

Remember the Sabbath

DARRELL DELANEY

One definition of music is the composition of sound and silence over time. That composition of sound and silence becomes beat, tempo, rhythm, and music. If all the sounds were together, it would be noise; if there were no sounds...well, it wouldn't be music at all. Somehow, the rhythm makes it music. Our lives have a rhythm to it as well, and sabbath is a very integral part of that rhythm. Today we will learn what the ancient, yet relevant, practice of sabbath means for us in our busier than ever culture. Stay tuned.

SCOTT HOEZEE

Welcome to *Groundwork*, where we dig into scripture to lay the foundation for our lives. I am Scott Hoezee.

DARRELL DELANEY

And I am Darrell Delaney; and on today's episode of *Groundwork*, Scott, we are continuing in our Ten Commandment series. This is the second program. We are going to deal with the fourth commandment, sabbath-keeping. Now, if you remember, Scott, we did a spiritual discipline series not too long ago, where we laid out a lot of good things about sabbath-keeping...

SCOTT HOEZEE

Right.

DARRELL DELANEY

But there is always going to be more that we can unpack in the scripture. I feel like scripture is like a sponge. You can wring it as much as you want, you will never wring all the good stuff out of it. There are always plenty of things for you that you could learn, so we want to talk more about sabbath today.

SCOTT HOEZEE

And we may repeat a few things here, but those will just serve as good reminders to all of us. One of the things that we want to remember that we pointed out there, Darrell, was that the law was given to Israel, not as a precondition for God rescuing them from slavery in Egypt, but as the first thing, right? I mean, God saves them first, right, by sheer grace...

DARRELL DELANEY

Yes.

SCOTT HOEZEE

They don't have to keep the law. God didn't give them the Ten Commandments in Egypt and said: When you get good enough at this stuff, I will come back and give you a grade and then we will see if I will save you. No; first he saves, then the law comes as a response; and sabbath-keeping is one of them; and even though we talk about it as sabbath-keeping, I think one of the things, Darrell, that is going to emerge in this program is that sabbath is a law, but it is also a gift.

DARRELL DELANEY

I think it is also important for us to remember, Scott, that some of us think of it as sabbath keeping, like we are keeping the Sabbath, but if we understand the rhythm of what God is trying to teach us, the Sabbath keeps us...

SCOTT HOEZEE

Right.

DARRELL DELANEY

It keeps us in a healthy rhythm of going and stopping, of working and resting, and I believe God was trying to establish that after he had delivered them from the mighty hand of Pharaoh in Egypt.

So, look at what it says here in Exodus Chapter 20, when we read this verse. It says:

⁸Remember the Sabbath day by keeping it holy. ⁹Six days you shall labor and do all your work, ¹⁰but 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 any foreigner residing in your towns. ¹¹For 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.

SCOTT HOEZEE

And so, there God is saying a few things: One, take a regular rest from your labors; not just you, but anybody connected with you. Don't work, don't make other people work, because God is the one who is at work. I mean, God was able to take a sabbath after he created the heavens and the earth...

DARRELL DELANEY

Right.

SCOTT HOEZEE

Not because he was tired...God never gets tired...but just to enjoy the creation. That is what Sabbath was. Enjoy it. As I think we said in that other program in the spiritual discipline series, the fact that the seventh day was the Sabbath, and Adam and Eve were created on the end of the sixth day, that means their first day of existence was sabbath, to enjoy what God had made. It is a gift.

DARRELL DELANEY

It is a wonderful gift, and it is such an important gift that God set it apart from all the other days; and that is what keeping it holy means. It means that not only is it a beautiful and sacred day where you remember and reflect, and we will get to that, but it is also a set apart day. It is different from these other six days that you encounter; and God is trying to teach the Israelites they need this healthy rhythm of work and rest, and if they don't instruct them on this, they probably would drive themselves crazy or run themselves ragged; and they had plenty of practice with that, Scott, when it came to the Israelites being in captivity—430 years of it. So, they are coming into this new land to have deliverance from God, and they need a new way to live, and this is what God is showing them.

SCOTT HOEZEE

And what you said just a moment ago, Darrell, about setting the day apart, that is really what it means to keep it holy, right? So, remember the Sabbath day and keep it *holy*. We are not always sure what that word *holy* means. What does that mean? Well, what it means...I mean, the Hebrew word was, indeed, to be set apart; and when we did a series a while back on Leviticus, we looked at the various levels of laws in Israel, and various levels of cleanliness, and there were various ways that you could the priests could only go in there once a year. So, something of that sacred setting aside is how important Sabbath is, and we just have to do it. We have to have that day where we stop, and we let God be God. We rest in God's providential care of us. That is one of the things I think the Heidelberg Catechism in the Reformed tradition says about this, is by stopping, you stop trying to make your own life, and let God take care of you, for a day...but it reminds you

that that is really the truth every day.

DARRELL DELANEY

Definitely. I think that once we learn this rhythm of depending on God and relying on God's providential care for us, I think we realize that he is the one who keeps the world spinning, keeps the hearts beating, keeps the sun going up, the moon going down, and he is the one who is taking care of each and every one of us each day. Sabbath-keeping is actually a reminder that, just because you stop doesn't mean the world is going to end, that God is actually still taking care become unclean, and then you had to cleanse yourself, but the highest level was to be holy, which means to be free of contamination, free of anything unclean, to be set apart the way God is set apart. This is as special as it gets. You think of the Holy of Holies—the very center of the Temple—so special that even of us; and I love the fact that you brought out that it is set apart, because this is what we need to understand, that God is the one who is making these things sacred for us, so that we can understand that in the regular rhythm of working, he is not only just there on Sabbath day, but he is there every day.

SCOTT HOEZEE

All the time; and you know, in that...I think we have pointed this out more than once on *Groundwork*...but, as we all know, there are two versions of the Ten Commandments in the Old Testament: Exodus 20, and then Deuteronomy 5, when Moses repeats the Ten Commandments for the new generation after the forty years of desert wandering. So, Moses reminds the people before they go into the Promised Land of what the Ten Commandments are. The fourth commandment is the only one with a change between Exodus 20 and Deuteronomy 5.

In Exodus 20, which you just read a bit ago, Darrell: Remember the Sabbath day, for in six days the Lord created the heavens and the earth...

DARRELL DELANEY

Yes.

SCOTT HOEZEE

That is creation; but, in Deuteronomy 5's version, it says: Keep the Sabbath day...¹⁵[for] Remember you were slaves in Egypt, and God [led] brought you out of there with a mighty hand and an outstretched arm. Redemption. So, sabbath has something to do with the creation of the universe, and sabbath has something to do with the redemption of the universe. Those are the two biggest themes in the whole Bible, so sabbath is pretty important. God is going to keep the things spinning, as you just said, and God has already redeemed the thing. It is not up to us to redeem it. He has already done it, and we rest in God.

DARRELL DELANEY

In the next segment, we plan to unpack these thoughts even further, so stay tuned.

Segment 2

SCOTT HOEZEE

Welcome to *Groundwork*, where we dig into scripture to lay the foundation for our lives. I am Scott Hoezee.

DARRELL DELANEY

And I am Darrell Delaney; and so far in this second episode of our Ten Commandment series, we have been talking about the Sabbath, and we recapped what three things we saw that we learned from the passage, and one of them was that: 1) God told everyone to rest from their labors. 2) Don't put your servant or your equipment or animals or anything in the place of you when you are told to rest; and 3) God rests even though he is never tired, and he still gives us rest and he shows the pattern of how we should live.

SCOTT HOEZEE

Exactly; and that is an important point that you note there, Darrell, in terms of the scope of this commandment. I mean, it is one thing to say, you know, you shouldn't work, but then, you know, neither

should your servants and neither should your horses and cows. Really, really? I mean, if we really widen out our focus to think about the Jubilee year, which was a Sabbath year every, what, seventy years, the soil was supposed to get a sabbath. I mean, even the earth gets a rest; and again, not because it gets tired, although soil can get tired, but because it is just woven into the very fabric of the creation. But the thing you note that you aren't supposed to sneak in other people either, that is so important because sometimes we do get so focused on the economy—on productivity—look busy, you know; I mean, that bumper sticker: Jesus is coming again; look busy! Like that is the goal of human life. You know, Darrell, when you get to the prophets, particularly the minor prophets, as we call them, people like Amos, when they assailed Israel for their covenant failures, one of the things that came up very often was how the people had come to despise the Sabbath. I think it is Amos in particular who says: You know, people on the Sabbath are just tapping their feet and looking at their watch and saying: When is this miserable Sabbath going to be over? When can we get back to commerce? When can we get back to making money and open up the stock market? This Sabbath is a waste of time because we are losing money, we are losing productivity. It reminds me of something that Microsoft founder Bill Gates said years ago when asked why he doesn't go to church, and he said: Because there are a lot more productive things you can do on a Sunday morning than just sit in a church. Well, when that is your priority and focus, that is a problem.

DARRELL DELANEY

It is a problem, and especially in the case of the Israelites because they have servants and people from foreign lands and people who were coming from other countries and regions that they are using to have servants and work for them, and if they follow God's rhythm then they have an opportunity to be missionaries to these people to show them the witness of how this is how God's people live, and you can become God's people too if you follow this way.

There is a particular verse in Isaiah that talks about this. Isaiah 49:6 says:

^{6b}I... (I being God) I will make you a light unto the nations that my salvation will reach the ends of the earth. I had a professor when I was at Kuyper College, which is also called Reformed Bible College, when I was there. Dr. Stephen Pettis taught Intro to Missions, and he always said that God's original design, because of where he strategically placed them in the world, and the conduct and the character that he wanted them to have, they were supposed to be cross-cultural missionaries; and I don't think they quite understood that sabbath-keeping could actually be a witness and a testimony to the people who were serving them, but if I was a person who came in from another country and I saw them living a certain way, it would impact me, but I don't think they got that message.

SCOTT HOEZEE

No; and one of the main things that was supposed to shine forth from their lives...one of the main things they were supposed to show was that their priority was God and their greatest delight was in God, not in something else of this earth; and Jesus gets at this in Matthew 6:19-21. This is part of the Sermon on the Mount. Well-known words here: "Do not store up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moths and vermin destroy, and where thieves break in and steal. ²⁰But store up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where moths and vermin do not destroy and thieves do not break in and steal. ²¹For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also."

So, our greatest treasure is supposed to be God, and one of the things, Darrell, that the Sabbath is supposed to do is make sure we reset our priorities on God as our highest treasure.

DARRELL DELANEY

I think that is important that you are talking about reset and recalibrating here, because if we don't acknowledge God in all our ways...if we don't acknowledge God especially on the day he set aside for us to rest, then we can get caught up in what we do, we can get caught up in how much money we make, what the degrees that we have behind our name...the letters we have behind our name...the achievements...the bigger barns, if you will, the car, the house, the family, whatever...the athletic achievement; and if we don't understand that God values us as people, then we will get caught up in the things that we do.

Jesus gets at this, actually in the Gospel of Matthew is talked about in his baptism. So, let's read this verse from Chapter 3 that says this:

¹³Then Jesus came from Galilee to the Jordan to be baptized by John. ¹⁴But John tried to defer him, saying, “I need to be baptized by you, and do you come to me?” ¹⁵Jesus replied, “Let it be so now, as it proper for us to do this to fulfill all righteousness.” Then John consented. ¹⁶As soon as Jesus was baptized, he went up out of the water. At that moment, heaven was opened and he saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove and alighting on him. ¹⁷And a voice from heaven said, “This is my Son, whom I love, with him I am well pleased.”

So, what is important to me, Scott, in this passage is that before Jesus does one miracle...before he walks on any water, before he turns any fish and loaves into multiple meals for people, before he casts out any demons or teaches any lesson, the Father is letting him know that the relationship is more important than the fact that he is just his Son and that he loves him and is pleased with him. It just transcends the fact that performance doesn't need to be a part of that, but the relationship is most important; and Sabbath is the opportunity for us to remember that.

SCOTT HOEZEE

And you know what you just pointed out, Darrell, and that is such a good point, that God gave Jesus his favor and God anointed him with the Holy Spirit before he had done anything in his ministry, and that makes him parallel to what we said a little while ago. Israel didn't get the law first, and then was told to keep it, and if you keep it I [God] will save you. They got saved out of Egypt first, and then the law came as a way to express gratitude. So, that makes Jesus and Israel parallel, and that makes sense because in the New Testament, and especially in Matthew's gospel that you just read from, Darrell, Jesus is the new Israel...

DARRELL DELANEY

Yes.

SCOTT HOEZEE

Jesus recapitulates, he repeats, he rehearses everything the original Israel did, and where they failed, he succeeds, of course; but it is good to note that both the original Israel and the new Israel of Jesus got the favor of God first, and that is a gift of grace, and that is what sabbath really lets us, you know, reflect on. You know, a while back we did a series on spiritual practices here on *Groundwork*, one of which was worship, and we recalled at that time something the liturgical scholar John Witvliet said: What is worship? Well, it is trinitarian, new covenant renewal. Every Sunday...and you know, we celebrate sabbath on the Lord's Day now, the day of the resurrection, the first day of the week; but every sabbath—every Sunday—we remind ourselves of our relationship with God by grace, and that resets our clocks, it resets our values, it reminds us who we are...whose we are. That is what we do with worship...that is what we do on the Sabbath day. Coming up as we round out this program, we want to reflect a little bit more on the character of God, but also give some practical tips for how we can keep that Sabbath day holy. So, stay tuned.

Segment 3

DARRELL DELANEY

I am Darrell Delaney with Scott Hoezee, and you are listening to *Groundwork*; and Scott, as we close out this program, we want to think more about how God is existent in our lives and never tires. We talked about how he told us to rest from our labors; he also told those who were connected to the Israelites not to work in their place...not their animals, not their people...and now we want to talk about how God never tires, even though he... I find this extremely interesting he did that, because he took a break, even though he didn't need it. We could look at this verse here in Isaiah 40. It says this:

²⁸Do you not know? Have you not heard? The Lord is the everlasting God, the Creator of the ends of the earth. He will not grow tired or weary, and his understanding no one can fathom. (And then this verse:) ²⁹He gives strength to the weary, and increases the power of the weak.

Not only does he not get tired, Scott, but he gives strength to the weak.

SCOTT HOEZEE

Exactly; and God is the one who established sabbath in the creation. God is the one who celebrated sabbath along with Adam and Eve in the book of Genesis; and again, not because he was tired, but because he wanted

to revel in all that he had made, and he wanted Adam and Eve to enjoy all that he had made; but it does...for us anyway...it does restore us. God doesn't need to be restored; we do. We do get tired, but the one who doesn't grow weary is able to give strength to us when we feel weak, but we have to let him do that then, too; and sabbath is one of the ways he does that. So, when we bulldoze over sabbath, if we feel burnout coming on, or something, it is not God's fault. He gave us a day to minister to us, to strengthen us.

DARRELL DELANEY

And it is beautiful that the God who created everything knows that we will deplete ourselves, that we need him to pour back into us, to recharge us so we can get the rest, recovery, and revelation that we need.

So, I just want to switch gears here, Scott, for a second and talk about how to enjoy this Sabbath day. What do we do? What is happening? Pete Scazzero, in his book, *Emotionally Healthy Spirituality...The Emotionally Healthy Leader*...he has a series...he talks about...there are four things: You can stop, you can rest, you can delight, and you can contemplate. So, as I think of those things, what are some of the things we could do on this day? Number one, we can rest.

SCOTT HOEZEE

And we need rest. Think of these words from Mark Chapter 6: ³⁰The apostles gathered around Jesus and reported to him all they had done and taught. (They just came back from their first big solo ministry tour.)

DARRELL DELANEY

Oh, yes.

SCOTT HOEZEE

³¹Then, because so many people were coming and going that they did not even have a chance to eat, Jesus said to the disciples, "Come with me by yourselves to a quiet place and get some rest." ³²So they went away by themselves in a boat to a solitary place.

So, it is sort of like, Darrell, you know, on our cars there is this thing on the dashboard called the check engine light...

DARRELL DELANEY

Oh, yes.

SCOTT HOEZEE

If it is not...and ironically, that often comes on if the engine isn't getting enough oxygen to function right...well, sometimes we don't get enough oxygen, and so Jesus looked at the disciples...they had just been really, really busy doing wonderful work, but their check engine light was on, so he said: Come on; let's rest. We need that, just as human beings; but it is not just total stoppage, right? I mean, I think one thing that sometimes the Lord's Day or Sunday or the Sabbath day got kind of a bad rap when it became kind of a boring day, where you were not allowed to do anything, you just had to sit and watch the dust motes float through the shaft of sunlight in the living room, or something; but rest can include activity, too. So, you know, what recharges our batteries?

DARRELL DELANEY

Whatever things that bring you life...whatever things that bring you fun and enjoyment and fulfillment. I think that is fair game to appreciate, because God spent six days creating everything, and he actually took the next day to enjoy all of what he had made that the scripture says was very good. So, what are some of the things that you like to do? Do you like to fish? Do you like to hike? Do you like to read? Do you like to take walks? Do you exercise? Do you play video games? What do you do to enjoy yourself and redeem fun? Fun is not evil, Scott. We need to enjoy ourselves from time to time because that recharges our batteries.

SCOTT HOEZEE

A while back, as the Covid-19 pandemic was kind of winding down, I saw a billboard along the road for a mini-golf place. It said: The fun is back. One thing that was true of the Covid-19 pandemic is it was not fun, and all the places where we go to have fun were closed...

DARRELL DELANEY

Yes.

SCOTT HOEZEE

Mini-golf, restaurants, you know, amusement parks, the movies...it was all closed. So, fun is back. That is a good thing. God created that, too; and to get out into creation on Sunday makes a lot of sense, because as you just said, God took that first Sabbath day to enjoy what he had made the previous six days: Mountains and lakes and streams and songbirds, and you name it...

DARRELL DELANEY

Yes.

SCOTT HOEZEE

But, you were talking earlier about Pete Scazzero and his book, and the next one was to reflect. So, we rest, we kind of recharge, but then we also reflect on the Word of God—on what we need to hear from God.

DARRELL DELANEY

I think it is important, too, because reflection could give us perspective, perspective that we didn't have. When we are working, working, working, going, going, going, we don't really have time to process those things. So, when we take our special day, which is the Sabbath, we can stop and we can allow God to give us... I love the *Lectio Divina* and I love the *Examen* from the old practices. I think we need to dust that off, Scott, and bring that *Examen* back, because the *Examen* had questions in it, like: What might God be teaching you? What is it that you are learning in this season of life? What are the things that are consolations and desolations? What are you discouraged about? What can you thank God for? I think there is a really interesting concept that Rabbi Naomi Levy came up with that is called taking a *soulfie*. I know you have heard of taking a selfie, but this is taking a soulfie...

SCOTT HOEZEE

I like that.

DARRELL DELANEY

So, as she got ready for Hannukah, she would ask these kinds of questions: What has my soul been trying to say to me that I have been ignoring? What activities and experiences nourish my soul that I don't do enough of? What does my soul want to repair that my ego is too stubborn or fearful to repair? (That is a tough one.) And finally, what does my soul want me to reach for? I think God has been trying to get this to us all along, that we need to take inventory and find out what we need to do.

SCOTT HOEZEE

The writer and pastor, Frederick Buechner...somebody we have quoted often here on *Groundwork*...one of his famous lines from one of his best known books was: Listen to your life, because when you listen to your life, you are going to hear God speaking; and listening to God and having the discipline to listen to God, that is also a Sabbath day practice...to stop, to shut out the noises of life and of the rest of the world and just listen...listen to your soul...that soulfie thing...listen to the Word of God, listen to how they interact and talk to each other, because when you do, you are going to be restored.

DARRELL DELANEY

I think it is important that God has given us an invitation to sabbath keeping, and these are the practices that we encourage everyone to live into, and allow God to speak to them in, because he has a wonderful way to come and commune with us, thanks be to God.

SCOTT HOEZEE

Well, thanks for listening and digging deeply into scripture with *Groundwork*. We are your hosts, Scott Hoezee and Darrell Delaney. Join us again next time when we study the fifth commandment, and discuss what it means to honor our parents, and why that matters to God.

Connect with us at groundworkonline.com, our website, to share what *Groundwork* means to you, and make suggestions for future *Groundwork* programs.

DARRELL DELANEY

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