

**Brothers and Sisters, Grace to you and peace from God our Father  
And the Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. Amen.**

Our lesson today is about a healing, and the text is very specific that it occurred on the Sabbath. Jesus also healed a blind man on the Sabbath. Jesus did a lot of healing on the Sabbath.

This morning I'd like to do some reflecting on Sabbath. What is Sabbath? And how do we experience it in our lives? How is it healing for us today?

Our third commandment is to "Remember the Sabbath day, and Keep it Holy." Sabbath is a gift that God has given us. As Jesus says, "the sabbath was made for people, not people for the sabbath." In other words, sabbath is fundamentally to be life giving and healing, it is gospel for us.

Studies have shown that for human beings to flourish, we need a balance of work and rest. Companies have been studying productivity and scheduling for a very long time. In the 1800's, during the industrial revolution, people often worked 60-80 hours a week. Even children! Can you imagine?

In the early 1900's industries noticed that people were more productive when they worked six, eight-hour days, in other words a 48-hour work week.... In 1923, Henry Ford was notorious for going even lower, he knocked off an entire day, and the 40-hour work week was born. Ford claimed the workers were more attentive, less likely to have accidents, had more energy and were more cheerful.

Recent studies on productivity and work schedule show all kinds of adaptations. Some studies are suggesting that even a four-day work week or 32 – 35-hour schedule makes people even more productive. I guess I'm a little cynical about that, but the studies are there...

In my life time, we've experienced a lot of technological changes. Computers have changed how we work and how we communicate. Some companies are letting people work from home or setting their own schedules...

Computers enable people to communicate at any time of day or any day of the week, and we do, we drop everything to respond to an email or a text. To some extent we are enslaved to our jobs, we can't turn them off when we go home anymore. HR professionals, human resource people in the US are reporting that Americans are again working more than 40 hours a week.

The nature of our jobs has changed dramatically in the last sixty years. Farming used to be the back bone of this country. Mechanization has increased food production tremendously. In 1940 there were six and a half million farms, currently there are two million farms. That's a lot of farmers now doing something else. I guess that's the family I grew up in...

We've experienced tremendous migration from the country to the city. And for the most part, agricultural and industrial jobs have been replaced by technological and service jobs... This means many people work on Sundays!

Sixty percent of married people are both working. Which seems low to me. According to government statistics five percent of people work two jobs. But if you ask how many people work on the side, the number jumps up to thirty-seven percent. So, it appears, more Americans are spending more and more time working.

Now, none of this is either good or bad, it just is what it is; technology changes, times change... and we change along with them. We adapt and we do the best we can. We support our families, we plan for the future, we try to get ahead... It's what we do...

Now, where is sabbath in all this? Having spent a lot of time visiting with older adults, I can tell you, this is one topic of conversation that frequently comes up. And I wonder if it's helpful for us if we think about sabbath along the lines of being an experience.

We typically think of Sabbath as a day of the week, and that's good discipline, and I encourage you to observe a day of rest. But I'm also realistic, I know what our schedules and work pressures are like. So, this morning, I'm most interested in the experience of Sabbath.

According to Genesis, "And on the seventh day God finished the work that he had done, and he rested on the seventh day from all the work that he had done. So, God blessed the seventh day and hallowed it, because on it, God rested from all the work that he had done in creation."

Now, do you think God rested because He was exhausted? Or do you think God rested in order to appreciate what He had just created? To take it all in... Maybe a little bit of both...

Quick story... After I resigned from being an administrator in the 90's, I stayed home to raise the kids and I built a lot of our own furniture... It was so healing for me to actually make something. I felt productive, and it was very meaningful. I remember building a little hutch and bringing it into the house, setting it in the living room.

And I just sat on the couch and admired it! That was a sabbath experience...

Sabbath for me, was in the resting and appreciating. And that created energy, to dream and I was motivated to continue building more furniture. There was excitement as I drew plans and studied wood-working techniques. It was a very creative and productive time in my life.

English Poet, David Whyte says that the antidote to exhaustion is not rest, but re-  
firement. In other words, igniting the passion for what we're doing. There are chapters in our life when we are absolutely in love with what we're doing.

And there may be chapters in our life when we are totally exhausted, and I'm not talking about being physically tired, I'm talking about being emotionally and spiritually drained, not being able to see any meaning in our work. We've all been there... So, how do we keep that passion ignited?

I'm not sure I have the answer to that question, but I suspect sabbath is an important piece of it. As God rested, we also need sabbath to rest, to look at our work, to appreciate the value of what we've done. We need to see our creation, connected within God's larger creation...

And it might not be work related, it might also be experienced through relationship. Loving and supporting one another... I have a friend, Sylvia in a nursing home in Austin. I got a birthday card from her a couple months ago. It made me cry, and it made me appreciate our friendship and the life and ministry we shared. It was a little sabbath experience for me...

So how do we incorporate that healing sabbath into our lives? These days, it might not happen on a particular day of the week, as much as it might happen in the cracks and crevices of our lives.

My invitation for you, is to be intentional about experiencing the meaning in your work and relationships. Set time aside to appreciate your accomplishments as only you are uniquely able to do it. Pat yourself on the back... Revel in how important the work is and how it contributes to our community.

And take time to dream about what you might do in the future... Build those motivational resources so you are excited to get out there and make a difference in the world, because that's exactly what you are doing!

Sit on the couch and admire your work... Take your friends out and tell them about what you do, support your friends in what they do... Visit your kids and admire what great people they've become. Do something with the grandkids... Visit your parents and reflect what great job they did!

There are so many ways to do this! And to be honest, we'll all do it differently, in our own way, we always have... What might work for some, might not work for others.

And everyone... This pertains to kids, parents, workers, people in retirement. Even people living in nursing homes... We often do our most important ministry during the last chapter of our lives, and believe me, they can do very meaningful things! Just go talk with my friend Sylvia!

Busy is well and good, and always take time to reflect, to appreciate who you are and what you've done.

The good news today is that we are God's hands in this wonderful creation. As we participate with God in the on-going of creation, we do appreciate what God is doing in and through our lives.

It's like that little song, "Count your blessings, name them one by one. Count your blessings, see what God has done..." Sabbath comes to us in many ways, and it restores our soul... It is deeply meaningful and it is healing. It's all God's work... And let's always remember, God rested on the seventh day! So can we...

Amen...