

I want to bring everybody up to date as to where we are this weekend. We have been in this ongoing study of the gospel of John for two years now. We started in John chapter one, verse one and we have come all the way to John, chapter thirteen today. We are right in the middle of a series that we kicked off a few weeks ago that we have entitled "Roller Coaster". I want to invite you to open your Bibles to John, chapter thirteen, today. If you don't have a Bible, don't worry about it, because it will all come up on the screen and you can track along with us that way.

I want to begin today by reading from somewhere outside of John, then I will come back. Listen to Hebrews 4:9. Listen carefully to what this says. It says, "*There remains, then, a Sabbath rest for the people of God.*" Stop right there. I want to set this up by asking you a question. How many of you have ever heard of the acronym BFF? What does that stand for? "Best friends forever". Aside from my precious wife Rhonda, who is my BFF, my other best friend forever is a buddy of mine up in the Carolinas. His name is Steve. As far as I can recall, Steve and I met in a fight when we were age five. Now, who won that fight is still up for arguments. Steve says he can hardly remember the fight. But from that day on Steve and I became best friends. As little children, we played football together. We played baseball together. We played basketball together. We boxed together. Then as grown-ups, we both went to the same college; we both went into ministry; and today we are both pastors. And today, we are still best friends forever. So Steve, I love you big guy, and thanks for being a best friend for me.

I was thinking back this week on an incident that happened when Steve and I were about twelve years old. Slip into this scene. We both had these mini-bikes that we had rigged up to go about thirty miles per hour. But late one afternoon after school, we had been riding these bikes and the sun was going down. It was time to go home. Steve got on his bike and rode out to the sidewalk and waved goodbye to me like a cowboy riding off into the sunset. Actually he was just leaving my apartment, where I lived, and going up to his house which was only about a football field away from the house. Folks, I'll never forget it. Steve got on his mini-bike and he full throttled the accelerator and started racing up the street to his house.

I want you to stay on the scene, because I am standing on the front porch watching him in full accelerator mode, thirty miles per hour, flying up the street. But folks, check this out: As he entered into his yard, he normally would slow down, but as I am watching, he is not slowing down a bit. In fact, he is still wide open. In fact, he is still in full accelerator mode. Folks, the reason he was in full accelerator mode is because his accelerator was stuck, wide open at thirty miles an hour, and Steve couldn't figure out

how to un-stuck it. I can picture it to this day. He goes flying across the yard and then running head on into Mr. Honeysuckle's chain link fence, at thirty miles an hour. That fence didn't just have honeysuckles on it. It had rose bush briars on it. So I see this and I go running up the street to my buddy's aid. Christ Fellowship, let me tell you. He was messed up. I mean, blood, cuts, scratches, and bruises all over him. He was messed up, and he got messed up because of a stuck accelerator. He couldn't figure out how to un-stuck it.

Let me turn a corner and draw an analogy to that, because what an image of how many of us live life. By that I mean we live life with a stuck accelerator, and we can't figure out how to un-stuck it so that we can stop, and rest, and replenish our body, and our soul, and our spirit. Now mind you, God knows the inclination in all of us to live life with a stuck accelerator. God knows the inclination in you and in me to go through life full throttle. Twenty-four seven, three hundred and sixty five days a year, until we mess up our marriage; we mess up our family; or worse yet, we drop dead from a heart attack, because we don't know how to rest. So, in order to help us to rest, this is my proposition and this is what I want you to walk out the door with today. In order for you to rest, and in order for me to rest, God instituted a day of rest. This is a day to let off the accelerator, and rest. This day by the way is called the Sabbath. You say, "Rick, what do you mean by Sabbath?" Well, we are going to find out today as we go back to John, chapter thirteen. Let me interject a note, because God is the one who instituted Sabbath, and He really did it immediately after He created us; after He created the world. He rested. Also, God put Sabbath in the big ten, didn't He? It is in the big Ten Commandments. It has the most explanation of all of them, and yet, the idea of Sabbath has become so convoluted because people are like "Is it Saturday?" or "Is it Sunday?" to the point that most Christians don't observe either one. So my goal today is to simplify Sabbath, and to bring it back as an intricate part of your life and as an intricate part of my life. So I want to give you two thoughts today, as we unpack from this narrative about the Sabbath.

Number one: Life extracts a toll on your body, your soul, and your spirit. Let me say that again. Life extracts, it takes away, from your body, your soul, and your spirit. With that in mind, let's pick up the narrative beginning with verse one. The Bible says, "*It was just before the Passover festival, and Jesus knew that the hour had come for him to leave this world and to go to the Father. Having loved his own who were in the world, he loved them to the end. (2) The evening meal was in progress.*" You know the story already. Jesus had gathered His disciples into the Upper Room for an extended time, extended hours with them. These hours were like letting off the accelerator, and

Jesus brought them up there so that He could replenish what life had extracted from His disciples, body, soul, and spirit. Not only that, He wanted to energize them for the tough days that were just around the corner.

I want you to put your thinking caps on for a moment, because when Jesus gathered His disciples into this upper room, they were already physically exhausted from the week before. By that I mean they had endured miles and miles of walking; serving thousands and thousands of people as well as enduring the attacks by the Scribes, Pharisees and religious leaders of their day. Folks, all of that had extracted a toll on the disciples to the point that they were weary. You know what weariness is.

Weariness is that deadening fatigue of your mind, your body, and your soul. That is what life had done to these guys. But not only that, Jesus knew what was coming ahead for them, just around the corner the next day. They were going to face high level temptation. They were going to face failures, letdowns, and their own life was going to be wretched. So they needed a body that was not running on empty. They needed a soul that was not running on empty. They needed a spirit that was not running on empty. So what Jesus does in John 13 in this Upper Room is that He called them apart for a time of rest.

What we see in this Upper Room is actually a model of Sabbath. So, here is what you need to know about Sabbath. Sabbath is a day to replenish. Sabbath is a day to replenish. By that folks, I mean it is a full day to replenish what life has taken out of it. Sabbath is a full day to replenish your body; to replenish your soul. Not only that, it is a full day to re-energize yourself for the week that is coming: Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday, Friday, and Saturday. Here is how Sabbath does that.

Sabbath is a day of rest. Look at what the Word of God says, all the way back to the book of Exodus, scripture says this. *"He said to them, this is what the Lord commanded. Tomorrow is to be a day of Sabbath rest."* Meaning Sabbath is God's way of getting you and me to let off the accelerator for a whole day. Remember, we talked about that a few weeks back, as we are going through our work week, we talked about stopping through the day. Remember that? And I had my phone set to stop at seven o'clock to remind me that I have a soul. We need to do that, right, to stop and rest. The Sabbath is God telling you to rest for the whole day; to stop for the whole day.

Now, I want you to put your thinking caps on, because all the way back in the beginning when God created mankind, God gave all of us this mandate. Here it is: *"The Lord God took the man and put him in the Garden of Eden to work it."* You say, "Meaning what?" Meaning God was telling man to be productive with your life. Here's how that flushes out. God wants you to work hard, because you were created to bring

glory to God. One of the ways that you glorify God is by working hard. Mind you folks: the Christian life is not a call to being a slacker. It is not a call to being slothful. To the contrary, the Christian life is a call to be productive with your life; to produce with your life. That means whatever job you have, you and I should be the hardest workers on that job. But here is what God does. God knows that hard work takes it out of us, doesn't it? Hard work extracts a toll on your body. So, to be at your peak six days a week, you need to rest one of those days. God wants you to work hard, but God wants you to rest harder, so you will be better. Here is what that means. God says on Sabbath, no work. Just rest. No work, but rest.

Here is one thing you should work hard at. You should work hard at doing nothing. Work hard at doing nothing. That is hard to do, isn't it? It is hard to do nothing. God knows you will be more productive in six if you do nothing on seven. God knows you will be more healthy in six if you will do nothing on seven. What I love about our Father is that He models this to us. In fact, let's go all the way back to the beginning again in Genesis, chapter two. You know the story. *The heavens and the earth were completed in all their vast array. On the seventh day God had finished the work He had been doing so on the seventh day, He rested from all of His work. Then God blessed the seventh day and made it holy because on it God rested from all of the work that He had done.* I like that because God entered into a Sabbath rest. God worked six, and took seven off. God worked six and rested on seven.

Now mind you, God did not need to rest. God is almighty. Nothing was extracted from God by creating. God was not like, "Whooh man! I'm so tired." We know that did not happen. God does not lose energy. God is not exposed to the laws of entropy and thermo dynamics. None of that affects God. God does not need rest, but God decided to rest on the seventh day to set an example for you and me. Work six and rest on seven. To put it another way; God gave you and me permission to rest, by resting himself on the seventh day. God gave you permission to rest. Do nothing. Take the day off and do nothing, but rest. Somebody said, "Sabbath is God's gracious five o'clock whistle that gives me permission to stop and lay down my tools, ready or not." Simply put: Sabbath is a day off that God has given you to replenish and refill what life has taken away from you.

Here is what God knows folks. God knows you need a full day to rest. It's like a lot of you that lift weights. I don't lift weights but I do a lot of pushups, and I notice that after I do a lot of pull ups for a few days, and a lot of pushups for a few days, my muscles need a complete day off so that they can restore themselves. God knows that about your body, that after we work for six days, whatever you do, your body needs a

full day off. So God whispers to us "I've got this. I'm in control, so you rest. Take a day off and do nothing but rest. The rest that God is talking about here on the Sabbath is not just for your body. It is also for your soul. It is not just for your physiological person that needs rest. Your mind, your spirit, your soul, need rest. The Sabbath is a day for you to rest your weary mind, and enjoy God's creation. Take a walk. Be with your family. Look at God's creation. Rest your mind.

Rhonda and I were watching a documentary a few weeks ago of people climbing Mount Everest. Talk about hard work! After day after day of scaling this mountain, when they got to the top of the mountain, I love what they did. After all of that work, they stopped and they rested and they took in all of the wonders of God's creation. All of the wonders of being on that summit! After all of that work, they stopped and rested. Folks, that is the idea. It is taking the time to stop and breathe in God's creations. Take a breath. I want you to follow me here because we live in a world that is marked by what I would call hurryness. Let me tell you something: Miami has got a real bad case of it. Let me give you an example of hurryness. You are sitting at a traffic light, and the light is red. You've got your foot on the brake pedal. As soon as the light turns green, before you can even get your foot from the brake pedal to the gas pedal, the guy behind you blows the horn at you. That is a person living with a stuck accelerator behind you, and they don't know how to un-stuck the accelerator. That kind of hurryness is deadly. It will kill you.

Hurryness is your enemy, and here is why. Hurryness will eventually lead you to have a hurried spirit. Have you ever been around people who are in too big a hurry? What that means is that even when your body is at rest, your mind is racing and is planning and you are trying to keep up. You are not resting. There is a rest beneath a rest. Not only is your body at rest, so is your mind. So is your heart. So is your soul. You've got to be still. God said, "Be still and know that I am God." Be still and breathe in God's creation. You can't do that when you are in a rush. We are great at hurryness, but we are lousy at being still. Listen, it is in the stillness that God is able to restore your weary soul. That is why the Bible says this: Psalm 23. *"The Lord is my shepherd. I shall not want. He makes me lie down so he can restore my soul."* Sabbath is about letting your weary spirit rest. Just sit at the feet of Jesus and breathe in His mercy, His kindness, His forgiveness, His rest for your weary soul.

Here is what I want you to get. Listen to this verse again. *"There remains a Sabbath rest for the people of God."* Listen: Sabbath is not just about rest. Sabbath is also a day of assembly. You say, "What do you mean by that? Well listen to Leviticus 23. God says, "There are six days when you may work, but the seventh day is a day of Sabbath rest, a

day of sacred assembly. All the way from the beginning of God's dealings with His people, God has always called his people to a day of sacred assembly. That is what we are doing today. This is a sacred assembly.

What I love is that even in the eternal state when God creates the new earth that we are going to live in, we are not going to live in heaven forever. We'll come back to the new earth. But even in that new earth that you are going to live in as a believer, there will be a time of solemn assembly on the Sabbath. Listen to Isaiah 66. It says this: *God says, "As the new heavens,- literally the new universe,- and the new earth that I will make endure before me, declares the Lord, so will your name and descendants endure. From one New Moon to another and from one Sabbath to another, all mankind will come and bow down before me, says the Lord."* Even in the new earth, there is going to be that sacred assembly on the Sabbath. All of God's people are going to assemble together.

You say, what are we going to do then?" The same thing we do in this assembly that we are supposed to do. We assemble on Sabbath to hear. Look at Acts 13:44; *"On the next Sabbath almost the whole city gathered to hear the word of the Lord."* I love that verse because when we gather like this and hear the word of God, here is what that does.

The word of God has a way of pasting our lives back into rhythm with God's life. I don't have to tell you that the world six days a week has a way of getting you out of rhythm with God, doesn't it? You get out of sorts, but when we come together like this and we open God's word, and you do that, it has a way of pasting your life back into rhythm.

That is kind of my goal every week when you come here and hear. It is to pace you back into rhythm with God. But the rhythm is this: Here is how the rhythm works. You work six days and you assemble on the seventh. There is a rhythm to life. There is a rhythm to the season, and when you are out of rhythm, it gets you out of sorts. So you need to be in rhythm: work six, assemble on seven. Work six; assemble on seven.

You see, some of you cannot get your life in rhythm with God, because you are not in rhythm with the Sabbath. You work six, miss Sabbath. Work six, miss Sabbath. We also assemble on the Sabbath to worship. Revelation, chapter six fast forwards us into eternity. Listen to this: *"And I saw a Lamb looking as if it had been slain. Standing at the center of a throne; and encircled by four living creatures and the elders. When we see Jesus in heaven, He will still bear in His body the visual reminders of His sacrifice on the cross. Watch what we will do. Verse 9: "And they, that is all of God's people, assembled around that throne; what will we do? "Sing a new song. Saying you, that is Jesus, are worthy to take the scroll and open its seals because you were slain and with your blood you purchased for God persons from every tribe and language and people*

*and nation.* "You say, "What is that?" It is simple. That is worship in its most raw form. Put it another way, it's all of God's people singing "Glory, glory, halleluiah, He reigns." That is what you were created to do. Animals can't do that. That is why you are not an animal. You are a human being created in the image of God. You have the capacity to do what animals can't do and that is to give praise to God.

Folks, what more valuable could you do today than to gather with God's people and ascribe glory to Him. The world out there couldn't care less about God. God is not even on the radar for them. God is completely ignored by them, but we are God's people and God calls us every weekend, every Sabbath day like this to come together and to ascribe glory and honor to Him. I love the way Acts 2 puts it. It says, "*When the day of Pentecost was fully come, they were all together in one place.*" That is what we are doing together. God has called all of us together into one place. By the way, that verse back there says every tribe, and language, and people and nation. Do you realize we get a little taste of heaven here every week? Folks, I know a lot about churches and I don't know another church in the world like this one, that has so much diversity of every tribe, and language and people and nation, and we, like few other people can glorify God because we have that, that few other churches have. We are all together in one place. I don't even have to tell you, this is axiomatic. You know this, that when we are all together, the praise that we give to God is more powerful. Right? And when you are not here, the praise and worship is weakened.

You know, I have seen some random empty seats. I have to look around, but do you see those empty seats? Let me tell you what that is. That is weak worship. That weakens our worship. When all of God's people are together, every weekend, when we ascribe worship to God, God is glorified. Let me tell you, when people who are guests with us, who are not visitors, that may be you today, you are not a believer. But let me tell you, when people see powerful worship given to God, it is contagious. It is why a lot of people get saved in this church because the worship is so powerful. But you ought to be here every Sabbath. Every Sabbath when you are in town, you ought to be here. That is why we read this. Listen to Hebrews, chapter eleven. It says, "Not forsaking". The Greek literally reads, "Do not forsake" the assembly of ourselves together as the manner of some are in the habit of doing." Folks, all of that is a command. It is in the veritable mode in the Greek. You say, "Meaning what?" Meaning it is not optional. That's not a suggestion. God is saying, "I command you to assemble yourselves together every weekend to ascribe glory to God." It is a command. But listen folks: We ought not do it because we have to. Right? It should not be "I have to go to church today." It ought to be "I get to go to church today." It ought to be "I

can't wait to get there to give glory to God. Listen, when you are here, it does something for your spirit. It just does, when you are with God's people. You are not just a body and a soul. You have a third dimension. You have a spirit. Your body is that part of you that makes you world conscious. Your soul is that part of you that makes you self conscious. Your spirit is that part of you that makes you God conscious. I'm telling you, even if you are not a believer, your spirit is craving for God, longing for God, crazy about God, cannot live without God. I'm telling you, when we gather together like this, there is something that happens to my spirit, that happens to your spirit, that awakens our spirit of the God that very few things can do. When we come together, we give honor and praise and glory to God. That's why you need to be in the rhythm to worship.

By the way, next week we are starting something brand new that we are going to call 'Five before'. You say, "What is Five Before?" Here is what I am going to ask you to do. I'm going to ask every one of you to be here five minutes before the service starts. We laugh, but here is why I want you here. Christ Fellowship West Kendall, five before, in your seats five minutes before. Here is why. I want you to get here five minutes before so you can pray, so you can pray for every seat in this auditorium, that God is going to touch people's lives; so that you can pray for that person who is coming and doesn't even know that they are about to hear the gospel. I want you to be here five minutes before to say, "God, touch the people who are going to be here today." I want you to be here so you can pray for worship that it would be powerful and exalting to God. I want you to be here five minutes before to pray for the message, that it will be clear; that it will be accurate, and that it will touch people's lives.

Jesus said, "My house is to be a house of prayer." Folks, we cannot do what God wants us to do in our own power. We need to pray. I want to ask you, not to put you on the spot, but how many of you will say, "Rick, I will do my best from here on to be here five minutes before. Will you just raise your hands? Wow! I can't tell you what that has done to my heart and my soul, to know that you are going to be praying ahead of time that God is going to touch. Now listen, if you are late, we are not going to judge. We are not going to go "Ah hah!" But listen, I hope you don't come to church to check God off. I hope you don't say, "As long as I get there before they say Amen, I can check God off." Let me tell you what you have got if that is where you are. If you show up just to say you went, you've got religion. You don't have a relationship with God. If you think God is about you checking off some kind of script, you are wrong. God despises that. That's religion. That is dead. God doesn't want to have religion with you. God wants to have a relationship with you.

That is what Sabbath is all about. It is about being here; filling up your weary soul with worship, the Word of God, by doing what you were created to do, and that is to glorify Him. Listen to this verse one more time. "There remains then Sabbath rest for the people of God." You say, "Rick, what day is it. Is it Saturday, or is it Sunday? Which is it?" There is the problem. There is where this goes off the track. So I want you to listen to this. Listen to John, chapter twenty. I could give you many passages, but listen to this. Verse 19: *"On the evening of the first day of the week – that would be Sunday – when the disciples were together, Jesus came and stood among them and said, 'Peace be with you'.* Acts 20:7. *"On the first day – that would be Sunday – of the week, they came together to break bread."* You say, "Which is it? Saturday, or Sunday? Listen: It is both. There are times when you look at the church and they are worshiping on the Sabbath. There are times when you look at the church after Jesus' death where they celebrated Sabbath on the first day of the week because that was the day that Jesus rose from the dead.

You say, "Rick, which is it. It seems like its Sabbath over there and it is Sunday over here. Which is it?" Listen: It is both. Let me put it to you this way: Pick one! Just pick one! Let me remind you of something. Jesus said, "You were not created for the Sabbath. The Sabbath was created for you." It is to help you to rest. The book of Colossians 2:16) says, "Let no man judge you according to the Sabbath." In other words, don't let anybody judge you on Saturday or Sunday, and don't send me e-mails. I've been at this for thirty-four years. I've got fifty books on the Sabbath. I'm telling you, I see it as Saturday sometimes and Sunday sometimes. I think we've got to say "Pick one and do it. Rest on the Sabbath." We've got Saturday and Sunday at Christ Fellowship. Pick one! Here is what you do on that day. By the way, think of it this way. Saturday on your calendar is the last day of the week, right? It is the seventh day on your calendar. But in reality, to your real life, Sunday is the last day of the week. Right? It is the week end, because Monday is the day you go back to work. That is what I say: Just pick one. Rest, and assemble. That is my prayer for you.