

Breathe – May 29, 2022

SERIES RECAP

All month we've been addressing a problem. We are exhausted. And anxious. We aren't sleeping well. We're being sabotaged by our devices. **It's hard to breathe** in this stress-filled time.

We're talking about this because we believe that we, as a church, are **called to something different**. In fact, this is one of our core values.

Breathe

We will not be ground into dust by this life. We long to be continuously refreshed by Jesus, to pursue what makes us healthy, and to practice the spiritual disciplines of solitude, silence, and sabbath rest.

This is what we value as a church. So to explore that idea, we've been looking at that concept in the Bible called "Sabbath rest."

We've looked at the Sabbath day and the Sabbath year, where the Israelites were commanded to not work at all.

What's become clear in this series is that, as followers of Jesus, Sabbath is more than an invitation to take a day off. It's an invitation to live a **Sabbath kind of life**.

One where we **trust** in God's provision, not our own self-sufficiency, where we are free from the task masters of work and greed, and where we ensure the rest and refreshment of all that is within our sphere of influence. In short, it's a life where we return to the **abundance of Eden**.

Well, today we're going to end this series by looking at one final aspect of this thread of Sabbath in the Bible. It's called the year of Jubilee.

THE YEAR OF JUBILEE

Please turn with me to **Leviticus 25:8, page ____**.

The passage we read last week about the Sabbath year comes right before this. Let the land rest once every seven years, and then this...

Leviticus 25:8-13

In addition, you must count off seven Sabbath years, seven sets of seven years, adding up to forty-nine years in all. Then on the Day of Atonement in the fiftieth year, blow the ram's horn loud and long throughout the land. Set this year apart as holy, a time to proclaim freedom throughout the land for all who live there. It will be a jubilee year for you, when each of you may return to the land that belonged to your ancestors and return to your own clan. This fiftieth year will be a jubilee for you. During that year you must not plant your fields or store away any of the crops that grow on their own, and don't gather the grapes from your unpruned vines. It will be a jubilee year for you, and you must keep it holy. But you may eat whatever the land produces on its own. In the Year of Jubilee each of you may return to the land that belonged to your ancestors.

Ok, a few things to note here. First of all, this year of Jubilee is supposed to take place **after seven Sabbath years**.

So you count off seven Sabbath years, and then you take what amounts to an *additional* Sabbath year. Two years in a row of no working, no planting, no pruning... Two full years of just relying on God's abundance to survive.

Have I mentioned Sabbath is a **matter of trust**?

But this year of Jubilee isn't just about not working. It's also a significant **economic reset** for the people of Israel. A chance to untangle the chains of injustice and poverty that have trapped people.

Verse 10. The year of Jubilee is a year to proclaim "*freedom* throughout the land." It may not be as explicit here as it is elsewhere, but this means freedom for those who are **slaves**.

Every 50th year, all Israelite slaves are to be set free. Doesn't matter how you got there. Your slavery is over.

And, the verse goes on, "each of you may return to the land that belonged to your ancestors."

In other words, if, in the course of the last 50 years, you've fallen on hard times and have to sell your family's land, **you get it all back** in the year of

Jubilee.

A new beginning for you and your family. Like I said, this is an economic reset.

And all of it accompanied by the **blowing of ram's horns**. In fact, the word "Jubilee" in Hebrew is

yobēl - ram's horn; blowing of ram's horn

That's what Jubilee means. You could call it "the year of the trumpet blast."

So just imagine for a minute the **anticipation** you'd feel about this as an ancient Israelite. Once or twice in your lifetime, if you're a slave, if your family has fallen on hard times, if you're being ground into dust by work, you know that when that trumpet blasts, you get a second chance.

You get to return to an Eden kind of life. A life of abundance. A life of justice. A life of rest.

There is hope. Because the year of Jubilee is on the way.

DAY OF THE LORD

At least, that's what you were supposed to feel... in *theory*. **In practice**, it didn't really work out that way.

You see, as we talked about last week, the Sabbath year was never actually practiced in Israel. And you need *seven* of those to reach the first year of Jubilee.

So, obviously this "economic reset" for the people of Israel never happened. Jubilee became **nothing more than a fantasy**, a dream. This nation that was supposed to be holy - set apart - from all the other nations, became just like the rest of them.

Injustice, slavery, abuse, and work that grinds you to dust... **Israel missed their chance to return to Eden.**

However, the oppressed in Israel didn't lose hope entirely. In fact, the year of Jubilee started to join with other **biblical ideas** or **visions of the future**, like

the “year of the Lord” or “the time of the Lord’s favor.”

All of these ideas came together to describe a coming day when God would **intervene to make things right in the world**. It would be the Lord’s time, the Lord’s year, the Lord’s Jubilee.

And when you read through Israel’s prophets, you see this hope echoed again and again.

For example, here’s what the prophet Joel envisioned:

Joel 2:1

Sound the trumpet in Jerusalem!

Raise the alarm on my holy mountain!

Let everyone tremble in fear

because the day of the LORD is upon us.

Why tremble in fear? Because Israel was full of injustice and violence, and when God shows up to make things right, it’s **not going to go well for the violent and the unjust**.

But this future day of the Lord is something those who *are* oppressed or enslaved can look forward to with **great anticipation**.

Like in this passage in Isaiah:

Isaiah 61:1-2

The Spirit of the Sovereign LORD is upon me,

for the LORD has anointed me

to bring good news to the poor.

He has sent me to comfort the brokenhearted

and to proclaim that captives will be released

and prisoners will be freed.

He has sent me to tell those who mourn

that the time of the LORD’s favor has come,

and with it, the day of God’s anger against their enemies.

So you see, the year of the trumpet blast - of Jubilee - the time of the Lord’s favor... This was the **hope** the oppressed people in Israel held onto. The

ultimate Sabbath, where true rest would come.

Remember, these are people living one bad harvest away from destitution, living under the thumb of greedy landowners and invading enemy nations... These are **people being ground to dust** by this life...

They held onto hope that when the time of the Lord's favor comes, injustice and violence will finally be crushed, hope and dignity will finally spring up. Those in chains will finally experience a new beginning.

The year of Jubilee became a symbol of hope for a world made new.

A world of Sabbath rest.

Now, our lives are very different than that of ancient farmers in Israel. But I think we feel that yearning too, don't we?

We long, just like them, to be free from the slave masters of profit and greed and survival. We want to be released from the crushing anxiety of our lives. We dream of walking again in the abundance of Eden.

Like the Israelites, we look forward to the time of the Lord's favor, to the day of the Lord, when true Sabbath rest is made possible.

Of course, that's all just a future dream. It's a long way off.

Or is it?

FULFILLED

Turn with me to the New Testament. To **Luke 4:16, Page ____**.

I want to show you something.

Because it may be natural to think, like the ancient Israelites, that the year of Jubilee, the time of the Lord's favor, is all way off in the distance. It's unattainable. But Jesus saw things a bit differently.

Check this out. Right at the beginning of his public ministry, this happened:

Luke 4:16-21

When he came to the village of Nazareth, his boyhood home, he went as usual to the synagogue on the Sabbath and stood up to read the Scriptures. The scroll of Isaiah the prophet was handed to him. He unrolled the scroll and found the place where this was written:

*“The Spirit of the LORD is upon me,
for he has anointed me to bring Good News to the poor.
He has sent me to proclaim that captives will be released,
that the blind will see,
that the oppressed will be set free,
and that the time of the LORD’s favor has come.”*

He rolled up the scroll, handed it back to the attendant, and sat down. All eyes in the synagogue looked at him intently. Then he began to speak to them. “The Scripture you’ve just heard has been fulfilled this very day!”

Do you see what Jesus is doing here? He says this “has been fulfilled.”

In other words, the time of the Lord’s favor is *now*. The year of the Lord has come. According to Jesus, this *is* the Jubilee.

That sounds crazy. But think about his teachings. Think about the kingdom he established.

- A kingdom where the **poor** are provided for and **chains of injustice** are broken.
- Where the **oppressed and marginalized** are given special honor.
- Where **violence** is rejected by self-giving love.
- A kingdom where the **last are first** and first are last.

This is why Jesus tells his followers not to worry about everyday life. Why he tells us to seek his kingdom first, trusting that God will give us everything we need.

Because in Christ, **Sabbath rest and Jubilee can become a way of life.**
“The Scripture you’ve just heard has been fulfilled...”

Now, is everything perfect? Has our world returned to Eden?

Not entirely. In this still broken world, when we see global famines and school

shootings and injustice, we are still waiting for that final trumpet blast, when New Creation is complete.

But we cannot miss the fact that when Jesus began his ministry, **the time of the Lord's favor *started* breaking into this world.** Everywhere he went, seedlings of Eden began springing up. Healing, peace, life, forgiveness, freedom, *rest*...

And through his Holy Spirit, the same thing can be true of you and me. This world is still broken, but **we are Jubilee people**, and we are here to un-break it in Jesus' name.

We are participating in the in-breaking of Eden in our world.

JUBILEE PEOPLE

Now, these are huge concepts, but what does this have to do with our need for rest?

Well I hope you can see that this is all connected. Sabbath rest, trust in God, and Jubilee...

This is all part of the same thread weaving through the entire Bible and right into our lives.

If we want true rest, we've got to follow where Jesus leads.

How do we do that? Three ways. First,

Grab your trumpet.

As I said before, the Jubilee - this year of freedom and justice and new beginnings - was literally the "year of the trumpet blast."

Well, if Jesus was anointed to bring Good News to the poor, the captives, the blind, and the oppressed, then **that's our job as well** as his followers.

Our lives should be **ringing endorsements** of the truth that the kingdom of God is breaking into this world. That the time of the Lord's favor has come.

If you want to experience the rest and abundance and provision of our God - if you want to live the Jubilee - then **join him** in the work he cares about.

- Show people how to come back to God.
- Move into the lives of those in pain.
- Open your home to the isolated.
- Stand up against injustice.
- Conquer hatred with love.
- And seek the wellbeing of God's beautiful creation.

Work with Jesus to heal the broken places of this world, and your life will be a **trumpet blast of good news.**

That is when a well of abundance and refreshment will spring up within you, as God works through you to plant seeds of Eden again. Grab your trumpet. It's Jubilee. Second,

Be holy.

This sounds like a very Christian-ey thing to say, but remember what we've been talking about through this series. Holy just means "**set apart.**" Different.

The Israelites were called to be a holy nation - to show the world a different way to live. That's what Sabbath was all about. Well, that call to be holy extends to you and me. As Peter put it,

1 Peter 2:9

You are a chosen people. You are royal priests, a holy nation, God's very own possession. As a result, you can show others the goodness of God, for he called you out of the darkness into his wonderful light.

As we think about the anxiety and stress and overwork and exhaustion so many are feeling in our community right now...

As we think about our neighbors enslaved to work, addicted to greed, consumed by consumerism...

As we think about them, let's ask ourselves. Are we set apart? Are we

different? Are we holy?

The whole point of biblical Sabbath, of the Sabbath year, of Jubilee - is to demonstrate to the world that **there is another way to live**. A life lived in trust that God will provide.

I want you to ask yourself: **does my lifestyle look different** than those around me?

Does the way that I approach money, or work, or time off, or rest - does it look like I trust that God will give me what I need?

Does my life look fruitful and abundant?

Do I live like someone who is free?

If your answer is no - if your life looks no different - if you are being ground into dust by this life - then I hope this series comes as wake up call.

Not to feel bad about yourself! But a wake up call that **things don't have to be this way**.

The time of the Lord's favor has come through Jesus, and his followers can now live in such a way that we declare to the world: the Jubilee has begun.

So, grab your trumpet, be holy. And finally,

Live free.

And this is where we're just going to get really practical.

If you *want* to be holy - to life different... If you want your life to be a trumpet blast of good news, then you've got to put these ideas to the test.

You've got to see if trusting God in this way leads to the rest that he promises.

So I've got **four things for you to practice** this summer. Pick one and give it a shot.

First, If you're someone who is always working, always reachable, always checking email on your days off, taking work calls on vacation... if that's you, I want to invite you to *stop*. That's what Sabbath means.

1) Carve out a regular window of time when you are not on the clock.

Maybe it's an hour a day, or a day a week, or a long weekend every month.

Carve out that time, protect it, tell your co-workers "you won't be able to reach me."

And then trust that into that time God will bring you **rest**, that he'll bring **healing** to your family, that he'll **relieve your anxiety**, and that he'll help your work be even more fruitful and productive when you *are* on the clock.

Would taking that time help you be set apart from the rest? Absolutely. But these moments of freedom - of Sabbath - might just be exactly what your heart has been yearning for. Second,

2) Make a conscious choice to reject the demands of greed.

So much of our stress and anxiety comes from **the relentless demands of more**. More products, more gadgets, more clothes, more stuff...

The Jubilee is here. It's a time for slaves to be released. And that includes our slavery to consumerism.

God's Spirit is within you. Take off the chains. You can stop the grind of greed. Will you make that choice? Next,

3) Put your phone in its place.

Let's be honest. Our phones have become the slave masters of our time.

But let's not forget why God commands the Israelites to practice Sabbath: because "you were once slaves in the land of Egypt" but you're not anymore.

The Jubilee is "a time to proclaim freedom throughout the land." I want you to be able to proclaim freedom from your phone.

Find the strength to put it down, turn it off, lock it up... for a moment. For an hour. For a day.

During my sabbatical I'm going to spend one week at least where my phone has to stay on the kitchen counter. If I'm outside, I don't have my phone. If I'm in bed, I don't have my phone.

I'm doing it to remind myself that **my phone serves me**, not the other way around.

Put your phone in its place because the trumpet is blowing, and we are called to be holy - different from the world around us.

Finally, this summer, I want you to

4) Settle in to the presence of God and let *him* give you rest.

Like I said a few weeks ago, you can't force yourself to rest. All you can do is **create the space** for *God* to give you rest.

This summer, I want you to get a taste of Eden. Of the abundance and refreshment of God. I want you to breathe. But you've got to make the time for it.

Let's make this **the summer of Sabbath rest**. The summer of Jubilee. Whatever that looks like for you.

God's desire to refresh and sustain you. Will you trust him enough to stop the grind? Will you trust him enough to rest?

[PRAY]