

## **The Rev. Billy Cervený:**

Lord, I pray now you would open the eyes of our hearts that we would understand what it means to be loved by you, to love like you, and to impact the world. I thank you, Jesus. We pray this in your holy name, amen.

All right, this is a little different. I like this, this is kind of fun. Well, band up front. So as I was preparing this sermon, I was remembering a number of years ago, when I was, that was a lot of years ago now. It was a couple of years ago when I was in college, but that was more than some of you in this room have been alive. But the point is, I love to travel.

And one of the best trips that I ever took in my life was the summer after my freshman year of college. I'd gotten it as a graduation president from high school, but didn't take it until the following year. As a college buddy in mind, we planned this trip to go to Europe for the summer. And we would be gone for a month. This was 1988 or something like that. And this was back when you get a URL pass or you get this URL thing, you go on any train in Europe, you could travel around, and you put your backpack on and all that kind of stuff, it was really cool. So I had this mapped out with my buddy, Bill. And when it came literally a week and a half before we were leaving, he called me and he said, "Dude, I can't go." I'm like, you're kidding me. I'm like, I bought all the tickets. I got the URL passes, we're ready to go, because I can't go. And I hung up the phone, and I was like, you know what, I'm going anyway. So I got on an airplane, I was only 19 years old when I did this, mom. I don't know what you were thinking, letting me do that, but I was 19 and I got off the airplane in London and I was terrified, but I had a backpack that was bigger than me and had a guitar case with me. And I jumped on sort of riding trains through Spain and through Portugal, and it was awesome. I met, I stayed in youth hostels, and I met all these people, and I took my guitar, and at every place I'd go, I'd take my guitar and I'd open the guitar case and play for money. I made about 45 cents, but it was awesome. And I love it. I met all these people, started traveling with them. And one thing that people used to say to me when I was doing this, they said, "You've got to go to the Panavechio, "when you go to Florence."

I was like, the Panavecchio, that sounds awesome. He said, "Just trust me, go to the Panavecchio. "You go there as a lot of young people, you could play your guitar there, people would love it." So I go to Florence and I get off my train and I look at a map. I don't know what the Panavecchio is, I just know it's a cool place. And I look on this map, and I see it, there's this bridge, there's this old bridge, and in the middle of it, it said Panavecchio. So I'm guessing it's in the middle of the bridge. And I get off and I travel over there, it's on the other side of town, I'm carrying my, I'm getting tired, I'm shifting my guitar case, and I'm start walking across the bridge and there's all these stores. And I pop my head in to the store, I don't speak Italian. A lot of them didn't speak English. And I said, "Panavecchio?" And they're like, "Yes!" And I'm like, "This is not working." So I go to the next store, Panavecchio, they're like, "Yes, see here, whatever." And so I'm really confused. And finally, I'm getting discouraged, I'm very tired. Like I said, my backpack's starting to chafe me, and this American couple comes up to me and they said, "Would you take our picture?" I said, "Be happy to." So they sit on the edge and I take the picture and they hand it back and they said, "Thank you, "because we have our entire marriage, "we've always heard how beautiful the Panavecchio is." And they weren't kidding.

And I'm like, "I'm sorry.

"Can you please tell me what the Panavecchio is?" And she's like, "Where it is?" And she goes, "You're on it.

"The Panavecchio, it's right here, it's this bridge."

So I would have been spending my entire time for the last hour trying to gain access to this place I was already in.

And I was so like, I couldn't see it, because I didn't know where I was. And once that happened, the lens turned, I saw it, I said, "Oh, I see, because there was young people "in stores, and it was like a plaza, "but in the word Panavecchio literally means old bridge."

So I took off my backpack and I sat down

and I could enjoy the vibrancy of everything that was going around. And that's a ridiculous story, I realize.

But that is a perfect metaphor for 90% of my Christian life, up for most of it, especially as it relates to this thing called the Sabbath and rest.

This idea that when I came to Jesus, I remember I had this sort of profound experience, maybe some of you can relate to this. And I remember what was so appealing to me was in Matthew chapter 11, where Jesus said, "Come to me, all you are weary and burdened, "and I will give you rest.

"My yoke is easy and my burden is light."

And I wanted that rest, because I needed it. And so what do you do? I became a believer. I'd had this profound encounter with Jesus, so I put on my backpack filled with all these Christian things, these things that were gonna carry me into this thing called Sabbath rest. I was gonna do my Bible studies, I was gonna be a nicer guy, I was gonna live better. I was gonna do all these different things. These are all good things.

And as I began to journey, I began to walk and try to kind of find this rest,

I don't care who you are; when you carry those things long enough,

and you try to, and you cross that bridge back and forth, not knowing where this rest is that you're trying to find, this Sabbath that people talk about, eventually you begin to shift that guitar case from one hand to the other. And eventually that backpack begins to chafe, and you begin to poke your heads in each little store, and you talk to other believers, like Sabbath rest, they're like, "Yeah." You're like, "Okay, Sabbath rest?" They're like, "Yeah, exactly."

And you keep going and you get tired, and then eventually you become discouraged.

And there's gotta be more. Now, if that's you, or if you've ever experienced pockets of your life like that, because that's me, that's a fear; it's huge chunks of my life like that, there is something more.

That's the good news, and it's right beneath your feet. You're here, you're in it. And I wanna unpack that a little bit.

Because see, as Christians, most of us spend so much of our time trying to gain access to a room we're already in, that we're trying to say if I can just do this or do that, I can gain access to this secret clubhouse that other people seem to have the decoder ring that gets them into, that allows them peace and rest and calm and placidity in their spirit and all these things. And what the gospel says is, no, when you come to Jesus, you are placed in the center of this room.

And the futility of trying to enter a room you are already in it only creates exhaustion.

And so what I wanna talk about today is okay, if we're in that room, how do we appreciate that?

How do we walk in that place?

So look at our passage in Luke 13. It's a great window to understand this. Jesus, he's in the synagogue,

and it's on the Sabbath, right?

It's on the holy day. And the Jewish religious leaders at this time, you know this if you've read any chunks of the New Testament, they're hardcore about keeping the Sabbath. And they're hardcore about it for a couple reasons. The first reason they're hardcore about it is the fourth commandment. You gotta keep the Sabbath and keep it holy. And the second reason is Israel has this long history of being an occupied country. They've been conquered by the Assyrians, the Babylonians, and now, when Jesus is time, they're run by the Romans.

And in the mind of the religious ruling class at that time, they thought that we have just gotta be obedient enough. We've gotta be good enough. We've

gotta observe things like the Sabbath enough. And if we can do that, then God will honor us and he'll drive out our oppressors.

So that's what's driving them, and they could not have been more hardcore about the Sabbath.

They dotted every I crossed every T, and they created laws around laws around laws so you wouldn't violate it. So in comes Jesus, and he's in this synagogue.

And he sees this woman. The scripture says this is a woman that Satan has oppressed for 18 years to the point where he's bending her over. And she is crippled. She is bent in half is the way the scripture reads.

And Jesus sees her, and he calls her over, and he lays hands on her, and she's healed, and the Pharisees lose their mind.

They lose their mind and say, "You can't do this." And Jesus says, "You are a hypocrite.

"You would untie your ox and lead it to water on a Sabbath, "but you would not take this daughter of Abraham,

"this beloved child, and watch her be set free, "who's been oppressed by a demon for two decades?"

And when you hear that story, you realize that the Sabbath issue is a big one. It's a big one for the Pharisees, as we've already established, but it's also a big one for Jesus.

Like Jesus is saying, "You are missing this."

And what he's doing is he's taking them down this road that is very uncomfortable for them, and he's trying to show them something.

So I need us to understand what this is, because how does this apply to our life? So what I think we first need to do we gotta understand what is a Sabbath. Like, why does it matter?

And the second thing is, is what is Jesus saying about the Sabbath in Luke 13?

And the third thing is, what does that have to do with me? Okay? So the Sabbath, if you wanna understand anything, especially in the scripture, if you wanna understand it more clearly, you gotta go back to ground zero.

And Sabbath was something; this wasn't a human invention, this was something God created. And you read about it in Genesis chapter two, after God had created the heavens and the earth and the birds and the snakes and all the plants and animals and the crown jewel of creation, humanity. And you can read in chapter two, verse one, it says, "Thus the heavens and the earth were finished

"and all the host of them. "And on the seventh day, God finished his work that he had done, and he rested on the seventh day "from all his work that he had done. "So God blessed the seventh day and made it holy,

"because on it, God rested from all his work "he had done in creation."

Now, if you wanna understand any passage in the Old Testament, especially when God is the primary mover, here's your secret, here's your secret. Look at the verbs, just write out the verbs, and it'll tell you the whole story. And in this thing, all we gotta do is look at the verbs, and it tells you the whole story. God, he finished, he rested, he blessed, he made holy.

He finished. What does that mean?

What it's saying is that yes, God he made the heavens and the earth, he made all the animals and plants and trees, and with the crown jewel of creation, he made humanity.

It says that he created these hosts of heaven, which means the unseen spiritual realm. This is something we always read over, the hosts he makes, which are angels and seraphim and cherubim. And it says the Hebrew word for finished here, though, it doesn't just mean that he stopped working, that God had just put his hammer down.

The implication here to this Hebrew word is that when God finished it, he had brought this vision to completion. The picture here is like a craftsman, a jeweler, who's crafting a crown, and he's placing the final crown jewel at the very top of the crown, and he steps back, and it is done. His vision is accomplished.

The picture, he has finished everything that he tried to do. Then it says he rested.

In Hebrew, the word is sabat, which is where we get the word Sabbath from.

And the word rested here literally means to cease,

but in the context here, he's not resting; God is not resting because he's tired. And when I rest from a project, usually I disengage with it, I walk away, I get a little head space, that's not what it means. It doesn't mean that God is disengaging; it means quite the opposite.

To rest, the implication this is that God is stepping in and he's admiring his work.

It's looking at it, it's almost like he's running his hand over it, and he's looking at it and he's marveling at it. And to go even further, the context of this, what he's saying, and more importantly, is that resting implies that he is taking up residence in his creation. He's moving in, and he's like, yes, here I am.

And he's there, and he's home. And it says he blessed and he made holy.

What did God say after everything he made? It is good.

And after he made man on the sixth day, he said it is very good.

And he blessed it; what he's saying is he has unmatched affection for it. He is laying the full weight of his affections on this, on this creation, but especially humanity.

And he makes it holy. What makes something holy in scripture? Not just holy with a small age is like sin, or like not sinning or doing good things, but holy with a capital H. What makes something holy is the presence of God.

When the presence of God moves in, so he blessed it. He laid the full weight of his affection on it, and he made it holy because he's with it, he's marveling at it, and in those moments, he's sustaining it with his presence and setting it free to do what he created it to do.

And the most important thing, not the most important, one of the important thing I want you to see here is this, that the Sabbath that God is designed here,

we think of Sabbath as this day that rolls around once a week. But the original intention in Genesis two it was the goal of creation. It was the ongoing reality for all things.

Everything was supposed to live and exist and move in this ecosystem of Sabbath

that you would work out of a place of rest, not work in order to accomplish something and gain rest.

Everything we did flowed out of it. It's a very, very different picture than what we have in it.

So the problem with the story in Genesis two and the Sabbath rest is that it's followed by Genesis three.

And in Genesis three, you know what happens. There's two things, this is where sin enters in. There's two things you need to see in this. First, the



serpent comes in here. This serpent enters into the garden. Now what happens to this serpent? We know when you read this story, you remember we just read earlier that God created these heavenly hosts as well. This serpent wasn't just a snake.

It was a divine being.

And in fact, it was a divine being that later in Ezekiel, says that it was one of the most, it was the most glorious divine being in God's heavenly realms.

He was the most beautiful of angels, as they say.

And this angel hated God.

And he had pride at the core of his being. And he wanted to undo God. And he wanted to undo his plan. And he wanted to be equal with God. So he wanted to vandalize his creation. And if you wanna vandalize his creation, what better thing to vandalize than to vandalize the image bearers of God?

And that's what he did.

He deceived Adam and Eve, and sin enters the world

and separated us from God.

And it shattered our hearts.

And now, when sin entered the world, what happens is all those verbs we read about God being finished, rested, blessed, and holy, it got inverted.

We became dramatically unfinished.

We became dramatically not at rest.

We became un-blessed and unholy. There was no Sabbath.

And the serpent, it didn't stop there. What does it say in 1 Peter?

He's still going for God's image bearers. It says that your adversary, the devil, it crawls around like a prowling lion seeking to devour someone.

So what happens later, we fast forward the story. You know, in the Old Testament, we get the Sabbath. God says honor the Sabbath, keep it holy. They're imitating the created order. But it's also this thing that they keep because it's pointing towards this day that's coming. It's coming towards, pointing towards this day that's on the horizon. Okay, you with me? So what does this have to do with Luke 13?

So here we go. As this passage lights up when you look at it through the lens of that. It's the Sabbath, and it's at the synagogue, and there's this woman.

And Satan, in his attempt to undermine God and vandalize his creation and vandalize his image bearers. He has tormented this woman for two decades. He has bent her in half as we talked about.

And Jesus sees her, and when Jesus sees her, he sees more than any of us can imagine.

Because what Jesus sees, he sees a bigger story, because he was there at the dawn of time.

When Jesus sees her, he was there at the very beginning; it was through him all things were made. It was him that spoke the word that brought all things into being; the pre-incarnate Jesus walked with Adam in the cool of the day.

It was Jesus who finished, who rested, who blessed, who made holy. It was Jesus who was the Lord of the Sabbath, who created this ecosystem. And he sees this woman.

He sees her. And he sees this example of the creation of what has happened to it. And it breaks his heart. He sees her and he calls her to him.

And he lays his affection on her. And then this God of creation, in an act of recreation, he lays his hands on her. And what's happening there is he is

undoing the damage of the curse we see in Genesis three. And when he puts his hands on her, two things are happening at once. One is he is grabbing the serpent, the dragon by the throat and casting it away. He is fighting an unseen battle, and he is vanquishing an enemy.

And the second things he does is he heals her, and she straightens up.

And she is restored.

The Pharisees look at her, look at him, and they say, "How dare you?"

Now, can you imagine if you were Jesus in that moment, how you would feel? How dare you?

You hypocrites.

You have no idea.

I'm not breaking the Sabbath. I'm reinstituting it.

The kingdom of God is at hand. I am making things the way they should have been. I am making things the way they will be. And I am dragging them into this moment and making it a reality now. I am vanquishing an enemy that you do not acknowledge or see, and I am restoring my image bearer here.

What happened to her?

She was completed, she was finished.

She rested.

He blessed her, and he set her aside as one of his own and made her holy. We are still telling that woman's story 2,000 years ago.

Amazing.

So what does that have to do with you? And what does that have to do with me?

So much of our spiritual life, when we strap on those backpacks, when we are trying to get to that rest,

we are trying to accomplish those verbs that we read in Genesis 2. I just wanna be finished.

I just wanna rest.

Lord, would you bless me? Would you just make me, set me aside, make me a holy thing?

And in those efforts, when we strap those backpacks on and we spend our lives trying to gain access to a room we're already in,

but when Jesus stepped in and he climbed on the cross, you need to hear this.

When Jesus stepped in and he climbed on the cross and he stepped from the tomb, several things happened here.

That serpent, that dragon, the enemy, Satan, was defeated.

The one that wants to vandalize the creation, his power was broken, and the humanity that had been bent under his torment for centuries was now set free to stand straight beneath the hands of the savior.

The oppressor was gone.

If you're a Christian, what that means when Jesus stepped from the tomb it means that Jesus saw you and he called you and he laid his hands on you, and by his cross, he took every sin that you have ever done and ever will do.

And it was poured into him on the cross

and he poured the power of his resurrection and his holy spirit into you with new life.

And what does that do?

Hebrews 4 then says this,

for those who follow Christ, there remains a Sabbath rest for the people of God.

For whoever has entered God's rest is also rested from his works as God did from his. You're invited to participate in the Sabbath. How?

We need to open our eyes, and we gotta stop trying to enter a room we are already in.

What is the room we are in? It's the verbs.

You're finished.

Those were Jesus' final words on the cross, to tell us die.

He said it is finished, every one of your sins

and the full magnitude of his spirit was poured into you. What does that mean?

Galatians 2.20 is probably my favorite verse in scripture. It's no longer I that lives, but Christ that lives in me.

I'm given this new identity. What's my new identity? It's completed. I'm an heir.

I'm a child of God.

I am a brother of Jesus. You are a sister of Jesus. Think about that.

I can go to the holy of holies and call him father. I'm treated like a firstborn. I get the inheritance.

When God finished creation, he brought it to completion.

And by one single offering, it says in Hebrews, he is perfected for all time those who are being sanctified. He has made you perfect. Wait a second, I don't feel perfect. I know you don't feel perfect. Neither do I.

Because I live in this fallen world.

I live in this fallen world, and I still contend with the broken things of life.

But my goal is because I've been perfected in Jesus once and for all, this journey called sanctification. The way I say it is we tease out the realities of what's already true in me.

I live according to what I already am. And that's a lifelong journey.

What else has happened?

You rested.

The Lord is calling us to rest.

See, God, when he remembered creation, he didn't just disengage. He moved in.

He moved in. He took up residence, and that's you.

1 Corinthians 3 16, what does it say? Do you not know that you are God's temple?

And God's spirit dwells in you?

That's heavy, man. And that's true and it's real.

He is at work in you, transforming your heart.

We need to recline into these truths. What else? He's blessed it, and it made it holy.

In the same way God and creation, the same way with God in Luke 13, with you, he has laid the full weight of his affections upon you.

He says, you are mine. I have called you by name before the foundations of the world; you belong to me. You have been blessed in Christ with every spiritual blessing.

And because I have moved in, you are now a holy thing.

You are set aside. You are a holy place.

You need to see this. Chad Bird is one of my favorite writers.

He says this, he says in the Old Testament,  
they kept the Sabbath.

But in the New Testament, the Sabbath keeps us.

See, Sabbath rest, it's not something that I have to create.

It's not some test I need to pass like the Pharisees would put up, so I can demonstrate my goodness, so I can finally rest and be at peace.

The Sabbath rest is the one that God revealed through his Holy Spirit that we are called to agree with.

And to be honest, though, it's a paradox

because we have to fight to enter that rest.

It's a struggle sometimes.

How do you struggle to rest?

Well, we do it here.

We pray.

We read our scripture, we sing worship songs, we come to the table and we have communion, we kneel around the altar.

We share with one another.

We read and we wait in hope because we know the day is coming.

And it won't be long when Christ returns. And we with unveiled faces, we will see him, and our Sabbath rest will be not something that we have to fight for, but that we can fully appreciate and fully ingest.

So where are you now?

How's that backpack on your shoulders? Can you feel like a tar case in your hand? Maybe that's some of you. I would encourage you that you're standing in the middle of the bridge. You're in the middle of the room.

You don't need to try to get inside of it anymore. That for us, it's our job to put it down and to rest and to recline into the truth of the gospel. Amen.

Amen.