

# **The Yoke of the Sabbath in Christ**

**June 30<sup>th</sup>, 2019**

**Deuteronomy 5**

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This morning we are starting a three-week series on a Sabbath Rest. You may have recognized our first scripture today as a verse from the ten commandments. This passage is found in both Exodus 20 and again in Deuteronomy 5. The difference though is in Exodus 20 the reason God gives for this commandment refers to the six days of creation and how God then rested on the seventh, and therefore we, as God's people should also rest. But as you heard in the reading this morning from Deuteronomy 5 the reason for this command is because the Israelites were once slaves in Egypt. The first time we receive the ten commandments is just after the Israelites have escaped Egypt but this later passage in Deuteronomy is over forty years later, when the descendants of freed slaves are finally about to enter the promised land. Moses.

There is a very important reason for this distinction. As slaves in Egypt they had no sabbath. The hard labor that the Israelites experienced was not of their choosing, it was forced upon them and their rulers were ruthless in their treatment. The forty years in the desert was in part to not only take them out of slavery but to also take the slavery out of them. They needed to understand that they were no longer chattel, a commodity to be purchased and sold, but rather the people of God, set free to possess the land and worship God as free persons. It was no longer enough to see the sabbath as a way to honor God and creation,

they needed to see that Sabbath was blessing for the people. So as they were about to enter the promise land and to finally live fully into the freedom promised to them by God, they needed to be reminded why they have the sabbath.

Did you notice that in this version of the command, that the sabbath is to be honored not only by the freed Israelites, but also the animals, the travelers in the land but even non Jewish people living in the land. This is significant because it marks all of these things as holy and sacred before God. It also reminds us that creation is more than just what we can do, it is who we are, we are God's.

So many times we live our lives according to what we can do. We introduce each other by our job titles. Jason the dairy farmer, Chris the teacher, Laurie the minister and so forth. It is an easy habit to get into, but in our lives that is not healthy in the long run. We are more than what we can do to earn a living.

By honoring the sabbath we honor ourselves as sacred creatures of God and we remember that we are not slaves to the commodity of wealth. We also remember to honor the dignity of others including livestock that they too are sacred beings of the creator.

It is easy to take the slave out of slavery, but harder to take the slavery out of the slave. To help people really understand they are more than what they can do. This commandment upholds the inherent value of each person and being as holy and sacred.

By stopping work and resting we shift our focus from work to relationships. We focus on our bonds to God and one another. We are not caught up in the distracting aspects of work where we can neglect our families or ignore the infinite ways God has been blessing us. It also honors our bodies giving us time to

regain our strength, to replenish the spiritual well within us and to hold in proper perspective the demands of capitalism to earn money.

This is one kind of rest. But another kind of rest is found in our second reading from Matthew 11. Jesus here is offering another deliverance from a form of slavery. It is a spiritual slavery that legalistic authoritarianism had created for the Israelite People.

In Matthew 11 Jesus offers three actions for the people: Come, Take and Learn. We are invited to Come to Jesus if we are heavily burdened and weary from those burdens and Jesus will give us rest. We are invited to trade in our yoke for Jesus' yoke which is light. And lastly, we are invited to learn from Jesus because he is gentle and when we do all this we will find rest, not just for our bodies, but for our very souls.

True sabbath is not found in the religious legalism but is found in the person and teachings of Jesus Christ. When we accept the invitation to come to Jesus, to accept Jesus as our messiah, savior, we take on the call of discipleship and to follow in his footsteps the path of Grace and Love. And as we grow and learn from this way of life, we too will enter into a new freedom a new liberation from the bondages of legalism and religion. This is one of the many ways we walk into the abundant life the Jesus promises us.