

## “To Rest in God” (Exodus 20:8-11)

We're in the series of “The Call to Undivided Intimacy.” We've been studying the Ten Commandments. Today we will study the 4<sup>th</sup> commandment. It has a very rich meaning, so I decided to preach twice from this section. The title of today's message is “To Rest in God”.

Here are common problems that anyone can experience in life.

About the past. A sense of defeat. Inferiority. Regret about what you have done or haven't done. Resignation. “It ended up like this, because so and so said those things.” “If only I hadn't made that choice.” “I shouldn't have said that at that time.” With these thoughts, we might continue to live in the past.

About the present. Sickness. Injury. Or what about mental health, even though you may be healthy physically? You may feel hesitant in personal relations. You may be wounded inside, but may be just making up appearances. You may know what is good, but cannot carry it out, instead you may be doing the wrong you do not want to do. It doesn't look cool sometimes to do the right thing, when everybody else is happily going a different way. I have difficulty doing with this. I don't want to be different from others. I can't do the right thing, because I am broken. You may feel like that.

About the future. Aging. Death. No one can avoid these things. No one can remove these burdens from us.

These are the burdens which everyone in the world has, but cannot bear. Nothing in this world can give us a solution for these burdens of ours. There is nothing that can give us peace and rest while we have these burdens.

But the 4<sup>th</sup> commandment reminds us of God's covenant with us, burdened people.

First, we will look at the Sabbath day in relation to Israel. Then we will look at what the Sabbath day means to us. Finally, I will talk about how to practice it.

### **1. Life in the covenant of God**

#### Exodus 20:8-11

Remember the Sabbath day by keeping it holy. <sup>9</sup> Six days you shall labor and do all your work, <sup>10</sup> 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 animals, nor the alien within your gates. <sup>11</sup> 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.

The 4<sup>th</sup> commandment is God's call for God's people, to remember what kind of covenant He has made with them, and remain in this covenant, looking forward to the day it is fulfilled.

- Past: I redeemed you. I set you free from slavery.
- Present: I'm your God. I'm taking care of you. You're living in my grace.
- Future: I'll bring you to the Promise Land. One day, you'll live in heaven, my home and have eternal rest with me.

Practicing Sabbath reminds them "I'm in this covenant." Practicing Sabbath lets them taste what this covenant means in reality. Practicing Sabbath re-shape their lives aligning with the covenant.

## 2. Israel couldn't enter the promise land

God led Israel out of Egypt with his mighty hand. He parted the Red Sea, and let them walk on the dry ground in the middle of the sea. The Lord was in the pillar of the cloud in the day and he was in the pillar of fire at night, and he led them to the promise land.

### Heb 3:16-19

Who were they who heard and rebelled? Were they not all those Moses led out of Egypt? <sup>17</sup> And with whom was he angry for forty years? Was it not with those who sinned, whose bodies fell in the desert? <sup>18</sup> And to whom did God swear that they would never enter his rest if not to those who disobeyed? <sup>19</sup> So we see that they were not able to enter, because of their unbelief.

God promised Israelites that they would enter the promise land, the promised rest. But they couldn't enter. Why? The Bible says it was because of their unbelief. Unbelief? Did they not offer enough sacrifices? Did they not practice enough rituals? Unbelief? What does it mean?

Several verses before this section, it says:

### Heb 3:9, 10, 12

where your fathers tested and tried me and for forty years saw what I did. <sup>10</sup> ... I said, 'Their hearts are always going astray...' <sup>12</sup> See to it, brothers, that none of you has a sinful, unbelieving heart that turns away from the living God.

They had witnessed the work of God so many times. Every day, God gave them manna. When they had no water, God gave them water out of the rock. The Israelites were traveling slowly because they had women, children and elderly people. It would be natural to wonder whether other tribes or nations targeted or attacked them in this state. But they didn't face this kind of danger. Not even once.

Nevertheless, they were unstable, they were not firm in the faith. They didn't trust in God 100%. They went away from the living God.

How could they become unbelief? God is so real with them. It's easy to say that. But if you put yourself in their place, you can understand them.

They are traveling in the desert. They have no idea when this travel would end. 1 year, 2 years, 5 years, 10 years, 20 years, 30 years, 38 years, 39 years, they are still in the desert. Each time they move, they have to pack all their belonging. Each time they come to the point to stay, they have to unpack. They don't know when they move again. They don't have GPS, no google map. They don't know how they are moving. Can you see how stressful they could be?

They have children. Parents, you know how difficult to get kids ready to go. You know it is huge challenge to make kids to move straight. They just follow with something interesting. They just stop whenever they see something attractive. You must lead them whole day to just walk. It's not 1 day, 1 week, 1 month. For 10 years, 15 years, you have been doing it every day. Now you can feel how tired they could be.

They eat manna every day. But they can't keep it. Which means for today's situation you have no saving. You just spend what you have each day. Tomorrow, you start from zero. That's all you can do. That is your plan. That is your tomorrow, next year, another year, you've been doing it for 10 years, 20 years, but you still don't know for how long it will go like this. Now you can really feel how difficult their life could be.

You know God is leading. But it looks very uncertain how this travel goes on. The situation tells you that God is not reliable.

"We can't rely on God. Look at how we are wandering like this! Can God really lead us into the promise land? He must be mistaken. He can't actually do it, can he?" They judged by themselves, fell into unbelief and wandered away from God.

As they are wandering, of course they have no peace, no rest at all. God told them, actually commanded them "Remember the Sabbath day by keeping it holy." God knows they need it. God provided what they really needed.

Did they observe the Sabbath? Surely they did observe it. It's not difficult to imagine that they didn't go out to collect manna, nor do any work on the Sabbath. It seems they also made their slaves and domestic animals rest. They were observing the Sabbath on the surface, but they had no peace, no rest. Nor did they enter the promise land. Because their actions were not connected with their faith.

There are so many uncertain factors around us. There are so many things that are out of our control. We are just surrounded by the things give us stress, drive us crazy, make us so depressed. In uncertainty, there is one certainty. That is God. If we don't trust in this God, if we wander away from Him, there is no peace, there is no hope.

The 4th commandment is God's call for us, to remember what kind of covenant He has made with us, and remain in this covenant, looking forward to the day it is fulfilled.

### **3. The shadow of Christ**

Should we observe the 4<sup>th</sup> commandment literally?

In conclusion, the 4<sup>th</sup> commandment is not something we are to observe literally, because the 4<sup>th</sup> commandment is a ceremonial law. But the essential message to us from this commandment is the same.

#### Heb 10:1

The law is only a shadow of the good things that are coming--not the realities themselves.

The ceremonial laws are the shadows of Christ. When the reality, Christ appears, they disappear.

The priesthood points to Christ. Priests offered offerings and sacrifices to atone sins. Christ is our eternal priest. We draw near to God through Him. He offered sacrifice for our sins. He is interceding for us at the right hand of God (Heb 7:24-25).

The tabernacle points to Christ. The tabernacle is the place where sacrifices are offered. It is the way through which a man is accepted by God. It is the place where God meets a man (Ex 29:42-43). Christ is the true tabernacle. Christ is the way through which we are accepted by God. Through Christ we draw near to God and meet Him (Heb 10:20; John 14:6). When we are in Christ, we are in the holy presence of God.

The sacrifice points to Christ. Innocent animals were slaughtered and offered as sacrifices for men's sins to be forgiven. "It is the blood that makes atonement for one's life" (Levi 17:11). In order for a man to draw near to God, sacrifices had to be offered. And it had to be offered according to God's words, not according to men's convenience. Christ is the true sacrifice. Christ is "the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world" (John 1:29). Christ is the perfect sacrifice, which was offered once for all to complete redemption of all sin (Heb 9:26; 10:14).

The 4<sup>th</sup> commandment is a ceremonial law, which is a shadow of Christ. So it is not something we are to practice literally. The 4<sup>th</sup> commandment is only a shadow of the eternal Sabbath rest. "For that eternal rest is none other than Christ Himself."<sup>1</sup>

The purpose of the Sabbath practice is to lead us to Christ, connect us with Him, and make us rest in Him.

## **4. Jesus is our Sabbath**

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<sup>1</sup> Michael S. Horton, *The Law of Perfect Freedom: Relating to God and Others through the Ten Commandments*, 1993, [Kindle 2004]. Location I817

Jesus Christ proclaimed Himself as the Sabbath rest (Matt 11:28), demonstrated Himself as the Lord of the Sabbath (Mark 4:35-41), and attributed to Himself the fulfilment of the prophecy concerning the Chosen Servant who would care for the broken and weary (cf. Luke 13:10-16, John 8:1-11).<sup>2</sup>

### Matthew 11:28-30

Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest. <sup>29</sup> Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. <sup>30</sup> For my yoke is easy and my burden is light.

Jesus is not teaching us how to be successful. He is not teaching us how to rest. Jesus is saying, “Come to me. I will carry your burden in place of you. And I will give you rest.”

The burdens of the past, present and future won't just disappear. We can't change what happened in the past. We can't erase the memories of the past. We may suffer physical disease and mental illness. There is no one who won't age. There is no one who won't die. But we don't have to carry all these burdens by ourselves. You don't have to be worn down by living with these burdens alone.

Jesus says “Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest.” He can carry these burdens in your place, and he can walk with you in this life.

We can pray, “Jesus, I can't carry all these burdens of the past, present and future alone. I need you. Jesus, I rejoice that you walk with me in this life.” In this way, we can live with faces turned towards Jesus. That is true repentance. This is how we can “remember the Sabbath day by keeping it holy” every day.

“Sabbath invites Christ to come into our everyday life, to rethink priorities and celebrate his faithfulness. Sabbath is weekly preparation and anticipation for making space in our lives for Christ to come.”<sup>3</sup>

To observe Sabbath is to rest in our Lord Jesus. It's not that we rest because we have completed our task. But we rest and receive the Sabbath rest by faith because it is what God has decided and given us.

“He is Lord of the Sabbath and Lord of our lives, and so we no longer have to be self-reliant.”<sup>4</sup> Our Lord, Jesus is the Lord of all the earth. He is in control of everything. He can turn this planet earth without you. He can arrange, advance, and complete anything. Because he is God. I know him as my God, you know him as your God. So you can come to Him and rest with Him.

Speaking of rest, we think of having a day off. But Sabbath rest and day off are different in nature. We can have Sabbath rest on our day off. But having a day off doesn't mean having Sabbath rest. For a long time, I couldn't get it.

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<sup>2</sup> Ibid., 1839

<sup>3</sup> Shelly Miller, *Rhythms of Rest: Finding the Spirit of Sabbath in a Busy World*, 2016, Kindle, 31

<sup>4</sup> Ibid., 89

What do you expect by taking a day off? By taking a day off, we expect to recover from the tiredness of work so that we are ready to work harder. Day off is there for us so that we can work more. But for Sabbath, we come to Jesus, trust in him and entrust everything to him, acknowledge what He has given us once again, enjoy them, rejoice and rest in His presence. We re-shape our life God-centered. “Experiencing the Life, Changing lives.” That is Sabbath rest.

## 5. To love yourself in God and with people

Now I want to talk about how we practice Sabbath. Two things I want to invite you to do.

One is to craft your day, to make it Christ-centred, rather than driven by demands and duties.

You come to God not just once a day but actually many many times. When you do something, you begin with coming to God. This is how you can do it. After you finish one task, one duty, one meeting, or whatever, you come to God before your start the next thing. It may be just to say “Jesus, please come with me.” You may remember the sermon title of the last Sunday “To rest in God.” That can be your theme of the week. You may look at one verse which you read in the morning. You need just a second to do it. I call it “Selah” or a “between time.” By doing this, you are crafting the rhythm of your day. You are centering yourself on Jesus throughout the day. It’s aligning your whole day with the Word.

Another thing is to rest in Sabbath.

For practicing Sabbath rest, the point is not what you do or what you don’t do. But the point is to love yourself in God and to love yourself in relationships with people. You come to God as His child, enjoy what he has given you, rejoice in God and enjoy being His child, and enjoy being a part of his family, his community.

You may start with one hour once a week. You may make it longer, maybe half a day, or a whole day.

Today, I will talk about especially how we can practically “love yourself in God.”

### (1) Schedule and Surrender

Sabbath rest must be scheduled. It is like booking a date with God. And when the time comes, we put aside whatever else we are doing and enter the Sabbath rest.

In other words, “the Sabbath requires surrender; surrender to a quality of time when you will not be disturbed.” “If we only stop when we are finished with all our work, we will never stop— because our work is never completely done.” “Not later. Not when their trials are over. Not when they are fixed. Right here, right now. There is a blessing for you here, now, in this very moment.”<sup>5</sup> This is the Sabbath rest.

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<sup>5</sup> Wayne Muller, *Sabbath: Finding Rest, Renewal, and Delight in Our Busy Lives*, 2013, Kindle, 27; 82; 43

Sabbath days, we can experience a lovely freedom from expectations—other people’s and also your own.<sup>6</sup> We must set ourselves free from our boss “shoulds.”<sup>7</sup> And “When we feel trapped by a problem, we must surrender to not knowing the solution.”<sup>8</sup>

## **(2) Be Still and Silent**

Psalm 46:10 says, “Be still and know that I am God.”

Henri Nouen insisted that the noise of our lives made us deaf, unable to hear when we are called.<sup>9</sup> So silence is necessary to come close to God, move into his presence and spend time with him. “Sabbath time is enriched by some period of intentional silence.”<sup>10</sup>

I found that it’s not easy to be calm and focus on the Lord for the first 5 minutes. I try to turn my heart to the Lord, but many thoughts come up in my mind. But I don’t try to shut them up by force.

Notice what arises in silence. Write on a small piece of paper a word or phrase that signifies a particular worry or concern you would like to leave behind for the time being.<sup>11</sup>

In my case, after 5 minutes or so, I start to calm down gradually. Sometimes I imagine that I am in my favorite place with God alone. I think about the moment when God worked in my life last week.

I don’t try to make something happen. I don’t try to gain something. I don’t try to get the answer, nor wisdom, nor solution, nor power. I just enjoy being able to spend time with God without disturbance.

Sabbath reminds us that we are loved deeply and we belong to him.<sup>12</sup> It’s not because we have done good things, but it’s because who we are, we are his greatly beloved children. That’s what the Sabbath is all about.

You schedule the date with God, and now the time has come. You sit down, be still and calm. Then, what is the next step? Today I’ll introduce a couple of things you can do.

## **(3) Reflection**

Each time I preach, I make reflection points. You can find them in the bulletin. It’s designed to help you to see yourself deeper in the light of the Word, and to lead you into deeper relationship with God, and encourage you to apply the truth in your life and to practice what you learned, instead of just hearing a sermon in the service.

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<sup>6</sup> Wayne, 67

<sup>7</sup> Shelly, 174

<sup>8</sup> Wayne, 189

<sup>9</sup> Wayne, 84

<sup>10</sup> Wayne, 55

<sup>11</sup> Wayne, 56; 60

<sup>12</sup> Shelly, 78

If you missed a service, don't worry. You can find my sermon note at the church website. And it has reflection points. Read the sermon first, and do the reflections. Don't rush. Calm down. Take your time. You don't have to finish all points at once. You can do them in different times.

#### **(4) Prayer with Psalm**

Some of us may wonder how the prayer can be the fellowship with God, instead of just repeating your wish list. I was one of them.

Here is how I've been learning prayer. It's very simple. Choose one Psalm. Read out one verse aloud. And rephrase it with your own words. It's okay if your words or thoughts move out of the context of the verse. Do it continually until you have no other words. Then, go to the next verse. And repeat this same pattern. You may do it with three, four or five verses.

This is interesting. You are talking, and you will hear from God.

I give you an example. Psalm 23:1. "The Lord is my shepherd. I shall not be in want." Lord you are my shepherd. You are always with me. You are my true shepherd and you gave me life. And you promised me abundant life. I am your sheep. I used to be far away from you. But I am redeemed by your blood, and now I belong to you. You never forsake me. Even if I lose my way, you will surely find me. You are my shepherd. And I am your sheep, I know your voice. When I feel anxious, downcast with sorrow, I hear your voice and I find peace. I long for you, and I seek you. Please let me hear your voice. Please let me walk with you. I want to remain in your gentle support, for this is the best place I can be. The Lord is my shepherd. I shall not be in want...

This can be done as a spoken prayer or by writing a journal.

#### **(5) Scripture Observation**

What you need is: The Bible. Please use the book. Then a notebook and a pen. I don't recommend you to use your computer or phone. It's important to make a difference between this and your work. Go to a quiet place and sit down silently.

1) Quiet your heart. And invite the Holy Spirit. You may take deep breath a couple of times.

2) Read the Bible, just a portion, about 10 to 20 verses. Read it slowly once.

3) Summary. Write down the summary of the portion. But "Jesus healed the sick." That is too simple. Write down the summary so that you can understand the content.

4) Observation. Ask the Holy Spirit to show you about God and about yourself through the scripture. And write them down.

(1) About God. For example, God's nature, greatness, promises, guidance, and model or pattern.

(2) About yourself. For example, who I am for God, what I need to change, what God is encouraging me to do.

5) Application. Ask the Holy Spirit how you can apply the truth from your observation to your life. Write down how you are actually going to practice what you learned.

6) Close by a simple prayer.

### **(6) The time for finding**

“Sabbath is about celebrating the goodness of our Creator.”<sup>13</sup>

During Sabbath time, we focus our heart not on what we need, but rather on what we have. When we are trapped in seeking, nothing is enough, we see only what is missing. When the Sabbath time begins, the time for seeking is over; the time for finding has begun.<sup>14</sup>

Our Creator, the source of life, great God takes notice of you and knows you and takes care of you. It doesn't mean all your problems have disappeared. From the following day, you may still face those problems. But there will be total difference in your finding that God is in control of the universe, and you are not. You are in his covenant. And he is faithful. On the Sabbath, we are in the moment of experiencing God. There is nothing to prove and nothing to accomplish. We just come to him and to be ourselves. There we find grace and rest.

What I shared is like a buffet menu. You choose what you like, and do it. Next time, you may do something different. Do whatever works for you. Each time you can do it in a different way. The point is not what you do or what you don't do. The point is to love yourself in God. You set aside time just for this. Start with one hour once a week. You give that one hour to God only. No internet, no phone. It's like a date with God. How can you miss it? Enjoy!

Through the 4<sup>th</sup> commandment, God calls us to remember what kind of covenant He made with us. He invites us to remain in the covenant, tasting the blessings we have been given, and looking forward to the day the covenant is fulfilled.

It's the call to undivided intimacy.

For Lifenet groups and personal reflection

1. Think about problems in your life about the past, about the present and about the future. Through practicing the Sabbath, what does God remind his people of his covenant about the past, about the present and about the future?
2. Why could Israelites not enter the promise Land? (Heb 3:16-19) What does their unbelief mean? What is it like to observe the Sabbath without faith? Why must faith be involved in observing the Sabbath?

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<sup>13</sup> Shelly, 94

<sup>14</sup> Wayne, 202

3. The ceremonial laws are the shadows of Christ. What do the priesthood, tabernacle and sacrifices teach about Christ? How does Christ give you rest?

4. Some ideas about how you can practice the Sabbath are introduced. When and how will you have the Sabbath this week?