

Congregational handout; outline sermon text on following pages
Sermon Notes & References

Take a Break!

Mark 6:31 – “Come away by yourselves to a secluded place and rest a while.”

May 17, 2015

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^A Exodus 31:13; Deuteronomy 5:12-15, 16:9-17; Mark 2:23-28

^B Ephesians 2:8-9; Romans 3:20; Galatians 3:2-3, 5:16, 18, 3:24-25; 2 Timothy 3:16-17

^C Colossians 2:16-17; Psalm 118:24

^D Hebrews 4:9; Genesis 2:2; Revelation 4:11

^E Psalm 37:7; Mark 6:34-44

^F Psalm 84:10, 32:11; Philippians 4:4

^G Jeremiah 6:16

^H Matthew 11:29

A. A Holiday Week-End

1. Our Text Today

- a. 'And He said to them, "Come away by yourselves to a secluded place and rest a while." (For there were many people coming and going, and they did not even have time to eat.)"' (Mark 6:31)
- b. and you can see how this can apply to this holiday week-end

2. Victoria Day

- a. comes as early as possible this year ... tomorrow
- b. years ago it always fell on May 24, and then later on the nearest Monday, so that people could have a long weekend
- c. originally it celebrated Queen Victoria's birthday, and then later, the official birthday of subsequent Queen's
- d. I looked to see if there was any religious significance in the celebration of Queen Victoria and could find nothing specific
- e. however, I did find that in 1874 she vigorously supported the Public Worship Bill which had the intent of purging the Church of England of liturgical rituals – she preferred a much simpler service than that of High Anglicanism

3. Ritual

- a. God has given things to His people to help them remember Him and to worship Him
 - (A) we read that passage from Deuteronomy 16:9-17 where the three great annual festivals were laid out: times of national gathering
 - (B) there are many passages in the OT describing the Sabbath, which was to be a sign between the Lord and Israel throughout all their generations, a mark of God's setting them apart (Exodus 31:13)
 - (C) and in the recapitulation of the law in Deuteronomy 5:12-15, the rest of the Sabbath connected with God's delivering them out of the slavery that Israel had suffered in the land of Egypt
 - (D) in the NT, Christians have been given the ordinances of baptism and the Lord's Supper as memorials of Christ's work, and in lieu of the seventh-day Sabbath, the celebration of the Lord's Day on the first day of the week ... the day of Christ's resurrection
- b. but man – Israel; Christians – has a great tendency to transform what was intended to be a blessing into mere ritual; going through motions
 - (A) as we have noted the past few Sundays, baptism becomes a mere rite with no thought of the salvation

in Christ it portrays

- (B) the Lord's Supper becomes simple formality with emphasis on its dignity rather than on its meaning
- (C) in Mark 2:23-28, we see how religious rulers had turned the blessing of the Sabbath rest into an occasion for criticism of Christ and His disciples for picking the heads of grain in the fields – to this narrative we shall make further reference shortly

B. "Keep My Sabbaths"

1. The Role of the Law

- a. as you read the OT you do discover that there were penalties for the breaking of God's law: harsh punishment for breaking the Sabbath
 - (A) even though it was intended as a blessing
 - (B) it was not to be treated lightly, for reasons we shall see
 - (C) and it was one of the reasons that later Israel went into exile
- b. but let us make clear some facts about God's law
 - (A) first: salvation is only by the grace of God
 - (1) Ephesians 2:8-9 (NAS): *For by grace you have been saved through faith; and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God; not as a result of works, that no one should boast.*
 - (2) law-keeping will not save, Romans 3:20 (NAS): *because by the works of the Law no flesh will be justified in His sight; for through the Law comes the knowledge of sin.*
 - (B) second: perseverance in faith is by the Holy Spirit's power
 - (1) *"2 This is the only thing I want to find out from you: did you receive the Spirit by the works of the Law, or by hearing with faith? 3 Are you so foolish? Having begun by the Spirit, are you now being perfected by the flesh?"* (Galatians 3:2-3)
 - (2) so it is not by law-keeping, as Paul emphasises later: *"16 But I say, walk by the Spirit, and you will not carry out the desire of the flesh. ... 18 But if you are led by the Spirit, you are not under the Law."* (Galatians 5:16, 18)
 - (C) third, however, the law is still relevant as God's word:
 - (1) to teach us our need of salvation, *"24 Therefore the Law has become our tutor to lead us to Christ, so that we may be justified by faith. 25 But now that faith has come, we are no longer under a tutor."* (Galatians 3:24-25)
 - (2) to teach us how to live, *"16 All Scripture is inspired by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for training in righteousness; 17 so that the man of God may be adequate, equipped for*

every good work.” (2 Timothy 3:16-17)

2. The Four Classes of OT Law

- a. The social or national laws that were to regulate Israel as brothers living in a just and fair society
- b. The laws that distinguished Israel from the nations around them, as the dietary laws and the mark of the covenant of circumcision
- c. The laws of worship, whose typical meaning has been completely fulfilled in Christ’s death and resurrection
- d. The moral law of right and wrong embodied in particular in the Ten Commandments and the two love laws:
 - (A) You shall love the Lord your God with everything
 - (B) You shall love your neighbour as your own soul
- e. so now we come to ...

3. The Fourth Commandment

- a. “Remember the Sabbath day to keep it holy,”
 - (A) which in the NT is never enjoined upon Christians, but rather it says, Therefore let no one act as your judge in regard to food or drink or in respect to a festival or a new moon or a Sabbath day — things which are a mere shadow of what is to come; but the substance belongs to Christ. (Colossians 2:16–17)
 - (B) Sabbatarians would us treat Sunday as a continuation of the Sabbath, with all its Mosaic and traditional rules: BUT it is not
 - (C) in Queen Victoria’s time, the general conception was that Sunday was to be a gloomy and cheerless day; in contrast, today’s secular society says it has no significance; it’s a fun day
 - (D) the one day in seven is but a token of the reality to believers that of every single day they should say: “This is the day that the Lord has made, we will rejoice and be glad in it” (Psalm 118:24)
- b. for Jesus revealed the truth of the matter:

C. “The Sabbath Was Made for Man”

1. Rest Is Needful

- a. sometimes – perhaps I should say usually – after lunch, I find that my head had fallen down and I have been dozing – this is its way of telling me that at my age I need a few moments rest
- b. rest is a Biblical concept; God’s intent for His people is rest – “So there remains a Sabbath rest for the people of God.” (Hebrews 4:9)
- c. let us return to the beginning of time: “By the seventh day God completed His work which He had done, and He

rested on the seventh day from all His work which He had done.” (Genesis 2:2)

- (A) why would God rest? Surely an almighty God could not be tired!
 - (B) one reason was to establish a pattern for us to follow
 - (C) but it was more than that: it was completely in tune with God’s nature and purpose that He should rest, contemplate and enjoy His creation – there is a hint of this in these words, “Worthy are You, our Lord and our God, to receive glory and honour and power; for You created all things, and because of Your will (or, desire, pleasure) they existed, and were created.” (Revelation 4:11)
 - (D) God ordained that His people and even His land should observe His Sabbaths ... that they should rest
 - (E) God wants that we should rest from our work, as He did from His, and rest, contemplate and enjoy our Creator
- d. Jesus saw that with the press of the throng and all the demands upon them, His disciples were not having a moment of peace – not even so much as they could stop and have a proper, restful meal
- (A) so they went away in a boat to a lonely place by themselves
 - (B) sailing – if you are not involved in a race, and the wind is not too strong – can be a most restful and relaxing time; you set your sails for your objective, and with a light touch on the tiller keep the boat on course (tacking if necessary from time to time)
 - (C) it would have been a time of companionship – perhaps silent or perhaps in conversation and fellowship
 - (D) but it wasn’t for very long, because the crowds soon followed
 - (E) but it was a break, the rest that they all, including Jesus, needed
 - (F) and they took up their tasks again, refreshed

2. Rest as a Discipline^{2}.

a. rest is not a wasteful period

- (A) try doing without sleep for any extended period and you will soon discover that
- (B) it is a great danger to Christian workers to feel they are so necessary that they cannot be spared for a time of rest – a friend of mine who is a very gifted pastor had to take off at least six months a while ago because he was physically and emotionally run down – I trust that he is now taking his “Sabbath rests”
- (C) probably I am a lot like you, for I find that engaging in a physical project – roofing our house – is a most restful, relaxing change

b. the most important rest is that of turning away from the concerns of the world to spend time with God: “Rest in the Lord and wait patiently for Him; Do not fret because of him who prospers in his way, Because of the man who carries out wicked schemes.” advises (Psalms 37:7)

- (A) a quiet time is one which you set apart for the reading of God's word, for prayer, and for meditation on spiritual matters
- (B) it is to the soul, what sleep is to the body
- c. resting when needed is no shame
 - (A) God created it as one of our needs –
 - (B) you have, perhaps, heard the story of two men engaged in a wood-chopping contest
 - (1) the younger – with rippling muscles – set feverishly to work
 - (2) without pausing nor slowing down his axe swung continually
 - (3) the older would work a while, take a break, work again – but every chop was rightly placed and very effective
 - (4) at the end of the hour, the younger who had worked so hard turned in dismay to see that older man's pile was twice the size of his own
 - (5) then it was explained to him – while the other was resting to marshal his strength, he also spent time sharpening his axe
 - (C) rest is necessary to prepare ourselves for the next tasks that are coming our way – it prepared the Master and His disciples for the feeding of the 5,000 men in that lonely place (Mark 6:34-44)
- d. to recognise these Biblical truths and to conform our lives to them is the way of our recognizing Jesus as our Lord; that He is ...

D. "The Lord of the Sabbath"

1. Duty or Delight?

- a. to the Scribes and Pharisees, keeping of the Sabbath was just one of the 613 (?) laws to be kept for a man to be righteous in God's sight
- b. they had elaborate details on how to keep this, for them, painful duty
 - (A) they had never learned what the Psalmist had experienced when he said, "For a day in Your courts is better than a thousand outside. I would rather stand at the threshold of the house of my God Than dwell in the tents of wickedness." (Psalms 84:10)
 - (B) and sang, "Be glad in the Lord and rejoice, you righteous ones; And shout for joy, all you who are upright in heart." (Psalms 32:11)
 - (C) and Paul able to say in Christ, "Rejoice in the Lord always; again I will say, rejoice!" (Philippians 4:4)
- c. the need for periodic rest is evidenced in the existence of a rest day (not always the seventh) in just about every society

- (A) God made us a certain way, and part of that way was our need for periodic rest
- (B) to step back from our work is also opportunity to enjoy and to give thanksgiving for the other blessings that God has given to us

2. Not Just a Vacation

- a. rest involves a spiritual dimension
- b. it involves recognising that Jesus is the Lord of the Sabbath
 - (A) that He is the Lord of rest; the Lord who gives rest
 - (B) that we can enter into the benefit of His finished work
 - (C) it is to know the fulness of God's love
 - (D) it is to have peace with God
 - (E) it is the assurance of sins forgiven, an eternal home in heaven

c. our song can then be

Jesus, I am resting, resting
In the joy of what Thou art;
I am finding out the greatness
Of Thy loving heart, —{3}.

- d. for Christ is the fulfilment of the promise of God: "Stand by the ways and see and ask for the ancient paths, Where the good Way is, and walk in it; And you shall find rest for your souls." (Jeremiah 6:16)

E. There is Here an Invitation

1. Christ gave it:

- a. "Take My yoke upon you and learn of Me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you shall find rest for your souls." (Matthew 11:29)
- b. it is for you to avail yourself of it through faith
- c. take a break – from the struggles of life – and know true rest in Him
- d. as you enjoy this long weekend, may you also enjoy the rest that is available in Jesus Christ.

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Some of the commentaries and resources used in the preparation of this message are identified as follow:

Barnes - *Notes on the New Testament, et alia*, by Rev Albert Barnes, Gall & Inglis, Edinburgh

BM - *Biblical Museum*, Editor James Comper Gray, ca 1870

EGT - *The Expositor's Greek Testament*, Hodder & Stoughton

Kerux - The sermon & illustration data base compiled by Rev. David Holwick at the web-site, www.holwick.com.

2. Thoughts taken from sermon, '*Vacation Time,*' by Rev-d Don Robinson – Kerux sermon 12245

3. '*Jesus, I Am Resting, Resting,*' by Jean Sophia Pigott (1845-1882)