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The Invisible Blessing

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Genesis 2:1 – 3; Mark 2:28

I'm not really into preaching do's and don'ts. I'm assuming you're doing the best you can. I'm doing the best I can. But there's something missing. Today we're looking at "the invisible blessing" God has given us that almost all of us ignore, and thus miss out on: The Sabbath. Not only that, but we go against God's will in *so* many ways when we fail to observe the Sabbath that we make a wreck of our lives without even knowing it. And it's sin. And it may just be the invisible reason you're miserable or struggling right now. Sabbath is throughout Scripture. It's huge.

Look at Genesis 2:1 *"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 (set apart for God), because on it he rested from all the work of creating that he had done."*

Look at #4 of the Big 10 (Commandments) in Exodus 20:8 *"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."*

Listen to Jesus: *"...the Son of Man is Lord even of the Sabbath."* Mark 2:28.

And if Jesus' words aren't enough, ☺ listen to what our 7th—10th grade kids wrote to their parents on the Confirmation Final. Seeing through a kid's eyes can be a powerful blessing. Sometimes blessings are hard to hear, sometimes challenging. The question was "If I could give my parents any advice about God or church, it would be..."

- Mom & Dad, God can work miracles through anyone.
- We should follow what God says and don't do what he doesn't want us to.
- It would be that we should go more often and go to Vertical Reality (the middle school youth group).
- Get involved with Sunday school, youth group, etc. It's so fun.
- To always go to church because it's a lot of fun.
- That God will always forgive you.
- Keep me going to church and make sure I'm not late so often.
- Let go and chill! Sometimes you have to almost stop caring about something in order for God to be able to work.
- Go to it. (Church, that is). ☺
- That God is more important than sports.
- Always look to God for help and he will always be there to help you.
- To pray before every meal.
- Keep coming throughout your whole life – God loves you.
- To read the Bible in a year.

- To love Him.
- To follow him all the time.
- Never doubt.
- To encourage other family members to attend.
- That we need to go more.
- Start coming every week & listening. It makes the week that much better.
- To never go astray from God. Always stand by Him.
- Never give up!
- Keep coming to church & getting involved.
- That serving God and praying may seem like small things but it will really help you grow closer to God.
- Church is important and you should go if you can.
- To go to church more often, and be more involved.
- That he loves you no matter what you do.
- That he is your friend, and he will never not be your friend.
- Mom and Dad to share their thoughts about him.
- He is always with us.
- My mom and dad know more than I do.
- Have fun learning about God. Learn to put Him first in your life.
- Always have faith in God.
- Always go. Church is a great thing to go to.
- Nothing. Do you know my parents?
- Give me more advice.
- To keep on doing what they're doing!
- God will always forgive you, even if you are the worst person on earth, but you have to ask him.
- To go every Sunday.
- That God doesn't care what people wear to church.
- Go often. You never know what you will learn.

Out of anything they could pick to write on, 19/41, nearly 50% of the kids said “go.” Our youth are calling us to the Sabbath without even knowing they are. There’s something healthy, something curious, something deep about it. Maybe it’s a perspective thing. But how cool that God says “Thou shall take a day off.” Chill out, celebrate, worship, and *fellowship!* (Fellowship is very important. Take time. No one should go home alone. You want to be a first century church? Practice the blessing of hospitality! Just open your homes. No special cleaning required. Have somebody over. It’s a part of the Sabbath that most blessed the early believers.)

Sabbath keeps you from having a McLife. McDonalds is a great symbol for our time, for good and bad reasons, having to do with the frenzied pace in which we live. But our #1 problem is “I don’t have time.” I can’t drop anything because it’s all important. But you end up with a McLife.

WHY DO WE STRUGGLE SO MUCH? The first reason came late in the process of preparing this message. We struggle so much because duh, we don’t really keep the Sabbath. ☺ We struggle because we’re running on empty with no hope of refueling. If we did, we’d eliminate this one big way that we defy God, and it would help us line up so much more with the blessings God has for us. But there are a few other big problems:

One of the **BIGGEST** problems: **We don’t have time!** We see the Sabbath as a day God has taken from us instead of a gift that God has given to us for rest, worship, and celebration, family, & friends. In our infinite wisdom, we think the modern world is too complex to set apart a whole day for rest and worship. We think there is too much we need to do and too much we want to do to give up one day in 7 for God. We think God doesn’t understand the 24/7 world we live in today. But listen, it wasn’t easier when God gave it to the nation of Israel. They were a nomadic people scrounging for food. A day off meant your family might not eat. (Let’s see: no food vs. emails piling up...)

Here’s another BIG problem: We believe we can do things just fine, thank you very much, outside of God. On our own. We think we can just fit God in, the way we do dance practice and dental appointments. We forget we’re dealing with the revealed will of the God of the Universe. Who is **SOVEREIGN OVER TIME**. (God *made* time, God made our jobs, and our opportunities, and our advancement, and our freedom. It ALL comes from God.

TIME doesn’t exist independently. Natural scientists can explain the origins of the seasons (duh), and months (based on the cycles of the moon), and days (based on the sun going up and down). But *they have no good explanation* for the origin of the week, unless you count the Bible’s Word, that God ordained it. TIME is part of the creation. We can’t mess with it. We can extend our *working* day with electric lights, but we can’t extend the day itself. Because all time belongs to God.

Another problem is we think the **Sabbath is this Old Testament idea**. For those of us who grew *up* in the church, this is tricky. We learned many stories of Jesus. He seemed to *attack* the Sabbath. He healed a lot of people on the Sabbath. He even gathered food. The religious freaks came after Him. But Jesus was attacking the legalism of it. Religious leaders turned it into a crazy list of do’s and don’ts, and people weren’t resting at all. They were just like us, side-tracked and trapped by our own thinking. Jesus came along and actually freed the Sabbath to be a blessing once more, not bondage. Jesus showed by healing many people on the Sabbath that you and I should do things that refresh, heal, and restore people too.

The question isn’t whether we observe the Sabbath. Of course we plow right through it. And that invisible blessing stays invisible. We *all* fill Sabbath with something. The question is with *what*. How *do* we observe it? Have you ever taken a weekly 24 hour reminder of your dependence on God? You have to make the decision beforehand. You have to say “no” to stuff. The truth is, you and I already have been saying “no” to stuff. When it comes to balance, when it comes to fitting everything in, you’re going to cheat. The question is, will you cheat your family? Your faith? Your spirit? Or your work? Most of us, cheat everything but our work (men especially). Jesus says no. Give your best to the things that matter the most. God seems to say keeping weekly Sabbath will give you *more* to give in every area of your life, including your work.

Here's the Challenge: Would you try it for a month? Find a 24 hour period each week that's easiest for you, when you say "I'm not going to do that." You just say "It'll have to wait." And just try it for a month. Is revenue important? Yes it's important. Is dependence on God important? Yes it's important. And one of them has to take precedence over the other. God says "*Keep the Sabbath holy.*" Remember: everything you have, I gave to you. Take a whole day, once a week, for *that* perspective. To apply it, you're going to have to be creative. You're going to have to trust God with that really practical part of life. In this moment God is asking us, "Will you trust me even with this? I'm behind all that you have and all that you are." Will you pick a month? Talk it over with your spouse, or an accountability partner. And see how God blesses you. You gotta love a God that says "take a day off." Let me be clear: God says to work for 6 days. Then take a whole day to remember. To rest. To worship. To celebrate.

That leaves only one more issue: "...*the Son of Man is Lord even of the Sabbath.*" If you're honest, your real issue with the Sabbath, like mine, like the Pharisees, is *not* over the activities you do. **Your real issue today is over the authority of Christ in your life.** (Say that again). Let me ask you: Is Jesus Christ Lord, or is He not? If he is, then he is Lord of the Sabbath and has the authority to shape it ...and shape you. You keep the Sabbath. The rest is up to Him.