

INI

St. Paul's Lutheran Church
2100 16th Street SW
Austin, MN 55912-1749
Pastor Ted Barthels
Sermon preached on
June 6, 2021
Confirmation
2nd Sunday after Pentecost

Scripture Lessons: Romans 10:5-13, John 8:31-36

Hymns: 11; 399:1-4; 338; 283

Grace be unto you and peace from God our Father and our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Amen.

Sermon Text: Deuteronomy 5:12-15

‘Observe the Sabbath day, to keep it holy, as the LORD your God commanded you. ¹³Six days you shall labor and do all your work, ¹⁴but the seventh day is the Sabbath of the LORD your God. *In it* you shall do no work: you, nor your son, nor your daughter, nor your male servant, nor your female servant, nor your ox, nor your donkey, nor any of your cattle, nor your stranger who is within your gates, that your male servant and your female servant may rest as well as you. ¹⁵And remember that you were a slave in the land of Egypt, and the LORD your God brought you out from there by a mighty hand and by an outstretched arm; therefore the LORD your God commanded you to keep the Sabbath day. (NKJV)

This is the Word of God.

Sanctify us, oh Lord, through Your truth. Your Word is truth. Amen.

In Christ Jesus, God our Savior, dear fellow Redeemed:

INTRO: Taking our faith for granted.

That is a real danger for all of us. We think, “I’m a Christian. I’ve been a Christian all my life, and I will continue to be a Christian

for the rest of my life.” Why would we think any differently than that? Of course, that is our desire and our intent. On this confirmation Sunday that intent is what we expect to hear from our confirmand. We get into trouble when we assume that since that is my intent and God-pleasing desire that it will automatically turn out that way. We are tempted to take our faith for granted and dismiss the possibility that we would or could ever fall from faith.

Life is so busy; our jobs or careers are often very demanding. The recreational opportunities that are offered to us by the world are plentiful and fun and offer a great distraction from the problems and stress of life. At the same time, the world is very proficient in delivering a message that lays values and goals before us that stand in direct opposition to the gospel. They are taught in our schools, presented craftily in entertainment programming, and strongly promoted by both social media and the political pundits. But we still think, “I’ll be OK. I know the truth. I sort of remember what I learned in Catechism class.” And we take our faith for granted.

Our faith is a gift of God, not something of our own making. The Lord does not take our faith for granted. He secured life and salvation for us at tremendous personal cost to Himself, and by His gracious power called us to faith and keeps us in true faith. It was also the Lord’s plan and intent that we should be gathered together with other believers in the Christian Church that we might be a community of believers that encourage and build one another up in true faith. *Keeping us in true faith unto everlasting life is the Lord’s first and foremost concern for us as His children.* While the Lord knows those who are His, and He knows each of us who will be with Him in heaven, He does not take it for granted that we will remain in true faith, so He need not give our faith any of His attention. It is the work of the Holy Spirit building and strengthening our faith **through the Word** that keeps us in true faith. So, in expression of this concern for us, for our eternal life and salvation, the Lord has presented us with the Third Commandment.

In our text in Deuteronomy, in which Moses reaffirms the law of God for the people of Israel right before Moses’ death, that Third Command reads “*Observe the Sabbath day, to keep it holy, as the Lord your God commanded you.*” (v.12) At Sinai the third

commandment was stated as “Remember the Sabbath day to keep it holy.” “Observe” is a stronger word, urging even more diligent attention to the matter of worship. If we remember our Catechism lessons, we are well aware that the Sabbath law was a shadow of things to come which was fulfilled in Christ. (Colossians 2:17) We have a great deal of Christian liberty concerning our practice of worship. However, it remains God’s earnest desire for us, for our good and blessing, that we be faithful in worship, in the assembling of ourselves together around the Word. So, on the basis of these inspired words let us consider --

THEME: The Blessings Received through Faithful Worship.

When we read the words of our text, we hear the Lord laying down the law in no uncertain terms, and it is difficult for us to comprehend that the purpose of this law is to secure --

I. Rest for Your Souls.

“Observe the Sabbath day, to keep it holy, as the LORD your God commanded you. ¹³Six days you shall labor and do all your work, ¹⁴but the seventh day is the Sabbath of the LORD your God. In it you shall do no work: you, nor your son, nor your daughter, nor your male servant, nor your female servant, nor your ox, nor your donkey, nor any of your cattle, nor your stranger who is within your gates, that your male servant and your female servant may rest as well as you.” (v.12-14)

The Lord made it abundantly clear that the people of Israel were not to work on the Sabbath. They were not even to allow their children or their servants, or even strangers or foreigners to work on the Sabbath. Why such a strict prohibition? The day was to be set aside as holy, as a day for the Lord. It was a day that He rested from His work of creation. Why would the Lord need a day of rest? The answer is, “He didn’t!” The point was to sanctify that day for a special holy purpose, that it be reserved for the Lord, so that the Lord not be crowded out of His people’s lives by the busyness of life. So, the Lord made it one of the commandments, a part of the moral law that applies to all people.

It's the law! And exactly how do we react to the law? How do we react when anyone tells us how to live our lives, be it even the Lord? We don't like it! We rebel against it!

Now, in the New Testament age we know from the Lord that we needn't worship on Saturday, and that the strict prohibition of working on our day of worship no longer applies either. What does the Lord say to us? *"And let us consider one another in order to stir up love and good works, ²⁵ not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as is the manner of some, but exhorting one another, and so much the more as you see the Day approaching."* (Hebrews 10:24-26)

That doesn't sound so legalistic, does it? The Lord asks us to think about our fellow believers and how we might encourage them in their faith and life by coming to church and worshipping with them. As we see the world falling deeper into the abyss, and the Day of Judgment appearing to be nearer, then we should be all the more dedicated to this stirring up of love and good works. The Lord is expressing His concern for the spiritual welfare of His special people, people whom He loves, for whom He sacrificed His Son to save. That not only includes you, but He is appealing to you and your love of Savior and brethren to care for your fellow believers enough to come to church and worship, and greet one another, and encourage one another in the faith.

The Lord cares about our souls that they receive the rest they need from the distress of sin in this world. Jesus said, *"Come to Me, all you who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. ²⁹ Take My yoke upon you and learn from Me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls."* (Matthew 11:28-29) How shall we come to Him except through faith? How shall we learn of Him other than by the hearing of His Word? What does He desire to impart to us but the rich blessing of rest for our souls? He brings us the blessed assurance of His love and forgiveness, a forgiveness that has its foundation in the sacrifice Jesus made for a world of sinners in His sufferings and death on the cross. He redeemed us from sin and death. And we can never hear that good news enough. In the world they don't comprehend any righteousness apart from the works of man. We have that

righteousness which is from God, that righteousness that is freely imputed to all and upon all who believe.

The last verse of our text is very special indeed, for in it the Lord reminded the people of Israel of the vast wonder of His power and grace to save. He implored them to obey His Sabbath law --

II. Commemorating Our Deliverance from Slavery.

“And remember that you were a slave in the land of Egypt, and the LORD your God brought you out from there by a mighty hand and by an outstretched arm; therefore the LORD your God commanded you to keep the Sabbath day.” (v.15)

Indeed, they had experienced a great deliverance from the Lord! They had been enslaved by the Egyptians in a harsh and cruel slavery, including the command to kill newborn children of Israel! It was the Lord who delivered them with a mighty hand! The ten plagues revealed the might of the Lord against His enemies. Finally, there came the 10th plague of the death of the first born. This deliverance was commemorated by the Passover, for the Lord had passed over every home that had obeyed the command to paint the doorposts with the blood of the lamb. The people of Israel had many blessings for which to thank and praise the Lord each and every Sabbath, but no earthly blessing was greater than that mighty deliverance from the slavery in Egypt. They were delivered from an agonizing slavery that could only lead to death and were finally brought to the borders of the Promised Land! The Lord reminded them to observe the Sabbath in their homeland, to keep it holy, to take the time to thank and praise their Savior and Deliverer.

All of this pointed ahead to that Lamb of God who would come into the world and paint the posts of the cross with His own blood. Jesus our Savior came to deliver us from an even more cruel slavery, the slavery of sin that leads to death. In our gospel lesson this morning Jesus was quite clear concerning the power of sin. *“Most assuredly, I say to you, whoever commits sin is a slave of sin.”* ³⁵ *And a slave does not abide in the house forever, but a son abides forever.* ³⁶ *Therefore if the Son makes you free, you shall be free indeed.”* (John 8:34-36) Jesus delivered us *“by a mighty hand and by an outstretched arm”* (v.15). Jesus engaged the devil in mortal

combat, a combat which according to human observation Jesus appeared to have lost as He languished upon the cross, but it was by those outstretched arms nailed to the cross that Jesus redeemed us and freed us from that cruel slavery to sin. He delivered us at the cost of His holy precious blood and His innocent sufferings and death. He died and was buried, but on the third day He rose triumphant over death, and His victory over sin and the devil was proclaimed loud and clear for the salvation of all who believe. This is the truth that frees us from the slavery of sin and death.

We just recently observed our national holiday of Memorial Day. On that day we commemorate the sacrifice that many soldiers made over the course of our nation's history first to secure, and then to keep our freedoms. The word "ultimate" is often used to describe the sacrifice soldiers made, but it doesn't begin to compare to the curse of God which Christ endured as He truly made the **ultimate sacrifice** to free us from sin and death. We come to church on Sundays to commemorate that sacrifice, to remember how great a sacrifice was needed to secure our spiritual freedom and eternal life. We come to praise our God and to be reminded of the greatness of His love toward us undeserving sinners, that He should work such a great salvation. We can't hear it often enough, and we can never thank Him and praise His name enough for this great salvation.

Observe the Sabbath Day to keep it holy. For us that's Sunday. We are present today to witness our confirmand solemnly promise to be faithful to this truth unto his end, and to be faithful in worship. As we hear Lawson make these solemn promises, we should recall that we have all promised the same, and for the same reason, to honor Jesus for the great salvation He has brought us, that we hold dear in our hearts through faith in His name. Could there every be a greater reason for us to gladly "*Observe the Sabbath day to keep it holy?*"

AMEN.

And the peace of God which passes all understanding shall keep your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus. Amen.