strength, “In repentance and rest is

your salvation; in quietness and trust is your strength.” Isaiah 30:15 I wonder what you’ll learn and discover if you take time to rest and renew your trust in the Lord and in his strength?

“Well, I hear you, but I just don’t see the benefit for me.” His rest can make all the difference in your life. Turn with me to **Genesis 2:18-23**. Adam had a problem. The lord had said it was not good for him to be alone. He needed a helper. The narrative tells us that God told Adam to name all the living creatures and so God brought them to Adam and he named them (what do you think, Lion or Larry?) But notice the last of verse 20 - “But for Adam no suitable helper was found.” I can imagine Adam saying “Lord, this isn’t working. They’re all animals out there. What am I going to do?”

God had a solution for Adam, an answer to his searching, but first there was something he needed Adam to do. He needed him to lie down and sleep. He needed Adam to rest. It was while he was sleeping, in a deep sleep no less, that God took a rib from Adam and fashioned a woman and brought her to Adam and he said, “Wo-man, look at that!” And the rest is history.

You don’t see the benefit of a Sabbath rest, but if you could just shut your mind and body down, if you could just obey God and relax and rest and take time to let him bring the answer to you as you acknowledge his wisdom, his ways, his purpose, his plan, who knows what he might provide for you. Who knows what grand idea he might just pull out of you if you will only surrender yourself to him and rest in him.

That answer to your problem, that answer to the dilemma you are facing, it just might be in you, in your spirit, but it won’t show up because you are so stressed out about it. Rest in the Lord. Decide that you will make time for Sabbath rest and see what great idea God shows up with.

Where do we find the answer? “In repentance and rest is your salvation, in quietness and trust is your strength, but you would have none of it.” You’ll be surprised what God has for you when you decide to rest and trust in him and his plans.

One more look. This time in the New Testament. Turn to Mark 3:1-6. Jesus came into the synagogue on the Sabbath and found a man with a withered hand there. He did something similar with a woman who was crippled, bent over with her back for

18 years. Jesus asked those present, **“Which is lawful on the Sabbath: to do good or to do evil, to save life or to kill?” Mark 3:3.** You see, by the time Jesus was born, the teachers of the law had come up with 1,521 laws concerning the Sabbath. 1,521 things you could not do on the Sabbath, including light a fire or save a drowning man. But Jesus understood the reason for the Sabbath. At the heart of it, like everything else with God’s plan for us, it was about redemption and restoration. **The Sabbath was about restoring something that had been lost.** It is about restoring strength that has been expended throughout the week. It is about restoring the mental capacity that has been exhausted through all the effort of the week. It is about refilling the spiritual reservoir that has been drained throughout the week. Sabbath is about a restoration of what has been lost.

So Jesus’ miracle for the man with the withered hand was the perfect example of what Sabbath was all about. He asked the people in the synagogue what they thought Sabbath was about, but they couldn’t answer, they were afraid of the Pharisees. They didn’t understand. They thought the Sabbath was about not breaking rules. They didn’t realize it was about restoration. They thought it was about refraining from activity. In fact, it was about the cessation of all that was required of you during the week and the instruction to do that which gives life back to you. That which has been withered and worn out and emptied out and exhausted is to be healed and renewed and restored and refilled.

The crowd didn’t see it and the bible says Jesus looked at them in anger and disappointment, deeply distressed because the man-made rules were more important than the man those rules had been made for. Sabbath had been made to restore what had been lost and the people had distorted it to the point they wouldn’t even allow Jesus to heal on the Sabbath. But Jesus wasn’t here to obey the people but to obey the Father. He said to the man, **“Stretch out your hand.’ He stretched it out, and his hand was completely restored. Then the Pharisees went out and began to plot with the Herodians how they might kill Jesus.” Mark 3:5-6**

Let me ask you, Do you need a Sabbath? What is needed in order to bring back restoration into your life? That’s what you ought to be doing for Sabbath. What would restore you today? What is it that has withered in your life, in your spirit? What would it

take to heal that?

“In repentance and rest is your salvation, in quietness and trust is your strength.” Isaiah 30:15

It's time to enter into his rest. Thinking you can't afford to take the time to rest? Remember what Joshua and the children of Israel learned before marching on Jericho. Take time to rest and remember that the Lord is your strength and you can only march in his strength and not your own. His strength leads to victory.

Can't see the benefit of taking a day off for a Sabbath rest? Neither could Adam until God showed him Eve. It's worth it when you see the solution God has for you when you rest in him.

Thinking you can do without the rest? How withered can you stand for your mind and body and spirit to get before you choose to accept his offer of rest and redemption and restoration?

Stressed? Weary? Refusing to rest? Trying to do it all on your own, without God? It's time to give it up. “This is the resting place, let the weary rest; This is the place of repose.”

Come rest in him. He has sent for you. He has called for you. Come rest.

Who here today would say, “I am so tired and weary and I've been trying to do it all on my own. Today I realize my strength isn't enough. I realize my salvation comes when I choose to turn loose, to trust the Lord and to rest in him.. I can't keep this up and I want to just surrender it all to Jesus today. I am coming to rest in the Lord.”

Now this is just a starting place. You need to find that place of rest in him. Make time for a Sabbath rest, but understand that you are resting yourself, your worries and struggles and fears in the Lord today. This is a place of repose. In the Lord is your resting place. Acknowledge his offer of rest and come rest in him.