FOUR POINTS CHURCH

Luke 24:1-12, Christ's Victory for Us Calls Us to Rest as We Work!

Opening Discussion: Let the debate rage! If you had to pick between Christmas Day and Resurrection Sunday, which do you appreciate/enjoy more and why?

- Opening Quip: what is the difference between working hardly and hardly working?
  - Illustration: the almighty clipboard and pen.
- The original day of worship was Sabbath, or Saturday. This was set aside as a day to rest, just as God rested on the seventh day.[1] The word sabbath (or shabbat) comes from a verb meaning to "cease" or "rest".[2]
  - According to the law of Moses, this was a "holy convocation" or sacred assembly![3]
  - This was such an important command, that it was included in the Decalogue, or Ten Commandments.
  - Psalm 92 is titled as "How Great Are Your Works A Psalm. A Song for the Sabbath." This Psalm states: in the first four verses:
    - **[1] It is good to give thanks to the LORD, to sing praises to your name, O Most High; [2] to declare your steadfast love in the morning, and your faithfulness by night, [3] to the music of the lute and the harp, to the melody of the lyre. [4] For you, O LORD, have made me glad by your work; at the works of your hands I sing for joy. (ESV)**
- I think it is important to note that Sabbath rest is still something that God expects us to practice. There has been much debate over Sabbatarianism, or the practice of Sabbath. Some believe we should rest from all work on Sunday, our day of rest and worship. Others believe we should still be taking a day of rest on Saturday, and

[1] Gen. 2:3; Ex. 20:8-11

[2] Joel Beeke and Paul Smalley, Reforemed Systematic Theology Vol. 4 (Wheaton, IL.: Crossway, 2021)898

[3] Lev. 23:3

doing the “work of worship” on Sunday as the Lord’s Day. Still others believe that Sabbath Law was ceremonial and fulfilled in Christ.[4]

- John Calvin believed the sabbath day was to be completely spent in “hearing God’s word, in prayers and petitions, and in meditating upon his works so that we rejoice in him.”[5]

Question: How can we practice Sabbath rest in our context today? What are your personal habits or approaches to Sabbath? How do you pursue closeness with God during your Sabbath?

- Jesus rose from the dead on the first day of week, which would have been the same day as the The Feast of Firstfruits; a holy day that followed passover and began what was called the “Counting of the Omer”, a counting of 7 weeks before the Feast of Pentecost (or feast of 50 days).[6]
  - The Apostle Paul alluded to this when he stated in 1 Cor. 15:20-23 “[20] But in fact Christ has been raised from the dead, the firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep. [21] For as by a man came death, by a man has come also the resurrection of the dead. [22] For as in Adam all die, so also in Christ shall all be made alive. [23] But each in his own order: Christ the firstfruits, then at his coming those who belong to Christ.”
- The apostles and early church fathers moved the official day of worship in the ecclesiastical week to Sunday in order to honor what Christ had done in rising from the dead on Sunday.[7]
  - By the end of the book of Acts, the apostles with the believes in the early church were meeting on Sunday.
    - **Acts 20:7 [7] On the first day of the week, when we were gathered together to break bread, Paul talked with them, intending to depart on the next day, and he prolonged his speech until midnight.**

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[4] Wayne Grudem, Christian Ethics: An Introduction to Biblical Moral Reasoning. (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2018), 346-51.

[5] John Calvin, *Sermons on Genesis, Chapters 1-11*, trans. Rob Roy McGregor (Edinburgh: Banner of Truth, 2009), 130.

[6] Leviticus 23; Mark 16:9

[7] https://www.saet.ac.uk/Christianity/Sabbath?

- **1 Corinthians 16:1–2 [1] Now concerning the collection for the saints: as I directed the churches of Galatia, so you also are to do. [2] On the first day of every week, each of you is to put something aside and store it up, as he may prosper, so that there will be no collecting when I come. (ESV)**

Question: How does viewing Sunday Worship as a gift of the firstfuits (or our very best and first day) change the way we approach church attendance and service?

- When we gather on The Lord's Day, we should be gathering with an effort to offer God our very best, our firstfruits in worship! Hopefully you rested yesterday so that you could come refreshed and ready to do the worshipful work of adoration and application today!

  - **Our work today actually involves spiritual rest, as we rest in Christ's righteousness as our access into the presence of God.**

    - If you are a work-a-holic like me, it is actually work to rest. I don't usually take real vacations as I don't enjoy resting, but God has commanded us to take Sabbath rest.

    - Sunday's can also be work to rest. Doesn't it seem like there are so many things we have to work to wrestle out of our hearts and minds as we seek to focus in on what God wants us to hear and understand?!

Question: What are some practical ways we can rest in the Gospel and in the presence of God on Sundays?

- Here is a Firstfruits Philosophy: this is the work of worship, and why we do it.

  - **Recognize Christ's work because it calls us to wonder!**

    - **[1] But on the first day of the week, at early dawn, they went to the tomb, taking the spices they had prepared. [2] And they found the stone rolled away from the tomb, [3] but when they went in they did not find the body of the Lord Jesus. [4] While they were perplexed about this, behold, two men stood by them in dazzling apparel.**

    - The women were the first witnesses to the resurrection! They were the first to experience the wonder of it all! They couldn't make sense what they were seeing and experiencing.

    - The Gospel should feel the same way every time we rehearse and remember it!

- Why would Jesus do this for me?
- Why was I blessed enough to hear the Gospel in the first place?
- Why is God so patient with me, a sinner?

- Whenever we gather, we should be spellbound by the love of Jesus for us.

Discussion: What is a worship song or hymn that describes for you the heart of wonder for God's grace or majesty?

- **Remember Christ's words because it offers us comfort!**
  - **[5] And as they were frightened and bowed their faces to the ground, the men said to them, "Why do you seek the living among the dead? [6] He is not here, but has risen. Remember how he told you, while he was still in Galilee, [7] that the Son of Man must be delivered into the hands of sinful men and be crucified and on the third day rise." [8] And they remembered his words, [9] and returning from the tomb they told all these things to the eleven and to all the rest.**
  - The Gospel is a balm of comfort. It is all we have to offer one another when we face things in life that we can't understand.
  - Remember: we don't inform our view of God through our experiences. We inform our experiences with our view of God. If you don't understand the Gospel, you can't understand the heart of God for His people.
  - When we gather here on Sundays, we are gathering to hear God's Word, and in particular, His Gospel words.
    - I once had a man tell me I used the word "Gospel" too much in my preaching. I took that as a compliment.

Question: How is the Gospel a "balm of comfort" to us in our every day context?

- **Run to Christ's witness of the empty tomb because it motivates us to run with the Gospel into the world!**
  - **[10] Now it was Mary Magdalene and Joanna and Mary the mother of James and the other women with them who told these things to the apostles, [11] but these words seemed to them an idle tale, and they did not believe them. [12] But Peter rose and ran to the tomb; stooping and**

looking in, he saw the linen cloths by themselves; and he went home marveling at what had happened.

- Peter ran to the tomb hoping he would see what he wanted to see. He did see exactly what he wanted to see, and it changed him forever. No more following Christ from a distance. No more cowering in fear. No more denying he knew Jesus personally. He would now run every where his feet could carry him preaching the Gospel, even dying a martyrs death for the sake of the good news.
- We used to sing a song called "Into Marvelous Light". The first line of the song stated: "Into Marvelous Light I'm Running".[8] I used to love singing that song.
- Every week we are running here to get into the light of the Gospel, we are running together back out into the world like a great marathon with the Gospel anthem.

- **Hebrews 12:1–2 [1] Therefore, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us also lay aside every weight, and sin which clings so closely, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us, [2] looking to Jesus, the founder and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is seated at the right hand of the throne of God.**

Final Application: How does this passage inspire us to bring the rest and victory we should experience at church on Sundays into the rest of our week and ultimately into our daily lives?

[8] Chalie Hall, "Marvelous Light", 2005 Sixsteps Music, worshiptogether.com