* **Series Slide**
* Cape Town South Africa is a beautiful city.
* Sitting on the southern tip of the continent, its buildings move from old-world colonial, to glass and steel skyscrapers, then rolling hills and green farmland…all set to a giant backdrop of amethyst known as “Table Mountain”…of course…all around it is the sea.
* **(PIC)**
* ****
* One of the best views of the city comes from just 6 miles away in the South Atlantic ocean….on Robben Island.
* You might recognize that name… It's the Island where South African President Nelson Mandela was imprisoned for 18 years…for his efforts to end apartheid. The racist policy that divided white and black people in S. Africa for half a century.

Robben Island offered a unique sort of torture Nelson Mandela. It allowed him to see the beauty and freedom of Capetown, but it was just out of reach.

He could see home, but he couldn’t get there.

So what did Nelson Mandela do to survive his 18 years of imprisonment?

He planted a garden.

After years of asking the prison warden, he was finally allowed to plant a small garden in a corner of the prison yard.

He collected a few seeds from around the island and spent hours everyday working this small plot of land, fertilizing it with pigeon manure.

Eventually, the garden became a favorite spot for both guards & prisoners to share in both the nourishment from the vegetables it produced and the beauty of its flowers.

After he was released in 1990, Nelson Mandela explained how important the garden became to him.

**“To plant a seed, watch it grow, to tend it and then harvest it, offered a simple but enduring satisfaction. The sense of being the custodian of this small patch of earth offered a small taste of freedom”** – Nelson Mandela, *Long Walk to Freedom (via Futureville, pg 81)*

While Nelson Mandela didn’t have the power to transform Robben Island into the beautiful and free place Cape Town was, he did take a small patch of ground that could reflect it.

Now, Think about this.

When Mandela planted that garden…what was he doing?

Well, he was working.

I want you to think about what Nelson Mandela said about that garden…

He said that when he was working that garden…it was a taste of freedom. There was some level of satisfaction.

The same year Nelson Mandela was released from prison, a book called “Flow” was released written by a psychology professor from the university of Chicago. (From “The Glass Cage” pg 14)

In it, he released the results of a multi-year study he did on work.

He conducted this experiment where he tracked how people felt about their quality of life both as they worked and as they engaged in leisure activities.

He found that people were happier and felt more fulfilled by what they were doing at work than what they were doing in their free time.

During their free time, people tended to feel more bored and anxious.

But here’s the really interesting part, they didn’t really like being at work either. When they were on the job…the participants expressed a strong desire to be OFF the job, and when they were off the job…the last thing they wanted was to go back to work.

Title Slide: “**Prison Garden: How the Sabbath Solves the Paradox of Work”** **Exodus 20:8-11**

He called this “The Paradox of Work”…on one hand we get a sort of satisfaction out of work,….but somehow, we don’t want to be there.

But when we get the leisure time we do want…we fritter it away by watching TV or scrolling through Facebook….and largely end up bored and anxious.

So, here’s the question.

How can a man in prison find freedom and beauty in planting a garden…when most of us with all the freedom and leisure activities we can shake a stick at still end up frustrated with our work and bored and anxious with our leisure time.

…and even more importantly…what is that frustration, boredom and anxiety telling you about your soul?

We’ve been making our way through the 10 Commandments and, I gotta admit, the first 4 kind of feel like the LORD is off his game a bit.

Right? I mean we all can happily affirm “do not murder” “Do not steal” “do not commit adultery”

But these first commandments like “Don’t make a graven image” and “Don’t use God’s name in vain”…they just seem a little…I don’t know…ticky tack. They seem a little silly at first blush.

And when we get to the 4th commandment…its still in the sort of weird category.

Take a look

* **Exodus 20:8-11**

**“Remember the Sabbath day, to keep 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, you, or your son, or your daughter, your male servant, or your female servant, or your livestock, or the sojourner who is within your gates. For in six days the LORD made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that is in them, and rested on the seventh day. Therefore the LORD blessed the Sabbath day and made it holy.**

And then in a restatement of it from the book of Deut, Moses puts it like this.

* **Deuteronomy 5:15**

**You shall remember that you were a slave in the land of Egypt, and the LORD your God brought you out from there with a mighty hand and an outstretched arm. Therefore the LORD your God commanded you to keep the Sabbath day.**

To understand this command to “Keep the Sabbath Holy” its crucial to look at what it is that the Sabbath points to.

Because if you don’t understand what the Sabbath is pointing you to…you’ll never really be motivated to keep it holy. At best, your Sabbath will just become a take it or leave it sort of thing…and at worst…you’ll end up stuck in the paradox or work...for eternity.

* **1) Sabbath points me to beauty over utility.**
  + When Nelson Mandela planted that garden in the corner of the Robben Island prison yard, I suppose there were some people who thought it was a little foolish.
  + I mean, why spend time petitioning the warden for permission to plant a garden, when you could be writing that many more letters to the courts petitioning for release.
  + Why waste your time on a garden?
  + Well, maybe you should be asking God the same thing?
  + **Exodus 20:11**
  + See, when God gives this command to Israel to work for 6 days and then NOT work on the 7th day, he also gives a reason for it.
  + He says “observe the Sabbath because I created the world in 6 days, then rested on the seventh…so you should reflect my character by doing the same.”
  + In other words, the Sabbath is meant to help us systematically, …on a weekly basis, Remember the way God created the world…and the way he created us.
  + Now, by “the way God created us” I don’t mean, whether the earth was 6,000 or 10 million years old.
  + I don’t mean whether God created in 6 literal days, or if there is some sort theistic evolution happening over 6 million years.
  + I don’t mean trying to reconcile Adam and Eve with the dinosaurs.
  + That’s not what the creation account is about in Genesis 1-2.
  + Gen 1-2 are creation accounts that tell us about God and the value of his creation, not HOW it was created or HOW LONG it took.
  + So, lets turn our attention to the exact place that this Sabbath command is asking us to look.
  + **Genesis 2:8-9a, 15**

**And the LORD God planted a garden in Eden, in the east, and there he put the man whom he had formed. And out of the ground the LORD God made to spring up every tree that is pleasant to the sight and good for food.**

**The LORD God took the man and put him in the garden of Eden to work it and keep it.**

* + Ok, I want you to notice 3 things
  + First, God put the man, and eventually the woman, in this Garden he created in order to work.
    - Which means work is a part of the GOOD world God created and intended.
    - That means, that a core part of who you are created to be is a worker.
    - Our goal as humans is NOT to avoid work, or to do as little work as possible.
    - We do not achieve as a society when leisure becomes our highest goal.
    - In fact, all play and no work makes Jack a dull boy.
  + Second thing to notice-
  + God took a little patch of the earth and put a garden in it.
  + This implies that the entire earth was not garden.
  + In fact, we know this, because after Adam and Eve sin, he sends them OUT of the garden.
  + And even before they sinned, in Genesis 1, God gives them the command to be fruitful and multiply over the whole earth…in essence, they are to use their God given abilities to take the flourishing beauty and nourishment of the garden…and multiply it all over the earth.
  + They are to go out into the wilderness and make the wilderness like the garden.
  + Third, thing to notice.
  + Look at the trees.
  + Notice what it says about the trees.
  + It says, “God made these trees to spring up in the garden that were pleasant to the sight and good for food.”
  + Now, this is a pretty stunning sentence.
  + Up to this point in the creation account, everything has been pretty pragmatic.
  + Lots of order. Time, space, material matter… everything has been very practical.
  + And even making a home base for humanity in this garden makes good practical sense.
  + But all of sudden…there’s this verse about the trees.
  + And there’s some good practicality in it too.
  + After all, Adam and Eve need the fruit of these trees to eat.
  + But….
  + But…
  + Look what comes first.
  + The beauty of the trees…the detail that they were pleasant to the sight…is actually expressed BEFORE their usefulness.
  + And all of a sudden…there is a whole new dynamic to think about.
  + Maybe…maybe…all of this pragmatic creating and ordering of this world really isn’t about necessity at all.
  + Maybe this whole creation bit isn’t really about God doing something he NEEDS to do….
  + Maybe, just maybe, God created the world somewhat like Nelson Mandela created that garden on Robben Island.
  + As an expression of beauty, rather than pragmatic necessity.
* **Back to 1)**
  + Ok, follow me for a minute.
  + Unlike any other of the creation elements…the beauty of the trees has no utilitarian function.
  + I mean, think about this.
  + Why did God make food taste good?
  + Why not make trees steel poles that distribute tasteless wafers packed with all kinds of vitamins and minerals?
  + Or remember when Israel was wandering in the desert?
  + Why not just make the manna that fell from heaven taste plain? But it didn't…it tasted sweet, like honey?
  + Now, lets think even bigger?
  + Is God’s creation of the world…and God’s creation of humanity utilitarian?
  + In other words, does God need me?
  + Short answer: no.
  + And all I need is the first 2 verses of Genesis to show you this
  + **Gen 1:1-2**
  + The Bible teaches this idea that God is Trinitarian.
  + That simply means that God is ONE God, and THREE persons.
  + I know. Not the simplest concept to grasp…but hang with me.
  + …and know, you won’t find the word “Trinity” in the Bible, but you also won’t find the words “Omniscient” or “Omnipresent” in there either, yet the Bible still teaches us that God is both of those, too.
  + Anyway, a Trinitarian God is an absolute non-negotiable if you are going to read the Bible.
  + It sets the God of the Bible apart from every false god.
  + See, for every other god, creation is mandatory…its utilitarian.
  + So, take some eastern religions, for example, that teach that we are all a part of God.
  + Well, in that case, god NEEDS me...because without me…he is less than god.
  + Or, take Islam.
  + Islam teaches that Allah is God. He is only one person…not 3 persons like the God of the Bible.
  + That means that you and I are crucial to Allah being god.
  + Because Allah can do nothing relational without you and me.
  + He can’t love or receive love. He can’t be just. He can’t communicate.
  + Because all of those things take relationships.
  + So for Allah to be a god that LOVES…he had to create someone to love.
  + But not this Trinitarian God. The God who was perfectly sufficient before he created a single person or thing.
  + In fact, you find the Trinity in the first 2 verses of Scripture.
  + First, there is the Father. That’s pointed to by the word “God”.
  + Then, its easy to see the Spirit. Hovering over the waters.
  + But where is the son?
  + Afterall, the book of John, Colossians, Ephesians, they all tell us that Jesus was present at creation…where is he?
  + Well, the Hebrew for “In the Beginning” is also translated…”Through the First Born”
  + Jesus is the First born of creation. Look how Paul puts it in Colossians.
  + **Col 1:15-17**
  + **He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation. For by him all things were created, in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities—all things were created through him and for him. And he is before all things, and in him all things hold together.**
  + See, this all means that before there was anything…before there was a beginning…God (Father, Son, and Spirit) were co-existant in one God eternally loving each other in perfect community.
  + That means God didn’t NEED to create us. He didn’t HAVE TO HAVE humans.
  + So why did he do it?
  + Well…for beauty.
* **Back to 1)**
  + You and I are not tools God created to get something from…
  + You and I are works of art…poetry…a song…
  + You and I are a sort of garden in the corner of a prison yard…
  + God created us not because he needed us…but because he wanted to overflow his love…he wanted to give…he wanted to share the beauty of his trinitarian relationship.
  + So how does Sabbath remind me of that?
  + Well, when I stop for one day a week. When I don’t work. When I commit to slowing down…suddenly, I detach from the temptation of seeing myself as simply utilitarian.
  + I am suddenly reminded as I spend time with friends and family, that God didn’t create me because he needed me to do something for him, but created me to share in his love and beauty.
  + I have to, as it were, slow down and look at the trees.
  + And this means some pretty profound things for the way we think and act in the world.
  + **First, it means that I don’t look at people as merely useful…I must see them as inherently beautiful.**
  + Which is no easy task.
  + Its hard to see inherent value in someone who doesn’t add something to my life.
  + This means that every human life is valuable. It means that I can’t support abortion or euthanasia or genicide…ever.
  + At the heart of abortion is the idea that a person is only a person when they are useful.
  + I find it hauntingly ironic that Holocaust Remberance day is on or near the anniversary of Roe v. Wade every year…
  + Because at the core of both the murder of millions of babies and millions of Jews is seeing people as useful, rather than beautiful.
  + You are only a person if you are useful.
  + You are only a person if you add something objective to society.
  + But that’s not how God defines humanity.
  + You are a person if you carry the beauty of God.
  + And if you are a human…you are indelibly infused with it.
  + This also carries a profound impact for the importance of worship
  + We don’t primarily worship God by being useful…but by being beautiful.
  + You might look at this weekly worship gathering we do pragmatically and think…what a waste.
  + People gathered in a room to sing and listen to a guy yell for an hour? They could be doing so much more with that hour.
  + But don’t forget Mary.
  + One of Jesus’ closest friends.
  + One time Jesus was at Mary and her sister Martha’s house, and Martha was cleaning dishes after supper, while Mary was just sitting at Jesus’ feet. (TELL STORY)
    - SHE CHOSE THE GOOD PORTION
  + Or what about the time at dinner with the disciples, where Mary broke open a jar of expensive perfume and poured it on Jesus’ feet and Judas, the one who would betray Jesus, said “Why this waste? We could have sold that perfume and given the money to the poor?”
  + But Jesus said, “No, this is good”
  + Its not useful**.....[PAUSE]** but its beautiful.
* **Transition:** Look, when you take a day off from working out of 7, don’t use it to just check out of life…to play video games, or mindlessly watch movies.
  + Instead, talk with a friend.
  + Worship with the church.
  + …plant a garden.
  + See, your goal is not to squeeze every ounce of utility out of everyday…its to let that utility all serve the beauty of God.
  + So stop working so much…and enjoy all the beauty that is intended to point you to the God who loves so much…he overflowed himself to create a world…where trees are pleasant to the sight.
* **2) Sabbath points me to liberation over escape.**
  + Imagine if Nelson Mandela had escaped from Robben Island?
  + What if instead of planting that garden, he used his time to plan a Shawshank Redemption sort of escape.
  + What if Nelson Mandela was more like Andy Dufresne?
  + What if he wasn’t liberated but escaped?
  + What if he somehow swam the 6 miles back to Cape Town?
  + You know what the difference in liberation and escape is?
  + If Nelson Mandela escaped, there is still a warrant for his arrest.
  + The police are overturning every apartment in Cape Town…and if they find him, they are taking him back to prison.
  + The difference in liberation and escape, is that when you are liberated, you no longer live under the threat of your captors.
  + Once Mandela was liberated, he was free to walk around the beautiful city of Cape Town…he could speak in front of large crowds of people…he could be public.
  + **Deut 5:15**
  + Israel was LIBERATED from Egyptian slavery…they didn’t escape.
  + Think about it.
  + God didn’t just have the Egyptians fall asleep and then let Israel walk out to escape.
  + He continued to tell Pharaoh to make a public declaration that they were no longer slaves. That they were free to leave and worship their God.
  + And when Pharaoh and the Egyptian army drowned in the Red Sea, God himself was making a public declaration, “My people will live in Cape Town, and the Egyptian police will never bother them again”
  + See, the other purpose of the Sabbath is to point to liberation.
  + When Israel was in Egypt…they had to work as slaves 7 days a week.
  + In fact,
  + Take a look at **Exodus 1:13-14**
  + The words “Work, service, and slave” are all derivatives of the same Hebrew word. To read this sentence in Hebrew is so monotonous.
  + I mean, listen to this…I’m gonna read it in English the way its written in Hebrew. (I’ll put it on the screen)
  + So they ruthlessly made the people of Israel ***work*** as ***workers*** and made their lives bitter with hard ***work***, in mortar and brick, and in all kinds of ***work*** in the field. In all their ***work*** they ruthlessly made them ***work*** as ***workers***.
  + In slavery, Israel worked all the time. It was hard to even tell one day from the next. In fact, notice how the end of this passage ends just like the first. It's a rat race. Its like an infinite loop…which is exactly why some of you feel the way you do about your jobs.
  + So the question is WHY DO WE WORK like that? Why do we have this paradox of work where on one hand we like what we’re doing…but on the other hand it sort of feels like slavery we don’t want to go back to?
  + Well, there are **2 reasons work feels like slavery. (one slide)**
  + **We think work provides for our needs.**
  + **We think work is our identity.**
  + And in both of those areas, we have replaced God with work.
  + God provides our needs
    - Manna in the desert…you can’t stock up. Too much and it rotted.
    - God will provide enough for you today…stay dependent.
  + The Sabbath helps us stay dependent.
  + We stop to realize that we aren’t the providers, but that we will trust God to provide.
  + Secondly, God is supposed to be our identity, but we make work our identity.
  + Here’s what that means.
  + God created us to work to create order and beauty.
  + To do what the Bible calls CULTIVATE.
  + Cultivate is another word for gardening.
  + In fact, in Genesis 2 where is says the man and woman were put in the garden to WORK it…that word work is the word for CULTIVATE…it, by the way, also has a derivative meaning that means TO WORSHIP.
  + Without fully connecting the dots in the original language, let me just say that the idea here is that **WORKING, CULTIVATING, IS WORSHIP.**
  + Cultivating is taking the raw materials that God created…then ordering them (like God ordered his creation) and bringing beauty from them.
  + So, for example, I plant seeds in a garden in rows. And in soil that I know will interact well with the vegetables and flowers I’m planting. Like Mandela in his prison garden, I'm testing different fertilizers…like the pigeon poop he used…to see what has the best effect on the flourshing of my garden. The result is something beautiful….and useful. Its trees that are pleasant to the sight and also provide the nourishment to keep people alive.
  + Or, if you are a musician, you take the raw materials of sound that God created and you order them in such a way that beauty is created.
  + Once again, in work we are using order to serve beauty…
  + Our identity should be in creating the sort of order in the world that magnifies or shows off God’s beauty.
  + BUT, we twisted it. We made work into this thing that doesn’t show off God’s beauty…but tries to show off ours.
  + We want to be noticed. We want to be valued. We want to be respected. We want the world to look at us and say, “Look what he has achieved. Look what she has done.”
  + So, we work for it.
  + We put in more and more hours, not because we are making the world a more beautiful place to reflect God’s glory…but because we think the way we escape the monotony and slavery of this broken and seemingly meaningless world is to make much of ourselves.
  + And in so doing, we create an infinite loop.
  + We work more, to get more. And then we are satisfied with what we worked to get…so we work more, to get more. And still. Not happy. So we use every hour of every day to do more, to BE MORE…and still no rest.
  + See, we’re trying to escape.
  + We are trying to bury our problems.
  + But the more you pour yourself into work as **WHO YOU ARE** the less you become **who you were made to be.**
  + The truth is when we replace God with anything it always breaks us.
  + That’s what idolatry is. That’s what sin is.
  + Its taking the raw materials that God has given us and using them not to show off his beauty…but to make a name for ourselves.
  + So, when the Bible talks about murder and stealing and adultery, and all the other 10 commandments…its also indicting you for working 80 hours a week and neglecting your family.
  + You find your self broken and condemned for working 5 hours a week and using all your leisure time to simply DO NOTHING.
  + You find yourself empty, searching, and looking for some meaning even though you continue to excel at your job.
  + But you won’t find ultimate rest in taking one day off a week.
  + That won’t fundamentally change your identity.
  + You have to liberated.
  + And the irony is, most of us try to be liberated by working more.
  + We see worship as a utilitarian transaction.
  + We come in here on Sunday so God is happy with us so we aren’t so stressed and can do better work.
  + Or you try to be a moral person so God will be pleased with you efforts and reward you
    - It begins to tear apart your family, it isolates you from friends, because anyone who isn’t useful to you and building a name for yourself gets shown the door.
  + And, as the old saying goes, you are very lonely at the top.
  + The only people there are more people who are using a relationship with you to make a name for themselves.
  + …and so, you and all your so-called friends…CAN’T STOP WORKING.
  + Because you merely tried to escape…you were never liberated.
  + But you aren’t ever liberated by your work…by your own efforts.
  + Just like in the Garden, Adam and Eve worked FROM knowing they were already in a safe and secure loving relationship with God.
  + It wasn’t until they believed the lie that they had to work to make themselves gods…it wasn’t before they believed that THEY were supposed to be Greater than God…that they broke…and fell under the slavery of sin and death.
  + And that’s where Jesus comes in.
  + In all our futility to try and make an identity for ourselves…to save ourselves from the fruitlessness and brokenness of working for ourselves…
  + Jesus came to work for us.
  + He lived the life we couldn’t live, perfectly reflecting God’s beauty.
  + And he died the death we were condemned to die…on a cross.
  + And just like believing a lie that we could work to create a godless identity broke us, so believing the truth that Christ died for us changes us.
  + **Romans 4:5**
  + **And to the one who does not work but believes in him who justifies the ungodly, his faith is counted as righteousness,**
  + Its not your work that puts you back in right relationship with God, its trusting in Christ’s work for you**.**
  + See, in the book of Hebrews, Jesus is called our Sabbath Rest.
  + He is the way you stop working to get love and acceptance and order and beauty in your life.
  + He is the way it is freely given to you by God.
  + Because Jesus doesn’t just help you escape, he liberates you.
* + **Colossians 2:13-15**
  + **And you, who were dead in your trespasses… God made alive together with him, having forgiven us all our trespasses, by canceling the record of debt that stood against us with its legal demands. This he set aside, nailing it to the cross. He disarmed the rulers and authorities and put them to open shame, by triumphing over them in him**.
  + See, on the cross he fulfilled your prison sentence for you. He took death on himself so the rulers and authorities can’t come after you
  + The Egyptian army was drowned in the Red Sea, and all the evil powers of the devil that now seek to condemn and kill you, on the cross, Jesus has publicly said, “SENTENCE HAS BEEN SERVED IN ME” ….now you are free to walk about the beautiful Cape Town city of God.

**Transition**: See…

* **3) Resurrection is the way beauty & liberation come in.**
  + Nelson Mandela wasn’t just trying to pass the time when he planted that garden. He was giving himself…and that whole prison…a reminder of the Cape Town that was his home.
  + The beautiful city that lay just beyond the horizon, separated by the sea.
  + **Sometimes people ask, Why Sabbath on Sunday…and not Saturday.**
  + **When Jesus resurrected… you know what day of the week it was?**
* **John 20:1**
  + **Now on the first day of the week Mary Magdalene came to the tomb early, while it was still dark, and saw that the stone had been taken away from the tomb**.
  + Start of a new week. We are now a part of the new Creation that is coming…and that starts IN US.
  + ALL Creation waits and growns for Xians to be redeemed.
* There was another exile in prison on a Island…the same John who wrote those words about Mary was imprisioned on the island of Patmos…and there, God brought him a beautiful vision of what the New Heavens and New Earth would be like….a sort of picture of Cape Town from Robben Island.
* **Rev 21:1-4**
* **Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away, and the sea was no more. And I saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband. And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, “Behold, the dwelling place of God is with man. He will dwell with them, and they will be his people, and God himself will be with them as their God. He will wipe away every tear from their eyes, and death shall be no more, neither shall there be mourning, nor crying, nor pain anymore, for the former things have passed away.”**
* The sea is gone. When Jesus comes back, we won’t be separated from Cape Town anymore.