

I Love Sundays - *Sundays Can Surprise You* Psalm 122

I want to start tonight/today with a question for you: What's your best or favorite day of the week? I started out Saturday, then in school it was Friday. And now, it's Monday!!!

I want to propose a revolutionary thought to you this evening/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. 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. 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.

Well, I have good news for you today: Sundays were never meant to be that way. God made Sundays *for you!* Jesus 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 suggest to you today that Sunday is a solution to 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.

One time, somebody invited King David, who wrote the psalm, which was our lesson today, 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?

David got excited when he was invited to church. Why? Why was David fired up about the thing that so many people are turned off by today? David can't wait to get there. What does he know that I don't know about church?

A. Why David Liked Going to Church:

1. He wanted to go to church because he liked being with God's people (v. 4a).
"That's where the tribes of the Lord go."

2. He wanted to honor God (v. 4c).
"I want to go to church to give thanks to the name of the Lord."

3. He wanted to do what God asked him to do (v. 4d). (Also verse 4.)
"I want to go to church because this was given to Israel to do."

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.

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.

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

I want to tell you why I want there to be people in church each week and why I want Sunday to become the best day of the week for every one of you. And why I want every one of you to experience great Sundays every week.

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 recreated 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.

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:

In Genesis 2 we hear that after the work of creation was done, God rested.

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.

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

B. Reasons to Invest in a Weekly Sabbath:

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

And God knows I 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.

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

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

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. My life goes better when I Sabbath.

So many of us think that 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.

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. (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.
6. They achieve higher grades and practice better time management.

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

5. My Mondays go better when I 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. Next week's message is called "Good Sundays Make Better Mondays." What we're going to learn is that if your Sunday is lived the way it was intended, your Monday will go as it was intended too.

6. My family does better when we 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 a repository of enriched memories that will last a lifetime. My family is a *far* better family because of church.

7. My eternity will go better if I Sabbath.

God promises to bless me if I bless Him. And I bless Him when I show up at church. Have you ever wondered what God thinks about Sundays? 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.

So, now what? What's next? What can you do so that you look forward to church every week?

So let me give you three steps to get started on your brand-new life.

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.

Let's pray. Father, thank you for creating us. And thank you for showing us how we work best. I pray for great lives for each and every person here this morning. Refuel us, refocus us, and refresh us with the rest of this day. Bless these people all week long, and bring us back next Sunday to experience life in all its fullness. In Jesus's name we pray, amen.