

Okay, okay, this is like preaching to the choir. God says, “Remember the Sabbath Day by keeping it holy.” Well, look at us . . . we’re all here! So, mission accomplished! We can check that box. Let’s all head home now.

But wait—before we check that box, let me ask you, is that even a box to be checked? Here’s why I say that—Sabbath means Rest, Sabbath Day means Rest Day, but if it’s a box to be checked then we’re not resting . . . we’re *doing*. See, it’s no wonder we think like this—when we have to obey the alarm clock and get up for church, when we have to say no to other plans because there’s worship on Sunday, when you and I make a deliberate effort to block out time for God, it’s easy to believe that coming here is yet another thing on our calendar, something else to *do*. And it makes sense, you and I, we’re so used to keeping a schedule, managing our time, that’s just the way of the workaday world. There are schedules to keep, appointments to make, deadlines to meet. It’s always rush-rush-rush, hurry-hurry-hurry, going from one thing to the next. So, it’s all too easy to see the Third Commandment this way too. Church is one more thing on your to-do list, another box to check. And so we make our Sabbath Day not about rest at all.

Once, there was this archeologist who hired an Inca tribesman to be his guide. He was heading to an archeological site deep in the mountains and he needed someone to lead him there. Well, after they had been moving for some time, the tribesman suddenly stopped and insisted that they go no further. Even though he was puzzled, the archeologist complied—maybe his guide needed a quick breather, needed to stretch, who knows, he told himself.

But as the seconds turned into minutes, and the minutes started really adding up, he began to grow impatient. With his words, with his actions, the archeologist tried to get his guide to budge, but nothing worked—the tribesman wasn’t going anywhere. Then, all of a sudden, the Inca tribesman got up and moved on. As they both picked up their gear and set off once more, the archeologist—bewildered by what had just happened—couldn’t help but ask why he had insisted on staying put so long? The tribesman simply answered, “We’ve been moving too fast, and our souls had to catch up.”

“We’ve been moving too fast, and our souls had to catch up.” Does that sound like your life—no time to stop and rest, and so it feels as if your soul is lagging somewhere far behind? If this Commandment is about doing, about going to church and checking a box, will that soul of yours *ever* catch up? Maybe this Commandment is intentionally not a “Thou shalt” or a “Thou shalt not” because the Sabbath isn’t about doing, it’s about resting. For six days people worked, people labored, but God knew they’d need one day to rest, one day to let their souls catch up with them. And so this Third Commandment isn’t so Commandment-ish, but is actually more of a gift. Here, our Lord is making sure that you and I get just the break we need.

See, the time limits, the end points, the expiration dates, that’s not God’s time. God made time, for sure, each of the six days of creation had a literal 24-hour period when they start and when they finish. For example, we’re told, “And there was evening and there was morning—the first day.” And that word for day is the same word used every other time a day is mentioned in the Old Testament. But anything where time runs out, anything final like death, well, that’s not God’s time—that’s our fallen time, time after the fall. Ever since then, the clock is king, tick-tick-ticking away—ordering (and disordering) our lives—until finally our time is up.

I was just in Chicago last week, and I discovered this amazing church in the midst of the city. Right there, in the heart of Chicago, is St. Peter’s Catholic Church in what’s called “the loop.” What makes this church so amazing is that you can’t miss Jesus—big and bold—on the outside facade, erected over all the hustle and bustle. He is a reminder that, even though we feel the press of time, that Jesus is Lord of time. There He is, suspended on a cross, overlooking all of us busy worker bees heading here and there, rushing around. But yet, He declares, “Time isn’t the Lord of you, but I—I—am the Lord of time.”

We know this, because He has come down out of eternity—out of time-*lessness*—and stepped into our time. He became subject to time, born a baby and growing up to be a man. He watched as time stole away beauty, He saw how time robbed us of joy, He even witnessed how time takes lives—but Jesus said, “No more!” And our Lord faced time’s ugly

mug head-on, letting time do its worst to Him—thorns digging into *His* brow, nails piercing *His* extremities, and spear puncturing *His* side. Bleeding out, breathing out His last, for Jesus it looked as if His time was *running out*. And as He was taken down off that cross and laid in the tomb, it sure looked like time had become lord of our Lord too.

But Jesus, well, *He* is Lord of lords, *He* is Lord of time. And opening His eyes, filling His lungs, sitting up and rolling away the stone, Jesus has reordered time. He created a new day, a never-ending day, an eternal day, as He has brought God's time into our time. If a man can rise from the dead, if *we* can rise from the dead, then there isn't much that time can do to us anymore. "Come to Me, all you who are weary and heavy laden," Jesus says, "and I will give you rest." Jesus is Lord of the Sabbath, Lord of time, and He promises us rest. He promises to let our souls catch up with us.

When you are here on Sunday you are making a daring protest against time. Church isn't about doing, but about resting, which is an unabashed, brazen, bold gesture against the clock. You are saying, "Move over, Time. I answer to a different Lord. Time, you have been reordered, you are now time-less. And I—I—am eternal. It is not *my* time that's running out anymore; no, Time, it's your time that is up."

Over the years there have been many innovations in the theater, but there's one in particular that's fascinated me most. We typically think of plays as being passive, something voyeuristic, as we sit and watch from afar. I think that's one reason many of us enjoy going to a good show now and again—we're at a distance, it's safe, and yet we're able to look into a whole different world. And that's why this one innovation to the theater has really caught my interest—it's called breaking the fourth wall. It's when the audience is no longer peering into the four walls of a different world anymore, but the wall we're looking through breaks apart and we actually become *part* of that world.

One example is "Tony n' Tina's Wedding," which premiered in 1985. It was a comedy about a traditional Italian-American wedding and reception. Its warm and intrusive stereotypes are exaggerated for comic effect. But the thing is, there's no fourth wall. So, it's interactive, it's immersive, it's environmental—it's anything but passive. The play engages the entire audience all at once; every person in the house actually plays the role of guest at Tony and Tina's wedding. People actually come, not just to have something to do on a Friday night, but to become part of another world.

As you and I sit here today, God breaks down His fourth wall. His time, His eternity, isn't just at a distance in some other world or another dimension. No, every Sunday, every Lord's day, the resurrected Christ does exactly what He did that first Lord's day. He reclaims time, He takes it back, He makes it His. That's why you don't see any clocks in church, that's why the rubrics tell pastors not to wear a watch—because here, Jesus throws away our clocks and tosses out our watches. Jesus stands over time, and He says, "Enough, I am the Lord of time!"

And right now Jesus bursts into this place, just like He burst out of the tomb, to reorder time. He interacts with you, the audience, pulling you into His infinity, His world without end. Amen. Forgiving your sins, He says your past doesn't define you. Sharing His love, He says to savor this moment. Giving you everlasting life, He says your future is bright. No matter what's going on in your life—whatever old sin still haunts you, whatever's bothering you right now, whatever's got you worried about tomorrow—none of that matters now because you are on God's watch. You are ushered into His time—a time of life, a time of renewal, a time of rest.

There's at least one of you in this room who already gets this—I know because you've told me so. One of you here spends a lotta time out there, working hard, putting in long hours. But here, well, here is your "happy place." This church is where you feel at peace, where you can breathe, where your soul can catch up and you can rest. Could it be that you know about that fourth wall—how God's broken it down and brings you into His time? If so, then you already know the true meaning of this Commandment.

Now, I don't want to say that Ascension is the place where *time stands still*—not sure we want that sorta reputation around here . . . but, it kinda is.