

Sabbath Keeping Exodus 20:8 Exodus 31 Isaiah 56:4-7 58:13-14

Friday was a special day for Adriana and me. 39 years ago on a Friday night we were married. So to celebrate our 39 years we went to the Red Lobster for a special meal and afterward we went to the Ice Center in Pasadena, laced up the skates I bought 33 years ago and went skating. This special anniversary date brought back many memories and feelings. We used to go skating when we dated. We remembered the people who were in our wedding party and what we ate and did at the reception later. Adriana tested me if I remembered the song of our first dance. She had to give me a hint but it all came back in a moment when she mentioned Doctor Zhivago – Somewhere my love. We remembered all the issues related to our big day. How the flowers didn't come on time, and how my brother refused to cut his hair the way we wanted it. Even today if we want to say something special to each other we use yellow roses. Friday was a good day.

Although we have amazingly much to celebrate, one of the issues of our marriage has been: neglecting to put our love into action. Expressing our love in concrete terms so that the other person will feel it and know it and be blessed by it instead of guessing or assuming. This has been, at least for me, my biggest challenge through the years. Although we love each other, as the years go by and we get involved with our studies, our jobs, our children, our ministries, our friends, our hobbies, our books, our TV program, our smart phones, and our house cleaning regiments we tend to take each other for granted. All these other things in our lives exhaust us and detract us from the vows we made so long ago with eager hopes and dreams of the ideal relationship. The biggest issue for me in our marriage has been getting side tracked with other things, and just taking Adriana for granted and letting her wilt on the emotional vine. I used to think that I didn't need days like Valentine's Day, and Birthdays, and anniversaries to stir me to express my love, I could do it myself every day – thank you Hallmark. But now I thank God for days like Friday.

Neglecting the most prized person in our lives is a hazard in most relationships. In our relationship with God too. With him we too tend to get side tracked with our own agendas and our own lives and our own concerns. Even though our first love for God and first commitments to Jesus were deep and passionate and committed and for life, over the years we too can take the amazing gifts and blessings and hopes in God for granted and we end up wilting on the spiritual vine. When God gave us the ten commandments they were directions and guidance for us to live in a wonderful mysterious life giving relationship with God. At Mount Sinai God committed himself to love his people – to love you and me his children forever. To be God for us and love us for a thousand generations. This covenant was like a marriage ceremony.

And when God spoke the vows to us he said: “we belong together, to have and to hold on to, to be there for you from this day forward, for better or for worse, for richer, for

poorer, in sickness and in health, to love and to cherish; from this day forward until life do us part.” Nothing can separate from the love of God. God’s love is an eternal love. No “death do us part” clause.

But there are always two parts to the vows. We promise not go after other Gods, and to not diminish the glory and the mystery of God with images of our own making – to box God in. We promise not to misrepresent God and use the name and power of God for our own selfish dreams and ambitions. And in the fourth commandment we promise to make our love for God and our relationship with Jesus something we put into concrete actions. We promise not to let our work, and our family, and our lifestyle detract us to neglect our number one relationship in life.

By the fourth commandment we promise to set one day aside every week as a sign of our relationship with God, as a concrete expression of our special connection with Jesus. On that one day we let go of our earthly distractions. All our labors, all our work all our life’s energy is put on hold and that one day, the Sabbath day, the day of rest is dedicated to the lord our God.

That one day is like an anniversary date with our God. We bring back memories and feelings as we review and live into the highlights of our relationship. We put ourselves into God agenda and God’s time table. So often we as human beings are controlled by the clock, and the calendar, and all the deadlines of our existence. But once a week, on that day of rest, we are invited to rest from our lives run by the human clock and human calendar and our man made deadlines. We are invited to immerse ourselves into God’s pattern of life, into God’s calculation of time and days and eternity. Into God’s way of thinking and acting. On our date day with God we remember and live into how God created us, and how he rescued us from slavery and how he saved us through the death and resurrection of Jesus, and how he gives us new life in the spirit. On that date day we delight once again in those concrete expressions of love. And we thank God for days like Sunday, when we Sabbath in the presence of God skate together for while on the Grace Center of the universe.

And it is beyond our understanding of how this one day, this Sabbath, this Sabbath encounter with God affects us. It’s a mystery how this one day refreshes the soul and inspires the spirit, and restores the passion and the joys for life, and stirs up the hopes of even great things to come. Isaiah in chapter 56 on his Sabbath reflections in the temple says this is what the Lord Yahweh says; Blessed are those who keep the Sabbath. They will always feel they belong in God family relationship. Even the eunuch who keep my Sabbaths and lives in that covenant relationship, to them I will give within my temple a memorial and a name better than sons and daughters. I will give them an everlasting name that will endure forever. Even foreigners who bind themselves in a relationship with Yahweh God, and keep the Sabbath and hold on to the covenant, These I will bring

to my holy mountain and I will give them joy in my house of prayer. Even foreigners I will accept and love for my house is a house of prayer for all nations.

And in Chapter 58 God continues to speak about the benefits of Keeping the Sabbath. If you keep the Sabbath, if you keep from doing as you please on my holy day, our date day, if you consider the Sabbath a delight and honor God on his holy day, if you honor this weekly date with God and not do as you please then you will find your joy in the Lord. On that Sabbath day you will experience and receive the strength to ride in triumph on the heights of the land and feast on the abundance of the earth and everything that belongs to God.

If you make Sunday a sign, a concrete act to show your love to God, you will experience blessings you never dreamed possible. That was God's hope and plan from the very beginning. God wanted us to experience a foretaste of heaven on earth. And so God set one day apart as holy. God blessed that day so that God could make us holy for life with him.

Today that Sabbath reality, that Sabbath holiness, that Sabbath rest and peace, that Sabbath date with God, those Sabbath blessings can only be experienced in the person of Jesus. Jesus according to the New Testament is the Lord of the Sabbath. He is the fulfillment of the temple. And in his body the church we can celebrate the special meals and the memories and feelings, and freedom and the joy of life with God.

For OT Israel the Sabbath helped them relive God's good creation and reminded them of his purpose for life. The Sabbath help them keep firm in the minds and souls that God had saved them from slavery. For Us Sunday helps think and meditate on all those things God has done for us but even. On Sunday we relive and experience again the power and the reality of Easter. On Sunday we are reminded that all of our energy and strength comes from the son. The son of God the light of the world. On Sunday we are reminded that the world does not turn on our efforts, and that relying on everything we do not give peace and joy. On Sunday we are reminded that the world belongs to God and our trust and our hope and eternal joy is in him.

God gave us the fourth commandment so that the Spirit of God use those words to stir in our hearts and minds an awareness of our sin

Motivate us to turn to Jesus and follow him as the source of Sabbath joy and
Guide for expressing our thanks to God every day but especially on Sunday

So let us pray that the Spirit will help to become aware of how we neglect God, let's ask him to direct our eyes and our heart to Jesus, and help us delight in our relationship with God and TGIS - Thank God it's Sunday.