

Sundays Can Surprise You
I Love Sundays, Part 1
Psalm 122: 1-9

BIG IDEA:

I want to propose a revolutionary thought to you this morning. Are you ready for it? Here it is:
Sunday was meant to be the best day of your week.

RAISE THE NEED:

Many of us grew up in situations where Sunday was boring. Or Sunday was a rat race. Some of us grew up in homes where Sunday was just another day. Others grew up in homes where Sunday was a disappointment, because it was supposed to be a family day, or a day off, but nothing ever happened because the family never did anything together. Or the wrong thing happened, like you had to do yard work with dad or chores with mom all day. Others of us grew up in homes where Sunday was full of conflict because church was mandatory but no one was ever ready to leave on time, so the whole family competed for the bathroom, bumped into each other scrambling for breakfast in the kitchen, wolfed down our food, bolted for the door, and argued with each other all the way to church—where you were miraculously healed and acted like saints as soon as you hit the parking lot.

I have good news for you today: Sundays were never meant to be that way. God made Sundays *for you!*

Jesus, in the Bible, said, “The Sabbath was made for man, not man for the Sabbath” (Mark 2:27).

Today we live in a world where the pace of life is killing us. I want to tell you today that Sunday is a solution to all of that.

It feels like we always have too much to do. God said that Sunday is the antidote for that.

It seems like we always feel pressured. God made Sundays as the relief for that.

We rarely have time for the really important things. God thinks Sundays can take care of that.

There’s never enough time for family . . . or the people we love . . . or the rest we need. God designed Sundays for that.

With so much going on in our world, it’s easy to lose sight of what really matters. God created Sundays as the cure for that.

PROOF:

If there is a Bible near you, or on your smart phone, open it and turn to Psalm 122.

One time, somebody invited King David, who wrote this psalm, to attend church with them. David’s response is recorded here in Psalm 122. Listen to this:

I rejoiced with those who said to me,

“Let us go to the house of the LORD.” (Psalm 122:1)

Does that sound like a guy who was turned off by church?

So what does he know that I don't know about church?

Let's unpack that for a minute. In this little psalm, David gives six great reasons to go to church.

A. Why David Liked Going to Church:

First, in verse 4, I think . . .

1. He wanted to go to church because he liked being with God's people (v. 4a).

"That's where my tribe goes."

Second, also in verse 4, I think . . .

2. He wanted to honor God (v. 4).

"I want to go to church to praise the name of the Lord."

And third, he says, he wanted to go to church because . . .

3. He wanted to do what God asked him to do (v. 4). (Also verse 4.)

"I want to go to church because the statutes given to Israel told us to do that."

Fourth, in verse 6, he wanted there to be peace and security in the house because . . .

4. He wanted peace for those who love God (v. 6).

He just wants good things for God's people. You can relate to that, can't you? Everybody wants peace for those they love.

Fifth, in verse 8, he admitted that . . .

5. He wanted peace because God's people were his family and friends (v. 8).

"For the sake of my family and friends," he says.

And sixth, in verse 9, he made a decision.

6. He committed himself to the prosperity of the house of God (v. 9).

That's not a bad list.

MY REASON FOR THIS SERMON IS SIMPLY THIS: I want Sunday to become the best day of the week for every one of you.

Once upon a time in our country, everything stopped on Sundays. People went to church and worshipped God, then ate together, hung out together, rested and played together in the afternoon. Sunday wasn't an extra day to get things done. Or a bonus day to put our kids in high-impact activities so they could get ahead. Sunday was a day of rest and worship.

I think people had a greater sense of peace in those days, don't you? And of hope. I think their pace of life all week wasn't as frantic as ours because they slowed their pace of life one day a week and rested and refueled and refocused on what really mattered.

There is something you can't see, touch, taste, or smell about church attendance that makes it the most powerful investment of your week. Something about being in church makes us better and qualifies us for special blessings and provisions from God.

Once upon a time, Sunday was the best day of the week for almost everybody. And life was better for almost everybody.

I want that again for our country. And I want that for *you*.

THE IMPORTANCE OF THE SABBATH:

Way back at the beginning of time, the Bible says that God created the heavens and the earth. After it was all done, after He made the sun and the moon and the land and the plants and animals, Genesis 2:2–3 says,

By the seventh day God had finished the work he had been doing; so on the seventh day he rested from all his work. Then God blessed the seventh day and made it holy, because on it he rested from all the work of creating that he had done (Genesis 2:2–3).

God rested. Do you think He rested because He was tired? God doesn't get tired! The reason God rested on the seventh day was because He knew that we would need to rest every seventh day and He wanted us to see how important that was, so He set the example for us.

When God gave the Ten Commandments to Moses, his fourth commandment was "Remember the Sabbath and keep it holy." His exact words, in Exodus 20:8–11 were . . .

"Remember the Sabbath day by keeping 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, neither you, nor your son or daughter, nor your male or female servant, nor your animals, nor any foreigner residing in your towns. 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" (Exodus 20:8–11).

Let me give you seven reasons why I want you to invest in a Sabbath every week.

B. Reasons to Invest in a Weekly Sabbath:

First,

1. You need it (Genesis 2:2; Mark 2:27).

And God knows you need it. That's why He rested and that's why He gave the commandment. God doesn't want to flatten your fun or lessen your life by taking away a day. He wants to increase your joy and improve your life by giving you a day to refresh, refuel, and refocus with Him because He knows you need it.

The second reason I want you to invest in a weekly Sabbath is because . . .

2. God asks you to (Exodus 20:8).

The fourth commandment says to keep the Sabbath "holy." I'll explain what that means for you next week.

Third, I want you to invest in a Sabbath because . . .

3. God blessed the Sabbath (Genesis 2:3).

For reasons only He fully understands, God says that He blessed the Sabbath. It's a *special* day, not an *extra* day. When we cooperate with what God blesses, we get blessed.

4. Your life goes better when you observe the Sabbath.

So many of us think that if we can get ahead faster, if we are productive seven days a week . . . But that's not how God made the universe. The most prosperous fast-food restaurant in the world is Chick-fil-A. No one makes as much money per location as Chick-fil-A. And Chick-fil-A is closed on Sundays because the owners of Chick-fil-A know that if they honor the Sabbath, God will honor their business. So they make more money in six days a week than McDonald's, Subway, Burger King, and Taco Bell do in seven. By the way, the owners of Chick-fil-A are Christians.

Here are some statistics I think you'll find interesting. Secular sociologists have studied the benefits of church attendance. Follow this for a minute. What they've found is that those who attend church regularly...

1. Live seven and a half years longer than those who don't.¹ (And yet some people say they don't have time for church.)
2. Are 56 percent more likely to have an optimistic life outlook than those who don't? (That's true, isn't it?)
3. Are 27 percent less likely to be depressed?
4. Are 35 percent less likely to get divorced?
5. Have higher average levels of commitment to partners, higher levels of marital satisfaction, less thinking and talking about divorce, and lower levels of negative interaction.²
6. Achieve higher grades, practice better time management, and experience a better sex life.

The studies are pretty clear: life goes better for those who go to church regularly.

The three reason I want you to take a Sabbath every Sunday is because . . .

1. Your Mondays go better when you observe the Sabbath.

Does anyone here dread Mondays? We get out of bed saying, "Rats, I have to go back to work today." We're exhausted and unmotivated because we used all our energy on Sunday instead of receiving new energy from Sunday.

The sixth reason I want to take a weekly Sabbath is because . . .

2. Your family does better when you observe the Sabbath.

It really is true that the family that rests together does best together.

A family that attends church learns skills from the Bible about how to do relationships better and how to do life better.

Great families become great by building great memories together. If you develop the habit of doing church together, your children (or your parents) will build memories that will last a lifetime. My family is a *far* better family because of church.

The seventh reason for Sabbath is because . . .

3. Your eternity will go better if observe the Sabbath.

God promises to bless me if I bless Him. And I bless Him when I show up at church.

I have a friend who once told me that he hated Sundays. He said, "One day I heard God whisper to me, 'I love Sundays, because that's the day when my children sing to me.'" Can you imagine what that would feel like? You create a planet for people and you do things for people all week long, and then they spend a morning a week recognizing you and thanking you for what you've done. That would feel great, wouldn't it?

Friends, God loves Sundays. And He wants you to love them too.

¹Dr. James C. Paterson II, MD, PhD, "Live Long and Prosper: Going to Church Increases Lifespan," Reasons to Believe, August 20, 2010, <http://www.reasons.org/articles/live-long-and-prosper-going-to-church-increases-lifespan>.

²Scott Stanley et al., "Marriage in Oklahoma: 2001 Baseline Statewide Survey on Marriage and Divorce," http://www.okmarriage.org/downloads/media/survey_report.pdf.

Psalm 100:4 says . . .

**Enter his gates with thanksgiving
and his courts with praise;
give thanks to him and praise his name (Psalm 100:4).**

How to Make Sunday the Best Day of Your Week:

1. Decide to let Sunday be the best day of your week.

At the end of Psalm 122, David decided to commit to the prosperity of his community. For your life to improve, you have to make a decision to let it improve. You make the decision, and God will make the difference. *Decide* to start coming to church regularly. *Decide* to make a commitment to it. *Decide* to get involved.

2. Invest in your Sundays.

Church is no different than anything else—to get something great out of it, you have to put something great into it. The Bible says, “**Where your treasure is, there your heart will be also**” (Matthew 6:21). So start investing your heart here. Being part of *I Love Sundays* these next few weeks is a great initial investment.

3. Take your next step, whatever that is.

Years ago a church sociologist named Win Arn did a study of satisfied church members and discovered that they have six things in common.

- (1) They attend regularly.
- (2) They have a place they serve somewhere in the church.
- (3) They develop at least six friendships with other members of the church.
- (4) They call the church “my church.”
- (5) They give consistently to the church.
- (6) They invite others to their church.

If you’re new, pick number one and start coming regularly. If you’re already doing that, pick one of the other actions you’re not doing and start doing that. Take your next step, whatever that is.

CONCLUSION:

A few of years ago, Craig Morgan sang a song called “That’s What I Love About Sundays.” He said,

*That’s what I love about Sunday:
Sing along as the choir sways.
Every verse of Amazin’ Grace,
An’ then we shake the Preacher’s hand.
Go home, into your blue jeans;
Have some chicken an’ some baked beans.
Pick a back yard football team,
Not do much of anything:
That’s what I love about Sunday.*

That song calls to me, friends. I want that kind of day, which leads to a great kind of life. And I want that for you. And so does God.