

Text: Exodus 20:8-11 (God's Word to the Nations). It's time to build! A day for the Lord. **June 25, 2017.**

Grace and peace are yours through Jesus, who gives us rest. Amen.

Can I tell you about my friend Bruce? Bruce was one of the first members at our new church in Arcadia, Wisconsin, where I served for many years. Bruce openly admitted that he had been a 61 minute Christian. He said, "When church got to the 61st minute, I started to get annoyed. Church should be over. It should be time to go home." When Bruce and his wife heard about this new church starting in Arcadia, where they lived, Bruce said, "It was really a struggle. We kind of wanted to join this new church, and it's in our hometown, but... we knew if we joined this start up church, we would have to get involved. That was probably going to take more than 61 minutes a week." Well, Bruce and his wife, Mardelle, came to a few Bible studies. God worked on their hearts and they decided to join. Before long, Bruce was the first one to arrive at the community room where we met for worship. He set up the chairs. He took out the hymnals. He ushered. He often taught our Sunday morning Bible study, since I had to go to our site in Galesville. He put the hymnals away. He moved the chairs back. He locked the place up. He was usually there for three hours, every Sunday. And he was loving it. He invited his mother-in-law. She joined the first week I ever had a vicar. Told him, "Well, at this rate, we are going to have 52 new members by the time you leave." Bruce invited his daughter and son-in-law. His son-in-law invited his parents. Before long, half the people at church were there because of Bruce. And do you know what Bruce said, "Why did I cheat myself out of all this for so long? It's a joy doing all this. It's fun." Yeah, it's fun to worship our Savior. It's a joy to serve Jesus. It's beyond any words to think about how beyond awesomely cool it will be to rest with Jesus, in heaven, forever. It's time. It's time for our faith to be built up. It's time for a day to worship the Lord.

God tells us to remember the day of worship. Remember. This word isn't just for the thoughts of the mind. Remember is for the feelings of the heart. This day of worship is a special, wonderful day. I pray Sunday has a feel, and it's a good feel, a feel that this is a special day, the best day of the week. It's the day we get to specially worship Jesus. Remember affects the actions. You don't just think about worship. You do it. You don't just come to worship to put in your 60 minutes, and not 61, like Bruce used to think. I pray you love this day of worship, treasure this day of worship. Could never think of anything better to do on this day of worship.

I like this phrase, "day of worship." It emphasizes what's really special about this day. It emphasizes what's timeless about this day. You might be more familiar with the phrase, "Sabbath Day." Now, the Sabbath Day had some temporary aspects and some timeless aspects. Let's sort those out. The temporary aspects were that the day of worship be on the 7th day. Now, God himself chose the seventh day as a day of rest and worship when he made the world in six days and rested, or stopped, on the seventh day. But God said, "Don't let anyone judge you by the Sabbath Day. This was a shadow from the Old Testament. The reality is found in Christ." We saw Christ say in our Gospel reading, "the Sabbath was made for man, not man for the Sabbath." It's not about slavishly following some rules about what day you have to worship and what qualifies as work. Today we worship most often on Sunday, because it's the day that Jesus rose from the dead and there's something to be said for setting aside the first part of the first day of the week for worship of the Lord, to show that this is the first and most important part of the week.

The other temporary aspect of the Sabbath day was no work. Now God was serious about this. He prescribed some pretty severe punishments for something as small as gathering sticks. God said, "Don't start a fire in your home on the Sabbath Day." So still today strict Jews don't turn on any light switches,

because a light switch ignites a spark, which is a small fire and that would be breaking the Sabbath. Later rules about work came along saying you couldn't carry hot water on the Sabbath, because if you spilled any, that hot water would be cleaning the floor and cleaning is work. Man, it had to be more work to follow the rules not to work than it was to work.

God had greater things in mind when he set up the Sabbath Day. God had timeless truths that still apply to us today. The first is that we set aside time for worship, a day for worship. Can you imagine sitting in church all day? Well, people then worked twelve hours a day, six days a week, and they still set aside a day for worship. We can't legalistically insist it be the whole day. But there's still time for worship.

There's time to find rest for the soul. That's the real rest, the lasting rest, the eternal rest.

The timeless truth is that we treat this time as holy. This time of worship is special. It's set apart. It's for God's use, not common use. It's at least one hour a week you don't look at your phone. This time is totally set apart. You don't play with it. You don't touch it, like that one guitar on Spinal Tap. You don't dare mess with or miss this time of worship. It's a holy day! It's set apart as holy!

Holy? Uh oh! I'm in big trouble. Set apart this time as holy, even on vacation? Set aside time for worship even when I'm camping, out of town? Come on! I set it apart as holy, except for when Saturday night was late, or the fish are calling. I'm here usually? Isn't that enough? Is it holy? But I put in my 60 minutes, better not be 61, right Bruce? I figured out a way around that one, come on Thursday and it's usually only 45 minutes. Ask Bruce how he feels about that attitude now. Better yet, why don't we ask God? Think he'd give the thumbs up, "Like," to that 60 minutes attitude, or would it be thumbs down, way down?

Good thing Jesus was holy. As your Holy Substitute. Jesus came to fulfill the law of the Sabbath. He came to keep it perfectly in your place. He went to a place of worship on the Sabbath. That was his custom. Can you imagine Jesus going to church? He literally already knew it all. But he went to be your Holy Substitute. He went so his sacrifice on the cross would be holy, perfect, the only sacrifice our holy God could accept. And Jesus worked and sacrificed until he was finished. That's what he said from the cross. It is finished! Only after he finished, could he rest in the tomb. But he sure didn't stay in that tomb for long. He rose. He lives. He ascended. He rules and reigns.

He loves us so much he gave us a timeless truth, a timeless plan that we set aside holy time for worship. That we set aside holy time to find rest for our souls. Rest for the soul. That's what this time of worship is about. Jesus said, "come to me, all you who are weary and burdened and I will give you rest. And you will find rest for your souls." My soul finds rest in God alone. There's rest for the soul when Pastor announces, "God, our heavenly Father, has been merciful to us and has given his only Son to be the atoning sacrifice for our sins." Don't be late for worship. You might miss that best part. There's rest for the soul when you enter, pass the baptismal font and remember, "I am God's baptized child. All my sins are washed away." There's rest for the soul to listen to God's Word. Did you catch it in our second reading? "There remains a Sabbath rest for the people of God." That's talking about heaven. You probably aren't going to be reminded about that at work. There's repeated rest for the soul to come to the Lord's table and hear him say, "This body was given, just for you. Your sins, yes yours, are forgiven. Go in peace." What a joy to worship! What a joy to find rest for the soul. What a joy to set aside this special time!

You would think with all this joy and all this rest and with a whole day off the Bible would be filled with accounts of joy, joy, joy at worship on the Sabbath Day. Would you believe that more so it seemed like a burden? At the time of Amos, one of God's spokesmen, people didn't count the minutes until work was over, like so many clock punchers lined up at quitting time. People counted the minutes until the

Sabbath was over, so they could work again. When will the Sabbath be over, so we can make money? When will worship be done so we can get back to work? Nehemiah was a sincere follower of God who led God's people in Jerusalem. When Nehemiah arrived in Jerusalem, there was all kinds of work going on during the Sabbath, and not all kinds of worship and rest. Nehemiah instructed the people. He drove out the buyers and sellers. He cleaned things up. And then when Nehemiah went away for a short time, they all came back. God commanded them to take a day off, and they wanted to work instead? Who would want to work when you could take a day off?

Well, who wouldn't want to worship when you can get rest for the soul? It's so easy to fall into the attitude of the early Bruce. When will worship be over? Why is this taking 70 minutes? When can I get back to doing what I really want to do? When can I get back to making money? Why is pastor preaching so long? Ask Bruce when in his life he found more joy, during the 61 minute days or during the first one to arrive and last one to leave days? Why don't we ask God when you will find more joy, putting Jesus first, others second and yourself last, that spells joy, J-O-Y in case you missed it, or when you put yourself first and Jesus last. God gave us this time of worship to be a joy for us. God gives us this time of worship because it's a time to build, to build up our faith in Jesus. God gives us to time of worship so we find rest for our souls.

God gave us this time of worship so we always remember and never forget the eternal rest of heaven. This time of worship is a little piece of heaven. God says we will sing praise to him in heaven. So we sing praise to him here on earth. God says his people will gather around him in heaven. So we gather around him here on earth. God says we will be in his presence, forever, in perfection, in heaven. I know this isn't forever and it isn't perfect. But we get to stand in God's presence. That's some cool, holy, awesome time. Amen.