

**2<sup>nd</sup> Sunday after Pentecost – June 10, 2012 – Faith Lutheran, Radcliff, KY**

**Based on Mark 2:23-28**

**written by Pastor Paul Horn**

**Get some rest!**

I saw a billboard this week that said, “Rest is required.” What do you think they were trying to sell? A stay at their chain of hotel s... Would you agree with that statement? Rest is required? Absolutely! Especially when traveling. How do you rest and relax at home? When we talk about relaxing would you include Sunday morning as a time of rest? This morning we are going to talk about the day of rest, the Sabbath day, the third commandment and its connection to the gospel this morning from Mark chapter 2. As we do the Holy Spirit encourages you, “Get some rest!”

Let us pray. Holy Spirit, remove all distracting thoughts from our minds so that we may listen to your Word with eager hearts. Amen.

The disciples were walking through Palestine with Jesus. And oftentimes the roads were bordered by fields of wheat or barley. This particular day was a Sabbath day. As they walked along they picked the heads of barley off the stalk, rubbed them in their hands to separate the kernel from the shell and ate the kernel. The Pharisees, the religious teachers in Israel, saw this and they pointed it out to Jesus, “Look! Your disciples are violating the law! They are sinning!” Where the disciples doing what was unlawful on the Sabbath?

In the Third Commandment that the LORD revealed to Moses on Mount Sinai he said, “Remember the Sabbath day by keeping it holy. Six days you shall work, but on the seventh you must rest. It is to be holy to the LORD.” The purpose of the Sabbath day, which was Saturday for the Old Testament believers, was rest for the body so they could have rest for their soul. The Israelites did no work on Saturday so they could go to church.

So, did the disciples break the Sabbath? Technically they were harvesting, and that was work. Israelites didn’t even cook food on the Sabbath. They prepared it all the day before. But if you read Deuteronomy 23:25 the LORD allowed for this. Folks who were traveling through the countryside could pick the heads of grain as they walked along. Now, you couldn’t bring a basket into someone’s field and fill it up. There were no gas stations to purchase snacks from while traveling. The LORD provided for his people. The law of love superseded the technical details of the commandment.

You have to understand why the Pharisees accused the disciples of this infraction. They had added over 1,500 amendments to God’s 10 Commandments, extra laws and ceremonies, which were really nothing more than traditions. But the Pharisees said that you had to keep these traditions otherwise you aren’t really keeping God’s commandments. You’re really not God’s people. They burdened the people of Israel into thinking that a right relationship with God could be earned by doing good things, performing extra good deeds.

In response Jesus told a story to teach his point. David lived about 1,000 years before Jesus. David had been anointed to be the successor to King Saul. While Saul sat on the throne, he grew jealous of David. He was

successful on the battlefield, popular with the people and with the ladies, his heart that was dedicated to the LORD, and that significant incident involving a certain giant named Goliath. Saul spent rest of his reign pursuing David in order to kill him. David gathered around him a group of vigilantes experienced in guerrilla warfare in order to elude the king's pursuits. One day David and his men set out for the city of Nob. There in Nob was the tabernacle. The tabernacle was the fancy tent Moses had made where the Israelites worshiped. There David asked for some bread.

The bread at the tabernacle was special. It was called the Bread of Presence. 12 loaves of bread were baked and placed on the Table of Presence in a room in the tabernacle called the Holy Place. The Table was made of pure gold. Every week fresh loaves were baked and placed on the table on the Sabbath. The bread was to be eaten only by the priests who served in the tabernacle. It represented a gift from the 12 tribes and signified the fact that God sustained his people with bread in the desert while they wandered for 40 years with Moses. In a sense the bread was holy to the LORD.

Did David wrong? Technically, yes. But Jesus here indicates that what the priest and David did was lawful. This action was getting to the heart of the commandments, which is love showing itself through actions. The priest was preserving the lives of David and his companions by giving them bread to eat.

Then Jesus said, **"The Sabbath was made to benefit people. People were not made for the Sabbath."** The LORD created the Sabbath day to give rest to his people, not to burden them. When they took a break from working, then they could go to church. There they would hear the great comforting promises from their God. Through those promises God gave them rest, true rest. Spiritual rest oftentimes translates to mental and physical rest. Through the 3<sup>rd</sup> Commandment God was telling his people, "Get some rest!"

Does the Sabbath apply to us as New Testament Christians? The purpose of the Sabbath in the Old Testament was to point the people to Christ. The Messiah would come and bring a true Sabbath rest: rest from their sins, rest from the burden of the requirements of the law, rest from the fear of death. Christ came and fulfilled the commandments. He obeyed them according to God's standards. And so the commandments and ceremonies were not needed, as Paul said in our Second Lesson in Colossians, these things were a shadow of what was to come, they pointed to Christ.

So again, does the Sabbath apply to us today? Technically, no. But the heart of the commandment still applies to us today. Sabbath is a word that means rest, and so our Sabbath day is whenever we receive spiritual rest. Jesus said, "Come to me all who are weary and burdened and I will give you rest." How does Jesus give us rest? Just like he did in the Old Testament, at church! In worship and Bible study God speaks his wonderful comforting promises to us. Through those promises he gives us rest from our sins, rest from the burden of the requirements of the law, rest from the fear of death. God speaks wonderful promises to us whenever we study God's Word for ourselves at home, with family devotions, and in our personal study of the Scriptures.

Technically, our Sabbath days are Sundays, when we gather for worship and Bible study. Our Sabbath days are every day because every day we study God's Word for ourselves in our homes. God says, "Get some rest! Let me give you Sabbath rest."

So why is it that you are so tired today, tired spiritually? Is it because you are not allowing God to give you true rest through his Word? Did you know that of all the people that come for worship on Sunday morning, an average of 38% of those people stay for Bible study on Sunday morning. Why don't more people schedule corporate Bible study time as part of their Sunday morning ritual? Why is it that you are so tired, spiritually? Are you allowing God to give you true rest through his Word in your home? How many of you have a time scheduled for every day of the week so that you can find true rest as you study your catechism or your Bible, your book of Lutheran confessions or your hymnal?

If we know that God gives us true rest when we allow him to speak to us through the study of his Word, why don't we make it a priority? God wants his Word to be a top priority in our lives. But sadly, it isn't.

What happens when you don't get rest? Maybe you've heard of these industrial disasters: Chernobyl, Three Mile Island, Challenger space shuttle explosion, Exxon Valdez, all happened because people don't get enough rest. What happens when God's people don't get enough spiritual rest? I've seen poor money management, stress, depression, lack of patience, extreme weight gain, unhealthy weight loss, unwillingness to forgive, fear and anxiety. Yes, a lack of spiritual rest affects our whole lives. More importantly, it affects our eternity. If we continue to get no rest, then we will fall asleep spiritually, and we will be dead spiritually.

Do you need some rest? I know I do. Our rest is found in our Savior, Jesus who said, "The Son of Man is Lord even of the Sabbath." For all of our sins against God's Word, misplaced priorities etc, did you know that God will not hold your sins and mine against us on the Last Day?

Because Jesus went to church every Sabbath day. But he was not just a warm body in the pew every week. He studied the Scriptures. He took them to heart. He then taught them to others so they could understand. He preached the Word of God so that others would hear and believe. Jesus didn't rest until his work was done for you and for me – until he completely fulfilled this commandment, "Remember the Sabbath by keeping it holy," and he kept it perfectly. For us, who by the grace of God believe in him, have been credited with that perfect life of obedience to the Word of God. How refreshing!

Jesus didn't rest until work is done – until he also suffered and died to pay the penalty for our sins against his Word. This is why God will not hold your sins and mine, our sins against his Word, against us on the Last Day. Because he punished his Son for those sins instead. Christ's work is done. You are forgiven! Then Jesus rose again to give us the guarantee of eternal rest. Of all those hotels that invite us to stay and be refreshed none can guarantee eternal rest. The Holy Spirit says, "Blessed are those who die in the Lord, they shall rest from their labors."

Maybe you know someone who suffered from sleep apnea. After a sleep study their ear, nose and throat doc prescribed them a CPAP machine which helps them breath at night. Those folks understand where they were, how tired they were, and how much better they feel now after receiving true rest for their bodies.

My dear fellow sleepy heads, you know where you were before. But now God has given you true rest for your souls. It is right here in his promise: Christ has fulfilled the commandment for you. Christ has taken the punishment for your sins. Christ has risen and defeated death. Isn't that so refreshing? Knowing that your reservation at the Heaven Hotel has already been made and paid for in full?

So... you know where God gives true rest – in his Word and in the Lord's Supper. You understand how important rest is. What are you going to do about it? Today you will go home, take out your calendar or Smart Phone, and schedule a rest time every day, write it in on Sunday morning, too, "Worship and Bible study - rest time." Who knows, someone may see your calendar and ask you, "What's rest time?" Come and find out.

My friends, get some rest this week. Amen.