

Sabbath Or Sunday?

Text: Luke 13:10-17

Suggested Hymns:

506, 324, 498, 012 ALHB, 508

1) Be hearers of the Word

2) Be doers of the Word

3) Our Biblical observance of Sunday

The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit, be with you all. Amen.

The text for our sermon today is Luke 13:10–17, *¹⁰ Now He was teaching in one of the synagogues on the Sabbath. ¹¹ And behold, there was a woman who had a spirit of infirmity eighteen years, and was bent over and could in no way raise herself up.*

¹² But when Jesus saw her, He called her to Him and said to her, “Woman, you are loosed from your infirmity.” ¹³ And He laid His hands on her, and immediately she was made straight, and glorified God.

¹⁴ But the ruler of the synagogue answered with indignation, because Jesus had healed on the Sabbath; and he said to the crowd, “There are six days on which men ought to work; therefore come and be healed on them, and not on the Sabbath day.”

¹⁵ The Lord then answered him and said, “Hypocrite! Does not each one of you on the Sabbath loose his ox or donkey from the stall, and lead it away to water it? ¹⁶ So ought not this woman, being a daughter of Abraham, whom Satan has bound—think of it—for eighteen years, be loosed from this bond on the Sabbath?”

¹⁷ And when He said these things, all His adversaries were put to shame; and all the multitude rejoiced for all the glorious things that were done by Him. (NKJV)

Lord God, heavenly Father, sanctify us through Your truth. Your Word is truth. Amen.

Dear friends in Christ,

Every well-informed Lutheran knows the tremendous difference between the Old Testament Sabbath and the New Testament Sunday.

The Sabbath was the seventh day of the week and was commanded by God. The Sunday is the first day of the week and is not commanded by God.

On the Sabbath the children of Israel had to rest from all their labours, but in the New Testament there is no such command. The Sabbath-day, together with the Sabbath-year and the sacrifices and the observance of days and weeks, belonged to the Ceremonial Law of the Jews, of which the apostle says in Colossians 2:16–17, *¹⁶ So let no one judge you in food or in drink, or regarding a festival or a new moon or sabbaths, ¹⁷ which are a shadow of things to come, but the substance is of Christ.*

And yet, in spite of the tremendous difference between the Old Testament Sabbath and the New Testament Sunday, the two are related. In the Sabbath law God is applying the Third Commandment to Old Testament conditions. Our New Testament Sunday observance also rests upon the Third Commandment. Thus the two are related.

Hence we can learn something for our Sunday observance from Christ's conduct on the Sabbath-day as it is presented to us in our text. The theme for today is *Sabbath or Sunday?* May the Lord bless our meditation.

1. Be Hearers Of The Word

Our text begins, *¹⁰ Now He was teaching in one of the synagogues on the Sabbath.* When Christ taught, He expected to have an audience. That is the will of God. *“This is My beloved Son, ... Hear Him!”¹* Hearing the Word was also in the Old Testament the important thing; therefore the prophet says in Ecclesiastes 5:1, *¹ Walk prudently when you go to the house of God; and draw near to hear.*

This is also the important thing in the New Testament. True, God has not appointed a certain day. In the New Testament all days look alike to God. There is, however, one thing that God has given us, His Word, the Law and the Gospel. This Word He has given to His congregation.

It is the will of God that the congregation arrange for the public preaching of this Word. They arrange for it by calling pastors, and also by appointing the days and the time, since God did not specify any day.

From the very beginning, the Christian Church appointed as one of these days that day of the week on which the Lord rose from the dead, Sunday. When therefore on Sunday we have divine services, it is the will of God that we should be there, not because it is Sunday, but because we have time and opportunity to hear His Word.

The question is not, *What day is it?* but, *Is God's Word being preached?* and, *Do you love God's Word?* The question *Do you love God's Word?* is just as important when the congregation arranges for services on other days, such as Christmas and Good Friday etc.

Sadly some people are like the "Jews" in our text who still observe the day for the day's sake. They feel they must go to church on Sunday. If they do not go on Sunday, that is a terrible sin. But if they do not go to church on some other day when the Word of God is preached, well, that may not be quite right, but it is not as bad as absenting oneself from the house of God on Sunday.

Such thoughts are wrong. Let us repeat, the question is not, *What day is it?* but, *Do you love God's Word?* If so, you will make every effort to be in Church every day on which the Word of God is preached.

2. Be Doers Of The Word

However, Christ did not only teach and expect to have hearers of the Word, but we learn from our text that He was also a Doer of the Word. He practised what He preached, ¹¹ *And behold, there was a woman who had a spirit of infirmity eighteen years, and was bent over and could in no way raise herself up.* ¹² *But when Jesus saw her, He called her to Him and said to her, "Woman, you are loosed from your infirmity."* ¹³ *And He laid His hands on her, and immediately she was made straight, and glorified God.*

Thus God tells us in the New Testament, in James 1:22, ²² *But be doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving yourselves.*

And in James 1:26-27, ²⁶ *If anyone among you thinks he is religious, and does not bridle his tongue but deceives his own heart, this one's religion is useless.* ²⁷ *Pure and undefiled religion before God and the Father is this: to visit orphans and widows in their trouble, and to keep oneself unspotted from the world.*

We should not merely go to church on Sunday or on any other day and, when we come home, hang our religion away with our Sunday clothes; no, the Word that we have heard is to be translated into living.

The first thing we should do is to lay hold on the Word with a living faith, lay hold on our Saviour Jesus Christ and the glorious work He has done for us.

The second thing we should do is to ask the Lord for grace to change our heart, to fill it with love for Christ so that we no longer live to ourselves but unto Jesus who loved us and gave Himself for us. Our whole life, at home, at work, at play, in church, is to be permeated by our religion.

That is true every day, especially, however, on Sunday. This day gives us an opportunity to practise our religion in a way that is outstanding from the ways of others days. This may begin already in church, even as Christ worked in the synagogue.

How about that stranger sitting next to you? You notice he has no hymn-book; he feels strange. What can you do? Or you meet him as you leave the church. What can you do? The woman in our text did not come to Jesus. He went to her. Jesus says, *“Go and do likewise.”*²

But Sunday gives us further opportunity to practise our religion. Perhaps our brethren in their family or in their congregation have some special cause for joy. *Rejoice with those who rejoice.* Perhaps our brethren in their family or congregation are stricken with some sorrow. *Weep with those who weep.*³

This does not mean that a Christian may not on Sunday, in the fear of God, also think of himself. If Father and Mother, who the whole week are confined to their work, in the pursuit of their health make a trip into see God’s grand nature, that is pleasing to God; only let them not despise preaching and God’s Word.

If the young people of the congregation, desirous of Christian fellowship, decide on a hike or some other outing, God will not say them no; only God’s Word must always come first. First Christ taught, then He healed. First comes the hearing, then the doing.

3. Our Biblical Observance Of Sunday

Christ’s conduct on the Sabbath did not please everyone. Our text says, ¹⁴ *But the ruler of the synagogue answered with indignation, because Jesus had*

healed on the Sabbath; and he said to the crowd, “There are six days on which men ought to work; therefore come and be healed on them, and not on the Sabbath day.”

This was hypocritical, for also in the Old Testament works of love and necessity were not forbidden. Therefore Christ is not influenced by the criticism of the ruler of the synagogue. He replied, ¹⁶ *So ought not this woman, being a daughter of Abraham, whom Satan has bound — think of it — for eighteen years, be loosed from this bond on the Sabbath?* ¹⁷ *And when He said these things, all His adversaries were put to shame; and all the multitude rejoiced for all the glorious things that were done by Him.*

Our Biblical Sunday observance also meets with objectors. On the one hand there are the so called liberals. For them we are too strict. They tell us, *“You make an idol of the Word of God. There is no need of being so careful always about running to church. Church-going can be overdone. I can be just as good a Christian as ‘So-and-so’ even though I am not in church every Sunday.”*

On Judgement Day the Lord, to whom we must give account of our time and who is the Giver of the precious Word of Life, will decide their case.

On the other hand, there are some people who still believe that by divine command we must observe the seventh day. For them we are not strict enough. Then there are also people who contend that God has put Sunday in the place of the Old Testament Sabbath. They insist that we must observe this particular day as commanded by God and that therefore many of the observances of the Sabbath have been carried over to Sunday. We therefore must rest on Sunday and not even have a paper in the house.

Let us not be influenced neither by the liberals nor by any other group. Let us not learn from the liberals to despise the Word of God and take something away from it. Neither, however, let us be swayed by anybody and add some man-made doctrine to the Word of God. One is as damnable as the other.

But, on the other hand, let us not be proud and in sinful pride lift up our heads over our objectors. Let us repent. For must we not confess that all too frequently we have not lived up to our own doctrine, that is, the teaching of the Bible?

Remember what you learnt in your Confirmation lessons on the Third Commandment.

Remember the Sabbath day to keep it holy. *What does this mean?* We should fear and love God so that we do not neglect His Word and the preaching of it, but regard it as holy and gladly hear and learn it.

What is the Sabbath day? In the Old Testament God set aside the seventh day (Saturday) as a required day of rest and worship. Note that the word “Sabbath” means “rest.”

Does God require us to observe the Sabbath and other holy days of the Old Testament? The Sabbath was a sign pointing to Jesus, who is our rest. Since Jesus has come as our Savior and Lord, God no longer requires us to observe the Sabbath day and other holy days of the Old Testament.

Does God require the church to worship together on any specific days? God requires Christians to worship together. He has not specified any particular day. The church worships together especially on Sunday because Christ rose from the dead on Sunday.

When do we sin against the Third Commandment? We sin against the Third Commandment when we despise preaching and the Word of God.

How is this done? We despise preaching and the Word of God when we do not attend public worship; when we do not use the Word of God and the Sacraments; and when we use the Word of God and the Sacraments negligently or carelessly.

What does God require of us in the Third Commandment? We should hold preaching and the Word of God sacred. We should gladly hear it, learn it, and meditate on it.

So let us ask ourselves - Have we loved God's Word as we ought? Have we rejoiced at the precious message of the Gospel of Christ Jesus? Do we embrace every opportunity to hear this Word? Have we always been doers of the Word?

We have need to bow our heads in shame and prayer, pleading with God to forgive also in this respect our many transgressions. God will hear our heartfelt prayer and forgive us for Christ's sake.

Let us summarise by taking note that the chief and common element in the observance of the Old Testament Sabbath and the Sunday of today is the “sanctifying,” and not the “day” nor the “resting.” The Jews kept the Sabbath holy by hearing, studying, and pondering the Word of God in their Synagogues.

Luther commented, *“The force and power of this Commandment lies not in the resting but in the sanctifying.”* In its simplest terms the Commandment now reads, *“Thou shalt sanctify,”* which is done by the Word of God and prayer. God expects us to assemble with our fellow Christians for public worship. It is the special time we spend in prayer, and in hearing and meditating upon God’s Word together.

Let us close with the words of the hymnist,⁴

SAFELY through another week
God has brought us on our way:
Let us now a blessing seek,
Waiting in His courts to-day:
Day of all the week the best,
Emblem of eternal rest! Amen.

The peace of God, which passes all understanding, will keep our hearts and minds, in Christ Jesus. Amen.

¹ Matthew 17:5

² Luke 10:37

³ Romans 12:15

⁴ 12 ALHB