

Monday, July 27, 2009

What would it mean for you to have a regular Sabbath time as an anchor for your soul? This week in our services, we learned that the Sabbath can be a time of delight that brings joy in the LORD.

We get so busy with the day to day things of life. It is like being on a spinning wheel, unable to get off.

The reading for today is Exodus 36 & 37. These two chapters (together with 38 & 39 that we will read tomorrow) tell about the building of the Tabernacle and the items that would be needed for the people to begin to live out the commands that the LORD has set forth.

I can imagine this would have been a time of great excitement. We get a glimpse of that when we see Moses tell the people to stop bringing things to build the tabernacle because they have more than what they need (36:6-7)! This is one example that proves the statement we use here in the church: "God's work, done God's way, in God's time will bring God's resources."

The time was right to build the tabernacle. I can see everyone gathering and watching and cheering (and perhaps giving opinions)! Can you feel what it may have been like to be Bezalel and Oholiab? They were filled with the Spirit of God to do specific things in building this place that the people would come to worship God. But notice that 36:1 says they worked with many skilled people—every skilled person—who had been given that skill by the Lord.

God knew the excitement that would be in the air, and He knew that the tendency of people is to jump on the things we get excited about with all of our energy. So, He had Moses call them all together first and talk to them. Notice in 35:1-3 what God has Moses tell the people. "Don't get so busy doing this thing that you are excited about doing for me that you forget to be the people I have called you to be."

Even if we have ourselves convinced that we are doing the work of the LORD, He wants us to spend time with Him to learn how to be His people. This is a valuable lesson for us today.

We are not required by the Law to observe the Sabbath, but that doesn't mean God doesn't desire for us to find pleasure in being in His presence in a special way during a special time we have set aside each week. It is a key part of building a relationship with Him. You have been designed to find your greatest pleasure in intimacy with God. That requires quality time together—Sabbath. Even when there are so many other "exciting" things to be done!

Family Discussion Question: Do I delight in being with God during a special time?

Tuesday, July 28, 2009

Chapters 38 and 39 of Exodus finish the account of how the tabernacle and all of the items were made.

Imagine you are one of those two men who have been filled by the Spirit to work on the place of worship—the very place that God would choose to dwell.

You do not have to imagine. If you have trusted in Christ alone as your Savior, you have entered into a right relationship with God. The Bible tells us that you have been filled by the Spirit, you have been given special skills and gifts to build a place of worship. That place of worship for us is the Church. Notice I use a capital "C". The Church is made up of the chosen priesthood that is spoken of in 1 Peter 2:9 that Pastor Doug had us look at last week.

Take a look at Romans 12:4-8 and 1 Corinthians 12:12-27. In these passages, Paul helps us understand that we each have been given a gift for the good of the body—the Church. Every one of us has special skills that God has given us. How should we each use our gifts?

Part of the importance of Sabbath is to find time to be alone with God and reflect on how you are responding to His call on your life. It is a regular time to meet with Him and see your life through His eyes. We are here to find delight in serving His purpose. That requires communication.

If you are using the gifts that He has given you for the purpose of building up His Church you will find great delight in your life. If, however, you are not using those gifts for that purpose you will find frustration. God knows the plans He has for us; do we?

The tabernacle was built exactly according to the plan that Moses had received from time spent alone with God. He conveyed that to the people who then carried out the plan. But you will remember that God gave the plan to Moses alone because the people did not want to be near Him (Exodus 20:18-19).

We can be tempted to have others go into the presence of the Lord for us and have them tell us what God wants us to do. God longs to communicate with you directly. Do not fear that time, do not exchange that time, do not let someone else stand-in for you in that time. Take your time with God. Hear Him speak to you directly. Find rest in His presence. Be refreshed by His Spirit. Be filled with His joy. Sabbath.

Family Discussion Question: Do I know the plans God has for me or am I waiting for someone else to tell me what that is?

Wednesday, July 29, 2009

Exodus 40:34-38 is an incredible passage. Close your eyes and try to picture it.

The same Spirit of God also helps you work on the place that God chooses to dwell today—in you! You are the dwelling place of God. You are His temple (1 Corinthians 6:19) and He has gifted you to make His temple reflect His glory.

Does the glory of the LORD fill you as His temple?

Make no mistake; God desires His glory to be apparent in your life in the same way that the glory of the Lord was so visible in the new tabernacle.

The tabernacle of the Testimony (Exodus 38:21) was a visible manifestation of the place on earth that God chose to dwell. It would have been a witness—a testimony—to the rest of the world that God is God. It would be like Israel crying out loud, "There is no God like our God! Come and know our God!" (Isaiah 45:5-6) Interestingly, it was the Law found in the tabernacle which was to be that Testimony (Exodus 31:18). The Law was given to help them live a life that set them apart as a people of God.

We are the visible manifestation of the place on earth that God chooses to dwell today. We are to be a witness—a testimony—to the rest of the world that God is God. We need to cry out the same thing as the Israelites. "Come and know our God. There is no God like our God!"

For us, our love for the Lord and for each other reveals God's glory to the world (John 13:34-35); that becomes our testimony. God's presence is revealed in us by the love that His Holy Spirit has lavishly poured into our hearts (Romans 5:5).

His grace provides us with the strength we need to live in a loving response of obedience that reveals Him to the world (John 14:23).

Sadly, many times we are not all that different and our lives do not reflect the testimony of His grace. If we let too much of the world's influence come into our lives, we reflect the world. It is so easy to get sucked in to thinking that we need things we do not need and that we need to be spending time on things that are not eternally important.

As incredible as the scene described in 40:34 was, eventually, the people stopped being impressed with God's presence among them. They had the true God in their presence, but they chose to worship the gods of the world. The extraordinary seemed mundane and the ordinary was preferred. It stands as a caution to us.

Family Discussion Question: Am I awed by the presence of God being in my life or is it unexciting?

Thursday, July 30, 2009

Our reading moves to the New Testament today to the book of Hebrews. This is a great book to read after reading Exodus. It also fits very well with our study of Romans.

Hebrews is an interesting book. We are not certain who the human author was. We are not certain when it was written and we are not certain who it was written to. It is called a letter although it does not have all the components of letters written in this era. There is no greeting, but at the end, the author calls it a letter.

It is generally agreed that the letter was written to an audience of Christian Jews before the destruction of the temple in 70 A.D. What makes this letter unique is the teaching of the supremacy of Christ and the view of Christ in relation to the Old Covenant. The author of Hebrews gives great insight into how the tabernacle that was built on earth is a "type" of the one in heaven.

He also gives us a great understanding of how the Old Testament can bring application for us today. I hope that you are looking forward to reading, and perhaps even studying on your own, this book in the next few days. With the tabernacle of Moses fresh on your mind, it will give this reading of Hebrews a fresh feel for you.

When I get a letter in the mail, I am usually very excited to receive it. Letters don't seem to come very often anymore, do they? And when I get the letter, I read the whole thing right straight through.

Could I suggest that you set aside a few minutes in the next day or two and just read the Letter to the Hebrews in its entirety?

Imagine that you are living in the first century and that you are a Jewish person who has heard about, and believed in the Messiah. You have heard Who He is from others who had seen Him (2:3). You have questions about how these new teachings fit in with the old. You want to serve the Lord, but what does that look like? It is all so new. Who is this Jesus who has saved us and how does He fit in to all that we have known about God?

Family Discussion Question: What amazing things does this book tell me about my Jesus?

Friday, July 31, 2009

Hebrews speaks to the supremacy of Christ. Jesus, the Son of God is superior. He is superior to the angels. Angels are commanded to worship Him! He is the radiance of God's glory, and the exact representation of God. The first chapter proves that Jesus is God. He is not just a man or a good teacher. He is God. He was the agent of creation (1:10). He has always been. God has spoken through Him!

Jesus is superior and He is now sitting at the right hand of God. This is called the session of Christ. It is as He sits that He is working for us. In His session, Christ is interceding for us, He has completed the work of redemption for us, and He has received authority over the entire universe. He defends us against any accusations as our advocate. He has opened the way for us to have access to God.

Don't take this first chapter of Hebrews too lightly. Many of the things that have been secured by Christ for you are understood because of this chapter. Notice the first verse of chapter two. These things cause us to pay more careful attention to what we have heard.

We love Jesus, because of His sacrifice for us, and so we should. But, sometimes we take Jesus as our friend and hold that very tightly without the realization that He is the all-powerful King of Glory with authority over our lives. If we are not careful, that can cause us to drift away. That is why we need anchors for our souls. They are there to help us keep from drifting away. One of the main anchors is Jesus and the sure hope we have in the truth that He is Who He says He is and that He is doing what He said He would do.

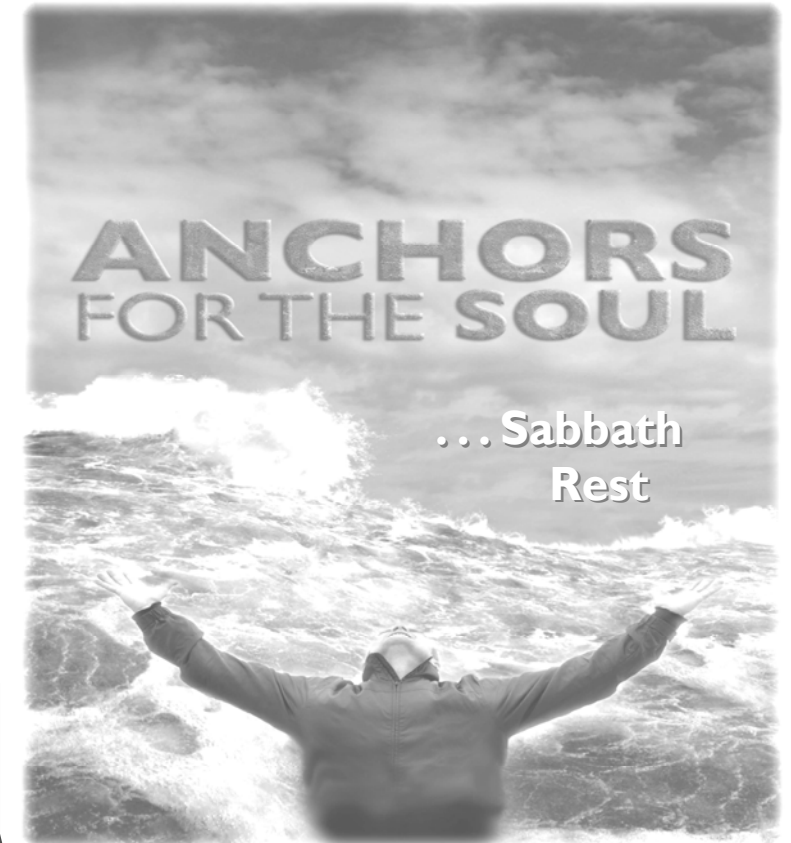
He is our almighty King! As you consider the truth of this statement, have it give you comfort to think that the One Who is your King has chosen to call you friend and He has chosen to reveal His reign through you.

Family Discussion Question: Am I a loyal subject to my King Jesus?



Pastor Chuck Cervenka

July 27 - 31, 2009



Verse of the Week

"Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest." Matthew 11:28



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Highway 50 & Harris Road
P.O. Box 1200 • Williams Bay, WI 53191
(262) 245-6294
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