

**Awaken 2016 – Israel**  
**Brett McBride**

...I knew that when I reached 65 to make room for younger leadership – I actually stayed until I was 67 – an old man then.

And when about 4 years ago I went to see the board and told them it was time to consider transition and replacing me as the leader of the church, I went that same day to visit a good friend of mine, Brett McBride.

And I met with him that afternoon in his office. I said, “I am going to talk to the board about my leaving the position as senior pastor; I would like to recommend you be considered. How would you feel about that?”

And Brett has his own story but until a while ago it was that he told us, “No, please take my name off the list.” (We put his name on the list.) But I am absolutely delighted that Brett is now the Lead Pastor of the Peoples Church.

The transition at the church itself is more or less complete and has gone extremely well. And shortly you will see the effects of the transition in Living Truth in television and radio ministry that God has given to us now in something like 70 countries all around the world.

Hilary and I are not leaving. We have been given the title Pastors at Large, Ministers at Large, which in England where we come from would have connotations of being large people, you know.

But it means that we are simply have a free roam, not any obligation to the church or from the church, just as where, when God opens doors and if we sense these are right and appropriate we will go through them. But our identity is along with the Peoples Church. And so we remain involved to that extent.

Brett and his wife Steph, who unfortunately was not able to be with us this week, and they have two boys – whether you will tell something about your family, I’m not sure. But Brett and Steph worked at a ministry called Urban Promise in Toronto, a great ministry with youth, the director of that, working amongst young people in particular from disadvantaged conditions and circumstances. And not only leading them to Christ, many of them, but making real disciples of them.

And some of the young people that Brett has discipled are impressive in their love for God, and knowledge of the Word of God, and in the way that God is using them.

So I was delighted when, in the course of time, Brett agreed to become the lead pastor of the church.

Not only was I delighted but the congregation are delighted. If there is any hesitation because people didn’t know him, they are now delighted. And I know you will be as well as over the

next years you will get to know Brett much more fully and will be beneficiaries of the ministry that God has given him and will continue to give him.

So Brett we are going to pray for you and then Brett is going to speak to us this afternoon. Can I hug you or does that...?

Absolutely!

Okay. Let me pray for you.

Father we thank You that we can be here this afternoon to sit under the ministry of Your Word. Thank You for Brett, for the man that he is, for the way You drew him to Yourself, for all the ways in which You have manifest Yourself in him and through him to other people.

And I pray that as he opens Your Word to us this afternoon, it will be, as somebody has said, it will be one beggar telling other beggars where to find bread because we stand on level ground before You, hungry and wanting to share what we have of the Bread of Life that so enriches and transforms people.

So we thank You for Your presence in this session and commit ourselves to You and commit Brett to You as we expose our minds to Your truth. We pray it in Jesus' Name, Amen.

Amen, thank you.

Charles was my pastor for the last 15 years. I was attending the Peoples Church virtually during the whole time he was there, he and Hilary and their family. And so I myself have found this last year that I am going through a transition.

And certainly when I sat under your teaching this morning, I thought to myself, "Lord, why did he have to go, because it is so rich and fulfilling." So thank you Charles for what you shared this morning.

This is my first time in Israel and I have to tell you for the last 3 or 4 days, knowing that I would be sharing from the Word, I thought to myself, as you are sitting in those spaces, as you are encountering places where Christ Himself walked, where stories came alive, because I have read them so many times, but to sit and hear the sounds and smell the air and just absorb what took place in the city of Jerusalem, what took place at Masada and En Gedi, I have to tell you that I am thoroughly overwhelmed today with just this sense of who our Savior is. And that on the night that He was betrayed, He who is the King of kings and Lord of lords was in an upper room washing the disciples' feet just hours before He would suffer agony for you and for me.

It has just been overwhelming to be here. And I know many of you feel the same. It is somewhat like drinking from a firehose as you go from place to place. And in my mind I'm

trying to absorb everything that I am encountering in each of these spaces. But it is profound to just be in this place.

You can turn in your Bibles to Luke Chapter 6. Before we read from Luke 6:6 let me just share a short story with you.

This story comes from a friend of mine. He told me that it is a true story. I believe him because he wouldn't have told me otherwise and lied to me. But it is a pretty profound story and I think it illustrates well what we are going to look at this afternoon.

There was a young man in the United States who was a phenom when it came to being a quarterback for American football. He was 13 years old entering into high school, into Grade 9. And at that young age he was already being scouted by Division 1 NCAA football schools.

He was a left-handed quarterback and his whole life ahead of him was set. As he continued to break record after record in high school, every major university in the U.S. was sending out scouts to look at this young man who was going to be the next Tom Brady or whatever your favorite quarterback is.

And in his senior year he was out with some friends and they got into a horrific car accident and this young man whose football career lied ahead of him, lost his left arm in that car accident.

All of his hopes, all of his dreams were lost in an instant and it was devastating for him. All of his dreams that he had lying before him were gone.

And for months he slipped into depression; he was just overwhelmed with the sorrow of everything he had envisioned in his life coming to an end.

But through the counsel of his parents, through the help of friends, he started to get on with his life. And in his city there was a judo dojo. And he was an athletic young man so he thought to himself, well I still want to stay in shape, I still want to utilize my body, and so he went to the local master at the judo dojo and he asked him, "Can you train me how to do judo?"

And the master looked at him, saw that he had no left arm and he said, "Certainly."

And so he started to take judo classes and he would show up and his master would literally each day that he showed up, just continually train him physically. But then he would only teach him one move. And this went on for three months.

Every day that he showed up for judo classes his master would just repeatedly teach him this one move.

And he started thinking to himself, isn't there more than this to this judo thing? And his master just looked at him and he said, "Trust me."

His master enrolled him in the state judo competition. He thought to himself, well maybe this is a Mr. Miyagi karate kid thing; he's just trying to teach me a lesson in humility. And he looked at his master and he said, "Why are you enrolling me in this state judo competition? I've only been in judo for three months. I have no left arm and I only know one move."

And the master looked at him and he said, "Trust me."

So he went into the competition and came for the day of his first contest. And he was facing another opponent who had two arms and he thought to himself, alright I will lose my match and I will be out of this tournament and I will have learned my lesson in humility.

So he went into the match and he ended up beating the person easily, right away, just took him down to the mat and completely had victory over him.

Now he didn't understand how it took place so he walked up to the master and he said, "Master, I don't understand how I beat that guy. I have only taken judo for three months. I have no left arm and I only know one move."

The master looked at him and said, "Trust me."

Well he went into the next contest and he thought, okay, maybe that guy just was new to judo as well; maybe he had only taken it for one month.

So he went into the next contest and he ended up beating that person as well. In fact he beat every opponent he faced and made it to the final match.

He was now facing the reigning state judo champion. This guy was doing judo from when he was born and had won the state championship year after year.

And this guy was visibly nervous about what he was about to face. And he again went up to his master and he said, "Master, I don't understand how I beat those other opponents but seriously, this guy has been doing judo all his life. He's going to cream me. I have only been doing judo for three months. I have no left arm and I only know one move."

And his master looked at him and his master said, "Trust me."

And he went into that final match and he beat that opponent hands down. He was now the reigning state judo champion, there with his trophy in his right arm, raising it victoriously.

But he went up to his master afterwards and he said, "Master, you have to explain to me how I beat all of these opponents because this just does not make sense to me. I have only been taking judo for three months, I have no left arm and I only know one move."

And his master looked at him and he said to him, "I taught you the most lethal move in all of judo. Very, very few people know the move that I taught you. And the only defense against that one move is to grab your opponent's left arm."

What I want to look at this afternoon is someone whose ear was tuned to the Master's voice and whose weakness became the very thing that Jesus used to display His strength.

Let me just set the context of what we are going to look at this afternoon. Jesus has been ministering in and around Galilee. In fact, the bulk of Jesus' ministry took place on this lake behind us and in the hills that surround it.

Capernaum was His home base for ministry. And God has been moving powerfully, demonstrating miracles, signs and wonders through Jesus' ministry. Huge crowds are flocking because they are talking that this could be the very Messiah that we have been praying and waiting for, for hundreds of years.

So there is all kinds of talk about Jesus, but He is followed by a group of disciples who wouldn't be described as the educated people that you would suspect to draw near to the Messiah.

And just as Jesus is being used by God powerfully to demonstrate that He is in fact the Messiah, He is also doing some things that are causing the Pharisees and the experts in the law to be very puzzled about this person who is proclaiming Himself and demonstrating Himself to be the Messiah.

He is going into the homes of tax collectors and sinners, of all people. After seeing the ruins at Masada yesterday, I see why that would be such a difficult thing for people to comprehend.

Matthew was a tax collector for Herod Antipas. Herod Antipas was the son of Herod the Great who ruled in the north.

Herod Antipas is the one who had John the Baptist beheaded. Many thought John the Baptist was going to be the Messiah.

So when Jesus sits and eats and fellowships and has table meals with a tax collector they are somewhat puzzled about this Jesus because here He is doing all these miraculous signs and wonders but by His actions He is very unconventional in the people that He is calling to follow Him.

And so the Pharisees and the experts in the law are puzzled by this Jesus because He doesn't line up with what they thought the Messiah would be.

But the thing that is drawing the most attention of the experts in the law, those who have their masters of divinity, is that Jesus is seemingly, continually breaking the Sabbath. He is casting out demons on the Sabbath. He is healing people on the Sabbath in the synagogue.

And that's what we are going to be looking at this afternoon.

In Luke 6:6 we read the following:

“On another Sabbath he went into the synagogue and was teaching, and a man was there whose right hand was shriveled.

“The Pharisees and the teachers of the law were looking for a reason to accuse Jesus, so they watched him closely to see if he would heal on the Sabbath.

“But Jesus knew what they were thinking and said to the man with the shriveled hand, ‘Get up and stand in front of everyone.’ So he got up and stood there.

“Then Jesus said to them, ‘I ask you, which is lawful on the Sabbath: to do good or to do evil, to save life or to destroy it?’

“He looked around at them all, and then said to the man, ‘Stretch out your hand.’ He did so and his hand was completely restored.

“But they were furious and began to discuss with one another what they might do to Jesus.”

The story we just read took place mere miles from here in a synagogue in Galilee. And what I want to talk about this afternoon is the rules of the religious, the rest of God, and the restoration of man.

See you have to understand in Jesus’ time, Israel was a covenant nation. All Jewish boys and girls at the age of five would go off to the local synagogue where they would be taught the Scriptures by the rabbi.

And they would study the first five books of the Bible, Genesis through Deuteronomy. Because they are a covenant people, by the age of thirteen they needed to know the law because if they are a covenant nation and that covenant was based on the laws of God, they needed to understand the laws of God.

But beyond the first five books of the Bible and some of the other books in the Old Testament; beyond all that, the rabbis would also pass down what is known as the oral law.

Rabbis for generations started to discuss and debate different facets of the first five books of the law, and started to add different rules and sub-categories to explain and give definition to the laws that governed the covenant with God.

Now today we know the oral law as the Talmud, and the Talmud consists of two sections: the Mishna, which is the text of the oral law; it is the oral law written down. And then there is the Gemara, which is more of a commentary on the Mishnah, the oral law.

Now the whole Talmud consists of 63 tractates, and in standard print today is 6200 pages long. Have you ever seen a Staples book of paper for printers? That is about 6200 pages. So the entrance and membership classes into being a covenant person was robust to say the least.

Not only did you need to know the books of the Old Testament but you were also schooled and taught the oral traditions and commentaries on top of the oral traditions. So you had thousands of different rules that would govern your life.

And in Jesus' day, when Jesus is seemingly breaking Sabbath, what He is actually challenging is the oral law, not the written law.

Many people I hear talk about Matthew Chapter 5 where Jesus gives His six antithesis statements and what He is actually confronting in Matthew Chapter 5 is the oral law, not the written law.

And so, let me just give you a few examples of what the Sabbath rules that would have governed the New Testament Jewish life at the time of Jesus.

This is taken from the Talmud. Just for the Sabbath alone there were 24 chapters that defined what it meant to work on the Sabbath. They were forbidden to work, but all the rabbis would discuss, "Well, what do we mean by work and what exactly fits into the category or definition of work?"

So planting is prohibited on the Sabbath. But just as planting is to cause the plant to grow, so too all activities that promote plant growth is included in this category. So this includes watering, fertilizing, planting seeds or planting grown plants.

Have any of you gardened on the Sabbath day? Put up your hands. Does anyone here garden on the Sabbath day? You are all Sabbath breakers. You are all lawless people.

Grinding was something that was prohibited on the Sabbath. And grinding was defined as simply cutting into pieces fruits or vegetables for a salad. It was okay on the Sabbath to cut them into slightly larger pieces but if you cut them too small, you broke the Sabbath because you started to do work on the Sabbath day.

Sewing was prohibited on the Sabbath. Using a stapler is prohibited on the Sabbath.

When we arrived at the hotel in Jerusalem it was Shabbat. And did any of you mistakenly step onto the Shabbat elevator?

I stepped onto that elevator because I wasn't aware that it was a Sabbath elevator and I started pushing buttons. Every time I pushed that darn button the light wouldn't go on. And I thought, "What is wrong with this elevator?" And I just started pushing every floor and no lights were going on. And little did I realize that every time I pushed a button I was breaking Sabbath.

So literally every time we are in there and pushing a button it is Sabbath breaking, Sabbath breaking, Sabbath breaking, Sabbath breaking.

And so for the ultra-orthodox Jew at the time of Jesus there were all these rules that governed Jewish life because they were a covenant people.

And the Pharisees and the teachers of the law were the guardians of the oral tradition. They saw it their duty to make sure that the Sabbath was enforced and that they were pleasing God by their actions.

But the Pharisees had focused on the mechanical ritualistic aspects of the Sabbath and in so doing, failed to meet its essence. The Sabbath had become burdensome. The Sabbath became a book of external rules that governed Jewish life but were so legalistic in their application that there was no life to it anymore.

Now it is fine to have rich history and traditions that we pass down. Every faith practises different history and traditions.

But the problem is that what might start as a sincere motive, as a beautiful expression of the worship of God, when it is an addition to His Word, can actually become a trap for us.

And certainly for the Pharisees and the experts in the law the Sabbath had become suffocating and they started to spread that suffocation to others.

Now this isn't just a Pharisee pattern; this is a human pattern. Sadly, we as Christians, when you review church history, have slipped into this exact same pattern ourselves.

We can slip into a rules-centered Christianity versus a relationship-centered Christianity. It is something that plagued the early church.

Paul writes to the Galatian church; in Chapter 3:3 he says this to the Galatians,

“Are you so foolish? After beginning with the Spirit, are you now trying to attain your goal by human effort?”

You see, they had come to Jesus and trusted Him as Savior and entered into a relationship with Him but they started to slip back into Jewish expressions of being obedient to the law as though that somehow improved their standing before God, and started to drift away from the work of Christ.

And we oftentimes, if you look back over church history, form our own version of the Christian Talmud don't we? There are certain unspoken rules and regulations that we establish for how church is to be done on a Sunday.

Many of you have been asking me as I have gone from bus to bus what I did prior to being at the Peoples Church and on staff there as the pastor.

And for 16 years I served as an urban missionary, as Charles mentioned. I served children, youth and families growing up in low income government subsidized housing.

And the neighborhoods we worked in were infested with guns, drugs, gangs, violence. Young people that I grew to know and love would get sucked into life on the streets – communities like Jane and Finch, Kipling and Finch and Rexdale, communities that struggled with violence and drug dealing.

For 16 years I served in that context and we would operate after school tutoring programs and summer camps and Bible studies. And we would build relationships with kids in the neighborhood and we tried to keep them occupied at the peak hours where crime would take place, right after school, on the weekends, during the weeks off in the summer time.

To reach out into the neighborhood we didn't see ourselves as something separate from the church; we were an arm reaching into the neighborhood. So we were serving in the community in Etobicoke for a number of years.

And we started to get more and more youth enrolling in our programs and eventually the building that we operated our children and youth program in had become so full that we had outgrown just one facility.

And in 2005 gun violence in the city of Toronto hit an all-time high. There were a number of shootings and the media was referring to it as the summer of the gun.

And what caught every level of government attention was that a gang member who had been killed in the community; during his funeral which took place in a church down the road from the church we were partnering with; during the funeral while the single mother was mourning the loss of her son, rival gang members showed up during the funeral and shot at the funeral in the lobby of the church just outside where the funeral was taking place and gunned down another young man during the funeral.

Well that had the whole media's attention and every level of government showed up because this gun violence started to infect every aspect of society.

Now we had, like I said, outgrown the facility we were using and contacted that church. And we said to that church, "We heard what happened in your sanctuary, we heard what took place. We work with children and youth that live in the communities that are struggling with these guns, drugs and violence, and we have outgrown our facilities. Could we partner with you and run a summer camp for junior high age youth, which is the peak time that kids get involved in gangs. Could we run it out of your facility?"

And so we got to know one another. I sat with elders of the church. Different staff of ours met with them and talked with them. We met with the denomination. And we went through the normal series of meetings that you have to go through to get to know one another and explore how you reach into a community.

And we were going through the normal meetings and it got about two weeks away from when this summer camp was going to take place. And I was getting a little nervous because we didn't have a Plan B up to that point.

But finally we received full approval and the contract was faxed through to our office. And I remember picking up the fax contract to the office and it had the normal list of non-negotiable rules that you must follow, talking about leaving rooms as clean as you find them, don't enter the sanctuary; just don't even go in the sanctuary, don't make a mess in the sanctuary, don't even look at the sanctuary.

I don't know what it is about our Talmud, but the sanctuary is this place that is somehow holier than the lobby. Even though the drywall and bricks and mortar and paint and everything is exactly the same, you enter into this space that is not child-friendly.

Sorry I will get off that soapbox and just get back to normal.

But then I came across a section of the contract that I had never seen before and it said this: "There shall be no tobacco, no pork products, no fish without scales, no caffeine on the premises."

Now we had about 50 junior high age youth registered for this summer camp – two weeks away. And we encourage our kids that can afford it to bring a lunch.

And I thought to myself, "How am I going to police 50 junior high age youth and search through their lunches to see if they have ham or some other form of pork product?" I was pretty sure that they weren't going to be bringing in tobacco - maybe some other foreign substances that are strictly medicinal, but not tobacco.

How would I manage to see if they would bring this on the premises or not?

And I thought to myself, "Even when I show up to program, to see the youth, and I am holding my Tim Hortons breakfast sandwich with bacon on it and my coffee which has caffeine and I step on the premises, what's going to happen? Is there going to be some type of alarm that goes off like, "Wee, wee, wee, we have got a pork product in quadrant 2; please take him down."

I'll be honest with you; this afternoon I have probably consumed so much pork product that this body is probably 30% pork product; just stepping on the premises might set off an alarm.

And so we had to call that church and we asked for clarification about how serious they were about this clause. And they were deadly serious that they didn't want any of this stuff to enter into their holy space.

And I thought to myself, here you have a community that is struggling with guns, drugs and gangs, and you have got young people who are succumbing to the life and pressures on the street and we serve a Savior that says, "Come as you are." But according to what they were saying is that Jesus says, "Come as you are, just as you are, but please for goodness sake do not bring your pork products with you."

Is that really the type of Jesus that we serve?

See, even we, like the Pharisees can slip into this space where we become a little more rules centered and we start to create traditions or we start to live by certain aspects that drag us down a road of legalism.

It is not just something that the Pharisees dealt with.

Now we were two weeks away from summer camp and we said to that church, "I'm sorry; we can't partner with you because we feel that if the youth we serve come out to your church, they might hear a different message than what we share.

"We share that Jesus will accept you just as you are in your messed up sinful state. You can come just as you are. Oh yes, when you put your faith in Him, He transforms you into something else, but He doesn't require you to be transformed prior to coming to Him."

And that transformation, I don't believe, requires leaving pork products behind. But that's just my personal opinion.

And so we said to that church, "I'm sorry we can't partner with you." And that created a little bit of a stir. But we are two weeks away from 50 junior highs showing up for summer camp and we have no building.

And I remember in the office, over the next hour we were trying to figure out what we were going to do and we strategized. We thought maybe we could run camp out in the park and that it would just be sunny every day.

And we started to talk about setting up a tent in a city park and maybe the city won't even notice that we are there and we'll just operate six weeks of summer camp with impunity.

While we were scurrying around trying to figure out a back-up plan the phone rang. And it was the pastor of a church just down the road. Now we hadn't talked to anybody about the problem we were facing. And the pastor from a church down the road on the phone asked us and said to us, "Would you consider operating your youth program out of our church for the next six weeks? We will hire two additional staff and rent out a gym for you to use two days a week. Would you do it?"

After we picked ourselves up off the floor, utterly amazed, God knew our needs way in advance and it confirmed for me that God really doesn't care about our pork products and He was saying, "My heart is for the widows and orphans in their distress. My heart is for these children. And yes, welcome them just as they are."

But my point is this: that we even as Christians sometimes get into this rule-based mindset and create our own Christian Talmud.

So I don't blame the Pharisees or the experts in the law. But what I always find mystifying is that those who devoted their lives to the study of the Word, those who were experts in God's

Word, when the Word Himself, the author of the book, was standing in front of them, they didn't even recognize Him.

Do you know what's so troubling about that? Scripture memory doesn't mean that you know Jesus.

How is it that these guys studied the Bible their whole lives and as He is there demonstrating and proclaiming who He is, they are focused on the rules and their narrow interpretations of what it is to observe Sabbath.

But Jesus came to awaken us and to invite us into the fullness of what the Sabbath was intended to be in. That's what I believe He is doing in this story because He makes this man with a shriveled hand stand up in front of everybody. And this is recorded in three of the Gospels, so certainly we are to pay attention to what Jesus is doing here.

And I think Jesus makes this man stand up in front of everybody, this man who has a shriveled hand, stand in front of the whole synagogue because Jesus wants to demonstrate through this man what the Sabbath was intended to be.

He wants to give maximum exposure to this event. And it has been leading up to this moment. In Matthew's Gospel we are told that the Pharisees and the experts in the law pretty much staged this event as a showdown.

We are told in that Gospel that when Jesus entered into their synagogue, the man with the shriveled hand was there. And they knew that Jesus was going around and healing people, and they saw Jesus heal a man on the Sabbath in the city of Jerusalem in John Chapter 5, and Jesus instructed him to pick up his mat and walk, which created a huge stir.

So they stationed this man that Jesus might see him and they asked Jesus,

“Master, is it lawful to heal on the Sabbath?”

They are the ones who have brought this to test Jesus. They are looking to accuse Him of being a Sabbath breaker.

So Jesus has the man stand up in front of everybody and Jesus answers their question with a question. And He says,

“I ask you, which is lawful on the Sabbath: to do good or to do evil, to save life or to destroy it?”

Jesus is asking them what is the intent of the Sabbath, what is the spirit of the law? And I believe that when you look to the Old Testament there are a couple of passages where Sabbath is introduced that really help us understand what the Sabbath really is.

And it points to the work of Christ. In Genesis Chapter 1 we read the creation account, how God on day after day after day created the sun, the moon, the land, the plants, the animal life, all living things in the ocean.

And at the end of six days, where He, on the sixth day, He creates man, male and female; He created them in His own image, in His own likeness.

And then on the seventh day He ceased from all His work. Not because He was tired, but because He was finished.

And so think about it: man was created on the sixth day, man's first day – first full day – of experiencing all that God created. Man's first full day on earth was resting in God's finished work.

Then we get to Exodus and we find God's covenant people in bondage to Pharaoh. God sends Moses as the deliverer and they are brought out of their bondage to Egypt and provided with bread from heaven in Exodus Chapter 16.

And they are commanded to rest in God's provision of bread from heaven.

In Exodus 20 we are given the Ten Commandments and there we have the Sabbath command given. It was a day that they were to do no work and on that day they would reflect on how God was their deliverer, God was the one who overcame Pharaoh; God is the one who led them through the Red Sea.

They contributed nothing to their salvation out of Egypt except for demonstrating faith in the Passover lamb, and spreading blood on the doorposts, and observing the Feast of Passover.

And so they contributed nothing to that as well. And God invites them in the desert to rest again in His finished work of salvation and deliverance from their bondage and slavery to Pharaoh.

Do you see a pattern developing in Sabbath?

I think when you study the Old Testament and look at it from a broad perspective, the Sabbath meaning is that we as humans rest in God's finished work.

And Jesus is using their question to trap Him and the paralysis of this man to illustrate the true purpose of Sabbath. Sabbath was designed for man to rest in His finished work.

Just as man's first day on earth was to rest in God's finished work, Christian Sabbath is about us resting in Christ's finished work that secures our salvation.

The law brought the rules of God; Christ brought the rest of God. The law brought condemnation; Christ brought salvation.

Speaking of the law's condemnation, Paul writes in Colossians Chapter 2:13 the following:

“He forgave us all our sins, having canceled the charge of our legal indebtedness, which stood against us and condemned us; he has taken it away, nailing it to the cross.”

That is the Christian’s relationship to the law. It has been nailed to the cross. We have died to it. It can no longer condemn us.

And speaking of the Sabbath later, the author of Hebrews and Chapter 4 puts the true meaning of Sabbath this way. Hebrew 4:1 says this:

“Therefore, since the promise of entering his rest still stands, let us be careful that none of you be found to have fallen short of it.

“Now we who have believed enter that rest.”

For anyone who enters God’s rest also rests from their works just as God did from His. And in Verse 11 of Hebrews 4:

“Let us, therefore, make every effort to enter that rest, so that no one will perish by following their example of disobedience.”

As we surrender our lives to Christ and enter into a relationship with Him, we are invited to rest in His finished work on our behalf that secures our salvation. That is what the meaning of Sabbath was meant to be.

It didn’t find its fulfillment in the Old Testament laws that these guys were experts in and all the additions that they contributed to it. It found its fulfillment in Christ.

But the Pharisees were trying the opposite. They stopped at the law itself and didn’t see that it found its fullness in Christ. They were worshiping the law as an end in and of itself and they got stuck on the narrow definitions and all the oral traditions that they would pass down.

And Jesus’ miracle in this synagogue is to awaken them to see that the law was powerless to make anyone holy or to bring life. It could only condemn and pronounce unclean. But Christ is the one who could completely restore life to them.

One of the most powerful moments that I had when we were in Jerusalem during the tour was visiting the Western Wall. I entered into the back where many of the rabbis were studying. I went as far as I could and I sat in a chair for about twenty minutes and I just observed people who were sincere in their devotion, people who were committed clearly to their faith, standing there with their Torah. Some of them talking to one another about the law and the interpretations of the law. Some of them probably talking about the Talmud and the 6200 pages. Some of them praying before the wall and rocking back and forth.

And I sat there and I thought to myself, “They have to be somewhat sincere in their devotion, but what are they devoted to?”

And as I sat there praying, my heart prayed that they would enter into the rest that Christ invites us into. Christ came to awaken us to our need and that no matter how hard we try, no matter how devoted we might be, no matter how devout and sincere we are, no matter how many rules we create, we cannot make ourselves holy.

It is only through His finished work. It is only through His holiness that we can enter into and rest from the ceaseless rules that would govern our lives, known as the law.

And we all fall short of His glory and His holiness. And as I was standing at the Western Wall, as I was sitting there praying, I just prayed that these rich ceremonial meanings would finally find their fulfilment in Christ and enter into the rest that God invites every person into in Christ.

I remember a few years ago – I have two sons – they are 9 and 11 years old – but a number years ago I was tucking them in at night and I pray with my kids every night.

And this one evening I was just overwhelmed with affection and love for my two sons. And I was in my oldest son's bedroom and I just looked at him and his name is Jadynd and I looked in his eyes (he was laying in bed) and I just said, "Jadynd, I love you so much. I think you are terrific. You are my son. I am so proud of you. I think you are just amazing. I love you, I love you, I love you, I love, I love you so much."

And he was laying in bed looking up at me in my eyes and he just felt so overwhelmed and he dug his chin into his chest as though he couldn't take it anymore. And then he said this to me: "What did I do?"

And I thought to myself – I think was about 5 years old at the time – I said to him, "You didn't have to do anything. You are my son and I love you because you are my son. I cherish who you are."

And as I walked out of his room I thought to myself, "What kind of father have I been that my son associates my love with his performance?"

And I went to my younger son's room and I tucked him in and I prayed with him and then I just looked at him, and I said, "Caleb," (he was about 3 or 4 years old at the time); I said, "Caleb, I love you so much. I'm so proud of you. You are just such a beautiful young boy. You have such a great sense of humor. You bring so much joy to me, so much life."

And again he was overwhelmed with the emotion of it and dug his chin in his chest and tried to hide in his blankets. He is far enough away from my oldest son that he didn't hear what my oldest son had said, but he looked up at me and he goes, "What did I do?"

What is it in us as humans, that is hard-wired into us that at the age of 5 and 3, when we don't even have much lived experience, that we associate the love of the Father with our performance?

He loves you because He loves you because He loves you. Now it's not according to what you do as though somehow by your best effort you could earn His favor.

He loves you so much that He came and clothed Himself with humanity and allowed the very people that He spoke into existence to strip Him of His clothes and nail Him to a cross so that He might have relationship with us for eternity. The love of the Father is a mystery to us.

And sometimes we are here trying to do, thinking that we are human doings, not human beings.

And Jesus has this man with a shriveled hand stand before everybody. And imagine everybody staring at Him and Jesus asks him, "What is the purpose of the Sabbath - to do good or to bring evil, to bring life or to destroy life?"

And we are told in Mark's Gospel that Jesus looked around the synagogue at all of them. Imagine Jesus staring at the Pharisees and the experts in the law, staring at each one of them. It is a pretty easy question, is it not? To do good or to do evil? To save life or to destroy it?

And there is silence. And we are told in Mark's account that Jesus was angry and deeply distressed at their stubborn hearts.

And because they were legalistic and it was in God's name and it wasn't displaying who He is and the purpose He had even instituting the Sabbath. And this man, at the center of everyone's attention, standing there with a shriveled hand that he has not been able to use – there was no life in his hand; he could not use it.

And Christ has this man stand before all and He brought to life what was dead. At His word life entered back into His condition and He was able to stretch out His hand.

What they used as a trap, Jesus transformed into a testimony. Their purpose was to find some reason to accuse Jesus, and Jesus uses this man to awaken people and invite them into a whole new experience of what the Sabbath was meant to be – to rest in who He is.

Let me close with this today. Let me ask you. As we have come to this place, as we are observing these sights and these sounds and these smells, and as we are immersed in the sights and sounds of where He walked and where He taught, is there a part of your condition, a part of your Christian experience where just a part of your body has become shriveled. Is there a part of your condition that has become cold and lifeless?

And He wants to awaken you to the fullness and invite you to experience all that He has for you. Does He want to bring life back to a part of your life that maybe has gone cold? Maybe it is a relationship – something has crept in – and a relationship that you once cherished that was so near to you has become lifeless.

Maybe it's your children or grandchildren that are lifeless. I just want to encourage us as we are taking in these sights, as we are seeing these things, it's amazing and we are afforded a great

opportunity to see the places that Jesus walked. But we can be so caught up with the places that we forget to focus on the person of Christ.

And He wants to awaken within each of us and bring life back to where maybe that shriveled part of our lives still exists.

So I would just encourage you tonight as you walk through this beautiful place to pray and ask, “Lord, where is there a part of my life that has gone cold or lifeless, that You want to awaken, that You want to speak into?”

Because we are told in the Gospels that Jesus completely restored this man’s condition and life flowed where it hadn’t flowed before.

And as I have had a few days of just walking through the Holy Land, I know that God is stirring up within me areas where maybe my heart has gone cold and He wants to bring life back to it.

And I don’t think it’s just for me; I think it’s for each one of us.

So my encouragement over the next day of this retreat is just that we sit with that question and allow Him to stir up within us what He wants to do.

Let’s pray together.

Father, we just thank You that You invite us into rest; you invite us into Your finished work. And Lord, we are enjoying Your finished work of creation all around us as we see the most amazing sights.

And Lord, we know from Scripture that as we enter into Christ we are a new creation and that we rest also in Your finished work of salvation. And in the parts of our lives that have grown cold and the parts of our experience of You that maybe are shriveled or the parts that we have never experienced, You restoring the secret place or the depths of who we are.

We pray that You would have Your way in and among us. We know that we rest in Your finished work of salvation, but that doesn’t mean You are finished working in us, the process of sanctification.

So we say together over the next days that we have touring that You would continue to speak to us and that we wouldn’t focus just on the places that we see but You, the person of Christ, that is so cherished and important to each one of us, our Savior.

Thank You for Your love for us. I pray that we would come to understand it in new and deeper ways. In Jesus’ Name, Amen.