



ARNA PENTECOST PODCAST 2023

The Spirit's role in worship

Day 7 | The people of God, are a worshipping community, and we gather to offer worship that is worthy of our Lord and God.

Focus | Today is Sunday which for Christians all over the world is a day of worship. From the very beginning God commanded His people to set aside one day each week for rest. He called this day Sabbath. The Sabbath day was a day of worship – when we cease from our work, and focus our attention on worshipping God. Today we will focus on the benefits of intentionally setting aside our Sunday as a day to worship our loving Father.

Let us quieten our body and still our mind, so we may more easily discern the presence of the Holy Spirit within our heart.

Pause

Scripture | Exodus 20:8-11; Hebrews 4:1-11

God clearly command His people how they were to spend our seventh day. In Exodus 20 verse 8 to 11 we read,

“Remember the Sabbath day by keeping it holy. Six days you shall labour 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, neither you, nor your son or daughter, nor your male or female servant ... 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.”

And the writer of Hebrews reminds us that entering God's rest is not just a practice of the Old Testament. In chapter 4 we read,

“God's promise of entering his rest still stands, so we ought to tremble with fear that some of you might fail to experience it. ² For this good news—that God has prepared this rest—has been announced to us just as it was to them. But it did them no good because they didn't share the faith of those who listened to God.

³ For only we who believe can enter his rest. As for the others, God said,

“In my anger I took an oath: ‘They will never enter my place of rest.’”

even though this rest has been ready since he made the world. ⁴ We know it is ready because of the place in the Scriptures where it mentions the seventh day: “On the seventh day God rested from all his work.” ⁵ But in the other passage God said, “They will never enter my place of rest.”

⁶ So God’s rest is there for people to enter, but those who first heard this good news failed to enter because they disobeyed God. ⁷ So God set another time for entering his rest, and that time is today. God announced this through David much later in the words already quoted:

“Today when you hear his voice, don’t harden your hearts.”

⁸ Now if Joshua had succeeded in giving them this rest, God would not have spoken about another day of rest still to come. ⁹ So there is a special rest still waiting for the people of God. ¹⁰ For all who have entered into God’s rest have rested from their labours, just as God did after creating the world. ¹¹ So let us do our best to enter that rest.”

Reflection |

What do you have planned for today? Some who are listening may need to go to work, being committed to care for those whose well-being requires assistance. However, for most Christians, today is our special day during which we give our entire attention to worshipping our glorious God. Sunday, for most, represents a step away from our normal activities, to rest and refresh our souls.

We live in a world that gives little time, nor attention, to resting. Rather our busy world has, in many ways, declared war on ‘resting’, regarding it as laziness.

The last time someone asked you, ‘what have you been up to?’ Did you automatically answer ‘busy as ever’! I wonder what the response would have been if you had said, “I’m perfectly relaxed, and at rest with God”.

In this book *The Rest of God*, Mark Buchanan says, “In a culture where busyness is a fetish and stillness is laziness, rest is sloth. But without rest, we miss the rest of God: the rest he invites us to enter more fully so that we might know him more deeply.”

Can you hear the whisper of the Spirit of God, calling you to enter into His rest?

When we are obedient to that call, we begin to share in the treasures and refreshment of Sabbath keeping.

When we make Sabbath keeping a priority, our pausing allows our heart, mind and body to worship God more deeply, and we open ourselves to what God wants to do in us.

During Sabbath worship we acknowledge the limits of our humanness. We are reminded that the world’s maintenance does not depend on me. God is powerful and I am weak. God is self-sufficient and I am dependent. God is all things to all people and I am tiny in comparison to him.

Entering into Sabbath rest is not just doing nothing. Rather it is a deliberate action of entering into the flourishing of Spirit inspired worship. We engage with the things that give us life, things that stir and nourish our souls, that helps us thrive as the kind of beings God created us to be.

When we return to God’s story, we see that right at the beginning God rested on the seventh day. Now, he did not rest because he was weary from all his labor and needed a breather so he’d be up to the tasks that lay ahead. Rather rest has a deeper meaning than merely a recharge of the batteries for the sake of what’s next. God rested to lead the world He had made to flourish as it should. He rested in order to delight in its flourishing.

The word “rest” that occurs in the Genesis story and elsewhere is the Hebrew word *menuha*. To the Hebrew person this word is the same as happiness and stillness, as peace and harmony. It is the state where there is no strife, no fighting, no fear and no distrust. The essence of the good life is *menuha*.

Also the word means ‘to stop.’ But it can also be translated ‘to delight.’ It has this dual idea of stopping and also of joying in God and our lives in his world. The Sabbath is an entire day set aside to follow God’s example, to stop and delight.”

That is why one of the most important disciplines we can retrieve in order to shape and sustain a life of worshipping God appropriately is the discipline of Sabbath keeping.

Jesus said, “*The Sabbath was made for humankind*” (Mark 2:27). *It was made for our delight, our joy, our flourishing. It was made for us to enjoy the God who creates and sustains life, to gather with friends in order to “taste and see that the Lord is good.”* (Psalm 34:8).

But entering into Sabbath rest takes faith!

That is what Charles Swindoll was highlighting when he said,

“At least one indication of unbelief is the tendency to measure life's challenges against our own adequacy instead of God's promises. To enter our Sabbath rest, we must put an end to self-reliance - trusting in our own abilities to overcome difficulties, rise above challenges, escape tragedies, or achieve personal greatness.”

Do you have the courage to devote this day to restful worship?

If you do so, you'll be giving yourself the opportunity to breath in the delicious, fresh air of God's Spirit and giving space to experience God's presence, celebrate God's reign and anticipate God's perfect peace.

Pause

Application |

Close your eyes now and listen to the Spirit whisper,

“Your Saviour calls to you, Come away with me. Let us go alone to a quiet place and rest for a while.”
(Mark 6:30)

Pause

Prayer | Heavenly Father, today is indeed a holy day – it is the day where I set aside my competing priorities and give you the attention you deserve. Help me to delight in your nearness and the celebration of your reign of peace in my life. May I not be one who draws back, rather let me inhabit your reign today and taste the glories of the world to come. **Amen.**