

# BELPRES CHURCH

## Restore

**Hebrews 4:1-12, Numbers 13:26-14:10**

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Well, hello to those of you here in the room and those of you who are watching online. Thank you so much for joining us. Happy Lunar New Year. Happy Super Bowl Sunday, which is a high holy day in our secular culture. It's good to have you here.

The scripture reading comes from Hebrews chapter four, and it says this, "Therefore, since the promise of entering his rest still stands, let us be careful that none of you be found to have fallen short of it. For we also have had the good news proclaimed to us just as they did, but the message they heard was of no value to them because they did not share the faith of those who obeyed. Now, we who have believed enter that rest just as God has said. So I declared on oath in my anger they shall never enter my rest. And yet his works have been finished since the creation of the world. For somewhere he has spoken about the seventh day in these words. On the seventh day, God rested from all of his works. There remains then a Sabbath rest for the people of God, for anyone who enters God's rest also rests from their work just as God did from his. Let us therefore make every effort to enter that rest so that none will perish by following their example of disobedience." That's a little confusing, but I'll explain it in a minute.

One of the things I really love about my youngest daughter is how laid back she is. For a while she said that her goal in life was to be a hippie, which is a noble goal, I guess. Until we pointed out to her that she likes nice things and hippies don't have a lot of money. So then she said, "Well, then I'll be an executive hippie." And we said, "Well, there's no such thing." Well, later on she changed and she said that her goal in life was to have a taco truck on a beach in California. Indeed. Doesn't that sound nice? But we pointed out to her that she would need money to buy the truck and she would need a business license and she would have to pay taxes. She said, "Taxes. That's not fair. You guys always crush my dreams." What are her parents for? Dream crushers.

But I love her laid back nature. As my oldest daughter says, "Lucy does not go above and beyond," and that is a compliment. And so different than me and so different than our East Side culture that is so hurried and stressed out everyone's striving to achieve, get great grades, get a great college, get a great job, take the kids to soccer, got to complete the project at work. And those of you who are retired, you are some of the busiest people I know. And those are all good things, they're really good things. It's just there's a lot of them.

We're starting a sermon series, new sermon series called Restore, about how in the stress of our lives, the busyness of our lives, the divisions in our culture and election year, our worries about the future. In the middle of all of that, Jesus restores us to mental, emotional and spiritual health. Which we very badly need. This graph right here shows the rise in major episodes of depression over the last several decades, and you'll notice that starting 10 years ago, there's a steep increase in depression, especially for people between the ages of 12 and 25. And those stats there only go to 2020 and it's gotten much worse in the last four years.

The CDC says that currently 22% of adults overall have some kind of serious struggle with anxiety or depression, and amongst teens and young adults, that number is a third. And that's just major episodes that get reported. We live in anxious times and it is wrecking us and we are destroying younger generations. And there's increasing evidence that what is causing all this, or at least contributing to all of this, is the busyness of our lives and all the fear in our culture are at least partly to blame for all of this. But Jesus restores us to mental, emotional and spiritual strength in a number of ways that we'll talk about over the next couple of weeks. But one of the ways he restores us is through the gift of the Fourth Commandment in the 10 Commandments, which says, "Remember the Sabbath day by keeping it holy. Six days, you shall labor and do all your work, but the seventh day is a Sabbath to the Lord your God. For in six days the Lord made the heavens and the earth, the sea and all that is in them. But he rested on the seventh day. A Sabbath day."

And right now, some of you may have just stopped listening to me because you may be like, "Yeah, yeah, yeah, I can't do that. That is actually impossible. My schedule. My time. Yeah, yeah, yeah." I hear you. I get that. I know that it can be hard. Hang on, hang on. We're going to get to all of that. And the action step coming out of this sermon is not going to be just go have a Sabbath day. That's not going to be the action step for this sermon. Now, others of you, you may have too much time on your hands, but you aren't actually Sabbath-ing. You're not being restored.

So let's define what Sabbath is and is not. Sabbath is not just a day off, it's deeper than that. Sabbath is not a legalistic obligation to make us feel guilty when we don't do it. Sabbath is not a day to catch up on errands, chores, go to soccer games and all that stuff. Sabbath is not binge-watching something on television. What Sabbath is, is a day with no work to connect with God, meaningful relationships and be part of Jesus healing

the world in ways that restore us. And Sabbath helps us live the other six days of the week differently. It's not a legalistic rule to make us feel bad when we don't do it.

Jesus said the Sabbath was made for people, not people for the Sabbath. It is a gift to be received. And you don't need to spend thousands of dollars on a Hawaiian vacation to get it. It's free and it works. And many of you do this and you know the blessing. And what Sabbath is all about, Sabbath is just the biblical word for being restored, for restoration. It's all about restoration. God said every seven days is a day of rest, but he didn't stop there. God also commanded in the Bible that every seventh year be a Sabbath year, and for the whole year there was not supposed to be any planting or harvesting of crops. Because as we know, unless you let a field lie fallow you'll exhaust the soil and it won't grow anything. So every seventh year the land had to rest in order to be restored.

And then after seven cycles of seven sabbatical years, in other words, 49 years, the 50th year God said, was to be a year of jubilee. And in that year, all debts were canceled. Slaves were set free. Property returned to its original owners. And again, that's all about restoration. People who had fallen into poverty got out of it, slaves were set free. All of that is about restoration, this giant control, alt delete of society. And that's why in the Bible Jesus healed on Sabbath days, which got him in trouble with the religious leaders. They thought Sabbath was just about not working. But Jesus' point is no, it's about restoration, which is why he healed people on Sabbath days because he was restoring them. Part of Sabbath is participating in Jesus' restoration of the world in ways that renew us.

Which means that for those of you who have too much time on your hands, you may actually need to add something meaningful to your schedule, not take something away. I think of people in retirement communities who can't get out anymore, but they pray for people or they're helping people in their assisted living facilities in ways that restore them. And one of the most counterculture things we could do as Christians is Sabbath. It's just so counter to our culture. And I know it can be hard. I get it. We're busy people. I understand that. I have a demanding job. One person's spiritual needs are infinite and there are several thousand of you, so my job description is several thousand times infinity. Okay? I get what it is to be busy. And like all of you, if I don't get some of that done, there are some real consequences.

But truth be told, there's also something less noble about my busyness. Because telling people how busy I am makes me feel important. I can't possibly slow down because so much depends on me. Without my anxious presence, this church would fall apart, did you know that? I alone hold this church together, did you know that? See, there's something in me that likes to tell people how busy I am because it makes me feel important. And so I, "complain" about being busy, but what I'm actually doing sometimes is bragging. Which is weird, right? Because the Sabbath command is number 4 on God's top 10 list of commandments. And we would never brag about breaking any of

the other nine commandments, would we? But we brag about breaking the Fourth Commandment all the time.

So if somebody asks you, "How are you doing?" What's a common response? Busy. "I'm busy." Right? If someone asked you, how are you doing? You would never say, "Oh, just making some graven images. Going to covet my neighbor's donkey later this afternoon as well." We would never say that, but we will brag about breaking the Fourth Commandment. What do we get for all that busyness? Stress, pressure, loneliness, because we don't have time to make meaningful relationships. God has a gift for us. It's called Sabbath. And that means a lot of things, but for this sermon two.

First Sabbath means trusting in God's all sufficiency. We just sang about trust. Sabbath is trusting in God's all sufficiency. The passage I read at the beginning out of Hebrews refers to a story in the Old Testament where the Israelites get out of slavery in Egypt and on the brink of the promised land, but they're afraid to go in because the people there look like giants and they don't think that God is sufficient to defeat the giants. So they don't go in, which means they wander for another 40 years. In other words, because they don't believe that God's power is sufficient, they don't get any rest from their wandering. And it's the same with us.

Part of the reason that we are so busy is we don't trust that God's work is sufficient to get us where he wants us to be, and we're afraid to rest because we're afraid that if we rest, the boss won't be happy or our friends won't be happy, or our kids will miss out on some amazing opportunity to maximize their potential. But the question Sabbath asks us is, do you trust that God's work is sufficient to get you where he wants you to be? Not necessarily where you want to be, but where he wants you to be. That's why it says in the Bible that on the seventh day of creation God rested. Not because he was tired, but because his work was complete. It was sufficient. God himself does not show up at the office every day, why do we think we have to?

And Sabbath isn't about just not working. You can not work and still be stressed out about it. Anxiety and worry come from not trusting in God's all sufficiency. When I was in seminary, there was a woman I knew who was studying for her PhD defense, and that's the thing that comes at the very end of the process where a bunch of professors grill you for several hours and then they vote on whether or not to give you a PhD. And this woman decided that she would study for six days, but the seventh day would be devoted to church, family, friends and connecting with Jesus. And all of her friends said, "No, no, no. You can't do that. You can't do that before your defense. You have to study every day before your dissertation defense. You can't do that." But she decided she was going to observe Sabbath anyway and take that time off.

Well, finally the day of her exam came and she did a terrible job. Like there were questions she didn't know how to answer, she fumbled on others. Finally, the committee asked her to step out of the room while they decided whether or not to pass her. She waited a really long time, which is never a good sign. And finally her advisor came out and said, "That was terrible. That was terrible. I mean, you passed, but barely. We almost failed you." And she said, "Oh, that's not good." And he said, "No, it's not because you know what? We have a word around here for people who barely passed their PhD defense." And she said, "What is it?" And he said, "Doctor. Congratulations Doctor." God was sufficient. God's work was sufficient to get her where she needed it to be.

How good is good enough? So often we get wrapped up in perfectionism and add all kinds of work to things that isn't always necessary. Sometimes it is, but sometimes it isn't. We don't always have to get the A plus. The house always doesn't have to be clean. Can I hear an amen?

Amen.

The project doesn't always have to be perfect. Plus, over the long haul her commitment to Sabbath made her a better scholar. Because if we don't Sabbath, we will eventually burn out and become like exhausted soil that can't grow anything. Which is why when I was working on my PhD, my advisor would make me take a week or two off every time I finished a chapter of my dissertation because he knew I needed to be restored. This woman trusted that God's work was sufficient to get her where he wanted her to be, which meant she got restored, connected to family and friends and Jesus, and she still gets to be called doctor.

Sabbath is trusting in the all sufficiency of God. And yeah, sure, she had some embarrassment at not acing that PhD defense. Yeah, sure, there was some embarrassment around that. But here's the thing, nobody is ever going to ask her how she did at her PhD defense. I have a PhD, no one has ever asked me how I did at my defense. Now, you're all going to ask me after the service in the lobby, and I'm not going to tell you. I still have one. Sabbath is trusting in the all sufficiency of God.

And then second, Sabbath is resting in the completed work of the cross. Because a lot of what drives our busyness is trying to prove to others and ourselves that we are valuable, that we have worth. In traditional cultures, you get your sense of value and worth from your family and your community. It's relational and it's given. But in our hyper-individualistic culture, our value comes from our achievements, grades, job, how well we look, that sort of thing. We have to earn it. Sabbath says, stop believing your significance depends on how much you achieve.

Jesus' work on the cross is complete. He died to pay the price for every sin that we have ever sinned, which means you don't have to justify yourself. You don't have to compensate for your sins and your bad things by trying to achieve a bunch of good stuff. You don't have to do that because Jesus did that for you. That's how much he loves you. It's believing that Jesus looked at the cross and he looked at you and he said, "You're worth it." And that's the deep rest that we need, that all the vacations in the world cannot give us. Only Jesus gives that to us.

So here's the action step for this week. Prepare to have a sabbath day. We're not suggesting that you have one right now because this is hard. So we're going to kind of stair step kind of baby step into this for right now. Just prepare to have a Sabbath day. Not just a day off to catch up on chores and stuff like that, but time to connect with Jesus and meaningful relationships. So first, identify the day it's going to be. I recommend Sunday because corporate worship is part of Sabbath, but if you have a non-traditional work week like I do, it's going to have to be a different day.

Now, one caveat here. Please don't turn this into one more thing you think you have to be perfect at because that would defeat the whole point of Sabbath. "I got to work really hard to be perfect at Sabbath." I mean, this is supposed to be a gift. Perfection is not the goal. If you can't figure out a whole day, whole day is better, but if you can't figure out a whole day, then start with at least half a day. Talk to your kids about it if you've got kids.

Third, identify the people, the community that you're going to connect with because Sabbath, part of that is connection in community. That's part of what restores us. So my day off is Friday. My work week is Saturday through Thursday. My day off is Friday. My Sabbath day is Friday. Here's what that looks like for me. First, I spend a few hours in the morning reading things that I want to read that have absolutely nothing to do with my job. For me, that's usually history. Then I work out on my elliptical, which I do every day of the week for about 35 minutes because that's part of what restores me, and it's part of how I just manage stress. And after the elliptical, then I go to the gym. Because the gym and T-Mobile Park, those are really happy places for me. I am very happy in the gym. I am very happy at T-Mobile Park. So I'll do that, I'll do the gym thing. Somewhere in the day. I always will listen to a sermon because everybody needs someone to preach at them, and so someone's got to preach at me. So I'll listen to a sermon. Somewhere in that day I'll make sure that there's time for me to pray. I often listen to worship music.

And usually when I get all of that done it's about 1:00 in the afternoon. And at that point, the thing that I most want to do is go back to work. I mean, I'm only halfway through my Sabbath day and already I want to go back to work because I like to work. And there's nothing wrong with liking to work. In fact, one of the things that's been fun for me to see in my son now and my oldest daughter is they like their job. My oldest daughter loves her job working for Disney. One of the things she does for them is a video podcast. And I

love watching it because she's really good at it because. The camera loves her and she loves the camera. Where did she get that from? I never met a microphone I didn't like. It is okay to really like to work, but not on my Sabbath day. I do not work even if I want to. I don't check email. I try really hard not to have to run errands. So instead, I'll use the afternoon to spend time with good friends who I've known a while with whom I do not have to be the pastor. Maybe cook something, I like to do that. Maybe watch a documentary on film theory, I know that's weird. But my wife and I try to go out together at least once a week, usually that happens on Friday night. I think what I need to do a little bit more of is things like backpacking trips, snowshoeing, because those things also restore me. That's Sabbath for me. For you, it might be a little bit different.

So start preparing to have a Sabbath day. And then one more thing to add to your preparation. You may need to identify where you need some margin and what you may need to cut out of your schedule. Because here's the thing, schedule is just another word for your priorities. Your schedule is just another word for your priorities. And yeah, I know it can be hard. You parents right now, you may be thinking, "How on earth? My kids have soccer games, baseball practice, yada, yada." I know, I know. My wife and I raised three kids in this culture and one of them is still in college, so it wasn't that long ago. We limited the number of activities they could do to one sport and one church thing at a time. We deliberately put them in less competitive teams until they were teenagers and if they then chose to go to something more select, then that was fine.

It may mean your kids have to miss a few games if they're scheduled on Sunday morning. We did not go to every single Sunday morning game or swim, we went to some, but not all because church matters. And regardless of what we say, we are showing our kids what we really think is important by our schedules. And sports and other activities, super important. They're super important, but the number of hours kids spend in sports and other activities has skyrocketed over the last 30 years, and it's too much.

"But pastor, I don't want and I don't want my kids to miss out on some great opportunity." I don't want them to miss out on that either. Back to that chart, look at that top line. What are we doing to them? We're crushing them. I don't want them to be crushed. And yes, it is hard to create space for Sabbath. It wasn't any easier for the Israelites back then. Can you imagine how hard it would've been at harvest time to take a day off when every day counts? Let alone not planting crops for an entire year. Trusting that God was going to provide wasn't any easier back then, but it is so refreshing and it restores you for your own good, for the restoration of your soul, for the sake of your kids and your grandkids. Sabbath, it's a gift.

As I've shared with you along the way a close friend of mine died in October at the age of 44. He was a student in my college ministry, when I did that. I was his mentor. It just eventually turned into a really close friendship. And he was senior pastor of a big church



in Dallas. Well, a couple of years ago, I had to be in Dallas for some work stuff. So I called him, said, "I'm going to be in Dallas. I would love some time with you, even if it's just an hour to go running together." He said, "Let me see what I can do. So he called me back a few hours later and he said, I can clear two days off my calendar. And there's a family in my church, they have a house on a lake a couple hours outside of Dallas, and they have a boat that we can use to go wake surfing or fishing. We can go on some runs together. Can you clear two days?" And I said, "I can and I will."

For two senior pastors of big churches with kids at home. That was a lot of time, but it came at a good time for me. It was a season of discouragement. I was kind of drained. So we hung out for two days, did some of those water activities. That was cool. Had some deep conversations like, "How you doing? No, really? How you doing? No, tell me the truth. How you doing?" We spent some time praying together, but also just a lot of time laughing, joking, talking about baseball, other stuff.

Now, the point that this whole story is leading up to is nothing. Nothing. We didn't have a life-changing conversation. We didn't strategize about best practices in ministry, didn't plan some huge endeavor that our churches could do together. Start a nonprofit to save puppies in Canada or whatever. Just two amazing days of nothing. But when I came back, the sermons were a little easier to write. I was a little less irritable because I'd been restored. And now that he has died, and as I go through the Rolodex of my memories of him, that is one of my favorite memories. We Sabbath, connection to Jesus, meaningful relationship, fun activity. You want to be restored, keeps the Sabbath holy. It's not a rule, it's a gift. Connect with Jesus. Trust that he is able to get you where he needs you to be if you rest. Trust his power in that and turn to him because he is our Sabbath. In Him and Him only do we find our Sabbath rest. Jesus who said, "Come unto me all you who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you and learn from me. For my yoke is easy and my burden is light. And you will find rest, rest unto your souls."

So Jesus, it's really only in you. It's only by trusting that your power is sufficient to get us where you want us to be if we rest, it's only knowing that we have nothing to prove because you've done it all for us, and you value us. Lord, only in you can we rest. So Jesus, help us as we leave from here this week to rest in you. We bring you all of our fears, we bring you our worries, we bring you all the things on our calendar, we bring you all the things we're excited about, we bring you all the good things. We put it all at your feet, Jesus. And say in the middle of all of this, help us find our rest in you. We pray this in your name. Amen.

### **Discussion Questions:**

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*Read this week's scripture(s) & answer the below questions with your friends, family, or All In small group.*



**Opening Question:** Looking back to last week's sermon and scripture... How did you live differently or practice what we talked about in your life this week? What did you do and how did it go?

**Scripture Reflection Questions:** Read this week's scripture together and discuss the following:

- What is the author warning his readers about from the story of Israel's rebellion?
- What is the rest promised by God?

**Sermon Reflection Questions:** Reflecting on this week's sermon, discuss the following:

- What would help you enter God's rest and observe sabbath?
- How will you prepare?

**Closing Question and Application:** Given what we've discussed together today, how might God want you to apply these learnings to your life or in the life of your community this next week? Who might you share this with?

**Closing group prayer:** Spend a few minutes together in your group sharing prayer requests and then praying together for each other. Thank God for the time together, the conversation shared, the other people in the group, and for encouragement in the week ahead.