* **Apostles Creed**
* **Series Slide**
* A few weeks ago, I told you about an early heresy in the church that has never really gone away, called Gnosticism.

Basically, Gnostics believed that all physical matter was evil because it was the accidental creation of an evil, inferior god.

They believed that if you could find a secret hidden knowledge within yourself and in the world called the “divine spark”, you could overcome and transcend the physical world into some spiritually sublime place.

To really over-simplify Gnosticism… **Physical Bad. Spiritual Good. God bad. You Good.**

Into that controversy, came a 2nd century Bishop named Irenaeus.

To combat the Gnostics, he writes his most famous theological treatise entitled *Against Heresies*.

One of the most memorable lines in that work is this-

**“The Glory of God is man fully alive”**

So, what does that mean?

Well, some have said that the word “Fully” should be understood as “Extremely”. The Glory of God is man EXTREMELY Alive.

You know, like X-games, Mountain Dew, Doritos Locos Tacos kind of life. Go skydiving. Climb a Mountain. Think outside of the bun.

Some say we should understand that word “Fully” to mean “Diversely”.

The Glory of God is man DIVERSELY alive.

Don’t just do one thing….Diversify your life. Go out and have fun with friends, but also be contemplative. Play sports but also read books. Do serious work, but also get a hobby. “All work and no play makes Jack a dull boy”.

Now, there are at least 2 problems with these interpretations.

**One is that both of those ideas are more in line with Gnosticism than Irenaeus was probably comfortable with.**

Its almost like he would be saying, “Hey, here’s the secret knowledge to find the divine spark by which you transcend the physical and find your true self.”

“Drink this Red Bull, while you skydive and you can touch the sublime.”

or…”Be a renaissance man, a jack of all trades and you’ll unlock the spiritual secrets of the universe.”

I don’t get the idea from *Against Heresies* that Irenaeus was down with that.

So that’s one problem.

Here’s the other problem with interpreting Irenaeus that way.

…He never wrote this.

At least, he didn’t include the word “fully”, which tends to be the word everyone focuses on.

Instead, here’s what he did write.

* **“The glory of God is a living human being; and the life of the human consists in beholding God.”- Irenaeus**

Do you see the difference?

When you remove the word “fully” (which Irenaeus DIDN’T write), you actually get a much simpler idea. God’s glory is located in just being a person….Without Redbull.

…and even if the person can’t read, write, or take up a hobby… Even if they can only sit in a wheelchair and stare… A living human being carries with them the Glory of God.

And notice, that there is more to the sentence. That moves the focus off of the life of the human and ONTO God himself.

The real FULLNESS of life comes from beholding, seeing, recognizing, honoring, delighting in…God.

* **Title Slide- “Being Human, Beholding God: How the Lord of the Sabbath Wants With-ness and Witness”- Mark 2:23-3:6; Eph 5:15-17**

Today we’re going to finish this short series on understanding and practicing Sabbath.

The word Sabbath means. Stop. Rest.

Stop DOING LIFE and BE a living human being.

Stop DOING RELIGION and Behold God.

Sabbath doesn't echo the mantra of YOLO…as if time is getting away from us. It doesn’t bow to the demands of consumerism…as if money or things can bring happiness.

Instead Sabbath marches to the beat of our Creator, who rests because he is all in all. He has no needs. He is not bound by time. And when we Sabbath, we rest in THAT GOD.

One of my aims today is to get real practical. If this sermon series just brings up some interesting ideas to you, but we never put it into practice…then it was pointless.

My hope is that many of you will start a new discipline of setting aside a day to Sabbath. Not simply for its benefits…though there are many of those... but Sabbath would become an act of worship for you and an act of gospel proclamation to your neighbors.

…and honestly, all you have to do is be a living human being that beholds God.

* **Mark 2:23-3:6**
* **23 On the Sabbath he was going through the grainfields, and his disciples began to make their way, picking some heads of grain. 24 The Pharisees said to him, “Look, why are they doing what is not lawful on the Sabbath? ”**
* **25 He said to them, “Have you never read what David and those who were with him did when he was in need and hungry ​— ​ 26 how he entered the house of God in the time of Abiathar the high priest and ate the bread of the Presence ​— ​which is not lawful for anyone to eat except the priests ​— ​and also gave some to his companions? ” 27 Then he told them, “The Sabbath was made for man and not man for the Sabbath. 28 So then, the Son of Man is Lord even of the Sabbath.”**
* **Jesus entered the synagogue again, and a man was there who had a shriveled hand.**
* **2 In order to accuse him, they were watching him closely to see whether he would heal him on the Sabbath. 3 He told the man with the shriveled hand,“Stand before us.” 4 Then he said to them, “Is it lawful to do good on the Sabbath or to do evil, to save life or to kill? ” But they were silent. 5 After looking around at them with anger, he was grieved at the hardness of their hearts and told the man,“Stretch out your hand.” So he stretched it out, and his hand was restored. 6 Immediately the Pharisees went out and started plotting with the Herodians against him, how they might kill him.**
* **Ephesians 5:15-17**
* **15 Pay careful attention, then, to how you live ​— ​not as unwise people but as wise ​— ​ 16 making the most of the time, because the days are evil. 17 So don’t be foolish, but understand what the Lord’s will is.**
* **Transition:** Today, I just have one idea to share with you, before we get into some “best practices” for Sabbath. Hopefully this is an idea that can anchor the decisions you make about how and why to practice Sabbath. Sort of a grid to run your Sabbath practices through to see if they fit God’s intent for Sabbath. Here it is…
* **1) Sabbath gives life through With-ness and Witness.**
  + I think one of the questions that has come up a lot in our community groups as we’ve been talking about the Sabbath is this- “How do I practice Sabbath rest and not make it a legalistic list of do’s and don’ts…which doesn’t sound restful at all?”
  + That’s a legitimate question and its an idea that Jesus took head on in his ministry often. Like in the text from Mark we just read.
  + **Mark 2:23-24**
  + The Pharisees, who were sort of the enforcers of Sabbath law, had put all sorts of restrictions around Sabbath practice that went beyond what God had commanded in the law.
  + And…they didn’t do it because they liked making people’s lives hard. They did it because they wanted to be vigilant and careful about not sort of “accidentally” breaking the law.
  + Instead of thoughtfully working through what was and wasn’t work, the Pharisees put clear definitions and lines around Sabbath practice. Things like “if you walk more than ¼ of a mile, you are breaking Sabbath.” Or “You can’t put a splint on a person’s hand or foot” on the Sabbath.
  + So when Jesus and his disciples are going on a stroll through grain fields (which is way too long a walk for the Sabbath), and then they pick off some grain to eat (which is harvesting and food preparation and shouldn’t be done on the Sabbath), the Pharisees are upset at the hypocrisy of this Rabbi’s disciples.
  + Disciples of a Jewish Rabbi should be EXEMPLARY in their keeping of the Sabbath, one of the most cherished laws of the Jews.
  + And here these guys are…. just further confirming to the Pharisees that Jesus is NOT a good Rabbi and is PROBABLY a false teacher.
  + **V25-26**
  + Jesus answers them with a reminder of something else that they would have cherished and respected. The actions of King David.
  + He refers them to the time before David was King, and King Saul was hunting him to kill him. His men are starving and they hide out in the temple. So the Priest gives them bread to eat that is dedicated to the Lord, that only the priests are allowed to eat.
  + In other words, Jesus is saying, “There’s a precedent for this. God is Pro-Life. His laws are not about performing some functions for him that make him feel special…his laws are about giving and preserving life.”
  + “So, when my disciples are starving, they are eating grain to live. Not to over-consume or be gluttons. They aren’t shirking off God, they are honoring God by staying alive.”
  + **The Glory of God is a living human being.**
  + **Mark 3:1-2**
  + Then the Pharisees are watching Jesus to see if he would heal this man with a shriveled hand on the Sabbath.
  + Now, this is interesting when you think about Irenaeus’ words. **The life of a human consists in beholding God.**
  + Here the Pharisees are. Literally BEHOLDING GOD. They are watching him. But they aren’t watching him for signs of life. They aren’t watching to observe his divinity.
  + **3:6**
  + They aren’t looking for the glory of God…instead, they are looking to kill him.
  + Here is the irony of the Pharisees.
  + In an effort to keep God’s law. They miss God.
  + On a day that is supposed to be centered on giving life, they plot to take life…from the giver of life…God himself.
  + Listen to Jesus’ words to the Pharisees as recorded by Matthew.
  + **Matt 23:4 & 13 & 23**
  + **They tie up heavy loads that are hard to carry and put them on people’s shoulders, but they themselves aren’t willing to lift a finger to move them.**
  + **“Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! You shut the door of the kingdom of heaven in people’s faces. For you don’t go in, and you don’t allow those entering to go in. “Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! You pay a tenth of mint, dill, and cumin, and yet you have neglected the more important matters of the law ​— ​justice, mercy, and faithfulness. These things should have been done without neglecting the others**
  + When Jesus scolds the Pharisees, he accuses them of placing burdens on people that they are unwilling to carry.
  + He says that in doing so, they slam the door of God’s Kingdom in people’s faces.
  + And then he tells them that they pay so close attention to the minutia of the law, that they miss the big picture. The life-giving big picture. Justice, mercy, and faithfulness.
  + In other words, when you treat God’s law as something to do, rather than a kind of person to be…and a relationship to be in…. you cause people to reject God. To miss God. To hate God.
  + In contrast to the Pharisees, just before this encounter with his disciples picking grain and healing this man’s hand on Sabbath…, Jesus says this.
  + **Matthew 11:28-30**
  + **“Come to me, all of you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest. 29 Take up my yoke and learn from me, because I am lowly and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. 30 For my yoke is easy and my burden is light.”**
  + He said to the Pharisees “You tie people up with burdens”.
  + Then he turned to those burdened people and said, “Come to me. I’ll give you rest. Let me be your rabbi. I’m not here to use you. I’m here to free you. I’ve boiled the law down to Love God and Love Others. I’m not heaping burdens on you. I’m giving abundant, overflowing, life. I’m passing out Rest. Come and get it.”
  + In Luke 13, a woman comes to Jesus on the Sabbath who can’t straighten her back. The Pharisees tell her to go home and come on one of the other 6 days. Jesus says back to the Pharisees-
  + **Luke 13:15-16**
  + **“Hypocrites! Doesn’t each one of you untie his ox or donkey from the feeding trough on the Sabbath and lead it to water? 16 Satan has bound this woman, a daughter of Abraham, for eighteen years ​— ​shouldn’t she be untied from this bondage on the Sabbath day? ”**
  + See Jesus says, On the Sabbath, you untie our animals to be sure they have life…And you don’t want me to give life to a human?
  + Now, look at the crowds response.
  + **Luke 13:17**
  + **When he had said these things, all his adversaries were humiliated, but the whole crowd was rejoicing over all the glorious things he was doing.**
  + Jesus did something life-giving for this living human being. And the people standing around celebrated, because they beheld…they witnessed… the Glory of God.
  + **“The Glory of God is a living human being. The life of a human consists in beholding God.”**
  + So on one hand we have Jesus saying, “Don’t OVERPRACTICE the Sabbath. Don’t turn what gives life into something that takes life. Don’t miss God by focusing on his commands.”
  + **Ephesians 5:15-17**
  + On the other hand, in the NT, Paul comes in saying, “Be careful. Pay attention to how you LIVE.
  + Pay attention to how you ARE A HUMAN BEING made in the image of God and created to display and behold God’s glory.
  + He specifically focuses here on TIME. Make the most of…or redeem the time.
  + Use wisdom. Because the natural pull of the day is EVIL. You will drift into busy-ness. Consumerism. Self-centeredness. PAY ATTENTION. Act wisely. Make time count!
  + **Did you know God used 2 signs to mark the Jews as his people?**
  + One was circumcision. Which was a very private mark of a life-creating organ. For a people who were promised a “SEED” that would redeem them in Genesis 3:15, God marked the part of his people that produced life-creating SEED.
  + But you couldn’t just go around showing people you were circumcised. And that was only the men.
  + **Ezekiel 20:12**
  + So, the other sign God gave to **publicly** set apart his people was the Sabbath. **Sabbath was the circumcision of time**. Sabbath was the way God showed the world that ***he*** would make his people fruitful and multiply. That it wasn’t their work that caused them to be blessed…it was that God would redeem their time. It was their faith in him to provide enough manna in the wilderness on the sixth day that they would be able to eat on the Sabbath without working.
  + The Sabbath is the circumcision of time. A reminder of the promise that we are nothing WITHOUT God. That his math works better than ours. That without being connected to him, our efforts are all in vain.
  + It's a reminder that what we do 6 days of work and rest WITH GOD goes a lot further than 7 days of work WITHOUT GOD.
  + So, to obey Paul’s command in Ephesians to redeem the time…that’s not going to come from FORGETTING SABBATH.
  + Its going to come by seeking GOD in the SABBATH.
  + To be WITH him. and to a WITNESS to others about him.
* **Back to 1)**
  + That’s why I think this is a good guiding principle for us.
  + **That Sabbath gives life through With-ness and Witness.**
  + Sabbath is about rest.
  + Sabbath is about stopping, and its about living.
  + Sabbath is about Beholding God’s glory…and appreciating it.
  + So when you’re putting together your plan for “this is how I’m going to Sabbath ask these 3 questions.
  + 1- Is this life-giving?
  + 2- Is this about being WITH GOD…and about being with PEOPLE made in God’s image?
  + 3- Is this a witness to others that my trust is in God, and not in myself?

**Mark 2:27-28**

* + Jesus said,
  + “The Sabbath was made for man, not man for the Sabbath.”
  + The second half of that phrase was very applicable to the Pharisees and Jesus’ 1st century audience.
  + They were a people who were “over-practicing” the Sabbath. It had become a tedious burden.
  + But today, by your own admission a few weeks ago, that’s not the word we need. We need the first half of that truth today. That the Sabbath was made for man. It's a gift. It's a way we confess with Irenaeus that the Glory of God is in just being alive. And that we need to stop one day a week and focus deeply on Beholding God’s Glory…in the relationship he’s given us with him…and the people God has put in our lives.
  + The Sabbath was made for man to experience WITHNESS and to be a WITNESS to God’s Glory.
  + When we practice Sabbath right, it is life-giving to us…and it's a gospel proclamation to our neighbors. Good News. God had loved you before you ever could ever lift a finger. He is faithful to provide. And he loves for you to enjoy him and his creation.
  + **THAT is a DEEPLY NEEDED message in our time.**
  + **The Sabbath is FOR HUMANS.**
  + And then, curiously Jesus said that he, the Son of Man, is Lord of the Sabbath.
  + Think about that. Jesus is the one who decides how we spend our Sabbath. He is the one who created it. And Jesus spends his Sabbath healing. Giving life. Jesus withdraws and prays…and he welcomes the sick and heals. He worshipped in the synagogue and he listened to the public reading of Scripture.
  + He paid attention to those around him…and paid deep attention to his Father in Heaven.
  + **That’s what the Sabbath is about. Paying deep attention to our Father in Heaven and to the People around us. Allowing God to give you life…while you pass that life on to others.**
  + **With-ness…and witness.**
* So now, …with the understanding that Sabbath is made for man, not man for the Sabbath…I want to give you some…
* **2) Practical Ideas for Sabbath**
  + Again, Sabbath is a practice.
  + Its not meant to just be thought about as a concept. Its meant to be put into practice. For the purpose of being a Living Human Being…and Beholding the Glory of God.
  + Look what James writes
  + **James 1:22-25**
  + **22 But be doers of the word and not hearers only, deceiving yourselves. 23 Because if anyone is a hearer of the word and not a doer, he is like someone looking at his own face in a mirror. 24 For he looks at himself, goes away, and immediately forgets what kind of person he was. 25 But the one who looks intently into the perfect law of freedom and perseveres in it, and is not a forgetful hearer but a doer who works ​— ​this person will be blessed in what he does.**
  + The blessing that God gives from Sabbath doesn’t come from BELIEVING in the Sabbath. It comes from PRACTICING the Sabbath.
  + It comes from DOING the Sabbath.
  + First, let me give you some categories on restfulness and restlessness.
  + ***Put up following picture: or create this chart if this is too fuzzy*.**
  + ****
  + The category on the left is what we are aiming for as we practice Sabbath. The category on the right is what we are pushing away from on Sabbath.
  + Of course, I want to push away from Restlessness every day of the week, but Sabbath TRAINS me for that.
  + *GO THROUGH CATEGORIES*
  + Now lets talk about some BEST practices.
  + **Be gratefully inactive & quiet**
  + Use *some* of your Sabbath time to not DO anything.
  + PLAN to have inactivity.
  + Take a nap.
  + Sit outside and watch nature.
  + Take a walk. Go to the park.
  + Additionally, in our age, I think digital silence/inactivity is important
  + Turn off the TV, Turn off the phone. Put the computer away.
  + Take time to JUST be a living human being.
  + Now, when you do this, in will creep all sorts of busy thoughts.
  + That’s a great time to pray.
  + Prayers of gratitude.
  + Move your mind to thinking about the good that God has given you instead of worrying about tomorrow or stuff you don’t have or haven’t yet accomplished.
  + If you need to, keep a pen and paper nearby. If a thought comes that you can’t get out of your head about something you need to do, jot it down on the paper with a heading of “NOT FOR SABBATH” at the top,” then you can come back to it tomorrow without the anxiety you are going to forget.
  + Remember, Sabbath isn’t just a day off to do whatever you want to. It needs to be about Withness, and witness.
  + Being WITH GOD and a Witness to his glory.
  + So use that time of quiet for gratitude.
  + **Delight in God by enjoying his gifts**
  + Make it a ritual to have lunch or dinner with friends or family on the Sabbath. Make your best meal of the week on the day that you Sabbath.
  + Now you have to be careful. Because this can turn into a production. You aren’t entertaining people, you are enjoying a delicious meal and good company.
  + Married couples, this is a great day to renew your covenant by taking an “extended nap” with the door locked.
  + Play a game of basketball in the driveway or football in the backyard.
  + Listen, there is lots of discernment here. For some folks, the Sabbath is going to be a day to leave the TV off. For some folks, it could be a where you watch a couple of football games.
  + For some folks, it could be the one day a week you play an hour of video games with your kids. For others, playing ANY video games makes it just like the rest of the week.
  + Sabbath is NOT a day for your addictions…to sports, or video games, or work, or anything else that has you imprisoned.
  + Sabbath celebrates REDEMPTION, not SIN. So please don't use the LORD’s Sabbath as an excuse to endulge in your addiction.
  + Additionally, if you have no self-control with food or drink throughout the week, don’t use Sabbath as an excuse to eat garbage and drink alcohol.
  + This is where the “Withness/Witness” framework helps. If you aren’t sure whether you should delight in something on the Sabbath…ask
  + Is this life giving to me and others?
  + Does this draw me close to God?
  + Does this show others the goodness of God?
  + Ask those you are around to weigh in on that.
  + **Do avocational things**
  + A lot of times people want to know, “Is gardening work? Is mowing the lawn work? Should I wash the dishes on the Sabbath?”
  + Well, if you are landscaper…probably don’t do gardening and lawn work.
  + If you wash dishes the other 6 days of the week…probably don’t wash them on Sabbath.
  + Do things that are outside of your normal job.
  + If you work primarily with your mind, then do things with your hands.
  + You can tinker with something, build something…as long as its restful and not chasing something you don’t have.
  + If you work primarily with your hands, do something with your mind. Read a book. Work puzzles. Sudoku.
  + **Be Relational/Invite others**
  + Withness and Witness require others.
  + Now, certainly, contemplative time alone is good on the Sabbath.
  + But so is time with others.
  + Slow down. Have conversations. Get to know someone deeper.
  + There are a couple of tricky parts to this.
  + One, is you might be an introvert. And relationships might be really taxing on you.
  + Or parents especially with young kids, you could laugh at the thought of trying to do about half of the things I’ve mentioned because your kids aren’t just going suddenly allow you to “take naps” or sit on the back porch and stare at a tree.
  + I get that. I really do.
  + And you know relationships within a family can be really taxing as well.
  + But keep in mind, that the Sabbath is designed for relationships. For being grateful for the people in your life and being human beings together with them.
  + So you might have to think ahead. Can you have each kid spend a little time in their room playing with toys, drawing a picture, reading a book? And then come back together later for some board games or games in the yard or park.
  + Can you write out a Sabbath question that you will ask family and friends on the Sabbath?
  + Things from, “Who is a person you aren’t related to that has positively impacted your life?” to “If you had a million dollars to give away…what would you do with it?”
  + Questions that both stoke gratitude and contentment and also prime thoughts of generosity and cultivation.
  + At the same time, you are getting to know a little something more about a person.
  + And Sabbath works GREAT in community.
  + Invite some other people and families in the church or your neighborhood or apartment complex to hang with you on the Sabbath.
  + For some of us, getting quiet time will be hard on the Sabbath. For others, especially for those of you that are single and live alone…it could be hard to find OTHERS to Sabbath with.
  + Families in the church, invite some single folks in.
  + Older married couples with kids, invite some newly-weds in.
  + And yes, invite people who don’t know Jesus to eat a meal with you. If the Sabbath is about witness, then what a great day to have people over, share a meal, and be grateful to God with them right there in the room with you.
  + **Practice God’s Presence**
  + **Last but not least**, Read Scripture and pray. Show up here and contribute at the worship gathering.
  + Make sure the Sabbath doesn’t become about you.
  + This is a day for BEHOLDING GOD.
  + This is not a day to take the day off.
  + SO read a Psalm as a prayer.
  + Maybe read it as you gather with everyone before dinner.
  + Acknowledge God’s presence at every turn.
  + **Build Sabbath a bit at a time.**
  + Likely, if you are used to watching 5 hours of TV on a Sunday before you go over your work emails and calendar for the next day…if you just plunge in and go no electricity and just sit in a chair and pray…you probably won’t last very long.
  + Just like if you have never run, and you just take off from the house in a sprint screaming “I’m going to run 10 miles”. As enthusiastic as you are, you probably won’t get very far.
  + You have to go out for a short walk. Then slowly build over several weeks into a run that gets farther and farther.
  + For some of you, this is going to mean just picking ONE thing. And practicing that for a while.
  + Some of you, you just need to turn the phone off for an afternoon.
  + Additionally, finding the day might be difficult. I think for a lot of us, Sunday probably makes the most sense, but depending on what line of work your in, that might be different. The day of the week is not as important as the frequency- one day in 7.
* **“The glory of God is a living human being; and the life of the human consists in beholding God.”- Irenaeus**
* Remember Irenaeus’ words?
* They are Sabbath words. Being human and Beholding God IS what the Sabbath is about.
* And he wrote those words to combat Gnostics who said that there was a secret to life…that if you looked for it…inside yourself…inside the messed up evil creation…if you looked for the divine spark…you could be better.
* Well, I want to end on Paul’s words to the Colossian church.
* **Col 2:2-3 & 16-17**
* **I want their hearts to be encouraged and joined together in love, so that they may have all the riches of complete understanding and have the knowledge of God’s mystery ​— ​Christ. 3 In him are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge.**
* **Therefore, don’t let anyone judge you in regard to food and drink or in the matter of a festival or a new moon or a Sabbath day. 17 These are a shadow of what was to come; the substance is Christ.**

Paul says to this church, “the deepest most beautiful things in the universe are not found in some Easter egg hunt. They aren’t found by FINDING YOURSELF or by looking under a rock. The deepest most beautiful truths of the universe aren’t life hacks or pop-psychology.

Rather, all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge are hidden in Christ. You won’t figure your life out until you know God as a person.

And then he says, ”And you won’t be able to use Spiritual disciplines like fasting or practicing Sabbath to find the riches of God’s mystery…no. Those are shadows of better reality. Knowing Christ.”

Celebrating Sabbath without knowing Christ is itself an act of ultimate anxiety. To say, I reject Anxiety and Busy-ness without knowing WHY you can reject anxiety and busy-ness won’t lead you anywhere. The SUBSTANCE is CHRIST.

So my question to you is this? Can you celebrate a relationship with Christ every Sabbath? Could you articulate what is so deep and rich and beautiful about Jesus?

* Do you know that he lived the life you should have lived. Righteous. Perfect.
* And he died the death of a rebellious sinner…the death you and I deserve.
* And he resurrected…on the first morning after the Sabbath…to invite us in…not because WE DESERVE IT…but because Jesus earned it for us…he now invites us to follow him…into eternal life…eternal Sabbath.
* Where we will be practicing WITHNESS and WITNESS…being living human beings….and beholding the glory of God.
* If you don’t Jesus like that today. ON this Sabbath, on this Lord’s day, I invite you to repent…and trust Christ.
* **PRAYER.**
* **Baptism**