

# **LUKE**

Part 53: “True Sabbath”

Luke 13:10-17 & 14:1-6

By David A. Ritchie

Sunday, March 3, 2019 (The Sunday Before Lent)

## **Scripture Reading**

*“Now he was teaching in one of the synagogues on the Sabbath. And behold, there was a woman who had had a disabling spirit for eighteen years. She was bent over and could not fully straighten herself. When Jesus saw her, he called her over and said to her, ‘Woman, you are freed from your disability.’ And he laid his hands on her, and immediately she was made straight, and she glorified God. But the ruler of the synagogue, indignant because Jesus had healed on the Sabbath, said to the people, ‘There are six days in which work ought to be done. Come on those days and be healed, and not on the Sabbath day.’ Then the Lord answered him, ‘You hypocrites! Does not each of you on the Sabbath untie his ox or his donkey from the manger and lead it away to water it? And ought not this woman, a daughter of Abraham whom Satan bound for eighteen years, be loosed from this bond on the Sabbath day?’ As he said these things, all his adversaries were put to shame, and all the people rejoiced at all the glorious things that were done by him” (Luke 13:10–17, ESV).*

*“One Sabbath, when he went to dine at the house of a ruler of the Pharisees, they were watching him carefully. And behold, there was a man before him who had dropsy. And Jesus responded to the lawyers and Pharisees, saying, ‘Is it lawful to heal on the Sabbath, or not?’ But they remained silent. Then he took him and healed him and sent him away. And he said to them, ‘Which of you, having a son or an ox that has fallen into a well on a Sabbath day, will not immediately pull him out?’ And they could not reply to these things” (Luke 14:1–6, ESV).*

*Almighty and everlasting Father, you are the fountain of our truest joy, our truest peace, and our truest life. As we come before your holy word today, we pray your Holy Spirit would rest up our hearts, so that our hearts would find their rest in you. In Jesus’s mighty name we pray, AMEN.*

## **Introduction**

- During my seventh grade year, I started to really get into music.
- I wanted to play the guitar, so I asked for a guitar for Christmas.
- But when my parents went to Tarpley’s Music (then called Tolzien’s), my mom made an executive decision to buy a bass guitar for me instead of a guitar.

- She thought since all my friends were getting guitars, if I got a bass, I would have a lot more opportunity to play in bands. Everyone is always looking for a bassist.
  - Her theory was correct. I had a lot of opportunities to play in a lot of different bands.
  - By playing in a church band, I became a Christian. After I became a Christian, I had the opportunity to come on staff at a church. By coming on staff at a church, I had the opportunity to start doing ministry. And in beginning ministry, I had the opportunity to become a pastor.
  - My bass guitar was in a sense one step that began me on a road that I could have never imagined in the seventh grade.
  - It is truly one of the most important gifts I ever received.
  - And it was a gift I would have never known that I needed.
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- Today's readings are about a gift that you don't know how badly you need – the gift of Sabbath.
  - Sabbath is a day of rest and worship.
  - The word Sabbath derives from the Hebrew word “*shabbat*” (שַׁבָּת), which means, “*to cease, stop, be at a standstill...stop working, take a holiday.*”<sup>1</sup> In the Bible, it refers to the day of the week when the people of God were to regularly cease from their labors as a sign of worship and devotion unto the Lord. Thus, if we are to build a definition of what the Sabbath is we are combining to ideas: *the idea of rest and the idea of worship.*
  - Sabbath is when God's people intentionally cease from work and busyness rest in the worship of God.
  - Jews typically observe the Sabbath on Saturdays.
  - Christians typically observe Sabbath on Sundays.
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- A few weeks ago, I was recently serving in our kindergarten classroom, and the kids were and are working on the Ten Commandments.
  - Many people would think that something like the Ten Commandments is crucial to learn because it is the bedrock of morality in the Bible and in Western civilization.
  - But what people what many people do not know is that remembering and practicing the Sabbath is a part of the Ten Commandments (commandment number four to be specific).
  - In other words, Sabbath isn't just a good suggestion that can be taken or ignored at will. Sabbath isn't merely a ceremonial issue – it is a moral issue: “*Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy. Six days you shall labor, and do all your work, but the seventh day is a Sabbath to the LORD your God. On it you shall not do any work, you, or your son, or your daughter, your male servant, or your female servant, or your livestock, or the sojourner who is within your gates. For in six days the LORD made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that is in them, and*

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<sup>1</sup> Holladay, William L. *A Concise Hebrew and Aramaic Lexicon of the Old Testament: Based on the Lexical Work of Ludwig Koehler and Walter Baumgartner.* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1988), 680.

***rested on the seventh day. Therefore the LORD blessed the Sabbath day and made it holy*** (Exodus 20:8–11, ESV).

- Sabbath is probably the most forgotten and least understood commandment in God's moral law.
- By Jesus's day and age, the Sabbath became something it was never intended to be. It was a perfunctory religious ritual that focused on restrictions and red tape, instead of rest and worship.
- In our day and age, we resist the Sabbath because we feel like it is unpractical.
- But make no mistake – we need the Sabbath. The Sabbath was made for us.
- **Sabbath might be the greatest need in your life that you don't know you need.**
- Sabbath can be misunderstood and devolve into legalism
- Sabbath can be ignored and pushed to the side.
- But today's passages will show us the beauty of **"True Sabbath."**

## **Exposition**

### **1.) True Sabbath is a Commandment Rooted in Creation.**

- Let's for a moment go back and review the two stories of our Scripture readings.
- Story number one: Jesus went to a synagogue to teach Scripture on a Sabbath Day (Lk. 13:10).
- There he sees a woman who has a disabling spirit, which has caused her to be unable to stand up for eighteen years (Lk. 13:11).
- From a medical standpoint, her condition would likely be diagnosed as *scoliosis* (curvature of the spine) or *spondylitis* (arthritis of the spine).<sup>2</sup>
- But from a personal standpoint, this woman has been suffering for eighteen long years. Eighteen years she has been hunched over, unable to breathe well, unable to walk well, unable to look up.
- Interestingly, this woman does not request anything of Jesus. But Jesus is moved by his compassion.<sup>3</sup> He reaches out to her. He lays his hands on her. The woman is healed, and she immediately glorifies God (Lk. 13:13).
- But the ruler of the synagogue is pretty upset about this (Lk. 13:14). He starts berating the people, saying, "If you want healing come other days of the week. But this is the Sabbath day!"
- Jesus corrects him sternly and calls him and people who think like him "hypocrites" (Lk. 13:15). How was this hypocrisy?
- Alfred Plummer notes: *"There was hypocrisy in pretending to rebuke the people,*

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<sup>2</sup> I. Howard Marshall, *The Gospel of Luke: A Commentary on the Greek Text*, New International Greek Testament Commentary (Exeter: Paternoster Press, 1978), 557.

<sup>3</sup> Robert H. Stein, *Luke*, vol. 24, The New American Commentary (Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 1992), 373.

*when he was really censuring Jesus; and in professing to have a zeal for the Law when his motive was animus against the Healer.”<sup>4</sup>*

- When Jesus issues his correction, he puts the synagogue ruler to shame, and the people rejoice (Lk. 13:15-17).
- Consequently, this is the last time in the book of Luke that Jesus ever gets to be invited to speak in a synagogue!<sup>5</sup>
  
- The second episode in our reading today is so similar that I felt like I needed to pull it in too, or else I would have to preach the same sermon to you in about four weeks.
- Jesus goes to eat at the house of a Pharisee (Lk. 14:1), which, by the way, shows that Jesus really does have a heart, not just for people who are enslaved to sin, but also people who are enslaved to religion.
- However, the guys the Pharisee’s house are watching Jesus “carefully” (παρατηρούμενοι)(Lk. 14:1).
- They want to see if he messes up so that they can criticize him and show how they are the true religious authority.
- At the dinner party, there is a man who has “dropsy” (Lk. 14:2).
- According to the *Baker Encyclopedia of the Bible*, dropsy is an “*Old medical term for excessive accumulation of watery fluid in any tissue or space of the body. Dropsy, mentioned in Luke 14:2, is a symptom of several serious disorders such as heart, kidney, or liver disease.*”<sup>6</sup>
- Again, Jesus heals the man and again corrects the Pharisees for their misunderstanding of the Law, and they are unable to counter him (Lk. 14:4-6).
  
- The question might be: is Jesus breaking the Law?
- The answer is “no.” Jesus is not breaking the law. He is restoring the intent of the law, and he is in a sense rescuing the Sabbath from the human traditions and restrictions that obscured and violated the heart of true Sabbath.<sup>7</sup> The Sabbath is to be a blessing, not a burden.<sup>8</sup>
  
- Why is Jesus going to such lengths to rescue the Sabbath from what it had become?
- The Sabbath is not just a part of the Ten Commandments. Sabbath goes even deeper. Sabbath was created when the world was created. In six day God created the heavens and the earth, and on the seventh day, he rested (Gen. 2:1-3; Ex. 20:11).

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<sup>4</sup> Alfred Plummer, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Gospel according to S. Luke*, International Critical Commentary (London: T&T Clark International, 1896), 342–343.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid. 341.

<sup>6</sup> Walter A. Elwell and Barry J. Beitzel, “Dropsy.” *Baker Encyclopedia of the Bible* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 1988), 643.

<sup>7</sup> Plummer, 341.

<sup>8</sup> Ibid. 343.

- Thus, the Sabbath is what theologians call “a creational ordinance.” It is woven into the fabric of creation. When we go against Sabbath, we are rubbing against the way God created us and the world around us.
- God didn’t rest on the seventh day because he needed it.
- He rested on the seventh day because we need it.
- We are restored and re-created in Sabbath.
- To be healed, then, is not work; it is the essence of the rest God wants to give us.
- Sometimes the things we think will give us rest don’t give us rest.
- Again, Sabbath is a gift we don’t think we want, but that we desperately need
- We are spiritual beings that need spiritual nourishment. We were created to find our rest in God. Nothing else will satisfy. As the great Saint Augustine of Hippo prayed on the first page of his book *Confessions*, “*You awaken us to delight in your praise; for you made us for yourself, and our hearts are restless until our hearts rest in you.*”<sup>9</sup>

## **2.) True Sabbath is a Sign of Covenant for God’s People.**

- Jesus offers an interesting statement when he defends why he healed the hunched-over woman. His rationale for her to receive healing is that she is “*a daughter of Abraham*” (Lk. 13:16).
- Why does this matter? Abraham was the ancestor of God’s people with whom God first made a covenant (Gen. 15, 17).
- *A covenant is a sacrificial bond of promise – the most sacred promise to persons can make.*
- God’s covenant with Abraham was the reason God’s people were a special people.
- Sabbath was a sign of this covenant for God’s people (Ex. 31:12-13).
- This is why the penalty for breaking the Sabbath was fairly severe. In ancient Israel, it was a capital offense punishable by death (Ex. 31:14-15). Why was this case? Well, the quick answer is that keeping the Sabbath was a sign of God’s people keeping their covenant with God. By breaking the Sabbath, people were saying they were not interested in knowing or worshipping God as Lord.<sup>10</sup>
- God’s people are called to remember and, in a sense, renew the covenant every Sabbath.
- *God knew that if they forgot the Sabbath, eventually they would forget they are God’s people.*
- Sabbath is an individual discipline, but it also a *community* discipline.

<sup>9</sup> A modernized rendering of Augustine. *The Confessions*. Trans. Edward Bouverie DePussey. (Philadelphia: Franklin Library, 1982), 5.

<sup>10</sup> Peter Enns. *The NIV Application Commentary: Exodus*. The NIV Application Commentary Series. Edited by Terry Muck. (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2000), 545.

- In his wonderful book *Crazy Busy*, author Kevin DeYoung talks about how our busyness is a co-conspiracy we have with one another. Even when we want to practice better habits, we often pull one another down.
- I truly believe that we live in an increasingly busy and anxious age and that our culture of busyness is harmful to our souls.
- *Might it be that one of the most important things we could do to represent the kingdom of God is for the people of God to image what it is to know Sabbath rest?*
- We are built to need Sabbath rest. Sabbath rest is like we need spiritual oxygen that gives life and nourishment to our souls. And for this reason, only Sabbath can give us the deep rest we need.
- Because Sabbath is a call not only to rest, but it is to rest in worship.
- Now, at this point, we should note there are exceptions for the Sabbath even in the Bible. These exceptions include works of necessity (like the people who guard our nuclear weapons), mercy (like health care professionals, and ministry (like myself).
- But these exceptions are exceptions, not the rule.
- The vast majority of people I know who regularly miss worship do not miss it because of their job or emergencies. They miss it because of largely elective busyness (meaning busyness they choose) or else simple convenience – whether it be a kid’s sports league, weather that’s too cold that you’d like just to stay inside and sleep in or a day the weather is so nice that you want just to go play outside all day.
- And in this moment, I really want to challenge the parents in this room.
- When you slip into doing life this way – which is very easy to do – you are discipling your children to worship Jesus, but only when there isn’t something a little bit more convenient to do.
- Recreation is fun, and there is a place for it. But it can’t come at the expense of worship.
- Don’t miss this opportunity in this season of life, to expose your children to worship on a regular basis.
- ***We live in a world that is still very much broken and fractured by sin, and often that brokenness wounds us. It deforms us, like the woman with the disabling spirit. But on the day of Sabbath, we are invited to cease from our works. We are invited to worship. And in that place of rest and worship, we are invited to encounter Jesus through his word and his Spirit; that he might heal us and restore in us that which is bent and broken.***
- Sabbath worship is like a communal spiritual chiropractic adjustment.
- *We need to do this. And we need to do this together, as a covenant community.*

### 3.) True Sabbath is a Remembrance of Freedom.

- In the Luke 13 passage, there is a very subtle hint toward the true meaning of Sabbath that Jesus uses.
- Jesus notes that the woman isn't just afflicted – she is “bound” (ἔδησεν) (Lk. 13:16). Thus, Jesus does not merely heal her. He says, “Woman, you are freed” (ἀπολέλυσαι)(Lk. 13:14).<sup>11</sup>
- There are two sets of the Ten Commandments. The first set is in Exodus 20 and the second is in Deuteronomy 5. There are identical in every way except for the way they talk about the Sabbath. In Exodus 20, Sabbath is rooted in creation. But in Deuteronomy, Sabbath is rooted in God's work of delivering his people out of slavery and into freedom.
- This is the Deuteronomy passage: *“You shall 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”* (Deuteronomy 5:15, ESV).
- Likewise, God invites us into rest and worship as a way to remember that we have been redeemed.
- We do not have to serve our old masters.
- To refuse the gift of Sabbath is a mindset of slavery, and God wants to give us a mindset of freedom: *“For you did not receive the spirit of slavery to fall back into fear, but you have received the Spirit of adoption as sons, by whom we cry, “Abba! Father!” The Spirit himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God”* (Romans 8:15–16, ESV).
- Sabbath is a birthright of redemption and adoption given to us by the Spirit.
- Sabbath is a foretaste of new creation that is to come when we will find eternal rest in God.

### **Conclusion**

- I'll conclude by answering a question I often receive when I teach on the Sabbath: “If the Sabbath is so important, why do Christians celebrate the Sabbath on Sundays instead of Saturdays like the Jews did, or (better yet) like Jesus did?”
- And historical and biblical evidence shows us Christians have done this ever since the age of the apostles (Acts 20:7; 1 Cor. 16:1-2). From the earliest times, Christians have gathered for worship and rest, not on the seventh day, but “the first day” of the week.

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<sup>11</sup> “to release from a painful condition, *free*, pass. *be freed*.” William Arndt et al., [\*A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature\*](#) (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000), 117.

- If the Sabbath is woven into the fabric of creation, why do Christians celebrate Sabbath on a different day?
- There is one simple reason for this. Something happened on a Sunday that shifted and changed the fabric of creation – the resurrection of Jesus Christ.
- The reason why we rest on Sunday is because Jesus completed a work on a Sunday that gives us the ability to know true rest.
- You see our task list will never be completed. We will never get to a place where we truly earn our rest. But we are to rest anyway. Why?
- By Jesus’s cross and his empty grave, he has finished the greatest work on our behalf. And our choice to rest in Sabbath is a sign of resting in his completed work.
- This is why Sabbath is an act of faith. It is saying that God’s work is enough when ours isn’t.
- ***We do not rest because our work is finished, but because Jesus’ work is!***
- So today, if you are exhausted and hungry for rest in your soul, know that your rest is found in the work Jesus has done. Come to him. Trust in him. Find rest in him. Enter into his rest. Hear the words of Jesus, *“Come to me, all who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light” (Matthew 11:28-30, ESV).*

AMEN.

### **Community Group Discussion Starters**

1. *Summarize the events and teaching given in Luke 13:10-17 and Luke 14:1-6 in your own words. What makes these two passages so similar?*
2. *“Remembering the Sabbath” might be the most neglected commandment of the Ten Commandments (see Ex. 20:8-11). What are some reasons that setting aside one day of the week for rest and worship is good and godly idea?*
3. *Jesus heals a woman on the Sabbath. This is a picture of what the Sabbath was meant to be – something that restores us. Have you ever experienced restoration from setting aside time to rest in the Lord and worship him? How so?*
4. *The ruler of the synagogue is indignant that Jesus would heal a woman on the Sabbath day. He, and other religious leaders like him, claimed to value the law of God, but in reality, had missed the whole point of Sabbath. How is it easy for us to miss the point of Sabbath in our culture today?*

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