

This is the 4th sermon in our series called *Good Work*

If you've missed any of the previous sermons

You can go back to our sermon archives

And hear about the gift of work, purpose of work, temptation of work

We've acknowledged that we need to talk about work

Because the majority of us spend the majority of our time

Somewhere other than this building

And God has something to say about the ways we occupy our time

We've been talking about how our desire and ability to work

Flows out of our identity as men/women made in God's image

We work b/c God worked; we create b/c God first created

And in our broken world, God invites us to partner with him

By using our work, our gifts, our skills, our passions to help others flourish

But we must be diligent not to put our identity in what we do

We find our identity in being children of God, people made in God's image

We should work FROM a firm identity, not FOR an identity

Work was meant to be a good thing—a gift

Throughout history, we've gotten glimpses of people recovering beauty of work

As people have designed magnificent works of art/architecture/technology

Think of the Mona Lisa or the works of Rembrandt

The Great Wall of China or the Temple in Jerusalem

The iPhone or the 3D printer

All of these remarkable pieces – and the people who designed them

Bear witness to the creative force of the God in whose image we're made

And while each of these works of art & technology are impressive

I think the crowning piece of American innovation and design tops them all:

[La-Z Boy recliner image]

The La-Z Boy

The team behind the La-Z Boy really knew who their target audience was

They knew that if they created a chair that was comfortable enough
And if they could situate it in front of a big enough screen
Boys and men would be stuck to it like flies on a glue trap

And here's how lazy the La-Z Boy is:

I can imagine the team was sitting around the conference room
Thinking of what to call this thing
And they'd just come back from a big lunch
And so they were all tired and lethargic
And one guy pipes up, "What if we called this thing the Lazy Boy?"
And another guy starts to sit up, lets out a big yawn and says
"Yeah, but do we have to spell out the whole word?"
How about we just use the L, A and the Z.

And that seemed like a good enough idea & then they all fell asleep in board room

For as work-obsessed as our culture can be
We are also fairly gifted at being lazy
Laziness is defined as an "unwillingness to work or to use energy"

I had buddies in college who would win gold medals in the Lazy Olympics
They could go for 10-12 hours straight of playing video games
Or binge-watching entire seasons of TV shows
I'd say goodbye to them in the morning
And come back in the late afternoon to find that they hadn't moved
It was like there was a carbon monoxide leak in the dorm; they were LAZY

But laziness is not the same thing as REST, which is our topic for today
Whereas laziness is a refusal to work or use energy
Rest is a deliberate break from work to refresh, reenergize, refocus
Whereas laziness is about detaching from the world around us
Rest is about helping us see the world around us in right perspective

In the same way that we've needed to develop a Xian imagination for work
We need to develop a Xian imagination for & practice of REST
To help us get there, we open to Deuteronomy 5

Deuteronomy 5:12-15

“Observe the Sabbath day by keeping it holy, as the Lord your God has commanded you. Six days you shall labor and do all your work, 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 male or female servant, nor your ox, your donkey or any of your animals, nor any foreigner residing in your towns, so that your male and female servants may rest, as you do. 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.

In this passage, Moses is reviewing for the people

The covenant that God had first made with them at Mt. Sinai

After he delivered them from Egypt with great displays of power

In this moment, the people are settled on the east side of the Jordan

Overlooking the land that God had promised Abraham, Isaac & Jacob

But before they can receive their inheritance

Moses wants the people to renew their commitment to God’s covenant

God initiated this covenant with the nation of Israel

And through Moses, delivered to them the 10 Commandments

Or if you’ve ever seen Mel Brooks’ “History of the World, Pt. 1”

The 15 Commandments, but Moses dropped one of the tablets on the way

These commandments were part of God’s covenant law

But notably, God’s covenant with the people began with these words:

“I am the Lord your God, who brought you out of Egypt, out of the land of slavery.” – Deuteronomy 5:6

Before a command is uttered

The people are reminded that they were saved by God’s grace

Before they could do anything to earn God’s favor or anything bad to lose it

God affirms that their rescue was a demonstration of his kindness

So we see, even here, in the passage about the 10 commandments

The heart of the Gospel

God’s kindness always precedes God’s commandments.

They were rescued from slavery in Egypt
Because of God's kindness
They got to trade in lives of slavery for lives of freedom [pause]

How awesome is it that one of the commands God gave these former slaves
Was to take a day off and rest every single week?

And this command to observe Sabbath really stands out as unique among the 10
No other commandment gets the kind of airtime that Sabbath gets
Don't murder, don't steal, don't commit adultery
All pretty straightforward

But here we have deliberate repetition:
Observe it, keep it holy
Do your work for 6 days, but take Sabbath on the 7th
This is God's command, do no work
It's like, "Yeah, yeah, yeah, we get the point."

But then God continues, expanding the scope
The command to *Sabbath*, to rest, to cease from labor
Applies not only heads of families, but to children, to all servants
To oxen, donkeys, all animals, to any foreigner living among the people
The Sabbath is to be a great equalizing day
When all of creation, under the care of the people of Israel
Are to enjoy a deliberate, God-commanded, day of rest from work
Every single week

And then God tells the reason WHY it's so crucial that they observe the day
Look at v. 15 and that key word: REMEMBER
"Remember that you were slaves in Egypt and the Lord rescued you..."

Call to mind when back in Egypt your identity was tied to what you could produce
You were a slave
You couldn't put in time-off requests
You couldn't walk off the job to go pursue your passions
Your entire worth/existence was bound to getting things done for the boss

I want you to remember what it USED TO BE like

And then I want you—and everything/everyone—under your care

To enjoy a day of rest

To affirm in your weekly rhythm of life

Your new identity as a person freed from slavery—a free man, a free woman

God commanded the people to observe the *Sabbath*

So that they would remember WHO they are and WHOSE they are

Sabbath reminded the people every week: “We are not slaves.”

Now, what’s fascinating is that if we go back to Exodus 20

Where God first gives the command of Sabbath on Mt. Sinai

The *reasoning* for the command is different

Whereas in Deuteronomy 5, Israel is commanded to observe Sabbath

Because God had rescued them from slavery

In Exodus 20, Scripture commands people to practice Sabbath:

“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 20:11

My friend Jason Jackson shared with me

That the picture of God resting on the 7th day in Genesis 1

Would have reminded people in the Ancient Near East

Of the idea of kings resting

Having vanquished all his enemies, establishing peace in his land

A king would sit down on his throne, confident that he is in charge of his domain

This is the picture we get in Genesis 1

That God created an orderly and beautiful world

And God rests b/c every square inch of what he made was subject to his rule

Sabbath is grounded in this picture of God resting, in control over what he’s made

And we take a day each week to rest, to stop working

To remember that God is in control and we are not God.

God institutes Sabbath to remind the people:

You are not slaves.

You are not God.

Why don't we rest? Why so good at being lazy but so bad at resting? (4 reasons)

1. We are addicted to being busy.

I believe we are addicted to being busy b/c we have given in
To the temptation of work (we put our identity in what we do)
And it doesn't matter whether we have important stuff to get done
We find ways to keep ourselves busy (checking email 24/7)
Because we struggle to anchor our identity in being son/daughter of God
We have to find ways to remind us that we matter
And I'll tell you, likes on Facebook/Instagram/twitter
Or that little red number popping up on your phone saying you've got email
Can really do the trick (I struggle with this)

Researchers have told us that there's a chemical reaction in our brain
When we get that alert
Something inside us says, "I matter!"

We don't rest because we are addicted to being busy.

We've CHOSEN to enslave ourselves to work, to social media, to *doing*.

2. We are terrified to be alone with our thoughts.

Blaise Pascal: "All of humanity's problems stem from a person's inability to sit quietly in a room alone."

Here's a challenge (for some, easy. For others, tortuous)

See how long you can go without looking at your phone.

How long do you think you'll last?

If that challenge terrifies you, pay attention.

We aren't as good at just being, at just thinking as we used to be

And without periods of DELIBERATE DISENGAGEMENT

We will never know what new insight/personal growth/creativity lies within

I paraphrase something I heard Sean Groombridge say:

“Where is the Bach, the Beethoven, the Chopin of the 21st century now?
More than likely, they’re staring at their phone.”

There are rich and true and beautiful things within us

That may never be discovered

Because we are terrified by the kind of mental space required

To uncover them

If you ARE afraid to be alone with your own thoughts

Let me tell you: It’s worth asking “Why?”

Because, while it’s scary, when we ask the “Why?” question

There lies on the other side of the question the opportunity for health

For more territory for God’s healing presence to open up to us

3. We have disorderly lives.

The Israelites were just as busy as we are now.

And they knew that they had to do twice the work on the 6th day

In preparation for the 7th

So, they ordered their entire week around preparation for rest

We couldn’t even think of taking a day of rest

Because we have so stuffed our lives to the brim with STUFF TO DO

And we think the whole world would fall to pieces if we pressed pause

If we organized our lives around God’s command to rest

Then wouldn’t our whole lives HAVE to undergo some straightening up?

We need to take a thick black Sharpie & put a big circle around what matters

And do some damage to some of the clutter that’s keeping us so frenzied

4. We don’t practice rest as a community.

A friend told me that she had resolved to take a day of rest

But the rest of the members of her family wouldn’t have it (stuff to do).

And so her desire was squashed.

It's really hard to take a day of rest

When everyone in your social circle is actively working against your goal
It's one thing to say, "My kid is not playing in soccer tournaments on Sundays"
But if every other parent says, "We're good with it."
You're kind of the weird parent (which is not the worst place to be)
Honestly, we SHOULD be weird in these senses.
Our kids will thank us for prioritizing family and rest
And for teaching them proper boundaries.

But what if your whole community, your whole social circle said:

"We are not going to subject our children or our families
To the rat race of busyness and we refuse to participate."
That would be a whole different ball game.

Which is why we must remember God gave this command to the COMMUNITY
He knew they couldn't pull it off on their own
It would take a group of people who were committed to the confession
We are not slaves and We are not God.
To get the family and the individual to enjoy God's gift of rest.

I want to make a final observation that's going to sound like
I'm talking out of both sides of my mouth

Prioritizing a weekly day of rest is so crucial

One, because our work is just so important.
Our mission, our calling to join God in restoring order/beauty of his world
Is just too important for us to be burnt out all the time

The second reason it's just so important that we prioritize rest
Is that we have to remember that we are not nearly as crucial
As we think we are.
If we left our jobs, we would be replaced.
We're not God; life goes on without us.
We need to rest to see ourselves in perspective.

So, how do you rest?

A good rule of thumb is to try to do the opp. of what you do during the week.

If you have a very cerebral job, engage your body (exercise, garden, outside)

If you are always on your feet, sit down (read, listen to music, nap)

If you're a boss, model rest for your team (don't send emails, don't call/text)

If you have kids, call a family meeting and brainstorm together how to do it

If you're single, pull in some friends & plan creative days of rest together

This is going to take some creativity, but it's worth it

A couple of restraints I would recommend for everyone:

Hide your phone. No social media. No texting. BE PRESENT.

Avoid the TV. For that matter, just avoid screens.

Remember that laziness does not equal rest.

What would it look like if the entire Asbury community

Modeled for one another a weekly rhythm of rest and recovery

How much healthier might we be?

How much more might we enjoy our work as the gift God made it to be?

How much more might we be energized to work with purpose?

How many of us might avoid temptation to put our identity in what we do?

And how much more attractive would it be to people outside the faith

If our entire Christian community learned what it meant

To loosen up, to breathe a little easier, to take ourselves a little less seriously

And to truly enjoy this magnificent world that God has created?

Jesus said, "Come to me, you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest."

Pray.