

WHAT MAKES YOUR HEART SING?, Ps.95

Stop the World I Wanna Get Off #7

◆**Intro:** Today we wrap up our seven week study on the Sabbath commandment and God's principle of rest: namely to set aside a whole 24 hours every seven days to rest, to love God, and to delight in everything good. That principle extends to the way we daily live as well by learning to slow down, and make space for God's refreshment in your life. When I applied for the sabbatical grant, the Lilly foundation asked us to answer this central question: What would make your heart sing? Basically they invited us to make a case for what we would do with three months off to seek refreshment of our soul, body, emotions, and mind (the four tanks we talked about last week.) Now obviously this whole series has been urging us all to adopt the Biblical pattern of truly taking a day off out of every week for worship, rest and delight. As soon as the topic comes up, people inevitably want to know what's allowable on this "festive day of rest" as the Catechism calls it.

◆1. To answer the question of what to do on a sabbath, answer the question in the title of this message: what would make your heart sing? A lot of folks think that religion is about making God happy. Keep his laws and commandments or else he'll get mad. But this is not the character of God, nor is it what Christianity is all about. God is already supremely happy. He has everything within himself. He couldn't be happier. And our little failures down here on the planet do not blow clouds over his day. The sacred scriptures tell us he is the very overflow of love, and your

WHAT MAKES YOUR HEART SING?, Ps.95

Stop the World I Wanna Get Off #7

existence is in fact a result of his love. He is the supreme commander but not because he needs someone to command. If you do not serve him, he will be no worse off. You will be, but he will not be. When God gives commands to repent, love and follow him he is sharing with us wisdom of the best ways to live and exist, not just here, but after this life is over as well. All of which is to say, the 4th Commandment to celebrate a weekly day of rest in honor of God, is not for God's benefit but for yours. God will still be Maker, Creator, Sustainer of the Universe whether you believe in him and obey him or not. But your best life, salvation, will come when you do.

◆ *"Trust in the LORD and do good; dwell in the land and enjoy safe pasture. Delight yourself in the LORD and he will give you the desires of your heart. Commit your way to the LORD; trust in him and he will do this: He will make your righteousness shine like the dawn." Psalms 37:3-6, NIV.*

◆ Lets take a quick walk through the text of Psalm 95. What do you observe in Psalm 95?

◆ *v1 Come lets sing for joy...* The context is going to worship God in which joy is central.

◆ *v2 Let us come...with thanksgiving.* It's hard to be down, depressed and thankful at the same time. Want to counter your gloominess? Sit down and make a list of everything you are thankful for.

WHAT MAKES YOUR HEART SING?, Ps.95

Stop the World I Wanna Get Off #7

- ◆ *v3 For the Lord is the great God, the great King, above all...* Here God's size reminds us of how minuscule are the things many of us obsess over. God's hand holds the Mariana Trench and Mt. Kilimanjaro(v4). The earth (v5) is a sandbox to God.
- ◆ *v7 For we are the people of his pasture...* Verse 6 repeats the invitation to worship God, and adds another reason besides God's greatness; that this huge Person, cares for us like a shepherd.
- ◆ God's deep desire is that your heart will sing when you know his love and goodness.
- ◆ 2. So, people always ask, "What can we or can we not do on Sunday." The simple answer is: If it's fitting with God's Word and if it refreshes you, it's all spiritual. Go for it. Let me throw around some thoughts to get us thinking.
- ◆ A. Filling my Spiritual Tank : How should we use our sabbath to restore our soul? To let some generations tell it, the sabbath was pretty much for nothing but bible-study, long prayers, recitations of creeds you never otherwise think about at all, singing, and possibly a nature documentary. If something was fun, then it should be avoided. A little boy was standing on the church bench and cooing at the family behind him. His mother snapped him back around saying, "Stop smiling, you're in church!"
- ◆ Honestly, you wonder how followers of the Biblical God could ever arrive at these conclusions, but then sin is easy, and the

WHAT MAKES YOUR HEART SING?, Ps.95

Stop the World I Wanna Get Off #7

devil is crafty, and a lot of times you and I find ourselves in full affirmation of things completely opposite of Heaven's wisdom. So lets not be angry with our ancestors, but lets also learn form their mistakes.

◆ Lets put it like this; delight yourself within the limits of God.

Now as we saw last week, the surest and quickest way to hear from heaven is through reading the Word and prayer. But don't just grab a devotional so you can read a page and then say you did it. *When you celebrate a sabbath, go looking for God.* The soul has to wake up to his presence. Ask the Holy Spirit to direct you to passages in the Bible that apply to areas of need in your life. Go on a prayer walk, pour out your soul, tell God what you long for, what you're afraid of, then you stop talking. If you hear nothing, *suppose* an answer from what you know God says in the Bible, or dig into the Bible for an answer. What might God say to my question?

◆ Remember that different things refresh the soul for different people. You probably know that praise music is restorative for me. I'm live in awe of finely crafted music, but when I'm trying to restore my soul, it has to be music that points me to God's beauties. For example, I'm a fan of the band Boston. Their soaring guitar choir sound is SO cool. But after I listen to a Boston album my spirit doesn't feel anything really. Oh I enjoyed it, but it didn't add to my hope, or my convictions. On the other hand the things Chris Tomlin, or Joel Houston sing about touch

WHAT MAKES YOUR HEART SING?, Ps.95

Stop the World I Wanna Get Off #7

me right down inside. Seek what refreshes your soul and enjoy it! I can tell you right now, it's gonna have something to do with your loving Creator! Isn't it Christ Jesus who said

◆“Come to me, all you who are weary...learn from me,... and you will find rest for your souls.” Matthew 11:28, 29, NIV.

◆*And Paul writes: "I pray that out of his glorious riches he may strengthen you with power through his Spirit in your inner being, so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith. And I pray that you, being rooted and established in love, may have power, together with all the saints, to grasp how wide and long and high and deep is the love of Christ, and to know this love that surpasses knowledge--that you may be filled to the measure of all the fulness of God."*
Ephesians 3:16-19, NIV.

◆Go looking for God on your sabbath.

◆B. Filling my Physical tank: Your physical tank can be refreshed both by rest and by exertion. I know, it's paradoxical, isn't it? We talked last week how sleep is good spiritually. So if you have a lot of manual labor at your job, napping on your sabbath may be just the thing for you. But if you're stuck inside all week, maybe a walk in the woods, or along a river will do your body good. I can tell you this, when I was a kid if you had made me be quiet all Sunday, and take naps, I would've hated Sunday even though I loved God!

WHAT MAKES YOUR HEART SING?, Ps.95

Stop the World I Wanna Get Off #7

◆ One really great way to fill your tank on your sabbath is to play! (This actually overflows into your *mental* tank and your *emotional* tank as well!) Mark Buchanan writes that sometimes we do things just for the sake of doing them. There is no particular usefulness in them. They don't *need* to be done. Nobody is waiting for them to happen, or insisting that they happen. That's what play is. How is it that Christians have often emptied the sabbath of play? Look at a girl in a sandbox. She's not accomplishing anything. She's not altering the course of human civilization. But she's relaxing. She's imagining. She's creating. Actually we could learn from kids. Adults are all about getting things done, fulfilling obligations, making "good use" of time. Sabbath is not made for that. Spend some of your day in sheer, unapologetic uselessness! There's refreshment in that.

◆ If you are too out of practice when it comes to play, start slowly. You don't want a heart attack or anything. Try a card game, or see if you can swing as high as your kids can at the park. Read a comic book or something. For some folks riding a bike for a couple of hours recharges them. You'll see them out on a lonely country road rolling along miles from anywhere. For others riding a bike is like eating lima beans; you may do it because it's good for you, but certainly not because you want to. Then that wouldn't be a sabbath activity for you.

WHAT MAKES YOUR HEART SING?, Ps.95

Stop the World I Wanna Get Off #7

◆C. Filling my emotional tank: As I've said before, there is a lot of overlap with refilling our tanks. So don't make too much of trying to refresh each one differently. The point is that God has designed a wide gamut of ways for his creatures to delight and be refreshed. And he did not intend for us to drag ourselves through life.

◆ *I came so that [you] would have life to the full. Jn.10:10*

◆ *I tell you these things...so that your joy may be full. Jn. 15:11*

◆What God intends for you is joy and joy is the primary fuel of the emotional tank. What brings you joy? Time with family and friends sure can fill you with joy. For some, a day at the zoo with the grandchildren scurrying around in awe and amazement fills their heart with enough joy to last a week! For other's it's letting Grandpa and Grandma take the kids... anywhere at all!

◆Some of the men here are wondering, can I **golf** on Sunday? Have you consulted the Holy Spirit for advice? He may have you ponder whether it might take you away from a your family that rarely sees you. Or, if like some golfers you come home angry. If these are the case you probably won't want to do it on your sabbath. If it's taxing on your financial responsibility that's a factor. And if you golf 6 days a week, it really wouldn't be making your sabbath very special, or set aside, would it? But if these things are not the case, and it's refreshing to for you, then it'd be a great thing to do on your sabbath!

WHAT MAKES YOUR HEART SING?, Ps.95

Stop the World I Wanna Get Off #7

◆ What about **shopping**? Are you being financially responsible? Is it a regular task you gotta get done, or an excursion just for the fun of it? If its the former I'd classify it as work and I'd avoid it. If walking the mall or the grocery store aisles fills you with awe and amazement, and your heart just smiles at the myriad of worldwide produce, I'd say go for it. Anything that's "work" instead of "refreshing" is what you want to rest from. Does it make your heart sing? Well then it fits with God's festive day of rest!

◆ On your sabbath, also pay attention to what drains your emotional tank and guard yourself in relation to it. Things like the News, which by and large focuses on who's been shot, and what law was broken, and how bad the weather is going to be. Be discrete about the entertainment you watch too. Is it noble, pure, just, lovely? -According to Phil.4:8 these are characteristics that bring re-joy-cing! For this reason, might be a good idea to unplug from all media on your sabbath!

◆ D. Filling my mental tank: Did you know a lot of Christian students never practice sabbath at all? In fact, my guess is that most save their homework for Sunday. I don't recommend it. What kind of "festive day" is that? God meant sabbath to be something you looked forward to! That doesn't mean learning, or reading even, is anti-sabbath. Marva Dawn says that intellectual rest is aided by things that move us into new, creative paths of thinking. Reading stories and fairy tales. I first read the Borne

WHAT MAKES YOUR HEART SING?, Ps.95

Stop the World I Wanna Get Off #7

trilogy in seminary at the advice of a professor who said it was good just to enjoy a well written story that you didn't have to write a paper on. Some folks find trying a new baking recipe adventurous and stimulating and challenging to the mind in a whole different way than work. For them that'd be filling their mental tank, and probably their emotional tank as well.

◆**Conclusion:** So, ever feel like the world is spinning too fast, and you'd just like to stop and get off the crazy ride? Realize that you are a beautiful, complexity that needs filling. What shall we put there? You can try all these things we've been talking about but if you miss the main point of sabbath rest they won't do you much good. Make space for God, friends. Jesus invited "Come to me...and I will give you rest." St. Augustine observed that inside every man is a God-shaped vacuum. Martin Luther summed it up, Follow God, and then... do what you want.

◆*"If you watch your step on the Sabbath and don't use my holy day for personal advantage, If you treat the Sabbath as a day of joy, God's holy day as a celebration, If you honor it by refusing 'business as usual,' making money, running here and there—Then you'll be free to enjoy God! Oh, I'll make you ride high and soar above it all. I'll make you feast on the inheritance of your ancestor Jacob." Yes! God says so! Isa.58:13-14 MSG*