

Jeremiah 1:1-0  
Psalm 71:1-6

Hebrews 12:18-29  
Luke 13:10-17

We live in a workaholic, soccer mom, 24/7, multi-tasking society, and we are proud of it. We are able to produce so much. We are able to accomplish so much. Does it not feel good at the end of the day to look at your long list of things to do that day, and see how many of them you were able to mark off, and feel good about the day. But is that what life is all about? Is life nothing more than brick making? Is life nothing more than what we accomplish? Are we all in a big hurry going nowhere? Our passage reminds us there is more to life than brick making.

I want us to think about Sabbath. If people know anything about the Sabbath, they may think of the Ten Commandments, for one of the ten is Sabbath observance. Answer this question quietly to yourself: why are we commanded to observe the Sabbath? How many of you said because that was the day God rested? You are right. But it is a bit of a trick question, for there is another passage in the Old Testament where we find the giving of the Ten Commandments. The first, the one you were probably thinking of, is found in Exodus 20. In that passage, we are to rest on the Sabbath because that is the day that God rested. "For six days the Lord made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that is in them, but rested the seventh day."

The other passage about the Ten Commandments is given in Deuteronomy 5. In this rendition of the Ten Commandments, we read, "Remember that you were a slave in the land of Egypt, and the Lord your God brought you out from there with a mighty hand and an outstretched arm; therefore the Lord your God commanded you to keep the Sabbath day." Why observe the Sabbath? To remember that they had been slaves in Egypt. For you see, when they were slaves, they were working seven days a week. But

now that they are no longer slaves, now they are emancipated, now that are free, they are to take a day off each week. They are no more in a culture of brick making, an economic system of brick making. God liberated them from the oppression of brick making. They are to have a day of rest.

We as Americans live in a commodity society. We live in a brick making economy. Have we not become slaves in a brick making empire? We are steeped in the "Protestant work ethic." We are valued for what we do or have done. We are known for what we do. So often, when we strike up a conversation with people, we may very well ask, "What do you do for a living?" Our self-esteem derives from what we have accomplished. There is nothing wrong with a good work ethic. But, when work becomes the only source for our self-esteem, or far transcends all other sources, then it threatens to distort who we are as human beings. Work becomes a kind of addiction It is no coincidence that we have coined the term "workaholic." There are other terms we use that betray the fact that we have become oppressed brick makers. Soccer moms conjure up images of a parent who after school every day drives their child or children from various school and other rehearsals and events. Children who busy their days not just with school but with sports, music, Scouts, and many other activities. Even children need a calendar to keep track of their busy schedules. 24/7 refers to something that never closes, open twenty-four hours a day, seven days a week. Multi-tasking refers to being able to do all kinds of things at once. One time when I was on a layover at the St. Louis airport, I went to the bathroom, and the man standing next to me was talking. I had no idea who he was talking to. I discovered he was making a business call while he

was going to the bathroom. And yet it seems to be acceptable in our brick making society. Workaholic, soccer moms, 24/7, multitasking. They joy of the modern age!

Americans are not good about taking their vacation. In 2014 42% of Americans did not take any vacation days. Workers, on average, fail to use five vacation days a year. And when we are on vacation, we stay connected to work with our laptops and smartphones and tablets. I'm guilty of that. Germany, Spain, Italy, France, and Belgium guarantee at least 30 days of paid vacation per year, regardless if you worked one year or thirty years for the company. By law, every country in the European Union has at least four work full weeks of paid vacation. In Germany, the average worker works 1,463 hours in a year, and the average American works 1,841 hours a week. The Germans work 46 fewer work days than Americans, 9 less weeks! And from the research one cannot assume that extra time off is negative for the economy. There does not seem to be a direct correlation. God calls for us to have R and R, rest and recreation. God calls us to enjoy the Sabbath.

Someone pointed out to me that God created humanity on the sixth day of the week, and then gave humanity the day off on the seventh day of the week. When God created people, he gave them a first day off before they worked! Rest is the pinnacle of creation! In Germany, employees can take their full vacation after working for only one full month.

How do we observe the Sabbath? Sabbath does refer to a particular day of the week. However, Sabbath itself does refer to a quality of time that can be adopted any day of the week. The word Sabbath means to stop, to cease, to desist, to rest. The emphasis is not to make sure we take Sunday off as a Sabbath, but that we pick a day

for our Sabbath day. Sabbath can be any day of the week. There are many for which Sunday cannot be their Sabbath. Their jobs may require them to work on the Sabbath. Sabbath time is a time in which we rest from whatever activities qualify as work for us. For example, someone may enjoy baking cakes on their Sabbath to share with friends, but for a bakery chef this would be work. Some people enjoy working in their yards or gardens, while others see it as drudgery. Golf may be a way a physician unwinds on Sunday, but not a golf pro. What is work for one person, may be play for another.

The Sabbath is meant to be enjoyed. By Jesus' time there were 1,521 things that a person could not do on the Sabbath. For instance, a person with a toothache couldn't gargle with vinegar but could use a toothbrush dipped in vinegar; a radish could be dipped in salt, but not left too long in the salt, let it begin to pickle. The church I attended in my childhood had a large playground. Years ago the pastor would tie up all of the playground equipment so that the children could not play on the Sabbath. No wonder the poet, and wife of C.S. Lewis, Joy Davidman, said that this commandment was recast to read, "Thou shalt not enjoy life on Sunday." The Sabbath was meant to be enjoyed.

Thomas Mann, an Old Testament scholar and pastor suggests that Sabbath is a time to stop and play. Stop and play. If doing that for an entire day would be difficult for you, ease into it. Perhaps start with a few hours or an afternoon. Let go of the things you should do. If you are going to try that on a Sunday, keep your Sunday best clothes on to remind yourself that you are celebrating Sabbath. Put an appliance to rest. Think of Sabbath as an "opposite day." Do things differently. If you read a lot, don't read. If you are like me, who tends to read only professional books and journals, read for

recreation, enjoyment. If you go to the gym every day, go for a walk or a bike ride during your Sabbath time.

In Deuteronomy, observing Sabbath leads to remembering the grand central story, "I am the Lord your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt." R and R now becomes rest and *remember*, as Dr. Mann suggests. Remember that you are a child of God. You are not a teacher, a bank employee, a lawyer, a real estate agent, a nurse. You are foremost a child of God. And this God wants God's children to rest, to recreate, to enjoy. We were created to recreate.

Blessed be the Lord our God. Amen.