

Sermon for: Trinity Lutheran Church, Manilla

Second Week after Pentecost: June 1, 2024

Sermon Text: Mark 2:23-28 (Gospel Reading)

Sermon Title/Theme: Sabbath Time with Jesus

Grace to you and peace from God our Father and from our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. Amen.

In his book Prayers, Michael Quoist includes a prayer entitled. "Lord, I Have Time." Quoist shares familiar laments, "Good-bye Sir, excuse me, I haven't time; I'd love to help you, but I haven't time; I can't accept, having no time; I'd like to pray, but I haven't time." He then follows with the petition, "Lord, I have time; I have plenty of time; all the time you give me; the years of my life, the days of my years, the hours of my days; to offer them to you . . . Lord, by your grace to do conscientiously, in the time that you give me, what you want me to do."

As we begin our summer worship time together, I invite you to reflect with me on God's gift of time. In today's Gospel reading, we join Jesus and His disciples in learning the significance and true meaning of a Sabbath time.

The creation account concludes in the early verses of Genesis, chapter 2: "And he (God) rested on the seventh day from all his work that he had done. So God blessed the seventh day and made it holy," (vs. 2-3). In the giving of the Ten Commandments at Sinai, the Creator's example became His divine command and gift to Israel, "Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy. Six days you shall labor and do all your work, but the seventh day is a Sabbath to the Lord your God."

Repeatedly Moses reminded the Israelites of God's command as they journeyed through the wilderness. A description of all the ceremonial feasts of Israel (Leviticus 23:3) began with the Sabbath directive: "Six days shall work be done, but on the seventh day is a Sabbath of solemn rest, a holy convocation. You shall do no work. It is a Sabbath to the Lord in all your dwelling places."

I mentioned previously that while the Sabbath was a divine command, it was also God's gift to His creation. It was a day to receive and celebrate God's gifts of grace. In her book Keeping the Sabbath Wholly, author Marva Dawn writes, "Keeping the Sabbath is not a legalistic duty. . . Come with me into the experience of observing the Sabbath, and you will discover for yourself the meaning of holy time," (pp. xii).

As with other divine gifts, our sinful human nature, our self-serving desires, and the temptations of the world, take what God designs and makes it into something that distracts from God rather than glorifying Him.

Such was the case with the Pharisees. The Pharisees were always taking time to watch Jesus, they were not watching or listening to learn more about Him. They were not humbly observing the One who had come to be their Messiah and the Savior of the world. They were watching so that they might protect their perspectives of the kingdom. They were watching to criticize and condemn. Ultimately their criticism would lead to Jesus' condemnation before Pilate and the crucifixion of Jesus.

In today's lesson (Mark 2 and the early verses of chapter 3) the criticism of the Pharisees is the observance of the Sabbath. On the Sabbath, the disciples had plucked some heads of grain, and

the Pharisees responded, "Lord, why are they doing what is not lawful on the Sabbath." When Jesus heals a man's withered hand on the Sabbath Day, they not only criticize him but "they immediately held counsel with the Herodians against him, how to destroy him."

Unintimidated, Jesus takes the occasion to put perspective not only on the Sabbath law but on His mission, "The Sabbath was made for man, not man for the Sabbath. So the Son of Man is Lord even of the Sabbath."

The Sabbath was to direct Israel to the gift of Jesus. The God who had rested to reflect on His perfect creation, saw His creation ruined by the fall. Those created in His image to worship Him in perfect and eternal fellowship in the Garden, chose to worship themselves and seek their own desires rather than those of God. What was to be a timeless encounter with God became a time bound and sin infected life outside the Garden.

Again Michael Quoist poetically expresses our predicament: "The child is playing, he hasn't time right now; the schoolboy has his homework to do, he hasn't time; the young man has his sports, he hasn't time; the young married man has his job and his house to fix up, he hasn't time; the grandparents have their grandchildren, they haven't time; the ill have their treatments, they haven't time . . . until they have no more time." The ultimate condemnation is death. Time ends for each of us. Not knowing and believing in the Lord of the Sabbath means an eternity separated from God.

The Son of Man, the Lord of Sabbath time entered time. Paul writes, "When the fullness of time had come, God sent forth his Son, born under the law, to redeem those who were under the law, so that we might receive adoption as sons," (Galatians 4:4). Jesus came to redeem those

born under the Old Testament ceremonial laws. Those laws were meant to direct God's people to His coming. Jesus fulfilled the law perfectly. He came to redeem them and us from every law we could not fulfill.

Jesus came in time: the time to teach and the time to heal. During His ministry Jesus not only observed the Sabbath Day but as true man took His Sabbath rests of time to pray and be refreshed. Ultimately it was time to go to the cross to suffer and die. His resurrection took place in time—3 days after His death and burial. The church observes the post resurrection times: 40 days until He ascended and the 50 days until the Spirit appeared. Jesus entered time to redeem our times.

Our own observance of the Sabbath Day directs us to the gift of Jesus. Jesus said, "Come to me all who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest," (Matthew 11:28). Ecclesiastes, chapter 3 shares Solomon's inspired wisdom on time. It includes the joyful times: time to be born, plant, embrace, dance, build up, etc. It also shares the realities of times to break down, weep, mourn; times of hate and war. Whatever the situation or scenario, we respond with the Psalmist, "But I trust in you, O Lord; I say, 'You are my God.' My times are in your hand." (Psalm 31:14-15).

In dedicating Keeping the Sabbath Wholly, Marva Dawn states this book is dedicated to all the people who need the Sabbath: those who chase after fulfillment and need to understand their deepest yearnings and to hear the silence; those who have lost their ability to play because of the materialism and technology of our society; those who are alone and need emotional nourishment; those who think the future is dictated by the present, who need hope; those who



long for deeper family life and want to nurture certain values; those who suffer and need to learn how suffering can be redemptive; those who want to be God's instruments, enabled and empowered by the Spirit to be world changers and Sabbath healers. Marva who herself experienced painful and hard times (cancer, chronic pain, blindness in one eye, and a kidney transplant) was able to cope through her Sabbath's rests in Jesus. She received eternal rest in Jesus in 2021.

Jesus brings us rescue and rest. A Sabbath rest takes place in this sanctuary as we hear the Word, remember our baptism, and are refreshed at His Table. Here Jesus takes away the burden of sin and the hurts of this world and bring us His healing, hope, and rest.

We begin "summer time". What that means for you depends on your life stage, family dynamics, and personal interests. There may be ball games and swimming; camping or travels to see new sites or visit family or friends; tending to the garden or yard; maybe a little more time on the deck reading or relaxing. Those can be Sabbath times.

As a church it will be a transition time: welcoming Pastor Staehr and Emily, installation, vacation Bible school and other items on the summer calendar.

Most importantly, we remember and observe the Sabbath time gifted to us by Jesus. It's time to continue to worship together. It's time for personal Bible reading and devotional reflections; it's time for more intentional prayer. Jesus Christ is Lord of the Sabbath. He is Lord of time—the Lord of our summertime. Amen.