

A Day for Delight

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Bible Text: Isaiah 53:13-14

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We have before us one of the most beautiful texts, I think, that God has given us on the sabbath because it casts such a beautiful vision of God's intentions toward mankind. There are so many images that have flown through my mind considering this this week. I think of just the many, many occasions where God expresses the beauty of his will. Think of what God did for his own Son during the time of his temptation, how he cared for him and nourished him by the angels and by the beasts of the field. Think about the song that we just sang where we heard of God's great intention for all of his sons and his daughters and that is to bring many sons to glory.

This text so brings out the kind intentions of God's will and, as you have been engaging in this series on the sabbath, we have really wanted to try to reveal by reading very carefully the texts that relate to the sabbath day so that we could understand that by going slowing enough over them so that we could get the contours of specific commands, grasp the different kinds of words that God uses to help us to understand what this day is all about, this day of rest, this day of doing mercy, this day to save yourself from judgment, this day to ride on the wings of eagles. This is a day that God has established for our great blessing.

Let me... I just want to pause for a moment and just communicate something to all of you as a church. You know, we have been bringing very socially contrary patterns to you. We know that many of the things we have brought to you and to ourselves contradict the ways that we have been thinking and living regarding the sabbath. But I just want to tell you how thankful I am for the way that you have received the teaching on the sabbath. It has been a huge encouragement and a blessing.

I keep sharing stories from people, from you, about how God is helping you to understand his will, how God is blessing you, how God is helping you to think better and differently, how God is soothing you, comforting you, increasing your delight, you know, through all these things, while at the same time shaking you up. And I am reminded of Hebrews 13:17 which says, "Obey those who rule over you, and be submissive, for they watch out for your souls, as those who must give account. Let them do so with joy and not with grief, for that would be unprofitable for you."¹

¹ Hebrews 13:17.

And it just occurred to me over the last few days that this has been a joy and not a grief because of the way that it has been received with honest hearts, with a genuine desire to try to understand the will of the Lord.

You know, there is so much blessing in that for a church when there is a humble submissive spirit before the Word of God, to look at the words and say, "Yes, that is what it says and that is what it means for me." And it is a great happiness when elders can find this heart in a church. I am so grateful for it.

So here we are now in Isaiah 58. We have been casting a vision for the sabbath using various texts, just doing simple exposition of the texts to try to explain what is there. Now we are in Isaiah 58. So the book of Isaiah, we have been in Matthew. We have been in Nehemiah. So we have gone to the gospels. We have gone to the prophets. We have been to the law in Exodus and Deuteronomy. And now here we are in Isaiah the prophet.

The book of Isaiah is broken into two or three sections depending on how you want to divide it up. There are two books generally, chapters one through 40 which gives a testimony of the judgment of God against a disobedient people. And then from 41 to chapter 66 is a glorious picture of redemption.

And in the section that we are in right in Isaiah right now in Isaiah 58 is in a section that explains the story of the suffering servant, that there is a Messiah coming, that he has come to save his people and he has healing in his wings. He is wounded. He is rejected of men, but he is the Messiah and he will save Israel from his sins. That is the section in Isaiah that we are in right now.

And so in Isaiah 53 you find that great chapter of the suffering servant. In Isaiah 54 you find the world wide impact of the gospel of Jesus Christ that is prophesied there. In Isaiah 55 there is a call to repentance that begins with the words, "Ho! Everyone who thirsts, Come to the waters; And you who have no money, Come, buy and eat."²

He is talking about the pleasures of salvation, the goodness of Jesus Christ to bring refreshment and delight and healing to his people. That is Isaiah 55.

And then Isaiah 56 there is more on the sabbath. And, again, that word connected with the sabbath, the word delight is there. And then now here we are finding ourselves in Isaiah chapter 58. And Isaiah 58 continues on with these same themes of the salvation of God toward his people because the sabbath fits into it.

Of course we know this. You can't talk about the sabbath without also talking about its fulfillment in Christ because Christ is your sabbath.

God has given us two things, a physical day to celebrate and commemorate in the same way that he has given us communion, a physical way to explain the sacrifice on the cross

² Isaiah 55:1.

and substitutionary atonement to through the death of his Son, the shedding of the blood of the son of God for the sins of all mankind.

So we have a day. We have something to do on that day, the celebration of the communion service. And it is all in this context of the suffering servant, the redemption that God desires for his people.

When you think about the sabbath you have to think about redemption because that is the way that Isaiah is presenting it here.

If you say the sabbath is not for today the you have to say that the suffering servant is neither for today either because both are for today. One is fulfilled by the other as well. And we know from all of Scripture, from Genesis to Revelation that the celebration of the day of the sabbath was never abrogated. Christ did not abrogate it. He fulfilled it and explained how to do it. The apostles did the same thing. They did not fulfill it, but they explained and demonstrated that the sabbath was something that should be celebrated. And then we find, also, the celebration of the sabbath actually in eternity future in heaven.

So, is the sabbath taken back? Well, it is not taken back in heaven. The disciples didn't take it back. Jesus didn't take it back and neither should we.

So that is really the summary of what we have been saying here.

So now in Isaiah 58 we have seen where this whole teaching of the sabbath fits in from the law and the prophets and the gospels and in the book of Acts and in the New Testament era in the epistles. Now we come and we get our focus on this one passage in Isaiah 58 and so I would like for us to see how it fits in Isaiah 58.

The totality of Isaiah 58 is addressing dead formalism. It is addressing fasting without love for God. It is about burdening yourself with fasting and keeping the day, but without a delight.

And so if you are looking at Isaiah 58—and I hope you are looking at verse one right now because I want us to see the progression of thought that Isaiah takes us through here.

He begins with a command to, “Cry aloud, spare not; Lift up your voice like a trumpet; Tell My people their transgression, And the house of Jacob their sins.”³

So Isaiah is doing the same thing that we have been really hoping to do in this series on the sabbath, to cry out and say, “We have been sinning against the laws of the sabbath.”

And that is what Isaiah is doing. But he is saying, “Cry out, don't hold back. Don't be mealy mouthed about it. Don't understand it at all. Say it with a big voice and a trumpet.”

³ Isaiah 58:1.

So that is the tone of this chapter. Do you see it here? Do you see how urgent, how intense this is here?

And then he points out a number of things. He shows the self righteousness of the people, how they feel. They feel like they have been properly approaching God, but they haven't really. They have been doing the duty, but they have lost the delight. And that is what God is confronting them for here. And so you see the hypocrisy that they have had in their fasting. Much like the hypocritical ways we often celebrate the sabbath.

Oh, yes, we might be sitting in church, but we are not delighting in the Lord. We may be celebrating a half a sabbath day, but not the whole sabbath day. And we haven't done it with the right heart or with the right inclination of our spirit.

So in verse six he says, "Is this not the fast that I have chosen?"⁴ He is making a distinction just like he makes a distinction later on on the sabbath. He is saying, "There is your kind of fast, but then there is my kind of fast. Your kind of fast is your own way and you get what you pay for when you do it. On the other hand there is my fast. But my fast is wonderful. It is real. It is beautiful. It has an effect in your life, in your family and in your community life." He says:

To loose the bonds of wickedness, To undo the heavy burdens, To let the oppressed go free, And that you break every yoke? Is it not to share your bread with the hungry?⁵

So Isaiah is confronting the people because of their dead formalism. They were doing the mechanical part, but they did not have the heart of delight that God had desired for them.

And then in the same pattern that Isaiah gives us in the sabbath, he also gives us in his instruction on fasting. And he gives a promise in verse eight.

"Then your light shall break forth like the morning, Your healing shall spring forth speedily, And your righteousness shall go before you; The glory of the LORD shall be your rear guard."⁶

And then he gives a number of sins that the people have committed against the poor and afflicted and then he comforts them with the benefit toward their lives if they make a correction. And I think that is one thing that we want to spread about in our church today. We want to ask: Is there any room for correction among us?

I know there is for me. But what is it for you?

But he comes back with this promise, verse 11. Do you see it?

⁴ Isaiah 58:6.

⁵ Isaiah 58:6-7.

⁶ Isaiah 58:8.

The LORD will guide you continually, And satisfy your soul in drought,
And strengthen your bones; You shall be like a watered garden, And like a
spring of water, whose waters do not fail. Those from among you Shall
build the old waste places; You shall raise up the foundations of many
generations; And you shall be called the Repairer of the Breach, The
Restorer of Streets to Dwell In.⁷

So Isaiah comes back and he comforts his people for how good it is if they delight in the Lord and have a genuine fast. And then he does, he takes the same pattern and applies it to the sabbath. And so that is what he does in verses 13 and 14, the verses that we have just read.

And so we find the blessings that are offered to us in fasting in a proper way, not just doing it mechanically. And then also keeping the sabbath day his way and not our way.

So that brings us to the first statement in verse 13. Do you see how it fits with all the book of Isaiah? It is in the section of the suffering servant and redemption of mankind. Why? Because the celebration of the sabbath day is to not only picture redemption, but literally bring the redemption of delight and pleasure to his people because that is what Jesus does. That is what happens when he forgives you of your sins. There will be rivers of living water flowing out of your soul that you will have life and you will have it more abundantly. That is what Jesus does.

So the sabbath is a way that we celebrate Jesus by observing him. We take an entire day to just soak it in and to express it to one another, to say it to ourselves, to wrap up our whole family in it and anyone that is in our house.

You know, we have a Christian world who says, “Well, my relatives are here. I am not going to celebrate the sabbath.”

The Bible says, “No. You and your household. You take everybody. Everybody working for you, your son, your daughter, your servant, your maidservant. You even make sure your animals get a rest if you haven’t thought of that.”

Take everybody with you and where are you taking them? You are taking them to Jesus. Husbands and wives should take their whole families to Jesus every Sunday, every sabbath day.

Ok, now we are confronted in verse 13 now with a choice. You can see how I have got this outlined. I have two major categories in which I have broken up this text, the choice to make in verse 13 and then Isaiah defines the nature of that choice, exactly what is on the table. What are you choosing from, ok?

And then the second part he gives you the victory. He shows you the victories that are there in the keeping of the sabbath. That is what verses 13 and 14 do.

⁷ Isaiah 58:11-12.

So make the choice. So there is a choice. There is a contingency. It begins with a verb. What you do with your foot, what your body follows your foot and what you do on that day, the way you turn on that day makes all the difference in the world. And so here an opportunity comes every week to turn of your foot, a verb, something that you actually do on a specific day with your foot. And like what we learned in our studies in Deuteronomy is the foot is always being turned at Mount Gerazim or Mount Ebal. It is either turned toward blessing or turned toward curse. There are always two great mountains looming over the people of God to remind them the way life really works.

There is the mountain of blessing and there is the mountain of cursing. The foot turned toward blessing is the image that is given here.

Now I want you to devote your attention to this very first word. It is the word “if.” It is a two letter word, but it really sets the stage for everything that Isaiah is trying to communicate here. “If” in verse 13 and then look at the first word in verse 14, “Then,” ok? Do you see what Isaiah is doing? If, verse 13, then, verse 14. So he is going to define what you should do and then he is going to tell you what will happen if you do it.

So there is a choice that is involved here. And the idea is if you want the delight that your heart so desires, here is how you get it. Do you want the victory? Do you want the provision? Then keep the sabbath day and make it a delight. That is really the very simple logic that Isaiah is using here.

And with this if then tension we are confronted with our views of pleasure, our views of delight and what we should do on what this calls, “my holy day.”

And what it is really it is a design for delight. I love what Matthew Henry says about this. He says that the sabbath is a sign between God and his professing people, his appointing a sign of his favor.

It is a beautiful sign that helps us to understand God’s favor toward us, that he would desire a day, a day in which he would just saturate us with every good thing and he would place within us a certain guarantee, an if and a then.

You know, this passage, I believe, it is an apologetic for the goodness of God. It demonstrates the goodness of God’s intentions towards his people.

You know, when Jonathan Edwards wrote his first resolution he said, “Resolved, that I will do whatsoever I think to be most to God’s glory and my good and my profit and my pleasure in my whole duration without any consideration of time.”

When Jonathan Edwards says, “I am going to do everything I can to increase my delight and my pleasure,” when he said that, he understood the profit and the pleasure that God designs for his people.

And so in the same way that Edwards' resolution declares it, so Isaiah 58 declares the same principle, that there is a design for delight for mankind and it is for us to turn our foot in that direction.

And so we have an apologetic for the goodness of God.

The turning of the foot is perhaps a difficult thing to understand in the way that it is framed in the text. Some say that it is the turning of the foot to travel on the sabbath. That may be true. It may be implying the turning of the foot toward the good things of the sabbath, but it is really the same thing when you think of it that way.

And so what this is is it is the establishment of the turn of a foot which it either ends up expressing your obedience toward God, your desire to love him and follow his ways or to throw off all restraint and follow your own sinful desires wherever your foot would leave you after the meditations of your own heart. So it matters what your foot does on the sabbath.

Now, I know that these things that we have been reading have been challenging to our own understanding. And here is one reason. The commands regarding the sabbath are very dis... because they expose many of our worldly ways, our worldly ways of thinking, our worldly ways of living even the way we handle our schedule. And so they cause repentance.

For example, it shows us how spiritually shallow we can be and how we really have little place in our hearts for meditation and prayer and fellowship and mercy, how little toleration, how short a fuse we have, how we burn out on it so fast. And so God gives you a day so if you learn how not to burn out so fast on meditating on God and considering his grace. Isn't that convicting, though? It shows us that we have an obsessive affection for work, that we will find every reason to grind on in our work when God has called us not to do it. It shows us our obsessiveness towards things. And God would break the obsessive addiction to work. How easy it is to become so addicted to your work, so fearful that you won't be provided for, that you throw aside the commands of God and are not even willing to stop and say, "God is my provider."

It shows us in very vivid terms how compulsive we become in a life of incessant buying and selling and we just hate to stop it. And so when someone says, "Stop buying and selling," like we find in all the texts of Scripture really regarding the sabbath, we hate it. We still want to maintain our habits of buying and selling on the sabbath when God has so clearly said that it was unlawful for us to do it. It is very threatening and it causes us to either rise up in rage against God or maybe anger against your leaders or it causes you to say, "Oh, Lord, I sinned." And that is what I think has been happening in our church. We have said, "Oh, Lord, here is what you have said. Help me."

It shows us another thing. It is such disturbing teaching because it shows us we need diversions to get us through the day. We are so addicted to our entertainments. We are so in love with our sports that we can't stop them for a second. Well, we might do it for four

hours, but that is a good as it gets pretty much. And we can't wait to get on to the things that would divert us so that we don't have to think about God anymore deeply than we already have in the first three hours of the day or whatever. And it shows us that we need a game, we need a show, we need to go shopping, we need a spree or a trip or something to make us happy. The truth is if that is what we want, we will never be happy. That is what God is saying on the sabbath.

He is saying, "You have to stop that so you will know how to be happy." He reveals that we are really very addicted to the various kinds of entertainments and sports.

My guess is probably in our region alone 75 percent of the people that are going to the churches today in our community are going to be at soccer practice or something by two o'clock in the afternoon. They can't have one day. They just cannot stomach it.

And so it exposes our hatred for God and how we hate to spend the day meditating on him. We can't even conceive of it. It sounds like a bondage. It sounds like a threat to our happiness when, in fact, it is our only hope for happiness.

If you can find a way to get out your scissors and cut out the fourth commandment, then I think you could stop seeking the sabbath. If you can find a way to say that it is abrogated, been stopped celebrating it. But I really honestly believe that the Bible tells us what when we do, we do it to our own peril.

So there is the choice, right? There is the if and the then choice and there is a lot, there is so much loaded into that choice. So many of our affections, so many of our patterns are loaded in that choice.

And so then Isaiah defines very carefully the nature of the choice. And I am going to give you four elements of that choice because he is very specific. He really gives us, you know, an all encompassing grasp of what he means.

So he says, "From your pleasure to my pleasure, or from your pleasure to God's pleasure." That is what he is talking about.

So there is a distinction being made here. There are different kinds of pleasures. There is my kind of pleasure and there is God's kind of pleasure. Or maybe it is more clearly said that there is the kind of pleasure that God gives you. Then there is the other kind and that is the kind that you want to give yourself, the one that you think will make you happy. You just go choose anything that you think will make you happy and go stick it in there and see if it does.

So there is a distinction being made in verse 13. So there are always two wills at work in the universe, my will and the Word of God. And a very sharp distinction is being made in verse 13 against these two kinds.

And what God is saying here is, “Look, don’t mess up true pleasure on my holy day. Don’t mess with pleasure because I created it and I want you to have it.”

This is the kind intention of God’s will. It is not that he would pull back any pleasure. He desires to actually magnify it and make it greater. It is a greater pleasure than yours. That is the idea that he is communicating here.

So he is warning us about this distinction that we always have to be aware of. So it is your pleasure or his. That is it.

So when we enter into the question: What should I do on the sabbath day, we always have to think about that there are two competing pleasures at work in our souls. And the truth is we are not discerning enough to get it right so we have to do something out of our own comfort zone, out of our own pattern, outside of our own thinking process. And that is God’s pleasure, ok?

Then, he also speaks of it in terms of the way that you speak about it or your vision for it and he says, “And call the sabbath two things.” Ok? It matters what you call it in your brain. How have you been conditioned in your own thinking to think about the sabbath? You know, people think differently about the sabbath, but he is saying that here there are two ways that you should think about it. There are two visions that you should always be casting for the sabbath. And you fathers and you mothers this is so critical for you. What is the vision you are casting for the sabbath? Because he tells you right here how to cast a proper vision for the sabbath. And he uses two basic ideas. One, it is a vision of delight and it is a vision of honor. It is a day that is honorable.

Ok, those are the two visions that need to be cast in every household. And in casting that vision you are casting a vision for Christian culture for your family. And so he says it is a vision of delight. It is a vision of delight.

If you would ever hope to celebrate the sabbath and make it a delight, you have to call it a delight first. Unless you can call it a delight it never will be, so that is really where it begins. It begins with this self talk and also the talk that you have with those in your households.

And so it is so important that fathers and mothers cast a vision for the sabbath by calling it a delight.

I received a letter from one of the women at our church this week. Here is what she says.

She says, “Mr. Brown, on Saturday evening I was about to prepare the dish for church on Sunday and joy leapt from within at the thought. I couldn’t wait to thank God for giving us a sabbath. Preparing for Sunday has become a delight and I find myself preparing days ahead. I pray that God will open our eyes to see him and that he will increase our joy in keeping his commandments.”

I love that letter because it was such a vivid practical expression of this verse right here. She called it a delight and so it created delight. That is what he is saying here.

It causes us to ask this question. What things are we teaching our families to delight in? Or what things are we saying to our families about delight regarding the way that we think about and talk to them and lead them through this day that God had called a day of delight?

And the truth of the matter is what Isaiah is exposing here is that we prefer our little pleasures over the big pleasures. We like our own dinky ones. We like to have the lower things. What God is inviting us to enjoy a big pleasure as we push the little ones aside. Quit drinking from the brackish water. Drink from the clear spring water. Go get a big delight, not a dinky delight is really the idea. Call it a delight.

People call the sabbath a burden for many reasons. Here is John Piper on the matter.

“The reason so many people feel that it is a burden is partly because we have so much leisure and we don’t feel the need for sabbath rest. But more important, I think, is the fact that not many people really enjoy what God intended us to enjoy on the sabbath, namely himself. Many professing Christians enjoy sports and television and secular books and magazines and recreations and hobbies and games, far more than they enjoy direct interaction with God and his Word or in worship or in reading Christian books or in meditative strolls. That is the heart of the matter. Our delights are all messed up. And so it is so reflected on the sabbath. God so kindly has given us this day.”

I think it is kind of a wake up call for us to help us see, yes, we did fall a little bit too much in love with these other diversions and entertainments so that we can’t put them down on the sabbath. If you can’t put them down on the sabbath, let this be meditated upon that it is possible that you have loved your entertainments more than you have loved your Savior who shed his blood for you and you can’t even give one day out of seven to meditate on.

So you have to call it a delight. And the remedy is this holy day, my holy day to the Lord.

And so what this does is it makes husbands and wives in many ways the director of delight, the purveyor of pleasure. It makes husbands and wives these individuals who come together and they create a beautiful God centered nourishing, sweet, delightful... focused on the things that bring genuine delight.

You know, what can you do? This is a big question that people are asking. What can you do on the sabbath? Do you just have to sit on the couch and stare into nothingness? Is that God’s design for the sabbath?

Well, we know for sure it is a day to cease from work. We also know it is a day to delight. We also know it is a day that should be holy, completely different than all the

other days of the week. We have to think of what we see the Lord Jesus doing on the sabbath. The Lord Jesus is walking through the grain field on the sabbath with his disciples. He is in a house and he is healing a sick person. He is teaching in the synagogue on the sabbath. He is doing many things.

Jesus is not sitting on a couch staring into nothingness. He is doing something. It is not a day of leisure. The Puritans called them sabbath exercises.

Remember last year when we were reading David Brainerd's biography? David Brainerd, one of the most amazing men that God has given the Church spoke often of the sabbath.

Go back and look at his biography and see the things that happened on the sabbath. He would often comment that he didn't have the sweetness of the sabbath, that was designed in it. But he called the sabbath, sabbath exercises. In other words not just sabbath couch potatoing, there is something you do. You are doing good works. The sabbath is made for mercy. The sabbath is made for man.

So it is good to be a blessing to people on the sabbath.

How many people are there in this community that you could be a blessing to by speaking with them or praying with them or conversing with them or fellowshipping with them. It is not a day to sit on the couch and stare off into space. It is a day to do stuff with people.

There are sermons to talk about. There is Scripture to read. There are walks that can be taken. There are people to visit for the express purpose of delighting in the Lord and blessing them.

Think of how much blessing you can be on the sabbath as a family or as an individual. But set yourself to that. There are songs to sing and Scripture to memorize. And there is the cultivation of a spirit of delight in every moment of the day. That is why God created the sabbath.

And he is telling us that if you want to delight, then that is how you get it. So he calls it a day of delight. God is the fountain of living waters. He is constantly turning toward his people to do good in the same way that a loving father sent the angels and the beasts to care for his Son is the same way that he sends you a day to care for you and to bless you. God is so kind.

I have dozens and dozens of verses of Scripture on delight and perhaps we will be able to get to these during this series somehow, but it is a vision of delight. You see that and it is also a vision of honor and that is honoring a day, setting a day aside.

God is confronting our value system on how we value different days and there are ways to have a vision for the sabbath and the vision that he is promoting is a vision of honor,

calling it honorable. You call it a delight and you call it honorable. That is the vision, right?

And so it is a day to be honored. It is a sign of God's authority. God commands that we organize our schedule his way, not our own. It is a sign of his love to fill it up with delight and pleasure. But it is a day for that. It is a day for mercy, not sacrifice. It is a day also that will bring judgment upon you and your family and your church and your community if you do not fulfill it. There is severe and terrible, terrifying judgments associated with breaking the sabbath day. It is a day of rest.

Next week we will deal with Hebrews four which says, "Enter into my rest."

And so here on this day it is a figure of spiritual rest in Christ, a day to completely immerse yourself in the rest of Jesus Christ that he has atoned for all of our sins, that you can't work for your salvation, that you can never be righteous on your own, that the blood of Jesus Christ is the only way that you can be made whole.

You can't do it by becoming a better person, thinking better, being nicer, being [?] toward the earth. That doesn't get you anywhere. Only the blood of Jesus gets you anywhere. You can shine up your character and say yes ma'am and no ma'am. It gets you nowhere with God. Only the blood of Jesus Christ atones for sins.

And that is what the sabbath is. It is a picture of Christ. It is a day of public worship and it is a day of rest for everything and it is, as John Calvin has said, it is meant to fashion and polish us. It is meant to help us reflect on his works. It is meant to publicly hear the sermon and reflect upon it. It is meant to get this. Bend all our wits to consider the gracious things that God has done for us and dedicate the whole day to him so as we may be utterly withdrawn from the world.

So today this day that we call honorable has all those elements in it. It is a day that is actually, it is power packed with dozens of very colored elements. It is not a day to sit on the couch and stare into space. It is a beautiful day of relationship and words and mercy and all of these things.

And also, by the way, it is a 24 hour day. Isaiah uses the word יומֵ (yome). It is the word that also Moses uses in Genesis to speak of the days of creation. And I find it fascinating that there are creationists who stand all their weight on the definition of this word meaning it is a 24 hour day, but when they get to the sabbath it is really only like a three hour day to them. This is the same word. It is the same time frame. It is a 24 hour day. It is not a couple of hours of your convenience somehow in whatever day of the week you want. It is a 24 hour day.

Honestly it is 52 days of vacation. It is seven and a half weeks of rest for God's people. God is better than any employer that you have ever had. He gives seven and a half weeks of rest where you are to abandon all work and come into the presence of the most delightful being there is. What a wonderful thing. He suspends all labor for you on that

day and exposes you to every beautiful thing if you would take it. Although we would take all of our days of vacation for our employer, we don't take it from our own God. It is astonishing.

So from your pleasure to God's pleasure, from your vision to God's vision and then, thirdly, from your own ways to God's ways. From your own ways to God's ways.

So this challenges us to think about our ways.

We all love to do different kinds of things. We all have different hobbies. We all have different callings and work structure and things like that. That is a good thing. That is the way it ought to be. But there is a way, there is a conditioning that we have that actually abrogates the sabbath, ok, practically. And we live in a culture where people are conditioned for a need to be entertained. We live in a world of constant noise. External media is constantly there to stir us up. We lust after it. We can't sit in a car without turning media on. We can't even take a walk without sticking ear buds in our ears.

It is often humorous to me to walk and often see a couple walking together and both of them are in their own little world with their own special earbuds in. They are listening to different songs. They are going in different directions. They might be married by legality, but their hearts are going in completely different worlds.

Well, that is what happens. There are ways that we have that abrogate the sabbath on a practical level. And we are used to being stirred up by fabricated media constantly. And the result is that it feels very unusual to be quiet and we need a shot of something to enliven us, something from the outside to stir us up, not God though. And so we live in a world that is just completely saturated with entertainment and external media. We have a way about us that is often hard to break.

And so he says, "Not your ways, but God's ways." And there has been some interesting discussion of late on this whole matter. Someone has just written a book where she says that children do not learn to focus and concentrate in a pool of quietness. Their minds have become fragmented and their temperament is irritable and their ability to absorb knowledge and sift it and grade it and evaluate it cannot be developed. Reading a book quietly, watching a rain drop slide slowly down the window pane or a lady bird crawl up a leaf, trying to hear the sound of a cat breathing when it is asleep, asking strange questions as where do all the colors go at night?

There is just no time for mediation that is the point.

Because we have such a bombardment of media and noise and visual imagery constantly. We have no time to stop and listen and meditate and think. We always have to have external stimuli.

That is just one of the ways of this world. And it is actually very special to our generation. We are absolutely bombarded by every form of media, sound, visual imagery and things like that. And we can't be stimulated without that.

There are ways about the way that we live that actually abrogate the sabbath for us because we just can't tolerate the mediations of God. We can't tolerate long conversations with people speaking about the blessedness of almighty God. We can't bet here to labor in prayer or to comfort someone. We just don't have time for it.

There is a show we have got to get to. There is a song we have got to hear. There is something we have got to see that is so funny and so interesting that as soon as church is over we are going to pop our laptops off at our house and see something that makes us happy. There are just ways about us.

So he is saying, "Not your ways, but my ways."

So when we talk about the sabbath we have to ask ourselves this question. Ok, so we live in a certain culture. We are born... we are living in the 21st century. It is not exactly like the first century. It has all the same sins of the first century. They just express themselves differently. We live in a century right now where there are lots of different challenges we have to consider when we think about the sabbath. And why is it that we can't stop and take a day and mediate on the Lord? Why?

Let me suggest this. One reason is that we have been so stimulated that we can't live without it and we are just addicted to stimulation and so we don't have relationships. We don't have conversations. We don't pray and we don't even know how to enjoy the Lord.

But God is kind. And he gives us a day to practice it, to break the chains of this external saturation so that our souls would be fed and that we would be useful to our brothers and sisters.

Think about your patterns, your ways. Think about your ways and analyze them and revolutionize them according to Scripture.

We have talked about in the past—and I want to mention it again—we have talked about renouncing without replacing. We have talked about we have a tendency to quit doing something, but then we don't replace it with anything.

If you learn anything, take anything away from this teaching on the sabbath, please take this, that God when he speaks of the sabbath, he never only talks about taking away. He always talks about adding as well. There is something to add to it in the way of rest or whatever. We can make a long laundry list of what he is telling us to add to it. Here it is delight. Here it is call it an honor and the various texts of Scripture on the sabbath give us different angles on what we replace it with.

The Westminster Confession sums this up in terms of what you do in terms of your ways. The Westminster Shorter Catechism says it is spending the whole time in the public and private exercises of God's worship. I think that sums it up, you know, in a fairly dense way. I like the way that they say that. They talk about exercise. So it is not a day for a bump on the log. And they talk about specific things that have to do with stimulating godliness in our hearts.

And then the fourth thing that Isaiah says to define the nature of the choice is from your words to God's words. So it actually even has to do with how you talk. It refers to idle and vain talk instead of purposeful talk, instead of profitable talk, instead of godly talk. It is a day for seeking profit by the words that you speak, not your own words.

So when we break up here, here is what we should do. We should be crying out to God. "God, help me not to use my own words. Help me to speak words of life to my brother or sister. Don't let me just babble on."

You know, how socially acceptable is it to babble on about one irrelevant subject after another on Sunday at church? How socially acceptable is that?

Well, you know how socially acceptable it is because we have all done it. But it is not acceptable to God that we would spend our day just in idle babble, but that we would not seek our own words, but that we would seek genuinely to be a blessing.

Now how much better is that? How much better is it to spend a day where there is genuine blessing coming out of your mouth and you cried out to God for it and he helped you and he put in your mouth words of life, not idle babblings. Who wants to live a life of idle babbling? And yet we do it all the time.

But God has given us a day to rescue us from that, to stop that pattern and to be more self-conscious that there is a God in heaven and he has words to put in your mouth for your brothers and sisters so that they would be blessed.

So not your own words, but my words.

I think of Deuteronomy 32 which says, "Give ear, O heavens... Let my teaching drop as the rain."⁸

I really believe the sabbath has been meant by God not only that his words would drop as rain in the preaching of the Word in the reading of the Word, in the singing of the Word, in the celebrating of it in the communion, but also in the conversations of the people that his Word would come down like rain. As they would say on the sabbath day, "Lord, not my words, but yours. Give me yours. Fill my mouth with sweet things. Then help me to deliver it to my sister and my brother."

God is delivering us from these patterns of speaking our own words.

⁸ Deuteronomy 32:1, 2.

We note that his Word will not return void.

Here is a truth about this. Does God want to run your life? Yes. He wants to run your weekly schedule and he wants you to take a day. And when you get to that day, he wants to run your mouth. He wants your tongue to be under his authority because it is not your own and it is not your day. It is his day.

But if you regard it as his day, as a delight, as holy, then he promises that more sweetness will come from that than anything you could have achieved on your own through your own words. Here he exposes the bankruptcy of our own words, the silliness of them and the inadequacy of them.

And then he appeals to the victory.

So he defines what it all means in terms of pleasure, vision, ways and words.

Has he left any stone unturned? I don't know. I think he has pretty much covered everything that might happen in life for us on the sabbath. And he has told us what it means.

And then he speaks about the victory that is there.

Verse 14. Then... Remember, if, verse 13. Then. So we have the guaranteed result.

“Then you shall delight yourself in the LORD.”⁹

So that is the first thing that happens is that you will delight. You know, isn't that interesting? If you call it a delight it will become that. It starts with the vision. It starts with what you say about it. If you say it is drudgery then that is what you are going to get. You get what you pay for.

If you call it a delight and begin to wrap yourself... you may have to force yourself to call it, but call it a delight and keep finding every reason it is a delight and then when you get there it will cause an upwelling of delight in your soul. It will have its perfect work. And it will delight your soul.

So he says, “Then, you shall delight yourself in the LORD.”¹⁰

And then there is victory. “I will cause you to ride on the high hills of the earth.”¹¹

This same promise is in Deuteronomy 32:12 and 13 where he says he causes us to ride on the high places of the earth.

⁹ Isaiah 58:14.

¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹ Ibid.

There is this victory that comes from obedience. We have been very well aware of the theme of Deuteronomy.

“Oh, that they had such a heart in them that they would fear Me and always keep all My commandments, that it might be well with them and with their children forever!”¹²

That is the idea here. It will be well. It is victory. You will ride on the high hills.

And then there is provision. He will feed you with the heritage of Jacob your father. This heritage is defined as an everlasting covenant. He will feed you with the fruits of the promises of Abraham. that in you all the families of the earth will be blessed and that there will be millions in heaven before the throne of God praising him. He will fulfill these things. He will give you the heritage of your father Jacob. He will give you godly seed from one generation to the next. It is a promise of a heritage.

There are two great signs of Christian culture in a household. Here they are. One is family worship. If you are worshipping God in your family it is this great sign that bears much fruit. And if you celebrate the sabbath there is a heritage for you, brother, in your family. Families that despise the sabbath often have offspring in them who care nothing for the sabbath. They care nothing for the church. They care nothing for God. They pour out nothing for their brothers and sisters. They live unto themselves. They die unto themselves and they have no heritage. And that is the opposite of what he is saying here.

No, there is a heritage here that goes on. It spins on. It is the heritage of Jacob your father. It is an everlasting covenant and it is the same from one generation to the next.

So those are the promises of victory, delight, victory and then provision of the heritage.

And then, finally, we come to the last phrase in these two verses, “The mouth of the LORD has spoken it.”¹³

Isn't that interesting how he ends it? “The mouth of the LORD has spoken it.”¹⁴

He ends it with a very crisp, clear, very easily understandable phrase. “The mouth of the LORD has spoken it.”¹⁵

This is not the opinion of some self possessed preacher. This is God almighty saying, “I have spoken these things. They are true.”

And so he is saying, “Be assured of the reliability of these consequences that God has said it. This is the God who spoke all creation into being by a Word. His Word is true.

¹² Deuteronomy 5:29.

¹³ Isaiah 58:14.

¹⁴ Ibid.

¹⁵ Ibid.

Every word of God is pure. And what the Word of God has spoken the Word of God will produce. That is what he is ending this with. He is ending it with the authority of God.

And so God has given us a day, a day of delight, a day of pleasure, a day of the words of God, a day of the ways of God, a day of mercy, not sacrifice, a day of ceasing from buying and selling and here we find it a wonderful day of directing all of the mind and all of the words on the words of life.

So here we are. All of us have a foot. And that foot can be turned, always will be turned either toward Mount Gerazim or Mount Ebal, the mountain of blessing or the mountain of cursing. These are always the two choices that God gives his people. He is very clear and very simple in his instructions toward us. And I pray that we will take them as seriously as the last phrase of this verse indicates, ““The mouth of the LORD has spoken it.”¹⁶

You know, I pray that our day would reflect that song that I love so much.

Take my life and let it be consecrated, Lord, to thee.
Take my hands and let them move at the impulse of thy love.
Take my feet and let them be swift and beautiful for thee.
Take my voice and let me sing always only for my king.
Take my lips and let them be filled with messages for thee.
Take my silver and my gold, not a mite would I withhold.
Take my love, my God, I pour at thy feet its treasure store.
Take myself and I will be ever only all for thee.
Ever only all for thee.

And I think Isaiah captured this in this text and I pray that God would just be so mighty among us that we would fulfill all of his commands as a church regarding the sabbath.

Let's pray.

Lord, thank you for the delight, the pleasure that you have ordained for your people. I thank you for the sweetness of it and how you would interrupt us from our defiling ways, our disappointing pathways and take us and put us on the highway of life in Jesus' name. Amen.

¹⁶ Ibid.