

THE 10 COMMANDMENTS - PART 5

A God to Remember

Dr. Derek Morris

Preaching passage: Exodus 20:8-11
Subject: Why we should remember the Sabbath day to keep it holy
Complement: Because God rested on the Sabbath day, blessed it and made it holy.
Exegetical idea: We should remember the Sabbath day to keep it holy because the LORD our God rested on the Sabbath day, blessed it and made it holy..
Homiletical idea: **Remember the Sabbath day by keeping it holy.**
Purpose: To remind my hearers that the Sabbath is a special gift of time to remember the LORD our God.

Introduction

I wish that Christiana Ham-Ying could have been here today to share her testimony with us. She was a remarkable woman of God. Her grandson, Dr. Michael Ham-Ying, is a deacon here at the Forest Lake church. When he shared his grandmother's testimony with me just a few weeks ago, I knew that I had to share that testimony with you today!

Christiana was raised in a Christian home on the island of Trinidad. She faithfully attended church every Sunday and read her Bible every day. One day, Christiana had a dream about the 4th commandment. In fact, she had the same dream more than once. What Christiana saw in that dream troubled her. She was shown that an important truth contained in the 10 commandments had been forgotten. She had been breaking one of the 10 commandments without even knowing it!

There is only one of the 10 commandments that begins with the word "remember." I have no doubt that the LORD our God wants us to remember all ten commandments and put them all into practice in our lives. Don't you? After all, these 10 sayings are words of blessing from our loving God. He spoke them from Mount Sinai, and wrote them with His own finger on tables of precious stone. But only one of the 10 commandments begins with the word

“remember.” It’s the commandment that Christiana saw in her dream. We can find that commandment recorded in Exodus 20:8-11. “Remember the Sabbath day by keeping it holy. [9] Six days you shall labor and do all your work, [10] but the seventh day is a Sabbath to the Lord your God. On it you shall not do any work, neither you, nor your son or daughter, nor your manservant or maidservant, nor your animals, nor the alien within your gates. [11] For in six days the Lord made the heavens and the earth, the sea, and all that is in them, but he rested on the seventh day. Therefore the Lord blessed the Sabbath day and made it holy.”

What does the LORD our God ask us to do in this 4th commandment? **Remember the Sabbath day by keeping it holy.** The Hebrew verb, translated remember, means to imprint. In English, we use expressions like “make a deep impression on your mind” or “let this sink into your head.” Imprint. Remember. This same Hebrew word found in the 4th commandment is used twice in the first part of the book of Exodus in reference to God. God remembered His covenant with His people. (Exodus 2:24, 6:5) I’m thankful that we have a God in heaven who does not forget us, aren’t you? He remembers His people, and He asks His people to remember Him. This 4th saying from the mountain is not just about remembering a day. It’s about remembering the LORD our God!

The wording of this 4th commandment is a clear reference back to creation week. Look at Exodus 20:11 again. “.....” We can read the account of that first Sabbath that God shared with Adam and Eve in the book of beginnings—Genesis. In Genesis chapter 1, the events of the creation week are recorded, culminating at the end of Genesis chapter 1 with the creation of our first parents on the sixth day. In Genesis 1:26-27, we read these words: “God said, ‘Let us make man in our image, in our likeness, and let them rule over the fish of the sea

and the birds of the air, over the livestock, over all the earth, and over all the creatures that move along the ground.’ [27] So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them.”

Now let’s continue to read in Genesis 2:1-3, “Thus the heavens and the earth were completed in all their vast array. [2] By the seventh day God had finished the work he had been doing; so on the seventh day he rested from all his work. [3] And God blessed the seventh day and made it holy, because on it he rested from all the work of creating that he had done.” “God blessed the seventh day and made it holy.” It is this seventh day that God in referring to in the 4th commandment the LORD our God says, “Remember the Sabbath day by keeping it holy.”

What does that mean? To keep the Sabbath day holy? Well, Scripture records that God is holy. The Psalmist declares, in Psalm 99:1-3, “The Lord reigns, let the nations tremble; he sits enthroned between the cherubim, let the earth shake. [2] Great is the Lord in Zion; he is exalted over all the nations. [3] Let them praise your great and awesome name—he is holy.”

And the apostle Peter also calls Christians to reflect the holiness of God. 1 Peter 1:15-16. “But just as he who called you is holy, so be holy in all you do; [16] for it is written: ‘Be holy, because I am holy.’” In other words, we are to reflect the character of our holy God.

But what does it mean to remember the Sabbath day by keeping it holy? Something becomes holy because God’s presence is there. When Moses stood before the burning bush in the wilderness, he was told, “‘Do not come any closer,’ God said. ‘Take off your sandals, for the place where you are standing is....?’ “Holy ground.” (Exodus 3:5) Why was the ground holy? Because God’s presence was there. The LORD God spoke to Moses out of the burning bush.

The Psalmist declares, "The Lord is in his holy temple." Psalm 11:4 God's temple is holy because His holy presence is there. So what does God mean when He says, "Remember the Sabbath day by keeping it holy?" We keep the Sabbath holy when we fully recognize God's holy presence with us during that special period of time. That's why we are encouraged to refrain from our labor. Listen again to Exodus 20:8-11. "....."

Simply refraining from labor doesn't make a day holy. There are plenty of people who refrain from labor day after day after day, just because they are lazy. An absence of labor on a particular day doesn't make that day holy. Rather, we refrain from our regular labor on the Sabbath day so that we can fully recognize God's presence with us during that special period of time. It's a time to focus in a special way on our Creator.

And remember that each of the commandments is prefaced by these words: "I am the Lord your God, who brought you out of Egypt, out of the land of slavery." The Sabbath is a time to focus in a special way on our Creator and our Redeemer!

So when is this Sabbath time that is set apart for us to enjoy special communion with the LORD our God? "Remember the Sabbath day by keeping it holy. Six days you shall labor and do all your work, but the seventh day is a Sabbath to the Lord your God." The seventh day. Does that mean any seventh day? No. This commandment clearly states that "the seventh day is a Sabbath to the Lord your God," not a seventh day.

So how do we know which day is the seventh day, the Sabbath that God blessed and made holy? Even before the giving of the 10 commandments on Mount Sinai, the LORD God clearly identified which day was the Sabbath day. Look with me at Exodus 16:4-5. "Then the Lord said to Moses, "I will rain down bread from heaven for you. The people are to go out each

day and gather enough for that day. In this way I will test them and see whether they will follow my instructions. [5] On the sixth day they are to prepare what they bring in, and that is to be twice as much as they gather on the other days.”

Now notice what happened. Exodus 16, beginning with verse 21: “Each morning everyone gathered as much as he needed, and when the sun grew hot, it melted away. [22] On the sixth day, they gathered twice as much--two omers for each person--and the leaders of the community came and reported this to Moses. [23] He said to them, "This is what the Lord commanded: 'Tomorrow is to be a day of rest, a holy Sabbath to the Lord. So bake what you want to bake and boil what you want to boil. Save whatever is left and keep it until morning.' "

[24] So they saved it until morning, as Moses commanded, and it did not stink or get maggots in it. [25] "Eat it today," Moses said, "because today is a Sabbath to the Lord. You will not find any of it on the ground today. [26] Six days you are to gather it, but on the seventh day, the Sabbath, there will not be any." [27] Nevertheless, some of the people went out on the seventh day to gather it, but they found none. [28] Then the Lord said to Moses, "How long will you refuse to keep my commands and my instructions? [29] Bear in mind that the Lord has given you the Sabbath; that is why on the sixth day he gives you bread for two days. Everyone is to stay where he is on the seventh day; no one is to go out." [30] So the people rested on the seventh day.”

Who decided which 7th day would be the Sabbath of the LORD our God? Did each person decide that for himself, for herself? No. God revealed which day was His holy Sabbath day. It is the same seventh day that He blessed at creation. The LORD our God clearly identified the Sabbath, not just on this one occasion, but every week, 52 weeks a year for 40

years, while the children of Israel were wandering in the wilderness. By thousands of miracles in the giving of the manna over a 40 year period, the LORD our God clearly identified which seventh day was His holy Sabbath day. It wasn't left to chance. No one had to guess. "I wonder which day I will remember as the Sabbath day?" No! The LORD God clearly identified which day was the Sabbath day that He had blessed and made holy. It is that particular day that the LORD our God calls us to remember by keeping it holy.

So God clearly revealed to the children of Israel which day was His holy Sabbath day. What about today? How do we know which day is the Sabbath today? Manna doesn't fall from heaven six days a week, with a double portion on the sixth day and none of the Sabbath day. How do we know which day is the Sabbath of the LORD our God—the day which the LORD God blessed and made holy?

Do you remember Christiana Ham-Ying, the woman of God whose testimony I shared at the beginning of this sermon? She had repeatedly dreamed about the Sabbath of the 4th commandment, she wanted to know the answer to that question too. Which day is the Sabbath of the 4th commandment. So Christiana went to her priest and asked for his help. Which day was the Sabbath of the 4th commandment? Saturday or Sunday? Her priest shocked her by telling her that Saturday, the 7th day of the week was the Sabbath.

Was her priest correct? Well, you could ask the Jews. They have remembered the Sabbath in an unbroken cycle since these 10 sayings were given on Mount Sinai. You could also examine various languages of the world and you would find that more than 100 languages of the world associate the seventh day of the weekly calendar with the Sabbath of Scripture. For

example, in Spanish, the 7th day of the week is called? “sabados.” In Italian, “sabato.” In Russian, “subbota.”

Scripture also clearly identifies which day is the Sabbath. Look with me at Luke 23:50- Luke 24:2. “.....” The holy Sabbath day is the day after Good Friday, when Jesus died, and the day before Easter Sunday.

Christiana was shocked. How could so many who claim to be followers of God’s Word have forgotten the one commandment which begins with the word “remember”? Some claim that the church has the authority to change the day of worship from Saturday to Sunday. Others say that early Christians just decided to change the day of worship from the Saturday Sabbath of the 4th commandment to Sunday in honor of Christ’s resurrection. Still others say that it doesn’t matter which day you remember, as long as you worship God on one day.

But Jesus did not give a single word of instruction about forgetting the Sabbath of the 4th commandment and worshipping on the first day of the week in honor of His resurrection. He had ample opportunity during the 40 days that he taught His followers after His resurrection. If Jesus wanted His followers to forget one of the 10 commandments, don’t you think that He would have given clear instruction to His followers? What Jesus did say was “if you love Me, keep my commandments.”

The 4th commandment clearly directs us to remember the Sabbath day by keeping it holy. And it tells us that the seventh day is the Sabbath of the LORD our God. The fourth commandment is the only commandment that the LORD specifically exhorts us to remember. And yet, unfortunately, it is the one commandment that so many have forgotten.

After her conversation with her priest, Christiana Ham-Ying had a choice to make. Would she follow church tradition, human opinions, or the Word of God? To Christiana, the choice was clear. She went in search of a Christian church that honored the 4th commandment, remembering the Sabbath day by keeping it holy. She also shared that precious truth from the Word of God with her family and friends. For the next 70 years, Christiana looked forward to each Sabbath day as a time of special communion with the LORD her God, a time made holy by His presence and His blessing.

I am so thankful that we worship a God who remembers us, aren't you? He has not forgotten us. He created us. He loves us so much that He sent His own Son to redeem us. He will never leave us or forsake us. And He wants us to remember who we are and who He is. That's why He gave us the Sabbath, a special gift of time every week made holy by His presence and His blessing.

How will you respond to this word of blessing from our loving God? Some of you might say, "Pastor, I thank God for the gift of the Sabbath! I look forward to the Sabbath every week! It's not a burden. It's a blessing! I work hard six days a week, and I need the Sabbath as a time of special fellowship with the LORD our God! It's a time for our family to remember that we serve a great and awesome God!

Others might be thinking, "Pastor, this is a new idea to me! I've never thought about the Sabbath before. I have a lot of questions. I need to study this further." Then, I have a special gift for you. I have a booklet that I want to send to you. Just send an e-mail to dmorris@forestlakechurch.org. I'll reserve a booklet especially for you. That's dmorris@forestlakechurch.org. The LORD our God promised through the prophet Jeremiah,

“Call to me and I will answer you and tell you great and unsearchable things you do not know.”

Jeremiah 33:3 And Jesus promised that the Holy Spirit would lead us into all truth. John 16:33.

So claim those promises as you continue to study this important topic.

And I'll be praying for each one of you. Because we all have a choice to make, don't we? Will we follow church tradition? Human opinions? Or the clear Word of God?