

THE SABBATH: THE PAUSE THAT REFRESHES

(November 2009 – Beausejour Church – Pastor Chris Jordan)

INTRO TO TOPIC:

- Are you tired? Worn out? Burned out? Overloaded? Overwhelmed? Stressed out?
- If you answered yes to any of those questions, then today's message is for you.
- Liza and I just returned from a week long sabbatical retreat at Genesee in California.
- Today's message is birthed out of my experience on this retreat.

KEY TEXT:

“Then Jesus said, “Come to me, all of you who are weary and carry heavy burdens, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you. Let me teach you, because I am humble and gentle, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke fits perfectly, and the burden I give you is light.” (Matt. 11:28-30).

“Are you tired? Worn out? Burned out on religion? Come to me. Get away with me and you'll recover your life. I'll show you how to take a real rest. Walk with me and work with me - watch how I do it. Learn the unforced rhythms of grace. I won't lay anything heavy or ill-fitting on you. Keep company with me and you'll learn to live freely and lightly.” (Matt. 11:28-30, The Message Bible).

QUOTE:

“Tragically, precious little in this hurried and hassled age promotes such intimacy. We have become a body of people who look more like a herd of cattle in a stampede than a flock of God beside green pastures and still waters.” (Charles Swindoll, Intimacy with the Almighty).

PERSONAL TESTIMONY– 17 YEARS BUSY DOING THE WORK OF THE MINISTRY:

- When we were at Bible Fellowship in Surrey, BC, I was: Youth Pastor, Christian Education directory, elementary school chapel speaker at Regent Christian Academy, substitute teacher for many elementary and high school classes (Bible, math, science, you name it!), I taught two classes every year at Pacific Life Bible College, and if that wasn't enough, in our last year there, Liza and I pioneered the Revolution Master's Commission.
- I can't tell you how many time in my Christian life the Lord convicted me through the story of Mary and Martha. *“Mary sat at Jesus' feet and heard His word. But Martha was distracted with much serving, and she said, “Lord, do You not care that my sister has left me to serve alone? Tell her to help me.” Jesus answered and said to her, “Martha, Martha, you are worried and troubled about many things. But one thing is needed, and Mary has chosen that good part.” (Luke 10:39-42).*
- I would get so busy doing things *for* the Lord; I would neglect my personal relationship *with* the Lord. When Liza and I accepted the call to come pastor the church here in Beausejour three years ago, we thought things would slow down.
- I still work six days a week – but now I am leading the adult congregation, preaching, teaching, preparing sermons, studying, writing, leading a home group, running a Christian club in our high school, doing chapels at East Gate Lodge, visitation, marriage counseling, crisis counseling, elders meetings, council meetings, fall outreach, more!
- When people saw how busy I was, my mantra became: *There's no rest for the righteous!*
- I've found myself in a hurry, missing or forgetting things, and not realizing why.

- Two times over the past couple of years, Foursquare Care (they care for our Canadian pastors) invited Liza and I to attend a sabbatical retreat (that they would pay for). Our response: we were too busy! When they asked us this last time, we said yes. I am so glad that we did! I didn't realize how much we needed this retreat until we got there!

OUR SABBATH RETREAT:

- **FIRST MORNING:** I went out to the Elijah room on the second floor of the prayer barn for some alone time with Jesus. I climbed the spiral staircase to the quaint upper room, and decided before jumping in and reading a spiritual book or studying the Bible that the first thing I needed to do was get alone with the Lord in prayer. For about half an hour, I wept before the Lord, repenting of my busyness and neglect of my prayer life, praying through the Lord's Prayer, and then David's penitent prayer in Psalm 51.
- **READING:** *"Setting apart an entire day – one out of seven – for feasting and resting, and worship and play, is a gift and not a burden. And neglecting the gift too long will make your soul, like soil never left fallow, hard and dry and spent... The root idea of Sabbath is... that all living things thrive only by an ample measure of stillness."* (Mark Buchanan, The Rest of God).
- *"God gave us the Sabbath to protect us from overload. He designed it as a day to restore us..."* (Steve & Mary Farrar, Overcoming Overload).
- **LAST DAY:** On the last morning, I went up to the Elijah room again for a time of praise and worship, and found myself belting out songs of praise and worship amidst spontaneous joy and laughter and dancing. I had been refreshed and restored!

A LOOK AT THE SABBATH:

"Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy. Six days you shall labor and do all your work, but the seventh day is the Sabbath of the Lord your God. In it you shall do no work: you, nor your son, nor your daughter, nor your male servant, nor your female servant, nor your cattle, nor your stranger who is within your gates. For in six days the Lord made the heavens and the earth, the sea, and all that is in them, and rested the seventh day. Therefore the Lord blessed the Sabbath day and hallowed it." (Exodus 20:8-11).

- Why had I never seen the importance of the Sabbath in the Scriptures before?
- One of the main reasons is because most of the people who I knew that kept the Sabbath did so in a strict, joyless, legalistic manner, and like the Pharisees used it to judge others.

QUOTE: *"The Pharisees have taken His Sabbath and loaded it up with more than 1,500 nitpicky rules and regulations. They took a good gift from God and made it into an unbearable burden for the people to live under... Let's keep the Sabbath as a good gift. Let's not make up our own Pharisaical laws and judge our brothers and sisters because they don't follow our particular rules and preferences... So, how should you observe the Sabbath? That's between you and the Lord. Remember, Jesus freed up the Sabbath from the rules and regulations of men. How you apply and enjoy the Sabbath is a matter of personal choice and conscience."* (Steve & Mary Farrar, Overcoming Overload).

- How you keep the Sabbath is between you and the Lord.
- As soon as you start judging someone else for what they do or don't do on the Sabbath, you have taken on the Spirit of the Pharisee. Repent!

JESUS AND THE SABBATH:

“**1** At that time Jesus went through the grainfields on the Sabbath. And His disciples were hungry, and began to pluck heads of grain and to eat. **2** And when the Pharisees saw it, they said to Him, "Look, Your disciples are doing what is not lawful to do on the Sabbath!" **3** But He said to them, "Have you not read what David did when he was hungry, he and those who were with him: **4** how he entered the house of God and ate the showbread which was not lawful for him to eat, nor for those who were with him, but only for the priests? **5** Or have you not read in the law that on the Sabbath the priests in the temple profane the Sabbath, and are blameless? **6** Yet I say to you that in this place there is One greater than the temple. **7** But if you had known what this means, 'I desire mercy and not sacrifice,' you would not have condemned the guiltless. **8** For the Son of Man is Lord even of the Sabbath.” (Matt. 12:1-8).

- In Mark’s account of this story, He adds Jesus saying: **“The Sabbath was made for man, and not man for the Sabbath.”** (Mark 2:27).
- In other words: *“The Sabbath is God’s merciful appointment for the common benefit of all mankind. It is not a yoke but a blessing. It is not a burden but a mercy. The Sabbath is good for man’s body. We all need a day of rest.”* (J.C. Ryle, Keep it Holy).

1. KEEP IT HOLY:

“Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy.” (Exodus 20:8).

- The first thing the Scriptures teach us about the Sabbath is that it is a holy day.
- The most basic definition of holy is: “dedicated or devoted to the service of God.”
- Therefore, the Sabbath is a day to seek God. We see this in the name of the New Testament Sabbath = the Lord’s Day (Rev. 1).
- One of the main ways we do this is by attending a worship service at church.
- It is a time set apart to seek God and think about His kingdom. Pray. Read His Word.
- *How* we do that is up to us as individuals – how can YOU keep the Sabbath holy?

2. REST FROM WORK:

“Six days you shall labor and do all your work, but the seventh day is the Sabbath of the Lord your God. In it you shall do no work.” (Exodus 20:9-10).

- If we don’t rest, we will burn out or die! The Sabbath rest is for our benefit.
- Remember how I used to say, “No rest for the righteous?” The Lord convicted me this past week through a Scripture in Revelation 14:11 that says, speaking of the wicked: *“they have no rest day or night.”* God wants His people to REST!
- *“There remains therefore a rest for the people of God. For he who has entered His rest has himself also ceased from his works as God did from His.”* (Heb. 4:9-10).
- Jesus said to His disciples, when they were busy from doing the work of the ministry: *“Come aside by yourselves to a deserted place and rest a while.”* For there were many coming and going, and they did not even have time to eat.” (Mark 6:31).
- It’s not a legalistic thing – Jesus said we can do works of mercy and necessity (Matt 12).

3. DO SOMETHING FUN:

“If you watch your step on the Sabbath and don't use my holy day for personal advantage, If you treat the Sabbath as a day of joy, God's holy day as a celebration, If you honor it by refusing 'business as usual,' making money, running here and there - Then you'll be free to enjoy God!” (Isaiah 58:13-14, The Message Bible).

- There is nothing in the Scriptures that says you can't have fun on the Sabbath!
- What is more fun than being in the presence of the Lord where there is fullness of joy?
- For example, this afternoon I'm going to watch a football game with my son!

THE BIG IDEA: God has given us a wonderful gift in the Sabbath rest – it is the pause that refreshes. God wants us to keep it holy, rest from work, and do something fun.

CLOSING QUOTE:

“The technology of Sabbath keeping is not complex. We simply select a day of the week (Paul seemed to think any day would do – Romans 14:5-6) and quit our work...

Monday is my Sabbath. Nothing is scheduled for Mondays. If there are emergencies I respond, but they are surprisingly few.

Sabbath keeping cannot be carried out as a private enterprise. We (as pastors) need our congregations help. They need our help to keep their Sabbath; we need their help to keep ours...

One of my tasks is to lead you in the celebrative keeping of Sabbath each Sunday. But that is not a Sabbath for me. I wake up Sunday morning with the adrenaline flowing. It is a workday for me. Monday is my Sabbath, and I need your help to keep it. I need your prayers.”

(Eugene Peterson, Working the Angles).

CLOSING PRAYER: Come to Jesus!

“Jesus said, “Come to me, all of you who are weary and carry heavy burdens, and I will give you rest.” (Matt. 11:28).

Beausejour Community Church Website: www.beausejourchurch.ca

Pastor Chris Jordan's Blog: <http://thelandofpromise.blogspot.com/>