

Second Sunday after Pentecost – 2024

Deuteronomy 5:12-15

2 Corinthians 4:5-12

Mark 2:23-28 (3:1-6)

Man is some kind of crazy hypocrite. Jesus' opponents, the Pharisees, say that they're concerned about protecting the integrity of God's law, the Sabbath in this case. They were worried about the Son of God engaging in a life-restoring activity on the Sabbath, yet they actually begin to make plans to *kill* someone... on that very Sabbath. Isn't murder against God's law? It's astounding what we do. Have you EVER said a hypocritical word, some caustic judgmental statement about someone else when you engage in the same wretched behavior or something worse? Have you EVER behaved hypocritically? I have. Lord, have mercy! I have. Jesus healed a man with a withered hand and the religious rulers make plans to destroy Him – that's how St. Mark puts it. Destroy Him. Now picture the vitriol that spews from their mouths as Jesus hangs on the cross? "He saved others; he cannot save himself. He is the King of Israel; let him come down now from the cross, and we will believe in him. He trusts in God; let God deliver him now, if he desires him. For he said, 'I am the Son of God'" (Matthew 27:42-43).

Jesus healed a man on the Sabbath. A new creation breaks in as Jesus restores a man who had endured a consequence of the fall. Disease, birth defects, mental pathology – the effects of man's fall into sin are legion. You know them well, don't you? Pain, sorrow, guilt, shame and death – and Jesus heals on the Sabbath. Oh, not healed, restored. Restored is the word St. Mark uses. Does humanity need to be restored? Who's going to do that? How, pray tell, will restoration take place? Eve reached out her hand and took some of the fruit that God had commanded should not be eaten. Eve's hand extended to Adam the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil and Adam took that fruit in hand and put it to his mouth and ate. Death; Christ came to restore what was perfect and then became riddled with death. And His opponents conspire to destroy Him because He restored a man with a withered hand on the Sabbath.

Jesus had told them: "No one puts new wine into old wineskins." "New wine is for fresh wineskins" (Mark 2:22). Jesus is new wine. The eternal Son of God in human flesh is new wine. "Come to me, all who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest" (Matthew 11:28). Sabbath means rest. Do you think that man finds rest apart from Jesus' death and resurrection? What is it that ails us? We hurt each other. We lie and we break our promises and we put ourselves above others. That kind of failure makes me heavy laden with guilt. Guilt is not just a feeling; it is, theologically speaking, the objective condition of my standing before Holy God. Who is going to deliver me from guilt? "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" (Matthew 11:29-30). Rest for your soul – have you found it? Has Rest found you? The radical love of a dying Savior – has Christ's grace, an unqualified acceptance of you, has that reality ever quieted the accusing voice of shame and guilt? Rest is found in Jesus' wounds; for everyone. The Lord Christ's yoke is His cross. Take my cross upon you and learn from me. What does Jesus want you to learn?

How about grace? Do you suppose that the individual who knows the grace that God has given to him and then extends a merciful disposition to others, do you suppose that that individual knows rest in his soul? How about devotion, fidelity, commitment to God and His Word? Does Jesus have something to teach you about these? Can you learn about devotion by taking Christ's cross upon yourself, denying yourself and following Him? Do you believe that denying yourself actually leads to finding rest for your soul? I believe that. As you might imagine, pastors see people, faithful people, in various states of unrest. None of us is perfect. Because we are imperfect, unrest will haunt us, plague us, vex us. You are not immune to unrest because you are a Christian. As a Christian, you do have to know where to go when unrest descends with its tumult.

What is the Third Commandment? Remember the Sabbath day by keeping it holy. What does this mean? We should fear and love God that we do not despise preaching and His Word, but hold it sacred and gladly hear and learn it (Small Catechism). There is something unique about this Divine Service. When our Lord sent out His disciples to proclaim the presence of His Kingdom He said this: "The one who hears you hears me" (Luke 10:16). You are sheep of the Good Shepherd. About you the Lord Christ said this: "My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me. I give them eternal life, and they will never perish, and no one will snatch them out of my hand" (John 10:27-28). The worst thing about unrest is that it lies to you, telling you that Christ will abandon you, that you should look for peace within yourself, that the church is merely a human construct and you can find God anywhere. God locates rest in the Gospel which is proclaimed here for you, Christ's sheep. God locates rest in Jesus' body and blood which is administered here to sinners, all who are imperfect and bring unrest upon themselves and others. Jesus died to give you this rest. Resurrection is the new creation that has already begun. Perfect peace, perfect rest is our future. We will not take our eyes off of the prize. We are strangers here; heaven is our home. But rest is ours now.

This Divine Service is a foretaste of the feast to come. In this place we participate in the ongoing feast of victory, a banquet of salvation through which Christ has served His church for millennia. Our mothers and fathers have finished the race, relishing the rest that came through Word and Sacrament and then inheriting the kingdom prepared for them from the foundation of the world. We are the same. Our children memorize Scripture and thus they have Christ's rest embedded in their soul. We study the bible, harvesting the rest that is ripe in that blessed Word. Satan, the world, and your own sinful flesh want to keep you mired in dysfunction, mired in a twisted circle of godless pursuits which leads a radical uneasiness and the proposed remedy is just more of the same in a different package. The Sabbath is the corrective. The Sabbath was made for you. Christ was incarnated for you. The incarnate Son of God is Lord of the Sabbath and the Lord of you and He is your rest.

On a Friday, the 6th day of the week, the Messiah was arrested, judged, scourged, and crucified. He atoned for the sin of the world (1 John 2:1-2). Before the Jewish Sabbath, Jesus was taken down from the cross and laid in the tomb. The New Wine of Christ crucified took His Sabbath rest in a tomb. And He rose. On a new day, the Day of Life, the 8th day, a day that stands outside of broken creation, Jesus rose from the dead and brings the light of heaven into this dark realm. Jesus rose on a Sunday and here you sit, hearing of rest that has calmed the hearts of billions of people. Jesus' death and resurrection is greater than our hypocrisy, greater than our

guilt, greater than man reaching out his hand to snatch forbidden fruit. Take comfort in this day. Take comfort in Christ's triumph. Take comfort in the rest that is here for you.