

Faith Walk! - Sermon Discussion

Date : 1 May 2022
Sermon Title : Don't Forget the Sabbath
Speaker : Rev Eddie Ho
Text : Exodus 20:8-11

INTRODUCTION

To many people, Sunday is just a day to rest, sleep in and for recreation. However, it is important to note that it was instituted by God as part of the 10 Commandments. Through Moses, God gave the Israelites moral and religious laws. What does it mean when Jesus said that He did not come to abolish the law but to fulfil it? For the religious laws, He fulfilled it by becoming the Passover Lamb. For the moral laws (10 Commandments), Jesus emphasized their importance and application in His Sermon on the Mount. Later, Apostle Paul also elaborated on Jesus' teachings in Romans 13:8-9.

We can easily see that murder, adultery, theft and greed are immoral because they hurt and violate other people. But why 'observing the Sabbath' is a moral issue since no one gets hurt or violated when it is broken?

Exodus 20:8-11:

- Remember the Sabbath day. (Exodus 20:8)
- Sabbath was the seventh day of the week. (Ex 20:10)
- To rest. (Exodus 20:9-11)

Essentially, Sabbath means "Don't forget to rest."

But there are 2 other things God is telling us in Exodus 20:8-11:

1. Holy – set apart to interrupt our obsession **In Hebrew, "Holy" means to "set apart"**

Of all the spectacular things God created when history began, God did not make a mountain or mankind holy. He only made 'time' (a day out of repeating seven) holy. Why?

- Everything that God created in Genesis 1 is confined by space and time. However, humanity often builds and measure success by things in space such as money and possessions at the expense of time.
- We forge our identity through space at the expense of time.

For we walk by faith, not by sight. 2 Corinthians 5:7

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- We are enslaved by consumption of things in space that often rob us of our time.
- But the truth is, our identity does not come from work. Life is a gift – not what we can do or produce.

Hence, when God created Sabbath, He is setting apart a time to insert into our space to break our obsession with achievement, work and productivity. The purpose of Sabbath is not simply for us to rest so that we can increase our productivity. It is for us to commit one day out of every repeating 7 days to cease our productivity and to realign our identity in God.

While God wants us to be good stewards and do our best in our work (Col 2:23), He does not want us to be mistaken that our identity is in our work.

This is why observing the Sabbath is a moral issue. Breaking it perpetuates a distorted and demeaned identity in the image of God. Jesus said Sabbath was made for man – to redeem our identity in God's image.

2. Sabat – to stop working and trust God

The Hebrew word for rest is 'Sabat' – it means 'cease' or 'stop' from doing.

- For 6 days, God displayed His power in Creation. On the seventh day, God ceased creating (*Sabat*), stood back and savoured the beauty and completeness of His creative work. God may have stopped creating the world but He is still working on sustaining the universe that He created. (John 5:17)
- God's care and provision for His people was demonstrated when the Israelites were wandering in the wilderness for 40 years. During the 40 years, manna would miraculously appear on the ground each day. The Israelites would collect just enough manna for the day. On the sixth day, God provided a double portion of manna so they would not need to collect food on the Sabbath but focus on their identity in God alone. All they needed to do was to trust that God would provide the right amount of manna for the day.

We can cease working because God is still working. Observing the Sabbath is to have faith in God and trust that He would provide for us each day. That is why breaking the Sabbath is a moral issue. Not only does it distort the image of God in us, it is also telling God that we do not trust Him. Observing the Sabbath is a big thing for the Jews and it should be for us too.

Sabbath is about the person Jesus Christ

While the Jews observe their Sabbath on Saturdays, Christians observe Sabbath on Sundays. Acts 20:7 and 1 Corinthians 16:2 suggest that the practice of gathering for

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corporate worship on the first day of the week might have started in the days of the apostles.

- Paul said that things on earth are a “shadow” of heavenly things but the substance belongs to Christ. This corresponds to what he said in Colossians 1:20, that all things are to reconcile us to God through Christ. (Col 2:16-17)

Hence, Sabbath is more than just about a day. It is about the person Jesus Christ – the Lord of the Sabbath. What matters is not the day of the week but the object of worship. The church has come to count the first day of the week as a Sabbath day because Jesus rose from the dead on that day.

Personal vs Corporate Worship on Sabbath

Personal worship is done daily by individuals in a private space but corporate worship is done in church as a community. Both are important and necessary because it pleases God to have all His people coming together to worship. We are not just one with Him, but one with one another as well. Sabbath is a day of “sacred assembly” (Lev 23:3) – coming together as the body of Christ for corporate worship.

Online vs In-Person Worship in Church on Sabbath

Attending online services should not be the norm but are for times and situations when we are not able to meet physically or for persons who are not well or homebound.

CONCLUSION

We are created creatures. God deliberately set aside a time in our space for holy conference, to remind us of our identity in Him. In short, Sabbath is a gift from God, not just simply for us to rest on our own but to rest in Him as a body of Christ. Sabbath is inserted into our space for our redemption so, let us not take it lightly but let us not forget the Sabbath.

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A. Review Sermon Application

Purpose: Reflect on how you have been embodying God's truth.

1. a. How successful have you been in fulfilling what you/your group had committed to do for the last FaithWalk? b. What were some challenges you faced and what would you like to celebrate?

2. Appoint someone to read Exodus 20:8-11 slowly.

Sabbath has been instituted by God as part of the moral laws for the community.

- (i) How has this sermon impacted your understanding of God's requirement for His people to keep the Sabbath holy?
- (ii) What evidence suggests that someone has set aside Sabbath, as a holy day for Jesus, the Lord of the Sabbath?

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B. Relate Sermon Content

Purpose: Relate with the Truth and Resolve for Transformation.

3. Sabbath is a 'time' inserted into our 'space' to break our obsession with achievement and work and realign our identity with God.
Consider the way you spend your Sabbath and answer the following questions:
 - (i) Have you been taking your Sabbath seriously?
 - (ii) How much of your Sabbath is spent for achievement and work in 'space'?
 - (iii) What concrete changes do you need to make in the way you spend your Sabbath to realign your identity with God?

- 4a. Sabbath is also for us to stop striving and to trust God to provide. What are some difficulties you face in trusting God to provide for you if you cease striving?

- 4b. The Israelites had to stop relying on themselves and trust that God would provide just enough manna at the right time during their 40 years of wandering in the desert. What is one thing you need to stop doing to show your trust in God's provision?

- 4c. How can your group members help or encourage you to achieve 4b above in the following week(s) till your next meeting?

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C. Testimonies and Prayer

Purpose: Give glory to God and seek Him.

5. Share your personal testimony of how God helped you realign your identity so that you define yourself not through your work or achievements but according to your identity in Him.

OR

Give thanks to God for the gift of Sabbath and the Holy Spirit's help to obey His command in setting Sabbath apart as holy unto Him. Give thanks also for the blessings you have experienced when you started keeping your Sabbath.

6. With a prayer partner, bring all that have been shared in 4a, b and c to God, asking Him to help you see His heart behind the command to keep the Sabbath holy.

Pray for your group and our church to take keeping the Sabbath holy seriously, obey God's pattern for holy living and make changes to old habits, lifestyles and culture which do not align to God's values.

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