

We've looked at the Commandment around Sabbath found in 2 records of the 10 Commandments
And looked at the Old Testament teaching on Sabbath, Sabbatical Year, and Year of Jubilee
Now we turn to the New Testament and the teachings of Jesus

Early in Jesus' ministry, we find him in the Synagogue in Nazareth on the Sabbath – Luke 4:16-30

Reading from Isaiah...

"The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me to bring good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim release to the captives and recovery of sight to the blind, to let the oppressed go free, to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor." And he rolled up the scroll, gave it back to the attendant, and sat down. The eyes of all in the synagogue were fixed on him. Then he began to say to them, "Today this scripture has been fulfilled in your hearing." Luke 4:18-21 NRSV

The "year of the Lord's favor" refers to the Year of Jubilee—which has been fulfilled in Jesus
Jesus has come to set the captive free and bring good news to the poor, etc.
This is his mission statement—his purpose on earth

From there, we have several incidences with Jesus on the Sabbath—look briefly at 2 of them...

Luke 13:10-17—Jesus is teaching in a synagogue on the Sabbath

While teaching, Jesus healed a crippled woman—on the Sabbath

Leader of the synagogue was indignant because Jesus healed on the Sabbath

*"There are six days on which work ought to be done;
come on those days and be cured, and not on the sabbath day."*

Jesus called them hypocrites for taking their ox and donkey to water on the Sabbath

But would not allow this woman to be set free from the bondage in her body

Mark 2:23-28—Jesus and his disciples are walking through grain fields on the Sabbath

They begin to pluck the grain and eat it

The Pharisees chide him for breaking the Sabbath laws

Jesus reminds them of David and his companions eating the consecrated bread

A story from 1 Samuel 21:1-6—they ate the bread because they were hungry

While against religious law, David was not condemned for eating the bread

Then Jesus says, *"The sabbath was made for humankind,*

and not humankind for the sabbath; so the Son of Man is lord even of the sabbath."

The Sabbath was originally intended to serve people

It was made so that people might be refreshed after 6 days of labor

Intentional down time established rhythmically in the lives of people

But by Jesus' day, there was a complex oral law around the Sabbath

It spelled out in great detail exactly what could be done on the Sabbath

It listed exact prohibitions and gave a long list of rules to worry about

The myriad rules meant that the Sabbath didn't really give people rest

The Sabbath rules symbolizes the oral law—created with good intention and purpose

But which now actually oppresses the people

The Sabbath represented the height of institutionalized Jewish religion of the day

By violating Sabbath norms Jesus was undercutting the authority of this complex law

Jesus was Lord of the Sabbath—Lord of the religious practices of the day
He would not bow down and serve them or give them credence
As soon as they lose their proper place, they should be torn down
God does not desire that we serve the rules—rather we are to serve God alone
Human need takes precedence over religious dogma
Jesus' compassion for others trumps the rules
Jesus insists that doing "good" on the Sabbath cannot be wrong

But never does Jesus say there should not be a Sabbath
He is saying the purpose of the Sabbath is out of bounds
Reality—Jesus is calling the Sabbath to its right size—to its intended purpose
A regular rhythmic day set aside for rest and worship
A down time day
A day to gather with others in worship
Enter the Sabbath rest

Have we so dismissed the rules that we have lost a sense of Sabbath rest?
The Jews took it to one extreme or rigid laws and prohibitions around Sabbath
But in dismissing the rules, we often take it to the other extreme, where we lose it altogether

How do we enter the Sabbath rest in a way that is restorative and life giving?