

Lord of the sabbath

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- [0 : 00] So one of the things that we're going to be talking about, particularly as you'll notice it's both passages, comes up with Sabbath. One of the things we're talking about is rest.
- Now, post-COVID, I think people woke up a bit to how busy they'd be. And there's been a big amount of post-COVID and during COVID.
- There's a whole load of secular books released about the need for rest or particularly how to de-stress. Now, the answers that the secular world comes up with, they're not to be completely dismissed.
- But I think if you look through them, there is an unhealthy focus about you finding the answer of what you need to de-stress within yourself.
- You know what you need. And you see phrases come up all the time, you do you. And that's the way that you'll actually find out what you need to rest and de-stress from all the busyness of life is you do you.
- [1 : 07] That being said, with all the efforts to rest and to de-stress, it does point to us, doesn't it, with the fact that the secular world knows this too.
- That we have a problem with unseeing the value of rest. I still think that in Western society we don't know how, we don't really know how to rest or really believe that we need to rest.
- I'd go as far to say that I still think that the lack of the ability to rest is one of the biggest strains on people's well-being. We need rest for our bodies.
- We need rest physically. We need rest emotionally. But importantly and probably most often forgotten, we need spiritual rest.
- We need that deep rest for our souls. I think there's a reason in our modern day that we do struggle with rest. Maybe more in some ways than other generations.
- [2 : 08] You know, technology is, the advances that we've seen over, even in just the last 20 years, were supposed to make us more productive so that we had more time to rest.
- But you know what happens. Having emails and the ability to type on your phone. All it has really meant is that you can just work anywhere, anytime. I've done it. I've done emails in the car whilst I'm waiting to pick Heidi up from school.
- But there's so many, that's one of the reasons technology is a factor. One of the other things is that this, I don't know if you, maybe this is how it is in where you work.
- It's that there's this unwritten rule to how people think about work. That the higher salary means more hours. So people at the very top of business get smashed because they're working 60, 70 hour weeks.
- But people at the bottom don't make enough money and so they have to take two jobs. Often when they should be resting. I think you get the picture of what I'm saying. That this issue is very pressing, it's very real.
- [3 : 15] And I think it affects all of us. And we need to know what rest is and how to rest physically, emotionally and spiritually. And I want to make the case, in looking at this passage, that spiritual rest is actually the most important thing.

Because if we can have spiritual rest, spiritual peace and contentment, that is the place where we get the freedom to actually rest emotionally and physically.

We know how to rest spiritually. It's actually the place where we feel confident in stopping physically and stopping emotionally. We need to rest. So that's what we're going to be thinking about.

What is rest? Where do we get it? What does it say about it? And we're going to be thinking through these questions by thinking in this context of Sabbath, which comes up in that passage.

Just a bit of background. I've done it every time. I'm not going to stop today. Reminding us the headline, the tagline, the statement from Mark's Gospel. Mark 1, verse 1. The beginning of the good news about Jesus, the Messiah, the Son of God.

[4 : 21] That's what Mark's all about. It's about understanding how this all fits into Jesus being the King and to being the Son of God. And we're in this section. There's five controversies.

We've looked at three. The three controversies were that Jesus forgives sin, that he eats with sinners, that his disciples don't fast.

And then we've got these final two. They sort of come together. He works on the Sabbath and he heals on the Sabbath. They both come together. And you think Sabbath must be a big deal.

Because out of the five, it takes up two in this section. Before we get into that, I just want to set out what the Sabbath is and why it matters.

What the Sabbath is and why it matters. The Sabbath was a big deal. In many ways, for Christians, it still is a big deal. About where you land on what the big deal is about the Sabbath.

[5 : 18] And you remember the whole idea of remembering the Sabbath. It goes all the way back to the Ten Commandments. Exodus 20, verse 8. Remember the Sabbath day by keeping it holy. Six days you shall labor and do all your work.

For the seventh day is a Sabbath to the Lord your God. On it you shall do no work. That's what we remember straight away when we think of Sabbath. But actually it goes further back than that.

Because when God created the whole cosmos, Genesis 2, we read, Then God blessed the seventh day and made it holy. Because on it he rested from all the work of creating that he'd done.

The word for rested, the word for rested there, Because he rested him for all the work he'd done, Is the same verb form of the word Sabbath.

He Sabbath. He rested. That's not to say, as you'll imagine, that he was tired and needed a break. He's totally knackered because he just worked like non-stop for six days.

[6 : 20] But what it really points to when it says that God's Sabbath, when he rested, It points to that he looked at everything that he'd created. We know this on the sixth day. He looked at all.

On all of the five days that went before it, At the end of every day he said it was good. On the sixth day he said it was very good. And it points to when he looks at what he's created, He's full of rest because he's full of contentment and satisfaction.

That is what rest is. It's the ability to be completely satisfied and content and at peace. Which means you can stop. And so the issue, the real issue at hand when we come to think about Sabbath, Is what it, given that it's in Genesis 2 and it's in Exodus 20, What does it actually mean to obey the commandment to remember the Sabbath?

Because surely, what it has to have, it has to have, Is some connection with God's week of creation. Because that's the very origin of Sabbath.

How we approach work, not just rest, but work as well, the six days, How we approach work and how we approach rest, Must take some inference from that. What's interesting to note about Sabbath being part of the creation week, Is that the establishment of the Sabbath predates the establishment of God's people Israel.

[7 : 48] The Hebrews, the Jews, the Israelites. It predates the Ten Commandments. Which means that as an ordinance, humans, people, all people, not just Israelite people, Are hardwired as image bearers to rest a normal life.

It's part of your creation. What that means then is, mankind is to remember the Sabbath, Not just as part of a law that was given, Not just part of the Ten Commandments, Because it's part of who we are.

It is set up in the order of creation for human flourishing, Because when we rest, in one sense, we're actually reflecting God.

Because He rested. We're imaging Him. The fact that He rested. If a person refuses to rest, They're actually refusing to do what they were created for.

Working and resting is actually what it means to be an image bearer, Because we're reflecting what God did when He created the Holy Spirit. And so when we're talking about Sabbath, When we're talking about resting, I think the question when we really drill it down, Is what does it mean to work?

[9 : 06] And what does it mean to rest? What does it mean to work for the Lord? And what does it mean to rest in Him? What does it mean for the pattern of our life to reflect that of our Creator? Rest or Sabbath was a provision by God to enable His people to flourish by resting.

There's no other religious system in the ancient areas that did this. Now, it's true that in ancient Egypt there would be festival days, And breaks in the calendar, But there was not a concept of a deity who would demand, Demand that His whole people stop from what they were doing for one day a week, Purely to gather together and worship Him, For their mutual flourishing and edification.

No concept of that kind of grace and provision. Every other God demanded, And still, in one sense, Every idol demands everything, In order to break you.

Wants you to do more work, So that you're totally broken. No other God but our God says, Stop and rest, Find satisfaction, And contentment.

It was and is an enforced act of grace, To enable work to cease, And to have a day to spend together, And to gather as His people, To worship Him. Sabbath was an act of grace by God, Given to His people so that they could rest, And be satisfied in their Creator.

[10 : 30] Remembering who He was, What He'd done for them, And in turn that they would reflect Him, Because He Himself rested, And was satisfied. Sabbathing, Resting, If you think about it, That no other society or culture, Did it at that time, Is a witness to the rest of the world, To a God who provides for His people, And enforces satisfaction and contentment, In what He has done.

It is a witness to the world. To a God who provides for His people, To a God who provides for His people, Now, What I've said is that, So, In essence what I'm saying is that, If we don't rest, We're not made to, We're not doing what we should.

You think that, That is true of things that, Of anything that we buy, Isn't it? You think, We just recently bought a, a shark hoover.

I don't know if you've seen them. They're quite a recent brand. We just bought a shark hoover and it's one of those that, it's not a traditional hoover but it's kind of on a long stick with the suction at the end.

Apparently I found out afterwards that shark hoovers differ quite a lot in quality depending on how much money you spend. We didn't buy the most expensive. So it jams all the time and it's brand new.

[11 : 52] And the problem with that is if you buy a Hoover and it stops picking stuff up, it's not really functioning as it should. The image of the Hoover when you're buying it is that this is what it's going to do. And it doesn't reflect what the advert says what it should be doing.

You see why this, that restlessness really, it is an epidemic. Because it's out of kilter with how we're supposed to be. We're made to rest to be satisfied to be content. We're made to Sabbath.

And when you do, you're reflecting on God's nature. If you fail to rest, if you avoid Sabbath, it's actually not to live out of the truth. It's to abstain from something that you've created for.

It's woven into the fabric of being, of your very being. And so the real question comes in, if that is what we're made to do, what does it mean? What does it mean to Sabbath and truly rest?

Well the first thing we can say, that we're going to say from looking at this passage is that the Pharisees in our reading, they get it wrong.

[12 : 59] They get it way wrong of what Sabbath is. That's what we're going to look at first when we dive into our passage now. Do we see how they get it so wrong? Because the reason they get it so wrong is because they turn what was supposed to be an act of mercy, a grace, a gift given by God, they turn this wonderful provision of resting, they turn it into a law, a punishable duty that has standards to it that must be strictly adept on.

It goes from a gracious gift to a strict law. You can see that from the off in both accounts. Slightly different motivations with the groups.

When Jesus doesn't do what the religious elite think is lawful on the Sabbath, in the first instance, if we look at chapter 2, verse 23, you see they pull him up for it. One Sabbath day, one Sabbath, Jesus was going through the cornfields, and as his disciples walked along, they began to pick some ears of corn.

The Pharisees said to him, look, why are they doing what is unlawful on the Sabbath? It matters to them. Now, in the second instance, there is deviousness about the Pharisees.

They are deliberately there to see or accuse Jesus. They want to trip him up. They are out to use this. This time, it is slightly worse, isn't it? They are out to use this gift, this grace, as a law against him.

[14 : 26] His own law. His own gift. They are out to use against him as a means of accusing him. You see that? Chapter 3, verse 1. So they watched him closely to see if he would heal him, to see if he would do good on the Sabbath.

The inference made in both instances is that pulling the corn was equated to working, and so was healing. Healing was equated to working. Work was not allowed to be done on the day of rest.

Did you notice how easily Jesus sets aside what the Pharisees thought the Sabbath was about? You notice that. They pick the corn they pick the corn and he heals the settler with the man's hand.

So easily, what they thought, he sets it aside. Which means, it either means one of two things. It either means that the Sabbath didn't matter and Jesus has just done a way of doing it.

Or that they've got it wrong. One or the other. It implies, doesn't it, from what the Pharisees are saying, that Sabbath is about doing the right thing.

[15 : 30] The religious duty. That's what it implies. That there's a strict way of following the Sabbath that has to be adhered to.

You see, they get it so wrong. You see what they've done. You see, they've turned a gift of grace into a burden. And Jesus calls them out. He calls them out, David, what does he say?

David, goes into the house of God, eats the consecrated bread, which is lawful only for the priests to live. And he's fine.

He doesn't die. And then he calls out the Pharisees, which is lawful on the Sabbath, to do good or to do evil, to save life or to kill. He's talking about healing this man.

And you know what they're supposed to say when he asks them that question, which is lawful on the Sabbath, to do good or to do evil, to save life or to kill? I mean, the answer is obvious to do good and to save life.

[16 : 32] It's obvious to us what the right answer is. You see, they can't answer him. They don't want to answer him. They don't want to say what they know is the right answer. They stay, it's it, but they remain silent.

It's that that gets Jesus so angry. The hardness of their hearts. They know the right answer, but they stay silent. Not one of them dares to speak out in front of everyone.

Not one of them will put their head above the parapet and risk losing face. You see his reaction, he's angry and he's grieved. And when he hears the man, Sam, their reaction confirms it.

They're not amazed like the crowds in the past, they want to destroy him. Their religiosity, their pride, their desire to be someone, to be known well in this religious establishment completely blinds them.

They turn love into a law. They turn provision into something oppressive. It's easy when we see the Pharisees here to think of terrible Pharisees.

[17 : 50] How could they see that? How could they do that? But the reality is we can sometimes do that too. We can take something good and that is designed to bless us and turn it into something that is a law and oppressive.

We can do that in our own hearts when we turn in on ourselves but we can also do it into other people and turn it into a work when we expect or make something into the way that something should be done.

We can turn it into a work just as the people do here with Sabbath. We can turn it into how often somebody should pray or how often somebody should turn up at an event.

when we turn something good that is designed to bless people into something oppressive. It doesn't work like that.

It doesn't work like that. So what does it mean to have true Sabbath rest? The critical answer the answer to the question lies in what Jesus said in the middle of the section at the end of chapter 2 just look at verse 27 and he said to them the Sabbath was made for man not man the Sabbath so the Son of Man is Lord even of the Sabbath.

[19 : 23] What he says right here is astounding. First of all he confirms what we said at the beginning that he confirms that the Sabbath is an act of grace from God.

You see that in verse 27 Sabbath was made for man it's there as something to bless you not the other hand. Man wasn't made that Sabbath is this thing that needs to be served itself.

And then in 28 he says something that really blows everything out of the water. So the Son of Man is Lord even of the Sabbath and it works like this. If he's the Son of Man which he is he's the one who has dominion and authority over all mankind.

Because that title as we remember we looked at a few weeks ago it's lifted from the book of Daniel chapter 7 I'll remind you that it's talking about the Son of Man that will come in the future and to him was given dominion glory and a kingdom that all peoples, nations and languages should serve him.

His dominion is an everlasting dominion which shall not pass away and his kingdom won which shall not be destroyed. You see what he's saying? He's saying Jesus he says I'm the Son of Man I'm the one who has authority over mankind and if I have the authority over mankind but Sabbath is there to serve man it means that I'm the Lord of Sabbath.

[20 : 46] Which means which means that he's the Lord of rest. He's the Lord of rest. What that's really saying is that Sabbath rest is meant to point to Jesus.

You don't actually go to a day in the week to find your true rest when you go to a person. The only place where you'll find that spiritual deep rest for your soul is Jesus Christ.

He's the Lord of rest and he's the one that you go to to find your rest in him. He's the Lord of the Sabbath the Lord of rest deep contentment and deep total satisfaction not just on the surface level but the kind of rest your soul needs you find in him.

And the reason that's so true and the reason we need to hear it is not just because of our misunderstanding of rest but it's also because of our misunderstanding of work. To understand rest you need to understand work.

And to understand work we must understand that there is a deeper problem behind our work. The problem lies, actually the deep spiritual problem lies in the work we do beneath our work.

[22 : 12] That we all do beneath the service, beneath our work. I want to explain what I mean. What I'm really talking about is not physical or emotional, toil, but the work that our souls do to seek for peace.

The work that is never complete, that's never finished, that chips away and demands our time and energy. The work our soul does beneath the work. It's the need we have, the way that we work all the time to prove ourselves, to prove, to be accepted by standards that we set where we do it again and again and again and again.

You see, there is a weariness and a restlessness that comes from work, that comes from our souls trying to feel accepted in life. But no matter how many holidays you take, it will never go away.

It is constant. We're trying to justify our position in society or in the circles that we mix in all the time to prove that we have value and that we have work.

And that work never disappears. You know that deep need to prove yourself, to prove that you're acceptable in the eyes of everyone else. When that deep joy killer comparison sets in, comparing yourself to others, you know even altering your behaviour in the right social setting to be accepted.

[23 : 39] We all do it. Or working hard in your job to feel a sense of achievement and that in society you're respected and find your value because of the status you've reached in life and the things you've amassed on the way.

And we know the effect of this deep work that's never finished. It breeds anxiety and disquietness. Because there's never enough proving of yourself where you're feeling satisfied.

who you are. It's just never enough. You're always laughing. There's always more. We're all trying to be somebody.

Our soul is constantly working to get accepted in the eyes of us. But Jesus is not there. He's the way with all of us.

He's the only one you can go to and find rest for your soul. The reason why? Because in the great exchange at Calvary, his finished, perfect, finished work he gives to you.

[24 : 46] His perfect finished work he gives to you. The reason you can have deep soul rest is because Jesus has done everything necessary for you to be accepted. It is based on his works, not your own.

You don't need to prove yourself to anyone because the only opinion that matters, the opinion of God Almighty, it is I love you, not because of how much you do, but because Jesus has already done it. Because on the cross he said it is finished.

All the work that you need to do to be accepted is done by me and I'm giving it to you. The work is finished and he sat down at the right hand of God with no more work for him.

You can rest because it's all done. It's all done. He's the deep place of rest for your soul which is why you can go to him, which is why he's the Lord himself. He's the Lord of rest.

Which is why if you find your deep and true peace and contentment and satisfaction and place of rest in him, it actually frees you to be able to rest physically and not emotionally because you know that you're accepted and stopped.

[25 : 55] because even if resting physically means that you don't succeed in the particular goals that you've set in your life, it doesn't matter because that doesn't determine whether you're accepted by the living God who loves you.

You can fail in life and it will never alter how much Jesus loves you. You can fail in the standards that you set yourself and it doesn't disqualify you from approaching the throne of grace.

It doesn't disqualify you from coming to him. There's nothing that you can do. There's nothing that you can fail in. There's no work that needs to be finished in order to gain more acceptance and love from Jesus because he's said it is finished.

I've done it all. And here is all my work given to you in my righteousness. He's the Lord of the Sabbath. And so when we come to think about the commandment, the commandment to remember the Sabbath takes on a new life as New Testament Christians.

Because yes, it is important that we rest through a day, that we come together like we are today and meet and spend time worshipping together, being encouraged by his word and spending time away from doing our six day a week job.

[27 : 19] It is important that we do that and that we understand that. But the real thing that we're reminded of is that we could come to church, we could come to church and be resting from our other day and still be working to try proving ourselves.

We could still be doing it in the things and the jobs and the activities and the serving that we do in church. We could be working. Jesus says, come to me. Lord Jesus Christ, we recognize in ourselves that we are so often that we forget that you have done everything.

You have done all the work. You have sat down in the right hand of God and all the work he's done. We are acceptable in your sight and we will always be acceptable in your sight because of your grace and mercy and peace.

So often we forget and we try to work our way into heaven. We think that if we pray more or we do the right things or that we gain a little, we have full acceptance, we gain just a little bit more, a little bit more reward and that you delight in us more.

You delight in us as your children. We're unconditionally. There's no conditions. Lord, it is truly amazing.

[29 : 05] And so knowing believing is that we can come to you and know that you're the place of ultimate spiritual rest, deep rest for our souls. And I pray that you would help us to just meditate and think on that this week.

That it would shape us and fashion us when we feel overwhelmed and that we need to prove ourselves at work or whatever we feel like proving ourselves is a thing. in our home and the way we parent or the way that we mix with different social settings and groups.

We try to act and put on a mask just to feel accepted. And we're not resting, we're working to be accepted. Lord, you're the Lord of rest and you praise your Father.

Help us to come to you. I ask for all this in the name of Christ. God olikastar Amaire disagreement to you. Amen.

Lord doctorate playing Jean-mu■.