

Sunday 8 June 2008

Ten. Four



Keeping the Sabbath

“Remember to observe the Sabbath day by keeping it holy”.

Exodus 20.8 NLT

Keeping the Sabbath

Work is Good

For in six days the LORD made the heavens, the earth, the sea, and everything in them; but on the seventh day he rested. That is why the LORD blessed the Sabbath day and set it apart as holy. Ex 20.11

God in commanding a Sabbath is not saying work is bad - far from it. Work is good and Adam had work to do from the beginning of creation.

The LORD God placed the man in the Garden of Eden to tend and watch over it. Genesis 2.15.

Paul writing to the Christians in Colosse teaches them that work is an expression of worship and therefore good.

Work willingly at whatever you do, as though you were working for the Lord rather than for people. Col 3.23.

Rest is Good

“Remember to observe the Sabbath day by keeping it holy. 9 You have six days each week for your ordinary work, 10 but the seventh day is a Sabbath day of rest dedicated to the LORD your God. On that day no one in your household may do any work. This includes you, your sons and daughters, your male and female servants, your livestock, and any foreigners living among you. 11 For in six days the LORD made the heavens, the earth, the sea, and everything in them; but on the seventh day he rested. That is why the LORD blessed the Sabbath day and set it apart as holy. Ex 20.8-11.

Here the Lord commands that one day in seven is to be a day of rest. It illustrates that there are rhythms in creation and in our lives.

Notice

- **The Lord Himself rested.**

So the creation of the heavens and the earth and everything in them was completed. 2 On the seventh day God had finished his work of creation, so he rested from all his work. 3 And God blessed the seventh day and declared it holy, because it was the day when he rested from all his work of creation. Gen 2.1-3.

In this command to keep the Sabbath, the very reason for doing so is because God rested. In doing so 1 day in 7 is to be distinguished from the other six.

John 5.17 is illuminating. Jesus heals a man on the Sabbath and when criticized he responded by saying.

“My Father is always working, and so am I.”

William Temple helpfully comments on this verse, that when God rested on the seventh day, he was not idle.

Jesus also highlights in Mark 2.27 that the Sabbath was made for the good of humanity.

However whilst the Sabbath is a day of rest this does not preclude doing good. (see Jesus healing the man with the withered hand Mark 3.1-6, Jesus healing the woman in Luke 13.10-17).

By the time of the Exodus the Sabbath also became a time of worship – a rest day dedicated to God.

- **Everyone was to have the opportunity for rest**

This rest day was for all, for all the family, for the servants, for those living with the Israelites. This command speaks of justice and the wellbeing of all. Significantly God is concerned with the whole of creation and includes the rest that animals are able to have.

Sabbath is a day of revolutionary equality in society. On that day all rest equally, regardless of wealth or power or need” Walter Brueggemann

The Sabbath – It’s Nature

i. A day of rest in Genesis, Gen 2.3

ii. A day for worshipping together

You have six days when you can do your work, but the seventh day of each week is holy because it belongs to me. No matter where you live, you must rest on the Sabbath and come together for worship. This law will never change. Lev 23.3.

iii. A sign that the Israelites were the Lord’s special people by honouring God with this special day

Tell the people of Israel: ‘Be careful to keep my Sabbath day, for the Sabbath is a sign of the covenant between me and you from generation to generation. It is given so you may know that I am the LORD, who makes you holy. 14 You must keep the Sabbath day, for it is a holy day for you. Anyone who desecrates it must be put to death; anyone who works on that day will be cut off from the community. Ex 31.13-14

iv. A day demonstrating dependency

When the Lord supplied manna for food He gave two days supply to include the Sabbath Ex16.5.

Even at harvest time – the Sabbath was to be honoured Ex24.21.

- **The Sabbath & Jesus**

- i. As we have already seen, Jesus was willing to do good on the Sabbath.
- ii. Jesus regularly attended the synagogue on the Sabbath Luke 4.16
- ii. Jesus was not willing to keep all the man mad laws or interpretations of the law (1521) concerning the Sabbath (see the disciples plucking ears of corn). Jesus in Mark 2.28 expresses He is Lord of the Sabbath. It was true then and still is for us.

- **The Sabbath and the 21C**

How then does this apply to us?

1. The divine principle of one day of rest in seven is as important now as ever.

It challenges greed, and workaholism. It promotes justice and wellbeing. This command addresses the fundamental issue of who or what controls our time.

2. The nature of this rest. As with the Lord it does not mean you have to cease from all activity. It is doing that which recreates and refreshes.

3. For us as Christians – Sunday the day of Christ's resurrection predominantly is the day when we worship the Lord together. This is not only a good habit as Hebrews reminds us but one of the expressions of being family together.

For Small Groups

If the weather allows why not think about meeting outside. This command to keep the Sabbath is rooted in creation and rest. It makes it easier to worship the creator in his creation.

Bible Passages. Genesis 1.31 - 2.3. Exodus 20.8-11

1. What do you think it means when it says the Lord rested?
2. How are we to interpret this command today?
3. Is taking a Sabbath having a day off or is it something different?