

Rest and Trust: Commandments 4 & 5

Exodus 20:8-12

Introduction

Today we are looking at Question 10 from the New City Catechism.

I will read the question, and then let's read the answer together.

Question 10: What does God require in the fourth and fifth commandments?

Fourth, that on the Sabbath day we spend time in public and private worship of God, rest from routine employment, serve the Lord and others, and so anticipate the eternal Sabbath.

Fifth, that we love and honor our father and our mother, submitting to their godly discipline and direction.

Let's look at today's scripture reading.

I am going to read commandments four and five from Exodus 20:8-12.

8 "Remember to observe the Sabbath day by keeping it holy.

9 You have six days each week for your ordinary work,

10 but the seventh day is a Sabbath day of rest dedicated to the Lord your God. On that day no one in your household may do any work. This includes you, your sons and daughters, your male and female servants, your livestock, and any foreigners living among you.

11 For in six days the Lord made the heavens, the earth, the sea, and everything in them; but on the seventh day he rested. That is why the Lord blessed the Sabbath day and set it apart as holy.

12 Honor your father and mother. Then you will live a long, full life in the land the Lord your God is giving you."

Together we read Isaiah 40:8:

"The grass withers, the flower fades, but the word of our God will stand forever."

Let's pray together.

Father, please send the Holy Spirit to give me wisdom and truth as I preach. Please open our hearts and minds to your truth, so we can glorify you in everything we do. We ask this in the name of Jesus our Lord.

Amen.

As you know, God gave us 10 Commandments to teach us how to honor him with our lives. Do you think any of them are optional? Of course not. But I think sometimes we don't take the fourth commandment seriously enough. But we should. In the original language, "don't murder" and "don't steal" are just two Hebrew words. The fourth commandment, about the Sabbath, is explained with 55 words. That's more than any other commandment.

"Don't murder" doesn't need a lot of explanation, of course. It's a simple idea. But I think it is interesting that God really took his time explaining the reasons for the Sabbath.

A Sabbath is not optional for Christians, even if some people don't take it seriously today. Exodus 31:16 says, "16 the people of Israel shall keep the Sabbath, observing the Sabbath throughout their generations, as a covenant forever.

17 It is a sign forever between me and the people of Israel that in six days the Lord made heaven and earth, and on the seventh day he rested and was refreshed."

Did you hear that?

God says the Sabbath exists forward forever in time. He also said the foundation of Sabbath goes back in time, to the very beginning of creation. God himself rested after the work of creation. Why would God rest? Not because he was tired, but for two reasons:

1) God's work was complete--Each day after He spoke things into existence, the Lord declared, "it is good." He left nothing unfinished, and all that He created was very good. God's rest celebrated the completion and perfection of His work.

2) The second reason God rested was to establish a pattern of life for all of creation.

The idea of Sabbath rest is actually baked into creation. Exodus 23:10 says, "For six years you shall sow your land and gather in its yield, but the seventh year you shall let the land rest." Farmland needs to rest, too. If you plant the same crops year after year the soil runs out of nutrients. God incorporated the need for rest into his design of the land, of animals, and people. He designed human beings as creatures that sleep for one-third of every day.

God put rest into his design of the solar system, also. It is dark on earth half the day. Before the light bulb, this forced people to stop working. They could not work in the dark, so they had to be at home, to sleep, and to rest.

My friends, Sabbath rest is woven into the fabric of all of Creation. But we fight against rest for some reason. Sometimes I feel overwhelmed by the stuff on my to-do list. I feel like I can never catch up, no matter how much I work.

Do you ever feel like that?

Do you ever wish you could just get away to the beach? I do. However, I have gone away on vacation, and failed to rest. Has that happened to you? You come home from vacation and feel the same as you did when you left. The beach is great, but sand and time off won't satisfy that longing you feel deep in your heart for real rest. You need living water, not salt water.

Jesus knows you, better than you know yourself. And He meets you where you are, with what you actually need. 1600 years ago, St Augustine, an African Bishop of the church, wrote this: "God is all this to you: if you hunger He is bread to you; if you thirst He is water to you; if you are in darkness, He is light to you."

Just listen to some of the personal invitations to rest that Jesus gave to various people. To a rich young man, who was striving to please God and those around him with his status and appearance. Jesus said to him, "Rest, from all of your self-importance, your pride and clinging to your possessions. Let them go, so you can truly rest."

To a leper who was forced to flee his own family, to wander from place to place, and avoid crowds who were scared of him. Everyone who saw this leper shouted with fear: "Unclean! Unclean!" To that man, Jesus said, "come and rest, find healing and acceptance and rest in me, for your body and soul."

To a Samaritan woman, of a different religious background and ethnicity, someone Jews weren't even supposed to talk to. To this woman who had so many broken relationships, Jesus said, "Take and drink this living water. Receive the only thing that can satisfy your thirst in a lasting way. Rest in me."

To the self-righteous Pharisees, who thought God would love them because they counted 10% of their cumin seeds so they could tithe them. The Pharisees carefully obeyed not only God's written law, but the layers of additional rules

and prohibitions they had invented for the Jewish people.

To those men seeking approval from God and the praise of other people, God says, "Aren't you exhausted by all that rule-keeping? Aren't you tired of faking it? You know in your heart that you aren't keeping the law perfectly. Even if you don't commit physical adultery you do so in your mind. Maybe you don't lie with your lips, but in your heart you mutter unkind and untrue things about your fellow human beings." Jesus asks those Pharisees: "Aren't you exhausted from maintaining the façade, of pretending you are a perfect law-keeper?" "Are you ready to give it up, and to rest? To rest in me, and in my obedience of the law? Because I have obeyed it perfectly," Jesus says. "I have done it all-- because I know you never could."

Jesus says to everyone who feels the burden of failure: "I died a sacrificial death to pay for your sin. Then I rose again so you would have hope, because you get the credit for all my law-keeping! Now you can rest in me, and know you are no longer under the burden and curse of the law. Instead you can follow me and obey me in joy and love."

How about you? What is the nature of your brokenness, your restlessness? Where do you most long for rest right now? Jesus says to you: "Come to me, all who are weary and burdened, come to me and I will give you rest."

(Matthew 11:28) True rest is something you have to receive, you can't create it for yourself.

What is real rest?

Do we find it when our work is done? No, we have to rest from our works, not in our works. Hebrews 4:10-11 says, "10 for whoever has entered God's rest has also rested from his works as God did from his. 11 Let us therefore strive to enter that rest"

God's rest is not found in accumulating resources or reputation. It is not found in popularity or security. You will never, ever save enough money or accomplish enough to really rest. The first step to finding real rest is to acknowledge how deeply, stubbornly, self-reliant we all really are. We are deeply committed to doing things by ourselves, in our own way. That is our biggest obstacle to true rest. "Never surrender!" is the cry of our hearts. Yet surrender to our Creator and King is the first step to real rest.

God gave us parents to help us learn the wisdom of surrender. That's one of the connections between Commandments 4 and 5. If we aren't willing to trust God then we won't obey his command to rest. And if we aren't willing to trust our parents, we won't obey them and learn wisdom.

Our New City Catechism question for today says this about the fifth Commandment: "that we love and honor our father and our mother, submitting to their godly discipline and direction." Do you see the connection there between our parents and God? We are called to submit to godly discipline. That means our parents need to submit to God, so

they can discipline and direct us with God's wisdom.

God uses our parents to be models for us to follow. It does not mean they are perfect. Are there any perfect parents out there today? Of course not. In fact, an important way we can be models for our children is to show them how to repent.

Parents: Do you ever apologize to your children?

You should. If I pretend to be perfect in front of my children, I am not teaching them how to follow Jesus. But when I confess my sin and my failures to my children, I am teaching them how to follow God.

My first job is to submit to God and follow him. My second job is to teach my children how to walk with God for themselves. Children submit to their parents as a model of submitting to God. Submitting to God and our parents doesn't come naturally, and that's why they are both included in the 10 Commandments.

God knows that we desire freedom, but he loves us enough to give us freedom within the boundaries of his good rules. I am a fool when I pursue freedom from God's rules, because that will never lead to the happiness I seek. But we stubbornly try to do things our own way, like Adam & Eve did in the very first sin. Our rebellion will always make feel empty and disappointed. And that's a gift! It is a gift from God that your own striving and efforts will never you bring what they promise.

True rest doesn't begin until you acknowledge how self-reliant you really are. It is our pride that doesn't want to say to Christ: "Here I am. Take over. Be the Lord of my life."

When Jesus says, "Put down your pride, and come to me for rest" it might feel like death. And it is. Submission to God requires the death of your pride and self-reliance. But it is the beginning of true life.

Listen to the reason given for rest in Psalm 116.

"7 Let my soul be at rest again, [WHY?] because the Lord has been good to me.

8 He has saved me from death, my eyes from tears, my feet from stumbling.

9 And so I walk in the Lord's presence as I live here on earth!"

Real rest is found by walking in the Lord's presence, by resting in what he has done for you. When we obey our parents and trust God with our Sabbath, we are walking with God instead of walking away from God. But my heart is always trying to find my own path. I bet your heart is the same.

This is why God gives us a weekly rhythm to follow. In the Old Testament, God's people rested after 6 days of work. They worked hard all week, in both earthly and spiritual senses, and then rested after all that work.

As New Testament believers, however, our week does not end with the Sabbath. It begins with rest. Our Sabbath is on the first day of the week, where we rest in the work Christ has already done for us. We rest in the comfort of knowing we are dearly loved sons and daughters of the King. That knowledge allows us to begin our workweek with rest. Sunday is like a launching pad for the entire week.

If we do not rest on Sunday, we can't open the gift of the Sabbath. We can't stop our striving and hurrying to accomplish more and more. If you don't rest on the Sabbath, you aren't experiencing the reality of the rest you have in Christ.

Imagine if a wealthy friend takes you on a two-week vacation to Hawaii. You stay in a house right by the beach. But you bring your laptop computer, and a bunch of books and files. You spend every one of your 14 days in paradise closed up in your room, typing on your computer. Is that a vacation? Your body can be on an island, right by the beach. But your heart and mind can still be at work. On the other hand, your body can go to work, and your soul can be at rest. How is that possible?

Ask yourself this question: Am I trusting in my work, or the work of Christ?

If everything depends upon what I do, then it doesn't matter how many vacation days I take--I will always be restless. I can never do enough if my safety and success depend on me alone. That's also the reason children rebel against their parents. Because they believe they will have more safety and happiness if they make all their own decisions. But children aren't ready to make wise decisions without the help of their parents. And parents aren't able to make wise decisions without the help of God.

That's why God invites us all to truly rest. We must stop trying to do everything on our own, my friends. If we truly rest on Sunday, we can go to work on Monday with a Sabbath mentality. A Sabbath mentality allows us to work while we continue to trust God alone for all good things. You see, Sabbath-keeping is not a burden or a duty. It is God's gift to us, for remembering, and resting the source of all we need.


I want to finish by taking a minute to quiet our minds and hearts. Let's meditate upon the rest we have in our relationship with Christ. And if that's a new idea for you--to rest your soul in Christ--then please speak to him, even if it feels strange or new. Let's all ask the Holy Spirit to show us where we are restless, striving, stressed, or stubbornly refusing to let him take us into His rest. Ask him to be in charge of every day of your life, so you can experience

forgiveness for sin and the eternal rest of being a dearly loved child of God. Take a minute to pray about that now, and then I will pray in a minute or two.

Let's pray.

Jesus, thank you for the Sabbath. Every seventh day is an opportunity to rest and remember that our Heavenly Father is our provider of all we need. Jesus you freed us from the burden of our sin. You are the one we can pour our anxieties onto. You are only source of physical and spiritual life. Yet, all of these truths are things we forget over and over. And so we need to practice Sabbath keeping. Holy Spirit, help us make choices that allow us to carve out time for rest and worship. Father, please be glorified in how we work, and rest, and love. We ask this in the name of your glorious Son Jesus.

Amen.

 One Voice Fellowship