

Series: Faith like a Child

God is Rest

Exodus 20:8-11, Ephesians 3:16-21

Sermon by Youth Pastor Hanna Arata

Waterstone Community Church, Littleton, Colorado

Sunday morning, November 23, 2025

Michael: A reading from Exodus 20, verses 8 through 11: “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 and 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 then He rested on the seventh day. Therefore, the Lord blessed the Sabbath day and made it holy,” the word of the Lord. Thanks be to God. You may be seated. Thank you.

Hanna: Good morning, Waterstone. How amazing were those baptisms? That was the best. That was the best. If you do not know me, my name is Hanna. I am the student pastor here at Waterstone. We’ve got a bunch of students in the room on the right. They are amazing. Yeah, give them a round of applause, the best people I know, the students. So, I want to go ahead and pray for us, and then we will get started. Lord, thank you for who you are. Thank you that you are a good Father, that you pursue us, God, that you know every hair on our head, and you know what we need, so God, as we talk about a topic today that might be a little bit difficult for some of us to live out, Lord, I just pray that you would open up our hearts to what you have to say to us. God, would we not shy away from any conviction that you give us? Would we not shy away from any encouragement that you give us, Lord? Would we just know that you are a good Father and that you love us? God, thank you for who you are, and it is in Jesus’ name I pray, amen.

So, I have the privilege this weekend of giving the last sermon in our Faith Like a Child series, and today we are going to be talking about the idea that God is rest. So, does anyone do a word of the year? Has anyone ever done that instead of New Year’s resolutions? I love a word of the year, first of all, because I am super bad at New Year’s resolutions, really bad at them. It lasts till the end of January at best, but the other reason is because I love getting to focus on one word that the Lord is teaching me or showing me about his character, and can you guess what this year’s word was? Yeah, it was rest, and you guys, I was really excited about this word. I was pumped.

The last couple of years have been challenging in some ways, and when the Lord told me what my word of the year for 2025 was going to be “rest,” I was like, “Oh, this is fantastic news. Do I get to rest for a whole year? Sign me up,” and then January came, and it was one of the most exhausting months of my life, and then February was not much better, and by March, I was burnt out with school, work, and the seemingly endless transitions that I was living in. “What the heck, Lord? Why did you do that? I thought we were going to have a year of rest,” and on one day in March, Paul and I were getting coffee, and we went on a little walk just to debrief life a little bit, and while we were talking, I told him, “Hey, my word of the year has been ‘rest,’ and it feels like a cruel joke. Like, why would the Lord do this?” and he stopped and looked at me, put his hands in his pockets’ and he said, “Yeah, that is why I have stopped asking for a word of the year.”

I tell you this story because I think for a lot of us, when we hear that someone is going to talk about rest, we think maybe they will give a five-point sermon on the ways you can do a Sabbath better, and it involves a lot of self-discipline that we do not actually have, and it all seems really removed from our actual lives. Have you ever felt that? Even worse, it inevitably leads us to craving the rest that they are talking about, and it feels so unattainable, and then we feel shame for the ways that we have not lived up to the standard that God has for us with rest. Like maybe if I loved Jesus enough, I would do rest the right way, but that is a lot of striving, isn't it? It does not sound very restful, and I have spent too many years of my life feeling shame about being the product of a society that moves one million miles an hour and calls you lazy if you take a day off, because the grind does not stop, but is this the abundant life that Jesus offers us, moving at a million miles an hour? This life to the full, from John 10, this version that we have been living just feels exhausting, and today we are talking about the idea that God is rest, and I want to offer you a new way of looking at rest that hopefully actually maybe feels a little bit more restful.

So, the first truth about rest is this. Rest is a command. So, let's start with our passage that Michael just read for us out of Exodus 20. For context, Israel has just been delivered from hundreds of years of slavery in Egypt, and they are walking through the wilderness to get to the Promised Land that God has set out for them to take, but they get to Mount Sinai, and God tells Moses to go up this mountain and to receive the Ten Commandments. You are probably familiar with the story, and according to the Bible Project, the goal of these commandments was to show the people of Israel how they should relate to God and how they are to live in His kingdom. It is supposed to be a nation of justice and generosity, one that is set apart from other nations, and this is because God has chosen Israel to be his chosen representatives, and if they are going to represent God, they need to live a certain way.

So here are the Ten Commandments. We are going to put them on a slide, the words that Moses receives from God, and they are paraphrased for ease. So first, no other gods. Do not have any other gods. It is pretty simple. Do not make images of other gods. Do not misuse the name of God. Remember the Sabbath day by keeping it holy. That is the one we are going to focus on. Honor your father and your mother. Do not murder, do not commit adultery, do not steal, do not give false testimony, and do not covet, and if you look at the Ten Commandments, it seems like there are two main sections.

The first, if you go back to that last slide, Kyle, the first three are all about allegiance to God alone. He is the only one worthy of our full devotion. He is the one we should give our lives to, because He is worthy of it, and then commandments four through ten are about how we are supposed to live differently. Isn't it interesting that the first thing God says to his people that they should do to live differently is to rest? It is the first thing he mentions, and if you do not know what Sabbath is, like it talks about in the fourth commandment, it just means a day of rest. God's command for rest comes before do not murder, do not steal other people's stuff, pretty basic, good human things, and the first thing He says is to rest, but for some reason, for a lot of us, all the other ones feel super intuitive. Like, okay, I am not going to kill anybody, I am not going to steal stuff, not going to want other people's things. All of those feel pretty manageable to not do for most of us, but Sabbath, rest, is different, and we think of it as this tagline to the Ten Commandments. Like, "Oh, like if you have time, like do these other nine, and if you have time, do this other one by resting," as if resting is just your next vacation or summer break or hanging out at the beach, and I think a lot of this idea has to do with the society that we live in.

We are so caught up in this tidal wave of productivity and hustle culture and independence that we have believed this lie that rest is optional. It is not optional, not according to the Ten Commandments, and it seems that we have adopted this idea that rest is only for people who have a lot of time or a lot of money, but that is not what the Lord says. It seems like we have gotten things out of order, and I think we need to redefine what rest is if we are going to believe that God actually is rest and live in that reality, so let's look at the commandment in a little bit more detail like Michael read just a minute ago. It says, "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."

So, when God defines what He means by the Sabbath, by resting, He says three things. First, He says, keep it holy. When something is holy, it is set apart, so your rest should not look like the rest of your days. It should be different. The second thing is that rest is a Sabbath day to the Lord your God. That means Sabbath day is not hanging out on the couch with a bag of chips, even though that sounds awesome, and sometimes we just need that, but that is different than Sabbath and the kind of Biblical rest we are talking about. The third thing is that we are not to do any work, and I might step on some toes here, but this means that any work you would consider doing any of the other six days of the week, you do not do them on the Sabbath day. That means that you do not just replace going to work with doing laundry or getting the groceries. This is separate from any of those other things. Friends, Sabbath is a command, and for some of you in this room, the very fact that God made it a command might make it feel like something to do on your to-do list, like another thing you have to add to your already bursting at the seams schedule, but I want to suggest that rest is not a task, but a way of being in the world.

This semester, our students' team has been walking with our student leaders through a semester on the word "abide," so we are focusing on, you guessed it, rest, and we have been using John Mark Comber's book, "The Ruthless Elimination of Hurry." If you have not read it, it is amazing. Please read it, and we are exploring the different ways that we can walk at the pace of Jesus in our actual lives. So, the first week of our semester, we asked our student leaders to pick one day of that next week to take some inventory, to be really self-aware of when in my day do I feel hurried, and when do I feel unhurried? As we debriefed the experience the next week, what was really interesting was that most of them said that when they were actually paying attention to how they were feeling throughout the day, they just felt hurried the whole time. Like from the time they woke up, getting ready for school, getting to class, all their extracurriculars, they just felt hurried all day until they went to bed. It was even worse at transition times, when they had to go and be somewhere on time, but they felt the permission to move a little bit slower once they were focusing on one thing at a time, when they got to where they were going, or where they did not have anywhere to be. They felt the best when they got to spend time with their people, whether that was sitting at lunch, eating with friends, or if they were coming to youth group on a Wednesday night, those things they felt a little bit less hurried in once they were there.

Friends, living in a way of resting is not always about our schedules. We are busy people, and we can't always control how our schedules are, especially if we have kids or a really crazy job, but this is

more about how we feel as we go about our days. A full schedule is not always optional, but do you know what is optional? Hurry. Hurry is always optional, and I wonder if you have ever taken an inventory of your own life. When do you feel hurried? I do not mean a vacation day at the beach or up in the mountains going skiing all day. I want you to look at a Monday where you have work and family obligations and school and maybe church things. Where in your day do you feel hurried? Are there moments in your day when you get to just bask in the delight of the Lord that is not actually based on your productivity, but on your very being? Do you have time in your schedule for that? I would venture to say that for a lot of us, we do not have a lot of that going on. We do not experience that very often, and a huge part of that is not because of our schedules, although it is part of it. It is that we hurry around all the time, and we have not actually created any margin for ourselves to experience rest.

I want to say up front, I know this might feel unattainable. I am not saying that it is easy, but what I am saying is that God gave it to us as a command because it is for our good. Have you ever noticed that Jesus is never in a hurry, but He is always on time? Never once was He in a hurry. He was always on time, and what I do not want is for all of this to lead to shame, but what instead I want you to have is a greater awareness of your life and where you need the Lord to reveal the spaces where you need Him to slow you down. Ultimately, God commands us to rest, not just because it is good for us, but because God is rest, and He actually wove it into all of creation. Exodus 20:11 says, “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.”

The second truth about rest is that God is rest, and our Exodus passage points back to the original creation narrative back in Genesis chapter 2, verses 2 through 3. It 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 the creating He had done.” Tim Mackey explains that in the way God created the heavens and the earth, He created sacred time, which means that He set the pace for how we should live our lives. God included work and rest into creation so that we would know how to live within creation. We were made in the image of God, and if God, the one who rules the entire cosmos, can make place for rest, then we as his image-bearers, we look more like our God who made us and live into more of our purpose when we also take the time to rest alongside our work. By making you in his image, He did not make you into his workhorse. That was never his plan. His plan was to make you into his delight. Psalm 16:11 says, “You will fill me with joy in your presence.” In the presence of the Lord, we do not find a list of to-dos. We find joy. We find comfort. We find rest for our weary souls. We find security, because He does not give us to-do lists. He gives us Himself, and if God is rest, then we can’t find rest, the one that we are actually longing for, anywhere else. In his presence, we are reminded that we are actually limited beings, and we need our Father to take care of us, and his hope has always been that you would come and find rest with Him.

The third truth about rest is that rest is trust. We need to get down to the root of the issue. If we are going to bridge the gap between who God made us to be and how we actually live, I think when we do not rest, it comes from a place of self-sufficiency, and rest can be so hard, because we have misplaced our trust.

So, based on how you are living your life, where are you putting your trust? Is it in money, relationships? Is it in your marriage, in productivity, in having success? Maybe it is your confidence that you can hold the world together in your own small way. I think for a lot of us, it is just a matter that we simply put our trust in ourselves. Maybe that is because we were told at a really young age that you should not trust anyone but yourself. Or maybe it comes from a place of pride. Like, I actually know better, so I am going to take the reins. I am going to have control over my life, but can I tell you that the enemy wants nothing more than for you to believe that you can save yourself? The enemy wants nothing more than for you to believe that you are your own savior, because then you do not actually need Jesus. The thing is, when we take the time to actually be with God, who is the God of rest, we are placing our trust in God to keep the world turning, to keep our family and our ministries and our jobs afloat, to secure our future. When we release our desire for control, we are putting trust in the Lord, and we can find freedom in the fact that actually, it has actually never been up to me. Praise God.

So then, how do we rest? A few years ago, my friend Zach was on a podcast with our old church, and he talked about rest as a believer in a couple of ways that were so interesting. He said, "I want you to imagine your phone. If it is at five percent, you can do two things. You can either turn it off, or you can plug it into the charger, pretty simple. If you turn it off, it might conserve the battery that you have left, but when you turn it back on, it is probably still at five percent, or it is actually at four percent, because it took a whole percentage point to turn it back on." I think most of us think of rest as turning off, vacationing on the beach, watching TV, sleeping in late, scrolling on our phones, and don't get me wrong, these things are not always bad. Sometimes we just need to turn off. As a person that works with people, sometimes you just need to turn off. I totally get that, but my friend's argument was that those things might be nice for a little while, but they do not actually recharge us to go and do the work that God has called us to do, and so the other option is to plug your phone into a charger, to attach it to an external power source. When you recharge your phone, say overnight, you wake up with a fully charged phone, and you can do with it whatever you need to do, and it gets you through the whole day. Plugging in for us as followers of Jesus simply means attaching ourselves to the external power source, God, by getting into His presence.

You might be thinking to yourself, "Hanna, this all sounds awesome, but I am not the type of person who wants to go on a five-day silent retreat. I do not want to go to a seven-hour worship service. What does this need to look like?" But it can look like a million different things. For me, resting with the Lord looks like going on walks without headphones. I know, crazy, but it allows me the space to actually hear what is going on around me and to listen if the Lord's speaking to me. Or I actually am really into scrapbooking. It is my favorite thing ever, but it reminds me of all of the ways the Lord has been faithful in my life. It means hanging out with friends over coffee, because the Lord has brought those people into my life.

So, what are those things for you? What are ways that you can actually slow down and enjoy being with the Lord? Friends, rest is a command, but it was never meant to be a chore or something just to do to please God, and maybe it is unreasonable for you to take a whole day out of your week. Maybe you do have kids or a crazy job or something that keeps you from being able to take a whole day, but I can bet you that if you took inventory of the way you spend your time, that there are actually times when you could slow down and not go so fast or places where you could take a moment and close your eyes and

take a deep breath and have moments throughout your day that are restful. I am going to tell you now, slowing down is really uncomfortable, but God is faithful to walk with you in it and to teach you how to walk at His pace, and if God is rest, then we too have to allow ourselves to rest. Rest is about reminding ourselves that we are and have always been dependent on God for everything, and it is about giving over that control and reminding yourself that you are not your own savior. Jesus is, amen.

We are now going to move into a time of communion. In participating in communion, we are reminded that it is by the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus that we are saved. It is not about striving or being productive for God, but it is simply receiving His love and living into the abundant life that God actually calls us to, one of rest and work that comes from an overflow of trusting that God has got it, even if I do not feel like I have it all the time, that the Lord is the one who completes the work He has started, and that He delights when we live as people of rest.

“On the night that Jesus was betrayed,” He was celebrating the Passover with his disciples, and “He took the bread, and He broke it. He gave thanks, and He said, ‘This is my body, broken for you. As often as you eat of it, do this in remembrance of me,’ and then He took the cup, and He said, ‘This is my blood poured out for you and for many for the forgiveness of sins. As often as you drink it, do this in remembrance of me.’” My prayer for you would be that as you come to take communion today, that you would surrender whatever it is you have been putting your trust in and put it back in Jesus and what He did for you rather than what you could do on your own. Let’s pray.

Lord, thank you so much for every person in this room. God, thank you for the ways that you have called us to rest, Lord. I pray that this would not cause shame or feelings of guilt, but instead motivation to get into your presence, because in your presence there is peace, and there is fullness of joy. God, would we know that today as we come to the table? It is in Jesus’ mighty name that we pray, amen.

Come as you are ready, and there is gluten-free in the back center as well. From Ephesians 3:16-21: “I pray that out of his glorious riches, He may strengthen you with power through his Spirit in your inner being, so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith, and I pray that you, being rooted and established in love, may have power together with all the Lord’s holy people to grasp how wide and long and high and deep is the love of Christ, and to know his love that surpasses knowledge, that you may be filled to the measure of all the goodness of God. Now to Him who is able to do immeasurably more than all we ask or imagine, according to His power that is at work within us, to Him be the glory in the church and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations, forever and ever, amen.” You may go in peace.

29:12 minutes