

Creation and Rest

The Whole Story • June 22, 2025 • www.isonrise.com

Today, we are going to start with a tale from back in my college years. I remember deciding before I moved on to college that I wanted to take my college work seriously. In high school, some would have called me a master at doing the bare minimum.

But in college, I figured it was time to turn over a new leaf. I don't know if it was the fact that I just cared, now, about what I was studying, or if it was more the fact that I was paying for it out of my own pocket. But I decided to try my best, instead of dodging all the hard work.

So, in my first semester, you could say I plunged headfirst into the deep end. I tried to read everything assigned to me. I took meticulous notes. I spent hours studying, hours finishing homework. But then, in the second semester, I took a class with the notorious Dr. Brian Doak. Dr. Brian Doak had gotten his PhD at Harvard University, and he even taught Hebrew there for a little bit while completing his coursework.

It was one of the best and most difficult classes I took in all of college. I was reading until my eyes were bloodshot. And not light stuff either. Philosophers I had never heard of; deep historical analysis. I think I understood about five percent of what I was reading. But I kept trucking on through. And it got so demanding that I used to go to the cafeteria each morning before class and fill up my forty-ounce hydroflask with just coffee. And I would sip on that coffee all day, every day, refilling the next morning.

Slowly, it began to feel like my life was a never-ending stream of work. And because of that, my experience of time became really mushy. There were no moments of rest. I was going from one task to the next. My life felt like it was all the same thing. Days and weeks all started blending together. I came into class on Monday feeling more tired than I did on Friday night. My fatigue was building up, and began to taste bland.

So why do I tell you all this? Well, we are starting a new series today. And in this series, we'll be walking through the major storyline of the Bible. And to frame the story, we'll be using the promises that God makes along the way, also known as the covenants. Our hope is to help craft some handlebars by marking out some important stories over the summer that you can use as guideposts as you become more and more familiar with what's in this book.

And, then, the reason I shared that little story, about my college life turning into a never-ending cycle of work, is because I have the privilege this morning of talking about rest. We'll be in Genesis 2.

But, before we get into the passage that will serve as our first guidepost, which comes in Genesis 2, I want to lay out, simply, what's already happened in Genesis 1. In chapter 1, we find the beautiful opening flourish of the Bible's long storyline, the words that kick it all off. We read that,

"In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth. The earth was without form and void, and darkness was over the face of the deep. And the Spirit of God was hovering over the face of the waters." (Gen. 1:1-3)

We notice that the author assumes the presence of this figure called God. He doesn't tell us anything about what God might have been doing before creating the heavens and the earth. The book just starts with why He matters to us, here on our big rock, hurdling through a vast universe. And the earth, with the heavens hanging overhead, sounds like a big ball of churning waters, a deep, dark ocean. Now, at this point, God hasn't yet created the Sun or even light, so the darkness of the waters is a pitch-black darkness. It is darkness that only God can see. And God's Spirit is hovering (some translators choose the word "brooding," like a mother hen over

her eggs), is brooding over these lifeless waters. God is not distant from Creation, even at its ugliest stages. He is there hovering over it, hugging it, holding it close.

Then we get six days of God creating different things. In the first three days, God creates the daylight, then the sky, then dry land. And in the second set of three days, God fills the spaces He has just made with creatures. He fills the day and the night with the sun, moon, and stars. He fills the water and skies with fish and birds, and then He fills the dry land with animals. And at the end of day six, God creates the final piece of this project. He puts another animal-like creature on the dry land, a special creature. This funny little creature is called a human. So here on Day Six, we have all the raw elements of life on earth accounted for. Creation is complete.

But the week isn't over yet! It's only been six days. There's still a day left in God's pocket planner. And this is where we catch up with today's passage. In Genesis 2:1-3, it says,

"Thus the heavens and the earth were finished, and all the host of them. And on the seventh day, God finished His work that He had done, and He rested on the seventh day from all His work that He had done. So God blessed the seventh day and made it holy, because on it God rested from all His work that He had done in creation." (Gen. 2:1-3)

Now think about that. God...resting? What does it even mean for God to rest? Well, as I studied to talk about this, I was a little caught off guard by what I found. "Rest" is certainly one way to translate what God is doing here, but there's another, I think, a more precise translation. And that word we're translating as "rested" is actually a bit closer to the word "ceased," "paused," or even "stopped." I picked through some other places in the Old Testament where this word for "rest" or "cease" is used, and while it's often used to talk about the opposite of work, it is also used to talk about people sitting or stopping.

But it is still puzzling to imagine. Why would God stop a day short? Why waste a day? Why not keep working? God seems to take a moment to just look at Creation. And actually, if we keep reading, we get a little insight later on as to why God "paused" His work on the seventh day. In Exodus, God is speaking to Moses about the importance of Israel pausing its work on the Sabbath day, and He says,

"It is a sign forever [The Sabbath that is] between me and the people of Israel that in six days the Lord made Heaven and Earth, and on the seventh day He rested and was refreshed." (Ex. 31:17)

Huh...so here we have a new reason for why God rests. On the seventh day, God stopped His work to "refresh" Himself. God was wiping His forehead, changing His clothes, taking a load off. And it was really cool to learn this week that the word "refreshed" in Hebrew is tied to the word for spirit and breath. It could be translated as God stopped His work, and took a breather or even that God stopped His work and revived, recuperated, recharged. Now, you might be thinking, like I was earlier this week, "What does it even mean for God to recharge or catch His breath? Isn't God all-powerful? Did God really need to take a breather?"

Well, I think this is an important question. Because this is not the only place where God seems to take on human attributes in the Scriptures. In this Book, you'll see God changing His mind as if He could make a mistake. You'll see Him asking questions as if He didn't know the answer already. You'll see Him walking around and even eating as if He had a human body. A lot of the time, God sounds pretty human. And even the Creation story brings up this kind of question. Like, why didn't God just snap His fingers and bring everything into existence all at once? We believe He had the power to finish the job in one move. But instead, He moves slow, taking it one day at a time. That seems pretty human.

Why does God seem to act like a human? Well, I think that whenever we see God doing something human, He is actually doing something for the sake of us humans. So maybe He's setting up a rhythm for us to adopt, maybe He is taking on a form more recognizable to us, maybe He's trying to bring the truth out of us. But traditionally, whenever we read about God doing something human, a lot of Christian thinkers have connected the dots between God *doing* something human to God *becoming* human in Jesus. And then those thinkers will point to moments where God changes His mind, or where God walks around in the Garden, or where God visits Abraham's house and raids his pantry, and they'll say that this must be a visit from the Second Person of the Trinity, God the Son, who we know as Jesus. It's like He's making a brief cameo before His big debut in Bethlehem. And here, in this passage about God resting, I think we can say the same thing. God is not resting behind closed doors, hoping to finish His nap before humans catch Him sleeping. No, God, who we know doesn't need to recharge or rest, is resting, and He's resting in broad daylight, for all to see. And as He's resting, I imagine Him glancing over at humanity, and giving us a little wink. Like, "Take note!" I think God is resting because God is teaching us what it means to rest, to pause for a moment, and kick our feet up. In His rest, He's inviting us to rest. And that's going to be my Big Idea for today. Living with God is restful.

So then, as the story moves toward the People of Israel, the Sabbath becomes a marker of what it means to be the people of God. In the Ten Commandments, God gives the Sabbath over to Israel. He says in Exodus 20,

"Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy. Six days you shall labor, and do all your work, but the seventh day is a Sabbath to the Lord your God. On it you shall not do any work, you or your son, or your daughter, your male servant, or your female servant, or your livestock, or the sojourner who is within your gates." (Ex. 20:8-10)

God's saying that there's no living thing in the land of Israel that shouldn't get to pause and recharge. Now, most of you've had the lovely experience of working seven days a week before. Maybe your manager called you in on a weekend during a busy season, or you had some chores that just needed to get done, or your kids' sports became really demanding, or you were trying to juggle school and work and just couldn't afford to lose a day. You and I are the same sorts of humans that the Israelites were. Except they lived in an agrarian society. They were farmers. The windows for harvesting your crops were short, and if you didn't get it done in time, you might miss out on some of the food you needed for the wintertime. So, for them, taking a day off might have meant missing out on a seventh of their overall paycheck. Resting would cost a lot. So it's no wonder that keeping the Sabbath was one of the easiest commandments for Israel to let slide. It's super inconvenient. But God then clarifies for them why the Sabbath is important:

"For in six days the Lord made Heaven and Earth, the sea, and all that is in them, and rested on the seventh day. Therefore, the Lord blessed the Sabbath day and made it holy." (Ex. 20:11)

Now, if I'm hearing this verse right, I think God is saying that the Sabbath is a special invitation for them to mimic their God. He is inviting Israel into a Divine Rhythm. He's inviting them to share a calendar with Him. When the Israelites kept the Sabbath Day for resting, they were prioritizing not just rest, but their identity as God's people, people who were defined by the God of the Sabbath. They were saying, "If taking a break on the Sabbath is good enough for God, then it's good enough for me too." And God was saying, "If you want to be my people,

you've got to look like me. And I rest on the seventh day." Their rest hinges on God's rest. And so, because God rests, Living with God is restful.

I think we could also imagine the Sabbath as one of God's family traditions. The Sabbath is a way for Him to give the weeks, months, and years of our life a distinct flavor, a unique character. Growing up, my dad's side of the family always celebrated the Dutch holiday of Sinterklaas, as a way of honoring my uncle who hailed from the Netherlands. Now, my parents and grandparents didn't need Sinterklaas. They didn't need another event in their schedules. They could have done just fine without it. But they did it for us. And it became a sort of family glue, a common shared identifier for the Hawley clan. And it protected a yearly gathering time for all of us cousins to get to see each other and our grandparents again. The Sabbath is a family glue that binds the Israelites to one another and to their God.

And God is also baking into each week a reminder that our work can't save us. So often, we humans begin to trust ourselves too much. We think if we can just cross off our entire to-do list, then we'll be ready for the future. But the to-do list keeps growing, and that misplaced trust leads us to overwork ourselves. God is setting down a limit for our work to remind us again and again that, as Psalm 127 says,

"Unless the Lord builds the house, those who build it labor in vain.

Unless the Lord watches over the city, the watchman stays awake in vain." (Ps. 127:1)

The Sabbath reminds us to entrust our futures to God. Maybe we won't harvest enough of our crops. Or maybe it'll rain before we can get the roof built on our new house. Or maybe we'll be attacked before we're prepared to defend ourselves. But whether or not that happens isn't ultimately in our hands. God can preserve our crops, hold back the storm, and restrain our enemies. If we're in His hands, we do have the freedom to rest.

So now, I'm gonna do a bit of mapping for us. This theme of Sabbath and rest comes up all over the place in Scripture. And one of the things we want to do in this series is take a look at not only the passage for the day, but also the passages behind it, and the passages in front of it, keeping an eye out for how Jesus ties up all the loose ends that the Bible gives us. So now that we've looked down at the passage for today, this picture of God resting on the Seventh Day, and we've looked back on the days of creation leading up to the seventh day, let's look forward to how this theme of rest develops in Scripture.

Israel learns pretty quickly that God means business when it comes to the Sabbath. In the Wilderness, manna falls from Heaven to feed the people every day except the Sabbath. If you didn't collect the extra He gave you on day six, then I guess you were gonna have to endure a rumby tummy, because no one was allowed to collect food on the Sabbath. There's also a story where a guy is caught picking up sticks on the Sabbath, and he gets stoned to death because of it. God is very harsh when it comes to keeping the Sabbath in the wilderness. But once the Israelites inherit the Promised Land, they start ignoring the Sabbath. The prophets, however, talk a lot about the Sabbath, mostly about how Israel was slacking on the Sabbath. Now, there's this haunting prophecy in the book of Leviticus, where God says to the people that if they don't listen to Him and follow His commands, He will devastate their land, give it over to their enemies, scatter the Israelites all over the world, and He says,

"Then the land shall enjoy its Sabbaths as long as it lies desolate, while you are in your enemies' land; then the land shall rest and enjoy its Sabbaths. As long as it lies desolate it shall have rest, the rest that it did not have on your Sabbaths when you were dwelling in it." (Lev. 26:34-35)

In other words, the land will get its rest, one way or another. Well, as many of you know, after a long series of disobedient Kings and a rebellious Kingdom, God does just that. The

Babylonians and Assyrians come and remove Israel from their land. And at the end of 2 Chronicles, it says that God did remove them,

“...until the land had enjoyed its Sabbaths. All the days that it lay desolate it kept Sabbath, to fulfill seventy years.” (2 Ch. 36:21)

So now, let's jump a couple of hundred years into the time of Jesus. The Jewish people had become really serious about the Sabbath after coming home to Jerusalem again. They knew what would happen if they ignored the Sabbath, so they started getting very precise about exactly what one could or could not do on the Sabbath. The religious leaders in Jesus' day were obsessed with the Sabbath. They had rules on rules on rules to keep the Sabbath as holy as possible. They had so many rules that they sort of forgot that the main point of the Sabbath was to share in God's time, to share in a Divine Rhythm, to come close to God. So, with all these rules, they ended up missing the forest for the trees. They became paralyzed by the fear of breaking the Sabbath.

But then, there was Jesus, on the other hand. And Jesus didn't seem all that concerned about their mountains of rules. Jesus would let His disciples pick some heads of grain to eat on the Sabbath. Jesus would heal people on the Sabbath. Jesus just saw the Sabbath very differently than the other Teachers of His day. And the Pharisees got their underwear in a twist over His loosey-goosey approach to the Sabbath. It's one of their biggest gripes with Him.

But, looking back at the start of Jesus' ministry, one day He announces in the synagogue that He will be the one to bring about what's called the Year of the Lord's Favor, a long awaited year that was known to be like a mega-Sabbath, a time of full restoration and renewal for the Land of Israel. And then Jesus also says to the Pharisees that the Son of Man, a common name He used for Himself, was Lord over the Sabbath, and that the Sabbath was made for man, not man for the Sabbath. Jesus was redefining the Sabbath around Himself and around the pathway He was opening up for humanity to be a part of God's life again. You see, Jesus was inviting people into a new way of relating to God. Before, the Sabbath was one of the shared spaces between God and humanity. The people would relate to God through the Sabbath. But, now, Jesus is the meeting space between God and humanity. We relate to God through Jesus. So this new way wasn't through following a system of rules and structures. Jesus is the Living Word of God. He is the Life that the Law was pointing to. He is the voice that the Law was trying to put into words. Jesus doesn't just invite us into another complicated life system. He doesn't give us hundreds of recipes to making healthy dishes. He is the Bread of Life. And what He is offering is discipleship. He doesn't say “Follow the Law.” He says, “Follow me.”

Jesus says something in Matthew 11 that Pastor Aaron quoted last week. He says, *“Come to me, all who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.” (Mt. 11:28)*

That's why Jesus followers don't feel the need to keep the Sabbath. It's not because we don't need rest. It's because we find our rest in a different place. We find our rest in Jesus. He is where we find our refreshment, our deep breath. Through the Holy Spirit and the Scriptures, the living voice of Jesus speaks to our soul and tells it what it needs. He is the Good Shepherd, who makes us lay down in green pastures, who leads us beside still waters, who restores our soul. But then He throws us a curveball. He says,

“...I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls.” (Mat. 11:29)

How is a burden restful? And what even is a yoke? Well, a yoke is a farm tool that ties together two beasts of burden, like oxen or cattle, so that when they walk, they walk at the

same speed. Jesus is saying, “Come, walk alongside me, carry what I carry, live as I live, and as I show you the ropes, you will find calm and rest for your soul.”

And that offer is still on the table for us today. The Spirit is moving us to work and rest like Jesus, to work and rest with Jesus, to work and rest in Jesus. Living with God is restful.

Now, I think this is good news for us. Because looking at us today, if I were to use one word to describe our current moment, I’d say we are “restless.” We are without rest. The daily news haunts us 24/7. The number of causes pleading for our time and energy are limitless. Our hands feel so important. We think we carry the weight of the world on our shoulders. People say that if we don’t take action now, the disasters, the crises, the blood of thousands, are gonna be our fault. And the deadlines keep coming closer. And the meetings keep piling up. We take work home with us. And then after work, we try to rest, but we don’t know how. We find our minds swimming in work stuff. So we try to distract ourselves with hobbies or entertainment, but those are both just different forms of work! And then we get ads on how to maximize our time, on how to start a small business, on which currencies to invest in, on which schools offer online degrees. Here’s another webinar, another masterclass, another vacation experience that will leave you more exhausted than when you left. And then there are more series to watch, more books to read, more posts to scroll through. We are always tired and never sleep enough. Our families are breaking down, our marriages are suffering, parents are sacrificing time with their kids, and even kids are overwhelmed with clubs and sports and extracurriculars and homework. Our friendships are weakening, our schedules are buckling, and even still our time never feels like enough. We are a people desperate to rest, but our desperation is never satisfied. Water, water, everywhere, and not a drop to drink.

How ironic is it that we’re too exhausted to spend time with the One who can give us rest? But, in the end, I think we stay away from Jesus because we know what His rest might cost us. In order to put on Jesus’ yoke and burden, every other yoke and burden is going to have to go. Every other allegiance, every other priority, every other master. Life with Jesus means death to our old way of life.

I’ve heard God described before as a 3-mile-an-hour God. 3-miles-an-hour is how fast a human can walk if they’re unhurried. God walks at a human pace. 3-miles-an-hour. But this means life with God can feel frustrating when we’re used to such fast paces. Sabbath teaches us that God doesn’t need us to be fast. He doesn’t need us to be superhuman. He doesn’t need us to multitask, to drink another cup of coffee, to skip showering again, to maximize our schedule. Our time is best spent listening to the Spirit in us, leading us where Jesus is going. And wherever Jesus is going, He’s walking at 3 miles an hour. Let’s remember that He takes a week to craft a world He could have finished in a second. Jesus takes thirty years to start His ministry, and then three slow years to finish it. Jesus didn’t Uber places. He walked. Life with God is Restful.

Now, there were times when Jesus worked hard. The Gospels tell stories of Jesus coming home exhausted from the crowds that needed healing. But Jesus didn’t heal out of a need to be appreciated, or out of a drive to build up His reputation, or out of a need for more money. Jesus says in John 5:19,

“Truly, truly, I say to you, the Son can do nothing of His own accord, but only what He sees the Father doing. For whatever the Father does, that the Son does likewise.” (Jn. 5:19)

Jesus worked where He knew God was working. Jesus was yoked to His Father. We are yoked to Him.

So, what are the action steps here? How do we learn to work and rest with Jesus? Well, rather than giving you a set of rules to follow, like the Pharisees, I’ll ask a question for you to chew on and to respond to. And this question is for the curious and the committed in the room, so whether you’re new to the whole Jesus thing or you have been following for years, this

question applies. The question is: Do you believe there's anything you can add to simply following Jesus that will give you a better life than He can offer you? Are there any extra add-ons that the world can offer you that Jesus can't? Any bonus packages that life with Jesus just can't get you? Whenever I find myself doubting that Jesus can bring me rest, I yoke myself to something else I think will bring me rest. But being yoked to two different things walking at different paces means I end up torn between the two, and my soul feels choked out. And maybe you've tried yoking yourself to those other things. To the approval of the people around you, to your title, to money, to success, to beauty, to human love, to being a good person. The reality is that those things will make you run so fast and carry so much. And maybe you're beginning to feel the exhaustion that comes with those burdens. Jesus' invitation to come and find your rest is always there waiting. And if you do believe that Jesus' yoke will bring you true rest for your souls, then the next step is simple. Where are you wearing other yokes and carrying other burdens that Jesus never meant you to carry? What fears for tomorrow, what impulses or urges, what hungers or concerns are leading you to wear newer, heavier burdens? And then, are you willing to pray for Jesus to remove those burdens from you, to take them off your back? Now, that's a serious question, because I believe in a God that answers prayers. If you ask for that and surrender to that, you might just find yourself losing interest or attachment to some of the things you hold most dear today. But that is both a frightening reality and our greatest hope. Because ultimately, only Life with God is Restful.

Life Level Application

Questions:

1. What's your favorite way to rest?
2. Are there any ways you try to rest that actually end up draining you more?
3. Have you ever experienced the rest that only God can provide?
4. Do you believe Jesus can actually give you rest, and if so, what tends to get in the way of receiving His rest?
5. What hard yokes and heavy burdens might Jesus be leading you take off?

ANNOUNCEMENTS

Sonrise Kids: 2nd-5th Grade Movie & Game Day! | Mon., June 23 | 2-4:30 PM | Bron Hall

Join us for a fun movie day! For more information, please email BethB@isonrise.com or come see us in Kid's Ministry!

Women's Min: Axe Throwing | Wed., June 25 | 6-8 PM | Blue Ox in Hillsboro

Join us at Blue Ox Axe Throwing on Wednesday, June 25th, from 6-8 PM for a fun evening! Whether you've thrown before or it's your first time, come ready to learn a new skill, share some laughs, and build meaningful connections. Bring your friends and enjoy delicious drinks and appetizers available for purchase, supporting a fantastic local business while you mingle and make new acquaintances. Register through Church Center.

Family Fun Night | Wed., July 16 | 5:30-7:30 PM

Join us for a free family fun night here at Sonrise on Wednesday, July 16 at 5:30 pm! There will be fun activities for kids of all ages – bounce house, inflatable obstacle course & other fun inflatable activities! We'll also have a toddler zone, crafts, and BBQ dinner. Invite your friends and neighbors! We have fliers available at the kids' check-in area. For more information, please email BethB@isonrise.com or come see us in Kid's Ministry!

Family Campout | Aug. 7-10 | Mt. Hood Village RV Resort

Join us for the Sonrise Family Campout this year at Mt. Hood Village at the base of Mt. Hood. Bring your family, dog, and neighbor for some mountain fun! Registration will close on July 16th. Nonrefundable after July 31st. For more info, please contact Emily Kukis at 503. 309.3534 or email at coreyandemilykukis@gmail.com. Additional details can be found on Church Center.

Songs from this morning:

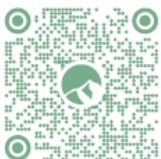
This is Amazing Grace – Phil Wickham

Holy Forever– Bethel Music

Still – Reuben Morgan

Come Thou Fount – David Crowder Band

What a Beautiful Name/Agnus Dei – Worship Together



**For more info or to
register, visit isonrise.com
or explore events/groups
on the Church Center App.**