

I.N.I.

Fourth Sunday after Pentecost
July 7, 2019
Exodus 20:8-11

In Christ Jesus, who came to fulfill the Sabbath for us, Dear Fellow Redeemed,

In the Old Testament, as we read in Ex. 20, the LORD set the Seventh day of the week as His Sabbath, the Day of Rest. That is what the word Sabbath means=Rest. The LORD again says, **SIX DAYS YOU SHALL LABOR AND DO ALL YOUR WORK, BUT 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 CATTLE, NOR YOUR STRANGER WHO IS WITHIN YOUR GATES.**

That Sabbath rest was a Shadow of the real rest that would be given them by the Messiah. In fact Jesus said: **THE SON OF MAN IS LORD ALSO OF THE SABBATH.** Jesus, the One who has come to keep the Law perfectly for us, has also fulfilled the Law, the Old Testament Moral, Civil and Ceremonial Laws. These Laws and Ceremonies were placed upon the Old Testament Jews as a reminder of the curse of the Law, sin, which the Messiah someday would remove from them. These Laws and Ceremonies constantly pointed ahead to a Messiah, a Savior who was to come. Paul calls them **A SHADOW OF THINGS TO COME.** And what was to come? The Messiah, Christ!

The Sabbath Day, the Rest Day of the Old Testament therefore signified a two-fold rest.

- 1) It pointed back to the rest that God took on the seventh day after He created the world. We read that clearly in this commandment: **FOR IN SIX DAYS THE LORD MADE THE HEAVENS AND THE EARTH, THE SEA, AND ALL THAT IS IN THEM, AND RESTED THE SEVENTH DAY. THEREFORE THE LORD BLESSED THE SABBATH DAY AND HALLOWED IT.**
- 2) It also pointed ahead to the spiritual rest which the believers would have through the Messiah, the Savior, the Christ and the final rest of eternal life that awaits all believers in Christ.

For us New Testament Christians, the Third Commandment does not speak about what to do with a certain day that was only a shadow, but it speaks about what to do with God's Word that brings true rest for our souls.

Since the New Testament believers knew that they no longer were commanded by God to keep this day as their "holy day" in this way—by not working; they chose another "holy day"—Sunday---holy in this sense—it was a day that they would set aside for public worship of their Savior God.

So this command of God applies to all of us today and everyday of our lives in a very real and serious way. First of all we learn from Luther's explanation to the Third Commandment that God forbids us to despise preaching and His Word and second He tells us that God commands us to look upon His Word as sacred and gladly hear and learn it.

How do we despise God's Word? We do this in many ways.

We despise God's Word by not coming at all to hear God's Word being preached in His House.

We despise God's Word by coming only irregularly, feeling there are many more important things to do.

We despise God's Word by coming, but not listening.

We despise God's Word by coming and listening, but not believing.

We despise God's Word by coming, listening, believing, but not doing or living it.

We despise God's Word by not reading and studying it at home individually or as a family.

We despise God's Word by not supporting the work of the Church, by not giving of our offerings to support the Word being preached here at home and in our missions.

We despise God's Word when we ourselves do not spread it by telling others about Jesus.

WOW! That is quite a list!

One man boastfully said that he attended services regularly for 40 years because it saved him much time. He said he really never heard a sermon all the way through, for he would spend the time during the sermon going over last week's business and making plans for the next week. Time well spent he thought!

Martin Luther in his Large Catechism wrote: **“This commandment is transgressed also by that other crowd who listens to God’s Word as to some entertainment and comes to the preaching service merely by the force of habit and leaves again with as little understanding of the Word at the end of the year as at the beginning...Bear in mind, therefore, that you must be concerned not merely to listen to God’s Word but also to learn it and remember it. Do not imagine that this is optional or that it matters little one way or the other. Realize instead that here is God’s command and that He will call upon you to give an account of how you heard, learned, and honored His Word...Also those conceited individuals are to be similarly rebuked who when they have heard one or two sermons turn up their noses at any more, imagining that they now know it all and need no more instruction...Be sure to get this: even if you knew the Word of God through and through and had mastered everything, yet all your days are spent in the devil’s territory, and he rests neither day nor night from stealthily trying to sneak up and kindle in your heart faithlessness and evil thoughts against all the commandments. Therefore you need at all times to have the Word of God in your hearts, on your lips, and in your ears. But where the heart remains unmoved and the Word does not resound, there the devil breaks in and does his damage before one realizes it. On the other hand, when we sincerely ponder, hear, and apply the Word, it has such power that its fruit never fails.**

There is a saying, “The act of going to church will not save man; but not going to church may very well damn him!” Why? Jesus says, **HE WHO IS OF GOD HEARS GOD’S WORDS; THEREFORE YOU DO NOT HEAR, BECAUSE YOU ARE NOT OF GOD.** If you are “not of God” then you are not a believer in Christ and are lost forever. Again Jesus says, **HE WHO HEARS YOU HEARS ME, HE WHO REJECTS YOU REJECTS ME, AND HE WHO REJECTS ME REJECTS HIM WHO SENT ME.** James says, **RECEIVE WITH MEEKNESS THE IMPLANTED WORD, WHICH IS ABLE TO SAVE YOUR SOULS.**

That is why despising God’s Word is so serious, so dangerous, so damning! By neglecting to read, hear, learn and study the Word of God we are neglecting the one and only way that God uses to bring us to salvation. Faith in Christ is the only way to heaven and where do we receive that faith but from the Holy Spirit working in and through the Word of God. **SO THEN FAITH COMES BY HEARING, AND HEARING BY THE WORD OF GOD.**

It is a very regrettable but true fact that the majority of the people in the United States do not come to hear or read God’s Word on a consistent basis. Many feel that they will only hear the pastor rant and rave about doing this and that, laying down law after law which will only restrict their lives and hinder their fun. This is not what our church is all about. This is not what our preaching is all about. Yes, we do preach the Law, in order to show all of us our terrible, damnable sins. Sins that condemn us and shows us our lost condition before our holy God. We have the Law preached to us so that we do not arrogantly go about thinking that we can do our duty to God and in some way save ourselves and earn our own way to heaven.

We have seen in these first three commandments—the First Table of the Law—that we have broken each of them many, many times in our thoughts, words and deeds. How often haven’t we neglected our Bibles, God’s Word and left them lying there unopened on our bookshelves? How often haven’t we not come to hear God’s Word when we had the opportunity because something “more important” came up? One man proudly told me that he worshipped at “the St. Mattress of the Springs” on Sunday morning, meaning he slept in rather than hear God’s Word.

A little baby if not fed food from its mother cannot live; in fact none of us without food can live. Cut off its nourishment and the baby and all of us would surely die. So also cut off the Word of God from our souls, which feeds us spiritual food, food for our spiritual nourishment, and **we shall surely die**, die spiritually in unbelief which leads to eternal damnation.

How can we escape such a certain end? That is where the preaching of the Gospel comes in--the glorious Good News that even though we have sinned everyday, even though we are miserable sinners who have dared to break God’s holy commands and deserve death and damnation, we have the assurance that our loving Father has sent His Son to take our place. Jesus has come and kept this Third Commandment for us. He always regarded God’s Word as holy and gladly heard and learned it. We see that in His sitting at the feet of the priests when He was 12 years old. He never despised the Word or the preaching of it. In fact He proclaimed His Father’s Words throughout His life and even now sends out His pastors, missionaries and teachers to do the same in His name.

So Jesus calls out to us, **"COME TO ME, ALL YOU WHO LABOR AND ARE HEAVY LADEN, AND I WILL GIVE YOU REST."**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. **"FOR MY YOKE IS EASY AND MY BURDEN IS LIGHT."** He says, **SON, DAUGHTER, BE OF GOOD CHEER, YOUR SINS ARE FORGIVEN YOU.** That is the REST from God!

Where do we learn this? From His Word! May we never willfully, knowingly, intentionally neglect the hearing of Jesus' Words. The Lord encourages us, through the author to the Hebrews, **LET US NOT GIVE UP MEETING TOGETHER, AS SOME ARE IN THE HABIT OF DOING, BUT LET US ENCOURAGE ONE ANOTHER-- AND ALL THE MORE AS YOU SEE THE DAY APPROACHING.**

Our God has indeed prepared for us a great salvation, a salvation which cost His Son His life, a salvation that is beyond our imagining and beyond our believing were it not for the Word of God and the Holy Spirit's work in our hearts. He has recorded that amazing salvation in His Word and through His pastors prepares a magnificent meal, a scrumptious gourmet meal of spiritual food every Sunday for us to spiritually eat and digest. We have the opportunity to also eat of this spiritual food everyday of our lives by our daily reading of His Word. Eating of that meal will make us all the more desirous for more and more so that we will be able to say with the Psalmist, **I WAS GLAD WHEN THEY SAID TO ME, "LET US GO INTO THE HOUSE OF THE LORD... THE LAW OF YOUR MOUTH IS BETTER TO ME THAN THOUSANDS OF COINS OF GOLD AND SILVER... BUT HIS DELIGHT IS IN THE LAW OF THE LORD, (God's Word) AND IN HIS LAW (God's Word) HE MEDITATES DAY AND NIGHT."**

This salvation which was first announced by God Himself to Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden is given to us in His Word and is announced publicly every Sunday in His House of worship. May the Holy Spirit lead us to come gladly to hear it, to learn it, to believe it and to live it.

The prophet Jeremiah wrote in 15:16: **YOUR WORDS WERE FOUND, AND I ATE THEM, AND YOUR WORD WAS TO ME THE JOY AND REJOICING OF MY HEART.** Most of us would say that God's Word, in which this precious rest from Jesus is given to us, is precious to us. May our actions say the same thing.

We pray: Lord, let Your Word ever be my pleasure and my hearts most precious treasure.

Amen.