Date Night
Sermon given on 3/10/2012
Based on A Love Song for the Sabbath by Richard M. Davidson

Illustration: Take a few moments and imagine with me, the perfect date. Stimulating conversation, an attentive date. What are the rules for a good date? Pick you up in a clean car; hold the doors open for you; don’t spend all your time texting or talking on the phone; pick up the check at the end of the dinner.

Psalm 92:1-3
1 It is good to give thanks to the LORD
And to sing praises to Your name, O Most High;
2 To declare Your lovingkindness in the morning
And Your faithfulness by night,
3 With the ten-stringed lute and with the harp,
With resounding music upon the lyre.

Tone: Joy, praise

- Isa 58:13-14  "If you keep your feet from breaking the Sabbath and from doing as you please on my holy day, if you call the Sabbath a delight and the LORD's holy day honorable, and if you honor it by not going your own way and not doing as you please or speaking idle words, then you will find your joy in the LORD, and I will cause you to ride on the heights of the land and to feast on the inheritance of your father Jacob." The mouth of the LORD has spoken. [keeping the Sabbath leads to the “joy in the Lord”]
  - “delight” – Hebrew “oneg”; this form appears only one other place in the Old Testament (Isa. 13:22) when describing a palace. It means “exquisite delight, luxury, pleasantness” (BLB Dictionary/Strong’s), “that which delights because of its surpassing quality” (Davidson)

- In Christ’s time, six blasts of the shofar signaled the beginning of the Sabbath: 1) for people to cease work in the fields; (2) for the city and shops to cease work; (3) for the lights to be kindled; then there was a pause for long enough to bake a small fish or put a loaf in the oven; (4) a long blast, a series of short blasts, and another long blast (Davidson et al.)
- In modern times, preparation for this delight began much earlier in the week; baking and cleaning would begin as early as Wednesday;
- special deserts and treats would be prepared, on Friday, the table would be decorated and fresh flowers placed there alongside Sabbath candles
- freshly bathed, wearing clean clothes, the whole family gathers early to welcome their royal visitor, Queen Shabbat
Celebration begins much earlier than sundown; mother lights candles and offers a prayer of blessing on the family, “...God, grant me and all my loved ones a chance to truly rest on this Sabbath day. May the light of the candles drive out from among us the spirit of anger, the spirit of harm; send Your blessing to my children, that they may walk in the ways of Your Torah, Your light. May You ever be their God and mine, O Lord, my Creator and my Redeemer. Amen.”

Father hold his children in this arms or places his hands on the heads and blesses them.

The husband then sings to his wife from Proverbs 31, extolling her virtues, “A woman of valor who can find? For her price is far above rubies...Many women have done virtuously, but thou excellest them all!”

Then blessings of the meal and celebration commences; food is eaten, hymns are sung; the family fellowships together all evening; once the kids are in bed, then husband and wife enjoy a special time of fellowship and intimacy together.

- Mark 2:27-28 And He said to them, “The Sabbath was made for man, and not man for the Sabbath. Therefore the Son of Man is also Lord of the Sabbath.”

Theme: Love / Faithfulness

- Covenant love; Deut. 7:9 “Know therefore that the LORD thy God, he is God, the faithful God, which keepeth covenant and mercy with them that love him and keep his commandments to a thousand generations;

- Ex. 31:16: “Therefore the children of Israel shall keep the Sabbath, to observe the Sabbath throughout their generations as a perpetual covenant.”

- Heb. 10:16-17 “This is the covenant that I will make with them after those days, saith the Lord, I will put my laws into their hearts, and in their minds will I write them; And their sins and iniquities will I remember no more.

Summary:

- Sabbath is a time of joyful praise to God, because he loves us with an everlasting, covenant love.
Psalm 92:4-6

4 For You, O LORD, have made me glad by what You have done, I will sing for joy at the works of Your hands.
5 How great are Your works, O LORD! Your thoughts are very deep.
6 A senseless man has no knowledge, Nor does a stupid man understand this:

Theme: Theme of joy continues, but for a new reason... “works of Your hands”; “How great are Your works”

- Ps. 19:1 “The heavens declare the glory of God; And the firmament shows His handiwork.”
- Ps. 102:25 “Of old You laid the foundation of the earth, And the heavens are the work of Your hands.”
- Job 38:4-7 “Where were you when I laid the foundations of the earth? Tell Me, if you have understanding. Who determined its measurements? Surely you know! Or who stretched the line upon it? To what were its foundations fastened? Or who laid its cornerstone, When the morning stars sang together, And all the sons of God shouted for joy?”

Creation

- Gen 2:2-3 “And on the seventh day God ended His work which He had done, and He rested on the seventh day from all His work which He had done. Then God blessed the seventh day and sanctified it, because in it He rested from all His work which God had created and made.”
- Ex. 20:8-11 “Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy. Six days you shall labor and do all your work, but the seventh day is the Sabbath of the Lord your God. In it you shall do no work: you, nor your son, nor your daughter, nor your male servant, nor your female servant, nor your cattle, nor your stranger who is within your gates. For in six days the Lord made the heavens and the earth, the sea, and all that is in them, and rested the seventh day. Therefore the Lord blessed the Sabbath day and hallowed it.
- God’s presence makes something holy
  - Ex. 3:5 “’ Do not come any closer,’ God said. ’Take off your sandals, for the place where you are standing is holy ground.’”
  - Ex. 29:43 “And there I will meet with the children of Israel, and the tabernacle shall be sanctified by My glory.”
  - Eze. 37:28 “Then the nations will know that I the LORD make Israel holy, when my sanctuary is among them forever.”

Summary:

- Sabbath is a time of joy, not because it provides merely physical rest. It is a time of joy, because our Creator Himself comes to visit, and we fellowship with Him. The point of the Sabbath is not idleness...Far from it...It is about strengthening our relationship with our Creator God.
Psalm 92:7-9
7 That when the wicked sprouted up like grass
And all who did iniquity flourished,
It was only that they might be destroyed forevermore.
8 But You, O LORD, are on high forever.
9 For, behold, Your enemies, O LORD,
For, behold, Your enemies will perish;
All who do iniquity will be scattered.

Note: Verse 7 is translated in the future text in most translations, but “the most precise rendering refers to a particular event that has taken place in the past, as captured in the NASB and other modern translations” (Davidson).

What past event is verse 7 referring to? According to scholars, it is most probably referring to Israel’s deliverance from Egypt at the Red Sea.

There are a number of similarities between the two events:
- Both deliverances are wrought by the hand of God in a miraculous way
- Neither deliverance was provided by man, but both require man to actively accept the deliverance.
- After both deliverances, the response of the delivered is to praise God in song: Song of Moses (Deut. 15:1-18); Song of Moses and the Lamb (Rev. 15:3-4)

Verse 7: Historical / referring to Israel’s deliverance from physical bondage.
Verse 9: Future / referring to our final deliverance from sin – physical and spiritual bondage

Theme: Redemption/freedom, both past and future

It is common in the Bible that past works/blessings of God are given as evidence that His promises for the future will be true.

In Deut. 5:12-15, when Moses reiterates the 10 commandments, he adds this redemptive dimension to the fourth commandment: “Observe the Sabbath day, to keep it holy, as the Lord your God commanded you. 13 Six days you shall labor and do all your work, 14 but the seventh day is the Sabbath of the Lord your God. In it you shall do no work: you, nor your son, nor your daughter, nor your male servant, nor your female servant, nor your ox, nor your donkey, nor any of your cattle, nor your stranger who is within your gates, that your male servant and your female servant may rest as well as you. 15 And remember that you were a slave in the land of Egypt, and the Lord your God brought you out from there by a mighty hand and by an outstretched arm; therefore the Lord your God commanded you to keep the Sabbath day.”

Luke 13:10-17 (NIV) “10 On a Sabbath Jesus was teaching in one of the synagogues, 11 and a woman was there who had been crippled by a spirit for eighteen years. She was bent over and could not straighten up at all. 12 When Jesus saw her, he called her forward and said to her, “Woman, you are set free from your infirmity.” 13 Then he put his hands on her, and immediately she straightened up and praised God. 14 Indignant because Jesus had healed on the Sabbath, the synagogue leader said to the people, “There are six days for work. So come and be healed on those days, not on the Sabbath.” 15 The Lord answered him, “You hypocrites! Doesn’t each of you on the Sabbath untie your ox or donkey from the stall and lead it out to give
it water? 16 Then should not this woman, a daughter of Abraham, whom Satan has kept bound for eighteen long years, be set free on the Sabbath day from what bound her?” 17 When he said this, all his opponents were humiliated, but the people were delighted with all the wonderful things he was doing.

- Hebrews 3-4 further links the Sabbath rest with redemption. Heb. 4:9 (NASB) “So there remains a Sabbath rest for the people of God.” What is Paul talking about here? From the context of the rest of the chapter, we see that God promised Israel a Sabbath rest if they would be faithful to Him. They failed to enter that “rest” in the wilderness. The promise was still available in David’s time as ref. in Ps. 95 (quoted in Heb. 3:15; 4:7). In Heb. 4:9, Paul makes it clear that this same promise of a “Sabbath rest” is available to us today. Heb. 4:16 “Let us therefore come boldly to the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy and find grace to help in time of need.”

- In both the OT and NT, the symbolism of the Sabbath is tied to God’s deliverance from physical bondage in the past, the deliverance from sin that He wants to give us today through His grace, and the ultimate redemption when He will come to deliver us from this world of sin in the future.

Summary:

Sabbath is a time of joy, because Christ offers us redemption from sin through His grace. Entering into the Sabbath rest each week is an act of faith in His redemption. ‘Six days I have worked, but Lord, I can’t work to earn salvation. I can only rest in faith that you will justify me.’
Psalm 92:10-12

10 But You have exalted my horn like that of the wild ox; I have been anointed with fresh oil.
11 And my eye has looked exultantly upon my foes, My ears hear of the evildoers who rise up against me.
12 The righteous man will flourish like the palm tree, He will grow like a cedar in Lebanon.

➤ Horn – “strength”
Anointed with oil – Ex. 28:41 “So you shall put them on Aaron your brother and on his sons with him. You shall anoint them, consecrate them, and sanctify them, that they may minister to Me as priests.” Ex. 29:36 “You shall cleanse the altar when you make atonement for it, and you shall anoint it to sanctify it.”

Theme: sanctification

➤ Notice who does the sanctifying – God. Man’s role is passive (been exalted, been anointed, seeing, hearing, flourishing)

➤ Ex 31:13 “Speak also to the children of Israel, saying: ‘Surely My Sabbaths you shall keep, for it is a sign between Me and you throughout your generations, that you may know that I am the Lord who sanctifies you.’”

➤ Isa 58:13-14 "If you keep your feet from breaking the Sabbath and from doing as you please on my holy day, if you call the Sabbath a delight and the LORD’s holy day honorable, and if you honor it by not going your own way and not doing as you please or speaking idle words, then you will find your joy in the LORD, and I will cause you to ride on the heights of the land and to feast on the inheritance of your father Jacob." The mouth of the LORD has spoken.

➤ Refraining from doing as we please, letting hold of self on the Sabbath, allows God to work in us, “being confident of this very thing, that He who has begun a good work in you will complete it until the day of Jesus Christ” (Phil. 1:6). Heb. 12:1-2 “let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which so easily ensnares us, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us, 2 looking unto Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith...”

Summary:

Sabbath is a time of joy, because as we let go of our own selfish desires, we allow Christ to work in us “every good work to do His will.” (Heb 13:21)
Psalm 92:13-15

13 Planted in the house of the LORD,
   They will flourish in the courts of our God.
14 They will still yield fruit in old age;
   They shall be full of sap and very green,
15 To declare that the LORD is upright;
   He is my rock, and there is no unrighteousness in Him.

➢ “Planted” is literally “transplanted”

Theme: Glorification

➢ Sabbath provides a link from the Garden of Eden to Eden restored.

➢ Sabbath is a foretaste of the “rest” that will ours throughout all eternity.

➢ Isa 66:22-23   For as the new heavens and the new earth, which I will make, shall remain before me, saith the LORD, so shall your seed and your name remain. And it shall come to pass, [that] from one new moon to another, and from one sabbath to another, shall all flesh come to worship before me, saith the LORD.

Summary:

Sabbath is a time of joy, because it is a foretaste of eternity with Christ.

Sermon Summary:

➢ Sabbath is about a relationship with our Creator, Redeemer, Sanctifier, and Savior, a God who loves us with an everlasting, covenant love.

➢ Each Sabbath, we have the privilege of welcoming this God, the almighty Ruler of the universe, into our homes and hearts as our special guest – an all-day date with the most powerful, most loving Being in the whole universe.

➢ Just like our analogy at the beginning, the purpose of the “rules” that are associated with Sabbath-keeping are not an end unto themselves. If kept just because they are “the rules,” then we have missed the whole point of the Sabbath and have missed the blessing promised in the Sabbath. If we come to church, just because we always have, then we won’t get much more out of it than we always have. We come to church each week, because we expect to meet our God here. And when we do, we will.