

We've got two weeks left in this series called "The Path," which is about Christian maturity and growing in our faith. So we're going to do Sabbath today and its role, and then next week we'll close out the series with two great Puritan words, "mortification" and "vivification." We'll talk at length about those ideas, but for now, let's turn to Mark 2. If you get into Exodus 20 and begin to read through the Ten Commandments, a bulk of them, religiously or irreligious, make a lot of sense. He says, "Don't make things gods that aren't God, because if you do, that thing, whatever it is, cannot bear the weight and will collapse around you and harm you and everyone around you. So if you make your spouse your god, that goes bad. If you make money your god, that goes bad. If you make your children your god, that goes bad. On and on and on we could go. If you make something a god that's not God, it will be unable to hold the weight of your expectations and it will eventually betray you and destroy you." That's the first command. It's a paraphrase, but it's the first command. "You shall have no other god before me." And that makes sense. "Don't be a liar." That makes sense. "Leave your neighbor's wife alone." That makes sense. Don't try to seduce your neighbor's wife. Learn to be content where you are. That's good advice. So if you read through them, you're kind of going, "Yeah. . . yeah. . . okay. . . of course God would be concerned about that." That's what I think when I read them. I'm grateful that He gave those tablets to Charlton Heston, and I can read that and go, "I can see why God is concerned with that."

Now there's one though in verses 8 that stands out as a little peculiar to me in regards to what God would be concerned with and what He wouldn't be concerned with. So there are all these great, ethical themes and He says, "For six days you'll work, and on the seventh you won't. Not only will you not work, but your sons and daughters will not work, nor will your servants, nor will your animals. No one will work, for God created for six days and on the seventh He rested." That last part has some theological problems, because God never gets tired. He doesn't need rest, and yet He's taking it. So this idea of Sabbath is peculiar because God is concerned about the weekend, isn't it? And then if you follow this, if you really want to do a word study on this idea, He gets very aggressive about this idea. If you get into Leviticus 23-24, He literally tells Israel, "If you will not stop, if you will not rest, if you will not celebrate, surely I will destroy all of you." So we've kind of just lost what's happening here and we've forgot some basic, foundational truths of what we believe as Christians. So the Sabbath, from my parent's generation, was a day where you weren't allowed to do anything. So my house was like, "Hey, can I go over to John's house?" "No, it's Sabbath." There was just no fun on the Sabbath. "You will sit there and think holy thoughts. This is the day that the Lord has made. You will rejoice and be glad." So it didn't make any sense. Sabbath was where you just don't do anything. Unfortunately that's not biblically the idea at all.

So that takes us to Mark 2. "One Sabbath he was going through the grainfields, and as they made their way, his disciples began to pluck heads of grain. And the Pharisees were saying to him, "Look, why are they doing what is not lawful on the Sabbath?" And he said to them, "Have you never read what David did. . . ." I love how Jesus quotes Scripture to men who are experts in the Scriptures to show them they are wrong. It is a constant practice of Jesus. He loves the book of Deuteronomy. He's constantly quoting Deuteronomy to men who had memorized Deuteronomy to prove that what the men were teaching out of Deuteronomy was wrong. Let's keep reading. "Have you never read what David did, when he was in need and was hungry, he and those who were with him: how he entered the house of God, in the time of Abiathar the high priest, and ate the bread of the Presence, which it is not lawful for any but the priests to eat, and also gave it to those who were with him?" Now verse 27 is a monumental verse, and it begins to unpack a little bit the nature and character of God in regards to His commands. "And he said to them, "The Sabbath was made for man, not man for the Sabbath. So the Son of Man is lord even of the Sabbath.""

Now this gets us into a constant conflict between what we believe as Christians and what the world believes we believe. Here's how it works. If you spend a lot of time with people who are not believers in Christ and don't have a lot of background in it, here's what they think. They think we obey the moral laws we obey because we believe that if we do not obey those laws, God is going to damn us to hell, give us cancer or send some fire out of the sky to blow up our city. They do. They think that our devotion to the Scriptures and to our God is fear based. Now the reason they believe this is because, for some of us, that's true, because we grew up where the pastor of our church utilized fear to get earthly numbers at the expense of heavenly ones. So I'll say this to you. Heaven is not a place for those who are afraid of hell; it's a place for those who love God. That's different. So do you remember the RA sketch at camp where there was a car accident and there were three friends? One guy got to go into heaven and the other two didn't, so these really big guys come in and drag them away while they're screaming, "Why didn't you tell us?" And you get the chills and go, "Oh, I don't want to go to hell like that guy." And then you get saved for the record again. Do you remember this? That's that game. That's why we have a baptism class for children here where we can meet the parent and meet the child and make sure that the decision is not the parent's. We want to make sure that the parent has not gone, "Um, do you want to come to heaven with mom and dad, or do you want to burn in hell? Okay, let's get you baptized." So we have to put those kind of parameters in place to protect everyone involved. So if you'll listen to them, we're portrayed as these sort of backwoods, non-intellectual, kiss your sister, cavemen by the media at large. We do what we do because God is scary and He's going to get us. So God takes on much more of our earthly father's persona unfortunately or the god Zeus where He's in the heavens with His lightning bolt and He's just waiting for someone to jack with Him. That's what the world believes we believe, and, God help us, that's what some of you have been taught.

The truth is, in the Old Testament, when anyone speaks of the Law, they don't speak of it as weighty or bad or being driven by fear at all. David calls the Law of the Lord honey on his lips. David says that he lays in bed at night and he thinks about the Law. So the Law isn't viewed as a negative thing. We do not obey the Law because if we do not, God destroys us. We obey the Law because it's God's way of leading us into life, depth, beauty, meaning, significance, purpose and hope. We are far more hedonistic than anyone else, because we're on the path because it leads to our joy and His glory. So we obey the Law because the Law is good, not because we're afraid of lightning bolts, pestilence, cancer or death. This is what He's saying here. God did not make His rules and then grab man, throw him into the maze of His rules and go, "Good luck. Hey Holy Spirit, Jesus, watch this. Oh, he made a left. . . Liberal. So what do you want to do to him? Tsunami? No, we already did tsunami. I'm thinking pestilence. Get him." And this is our view of God. Some of us have this unhealthy, wicked view of God. Now I'm not saying that God will not at times crush you, but for the believer in Christ, the believer cries out like they did in the Scriptures, "May the bones that You crush rejoice." Sometimes God will break your fingers to get your hands off of what will harm you. And that has been true in every book of the Bible and through every year in the history of man. J.I. Packer has got my favorite quote: "And still He seeks the fellowship of His people and sends them both joy and sorrow to detach their hands from the things of this world and attach those hands to Him." That's just a great quote from a great man. The Scriptures say that God makes man and then says, "For man to be what he was created to be, here's what he needs." And then He creates the Law. So the Law was created not to rob us, but to give to us. So the Law is about life, not about death. So in the end, you have a very benevolent God that has said "Here's how the universe works. Please use this like it was created to work for your own joy and My glory." And He gives us the Law.

Now when you take the Law and you make it the point rather than the path, you see wicked fundamentalism. You get men and women defending the Law at the expense of what the Law was given for. Let me show you that exact thing happening in the next part of this text. Mark 3:1, "Again he entered the synagogue, and a man was there with a withered hand." A withered hand would have meant that he was viewed by his culture as having sinned or his parents having sinned. He would have been viewed as a social outcast. He's begging, so in order for him to eat, somebody is going to have to be generous and give him food. He's viewed as unclean. On and on we could go here. Now, watch these spiritual

leaders in the temple in verse 2. "And they watched Jesus, to see whether he would heal him on the Sabbath, so that they might accuse him." What wicked men are these. They have no compassion for this man, no grace for this man, no hope for this man and no mercy for this man. They're simply watching Jesus and hoping Jesus heals him, but not for him, but so that they might attack Jesus. Let's watch it play out. "And he said to the man with the withered hand, "Come here." And he said to them, "Is it lawful on the Sabbath to do good or to do harm, to save life or to kill?" But they were silent. And he looked around at them with anger, . . ."

I want to highlight that because I always want to do battle on the current notion of Jesus. I think it was the picture that we grew up with in church, the one where Jesus is a white guy with blue eyes, blond feathered hair and if we could just be honest, He's somewhat effeminate. Is He not? I cannot worship that Jesus. I have a strict "If I can take you, I cannot worship you" rule. It's like that picture gives us this idea that maybe He has this bag of love dust on his belt and a wand, and He floats about and sprinkles love dust on everyone. He's never frustrated, He's never angry, nothing ever breaks His heart and He requires nothing of you. I hate that version of Jesus. It's a horribly unbiblical one. I mean, this man is angry at this point. The Scriptures tells us He flips over tables in the temple. He's not weak. He calls the religious ruling party of His day publicly "a brood of vipers" and "whitewashed tombs." This is an aggressive, ferocious man who happens to be God. So we need to get rid of that picture. He's a Jew for goodness sakes. He's not a white guy. I know we're in the suburbs in Dallas, but He's not a white guy. For some of you, the floor just dropped out of your world, but we are not the master race.

Let's keep reading. "But they were silent. And he looked around at them with anger, grieved at their hardness of heart, and said to the man, "Stretch out your hand." He stretched it out, and his hand was restored. The Pharisees went out and immediately held counsel with the Herodians against him, how to destroy him." So you've got the Law, which is good, which is right, which was given for the heart of man; you've got men who have perverted the Law of the Lord and made the Law of the Lord the point rather than the path, which leads to grace and mercy and hope absolutely evaporating to the point where you've got guys defending the Law at the expense of human hearts. The foundation got all screwy.

Let me show you a couple of things, and then I'll tie this together. Flip over to Isaiah 43:6-7. If you read verses 1-3, you'll see that He's talking about the creative order. He's talking about creating all of us as men and women. He is the Creator, He is the Sustainer, He is the One who did it. I'm going to just read verses 6-7 because they speak to the purpose for which we were created, not just that He is the Creator. "I will say to the north, Give up, and to the south, do not withhold; bring my sons from afar and my daughters from the end of the earth, everyone who is called by my name, whom I created for my glory, whom I formed and made." One of the things we're going to do over and over again in my forty years here with you is get you into the story, the metanarrative, the story of the Bible. This is not 66 separate stories. This is one story, the story of God reconciling man to Himself. That's the story of the Bible. When you forget that and concentrate on this paragraph or these two verses, you unfortunately end up teaching moralistic deism, that there is a God and you had better behave. But the metanarrative is this: God created you as image bearers. God says, "Let Us make man in Our image" and creates you and me as image bearers and then gives us the cultural mandate that you see in Genesis 2. God says to mankind, "You are My image bearers. Fill the earth and subdue it, create art, build cities, start businesses, plant crops, get married, have children, be a grandparent, celebrate, live, love, laugh. . ." Sin fractures that cultural mandate, and in that fracturing, we become cracked image bearers that no longer reflect the glory of God. Instead, we make creation our god, it cannot bear the weight of it and so it collapses around us. We make our spouse our god, our kids our god, money our god, power our god, position our god and physical beauty our god. We make crummy gods, they crumble around us and then we shake our fists and ask, "Why?!?" You're broken, I'm broken. David says, "Surely I was brought forth in iniquity." I was born broken. It's not something that happened to me. So we're cracked icons and are not displaying the glory of God. So Christ restores and reconciles. The atoning work of Christ on the cross

restores us to God, which gives us a right view of ourselves, which leads to right relationships with others for the good of the world.

Now here's another Western thing that we've got to address. That rugged individualism where Christianity has become all about you being saved? That's a perverse version of what we believe. Pentecost didn't create individual believers; it created the church. So we are reconciled to God, formed as a community and now live missionally in regards to every venue in our lives. So here's what it looks like to live as a Christian. I am a restored image bearer, my wife is a restored image bearer and we are praying that our children become restored image bearers. We bear the image of Christ to the world around us, which simply means this. We are agents of reconciliation everywhere we go. So I always stop at the same Starbucks, the one on F.M. 407. My barista has a soul. He or she is not just there to get me my coffee and get it to me now. My waitress at the restaurant, she's not just there to get me my chips and hot sauce and do it now, although I would appreciate the quick service. She has a soul. And if she's catty and rude, it's my understanding that there is hurt, fear or brokenness involved in her cattiness to me. And since I have been restored, my response to that cattiness will be grace, patience and maybe a larger tip instead of a smaller one. Why? Because I'm an image bearer. And it means I live a certain way in my neighborhood, I live a certain way with my money, I live a certain way with my family, I live a certain way with my vacation, I live a certain way with my hobbies and there is no sacred/secular divide for me. Everything is sacred because I'm an image bearer. And this is what I was created for. The reason I think the bulk of Evangelicals are bored out of their mind and spend all of their energy and efforts trying to quit cussing and looking at porn is because, in the end, they're outside the *missio Dei*, they're outside of the purpose for which they exist. You are sanctified as you live missionally in the world you're in. That's how you're sanctified. Because if you start going, "Oh, I don't want to give up my money. I want stuff for me," you don't want to treat your waitress like she has a soul." And what's being revealed is that the grace shown to you in Christ, you don't show to others. You need to repent. This is how we grow, not by going, "I'm not going to be bad anymore." Yes you are. I always like to ask, "How is that working for you, not being bad anymore?" Those of you who have been doing this for 20 years, how's that working out for you? Have you attained perfection yet? No?

So now God is saying, "You are an image bearer, and if you want to walk like this, you'll need the Sabbath." Here's why. When He's writing this, he's writing to a predominantly agrarian society, which means there's no electricity, no TiVo and there's no Twitter. So when the sun goes down, the day is over. It's just done. But for us, life has a way of endlessly piling upon itself until our very existence is just one giant obligation and we go from place to place to place doing thing to thing to thing to thing and lose sight of what matters and the tender mercies that God has given to us. I'll give some examples. I was having lunch with Lauren yesterday, and I saw a man with his wife and two kids. Probably about fifteen minutes into the meal, I started keeping count, and in 25 minutes there, he checked his phone no fewer than 20 times. In this world, where we are wired in always, we're never where we are, never. I have found myself at a table with my wife and kids but I'm not there at all.

The Scriptures say the Sabbath is given because if you live life like that, then people become commodities to you. They're there to meet your needs, they're there to do what you say they should do and you no longer have real, deep relationships. Or have you ever found yourself snapping at your kids when they interrupt you from doing something that, in the end, is probably stupid? "What do you want?!? I'm updating my blog!" That kind of thing. "Can you give me a second?!? I'm tweeting!" Do you ever find yourself doing that? Of course you don't. They just interrupt you when you're praying and studying your Bible. Now what's happened? Well, your wife is a commodity to you. You don't have to listen to her; you have to answer this e-mail. And your children are a commodity to you that you can buy and sell and don't really have to engage and you don't have to go after their hearts. Do you have a day where you're unplugged? Do you have a day where you're not looking at your e-mail and people can't text you or call you? And I know some of you are going, "Oh whatever, pastor. I have a Fortune 500 company. I have to rule the universe." Okay, here's what I would say to

you while you count your gold. Maybe a day where you took a step back and kept yourself from believing that you're God and that the universe would collapse around you if you weren't available might be a great thing for your perspective. Do you have a day that you unplug and stop doing and simply are? Do you have that day, because that's the Sabbath, a day set aside, a holy day? Did you know that in Isaiah 58, the Lord promises that those who do Sabbath will mount up and ride upon the heights of the earth? Do you have a day where you just are? Do you have a day that you're unplugged, a day that you enjoy the simple beauties that God has given us?

So what does it look like to do Sabbath? That's a very difficult question to answer. I can give you some answers historically. In the more liturgical traditions, it's inhaling the incense, it's doing the Lord's Supper, it's reading the Word, it's doing the liturgy. But Sabbath is just a day where you slow down and take in all that is good that God has given you. It could be going for a walk, but not to burn calories. On Sabbath we don't walk to burn calories; we walk to walk. We go for a walk, we drink a glass of wine with good friends, we get some of our closest friends and we go to the store together and buy unprepared food. We pick out the meat, we pick out the vegetables, we pick out whatever and we go back to a house and cook it. We drink and we cook and we laugh and tell stories and then we eat it slowly. Dinner lasts for a long time. And then we all clean it, because you don't want one couple to hate Sabbath. And this time of year, my wife loves a fire in the fireplace, which is unfortunate because we live in Dallas. So there are literally times in my house where we have turned on the air conditioner to have a fire. It's horrible stewardship financially but great stewardship maritally. So we'll have a fire and the crew and our wives will sit around the fire and tell stories about our kids. We talk about how we are and dream about vacations together where the pace isn't the pace that we run in here. My phone is turned off on Thursday night (our Sabbath is Friday). So at dinner on Thursday night, I turn off my phone. E-mails do not come to my phone. And the reason I have to do that is because I will immediately check and see that there's an issue or problem that needs to be resolved, and the second I read it, I'm solving that in my brain and I'm no longer where I am. And here's what I've found. I don't get e-mails to my phone, and I only look at e-mail three days a week. I've found that nothing disintegrated, no one died, puppies and kittens didn't burst into flame all over the world and everything worked out just fine. And I know there's a disjoint here. Maybe you're thinking, "Chandler, you don't live here in the real world." I would argue adamantly that I live in the real world far more than you do. How many little kids have you put in the ground this year? How many people with cancer have you sat by in the hospital? Every day we walk through sorrow upon sorrow upon sorrow while getting to experience joy upon joy upon joy. No one is more dialed in to the highs and lows of life as pastors are. And what we've learned is that being available 24/7 to everyone is unbelievably unhealthy.

Do you have a day where you're disconnected? To go for a walk? To stare at an icon? To make love to your wife? To drink a good bottle of wine with friends? To have good conversations? To read a book? To listen to good music? To play in the yard with your kids? To go to the park? To just walk outside, breathe and feel the air? You only get a month of that here. The rest of the year, the air feels you. But for just a month, you can walk outside and feel it. Do you have a day where you don't do but you are? Because the Bible doesn't request this; it commands it. This is not God going, "When you get a chance, you ought to rest some." And it's not doing nothing, because all of us would have those days we did nothing and felt worse for it. Do you have this day?

Now my favorite part of Sabbath is it's a shadow for something else. Sabbath is not the point. The point of Sabbath is the cross. If you have a day where you're not doing and you simply are, then on that day you are reminded that you are accepted by God not because of what you do but because of what He did. When you have a day where you're just enjoying Him and the simple pleasures He brings instead of, with a great deal of fanaticism, going from Bible study after Bible study after Bible study with no Sabbath to actually think about and apply that, the Sabbath becomes this picture of what Christ did for us in the cross. It becomes that picture of our acceptance and justification before God not being built on our merit. And the reason some of you are so frantic in your religious activity is, despite the fact that you're hearing that constantly, you can't get it out of your head that you have to earn God's love. And the Sabbath slams on the brakes

when it comes to that idea and points us back to the cross. What the Law could not do, weak as it was in the flesh, God did in sending His Son in the likeness of sin. Sabbath reminds us of what Jesus did on the cross. It reminds us that the people around us have souls. We get to look at our wife and remember how beautiful she is, that she's not a commodity, that she has a soul and a mind. We get to look at our children, and they get to not be annoying to us that day for the most part. We get to eat good food and remember that God came up with these flavors. And in enjoying all that, we're reminded of how good God is and how gracious He's been and how loving He is. And we remember.

So when do you do Sabbath? For my family, it's Friday. But when do you do Sabbath? When do you stop? When do you breathe? I think if you don't say, "This is the day we do it," then you'll never do it. Because stuff has a way of violently invading space. Some of you are going to have a very difficult time with this because your whole worth is made up in what you do. Some of you are just addicted to connection. Like it's just going to feel wrong to you that you can't tweet that you're Sabbath. It's going to feel wrong that you can't update your Facebook page of what you're doing on Sabbath. You giggle, but just try it and watch it woo you, watch it call to you. It means that you're addicted to technology and you need to breathe. When are you doing it? And then you've got to figure out how to do it, how to rest in the Lord, how to set aside a day to enjoy and pursue the Lord. Abraham Heschel is a rabbi and would say it this way, "A man who works with his hands will Sabbath with his mind. A man who works with his mind will Sabbath with his hands." I don't know if he's right, but it sounds good.

So maybe you need to ask for forgiveness because your view of God has been that He is a strict, uptight, Zeus-like God who has been ready to pounce on you from day one. Maybe you need to repent because you've been trying to earn what was freely given instead of celebrating and resting in what He has freely given you. Sabbath is not a suggestion. Are you tracking with me. You need it. I need it. We need it. He doesn't say, "Five days you'll work and two days you'll rest," for those of you type-A accomplisners. He said, "Six days you'll work and one you'll rest." Six days is plenty to work. When will you Sabbath? How will you Sabbath? Husbands, this falls on you to lead out in your home what it looks like and what it doesn't look like. It's been my experience after three years of trying to figure this out that it takes a bit of time to figure it out. May you learn to rest well in Him, may you learn to see the simple mercies, may you learn how those simple mercies point you to the cross and may you find your strength, vitality and hope there and there alone.

Let's pray. "Father, I thank You for these men and women and for a chance to come together and learn how You designed the universe to be. I pray where we have made much of ourself in regards to accomplishments and tasks that that would give way to resting in just who You are. Help us. We need You. It's for Your beautiful name. Amen."