

Sabbath means stop, it's a simple concept – but has always been incredibly important as a marker of Jewish identity. Sabbath is a personal rest, but it is also a community declaration. In the west in the 21<sup>st</sup> century we can easily start to think about all the practical benefits of Sabbath. But actually one of the main reason for Sabbath was as a way of marking off a community together, something that a community of people did together. I think that this is a marker that we in the Christian community have given away too cheaply.

Do you wake up at 4am worrying about all the things you need to do? Are you up late finishing off or up early trying to get a handle on things. Do people praise you by saying he's busy, gosh she's got a packed schedule. Sometimes I thinking I am burning daylight when I haven't got my day packed with activity. First is family, Karen, Jono, Will and Lucy, and then there's stuff for St Peters, there's stuff for the Presbytery, stuff for the Presbyterian Church, then there's washing, and dishes and lawns – my share of the housework. Then there's the Christian Education Trust, Outdoor training NZ, a little professional development, exercise, couple time, my siblings, my friends and last week my auntie's funeral. **Hurry sickness.** Have you got a dose of hurry sickness? Have I got a cure for you!

Students, I know what it's like, cooking for yourself, doing your own washing, getting to class, assignments, finding your way to tutorials, social life, sports, clubs, and an occasional text back to mum. **Hurry Sickness.**

I'm told when you retire it gets worse!

We are making our way through the 10 commandments, ancient wisdom for today; not a way to salvation, but guidelines to living a good life, pleasing to God and in balance with the universe, these things work. And number 4 is remember the Sabbath.

Can anyone tell me the 10 without looking – let's blank the slide.!

In the scriptures we are given a long list of people and creatures to include in the Sabbath, in the day of rest and we are given two reasons, clearly not mutually exclusive, complementary reasons. Because God rested after He created the world, good for us; and because you were once slaves, good for others.

Six days you shall work, and on the seventh rest – don't do any work. Rest, stop, worship and enjoy.

Exodus 20. Not You. Nor your Son or daughter. Nor your Man or woman servant. Nor your animals. Nor the alien within your gates.

Deut. 5. Not You. Nor your Son or daughter. Nor your Man or woman servant. Nor your Ox nor Donkey nor any animal. Nor any alien within your gates. Take that xenophobia, undocumented workers get the Sabbath too.

Because if God could rest, that means He set up the world with a bit of momentum and it will keep spinning without us. If everything depends on us pushing it all the time, then things aren't good. I remember my father talking about his father, when the hay had been cut and it was sitting on the paddock and it looked like rain, but it was the Sabbath, and DAD asked his dad what should we do? What will happen if it rains. And my Grandfather said, then the hay will get wet, obeying God's command meant more to grandad than dry hay.

I believe that the Sabbath was created for man, not man for the Sabbath – meaning God has given us this pattern as a blessing, and it is good to observe Sabbath. And Penny is going to share a bit about that.

Secondly Sabbath is a community ideal, you used to hear about the Hebrides the Scottish islands where my people came from. There was a great stillness on the Sabbath. Where the people agreed together to keep Sabbath and there was a holy silence, compared to the unholy sound of the sweatshops in Glasgow.

We live in an era where 24/7 is more and more a problem, how often do you check your smart phone? How often are you called in after hours? I remember a time when New Zealand was shut on Sunday, and it didn't kill us. I remember pastors being challenged if we were seen in a supermarket on a Sunday! - You see Sabbath was never just a private good, it was meant to be about my man servants and woman servant. i.e. people working for me, or providing a service for me. I remember a friend in retailing, who was in a mall who said when he was forced to go to 7 days and long hours, he didn't make any more money, he just sold the same goods over a longer period. Convenience is a trap. Here's a radical idea why not decide not to shop on Sundays? Penny's going to talk about keeping Sabbath for yourself, but what about keeping Sabbath for our community. Do you think we could start a movement – not all progress is good!

And hey what about Jesus, why did he appear to challenge Sabbath. So in Jesus's time Sabbath had grown, it wasn't simply – have a rest and give your workers a rest it had become a complicated and complex systems of rules that appeared to fear God's wrath. Now at first sight Jesus seems to have played surprisingly fast and loose with Sabbath. He let his disciples pick grain, and he healed lots of people on the Sabbath. It's a reasonable question – why not do the healing on another day? Why not wait a day? I think Jesus was making a point, I think that He had decided that the Sabbath which was meant to celebrate freedom from slavery was becoming anew slavery. I think that like the maker he was re-calibrating it. Saying remember, but don't let the Sabbath enslave you.

And the big question. Why did Christians change the Sabbath to Sunday? It's a simple reason, Jesus rose on the first day of the week on Sunday, Christians starting worshipping on Sunday. Originally they would go to Synagogue or temple on Saturday and then

Christian service on Sunday. Fairly quickly worship moved to Sunday and Sabbath observance change with it. Some Christian groups believe we should still worship on Saturday. I don't have a problem with that, but I think Sunday is just fine.

Penny:

Some questions:

What made you start to think about doing Sabbath more intentionally?

Is there a scripture or a story that really has influenced you in adopting your Sabbath practice?

How did you start to observe Sabbath?

What do you do now?

What 'take away' would you like to give us?

Have you read any good books? (Did you read Lynn Barb book?)

What about you. Can you hang the Closed shingle up one day a week?

Not today, but for the rest of this year could you avoid shopping on Sunday? Could you make a distinctive mark in your life, not a new slavery, but a gift?