

Sermon for A Year with the Catechism The Third Commandment

Date: September 26, 2021

Location: St. John's Lutheran Church, Austin, MN

Old Testament: Exodus 20:8-11

Epistle Reading: Romans 5:6-11

Gospel Reading: Mark 2:23-28

Sermon Text: Exodus 20:8-11

Sermon Title: The Third Commandment

Introit: Psalm 84:1-2, 4-5, 8-9, Antiphon Psalm 84:10

Hymns:

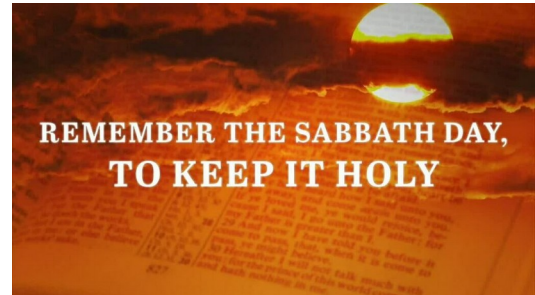
LSB 817 – Earth and All Stars

LSB 581 – These are the Holy Ten Commands
(v. 1,4, 11-12)

LSB 655 – Lord Keep Us Steadfast in Your Word

Liturgy:

Divine Service IV, p. 203



Songs:

House Of The Lord – Phil Wickham

Church (Take Me Back) - Cochren

Maybe It's Ok - We Are Messengers

Lift Your Heads Weary Sinners – Crowder

Liturgy:

Creative Worship



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Text: Exodus 20:8-11

Remember the day of worship by observing it as a holy day. You have six days to do all your work. The seventh day is the day of worship dedicated to the LORD your God. You, your sons, your daughters, your male and female slaves, your cattle, and the foreigners living in your city must never do any work on that day. In six days the LORD made heaven, earth, and the sea, along with everything in them. He did not work on the seventh day. That's why the LORD blessed the day he stopped his work, and set this day apart as holy.

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Pronunciation for difficult words are contained in { }

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In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

Open, please, your Catechisms to p. 74. There you will find, in the “Explanation” section of the Catechism, the 3rd Commandment. And please your Bibles to: Exodus 20:8-11

When you had to memorize the commandment about keeping the Sabbath Day holy, you got the short version. You memorized:

The Third Commandment

Remember the Sabbath day by keeping it holy.

What does this mean?

We should fear and love God, so that we do not despise preaching and His Word, but hold it sacred, and gladly hear and learn it.

In the Bible, in Exodus chapter 20, the full commandment reads:

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. On it you shall not do any work, you, or your son, or your daughter, your male servant, or your female servant, or your livestock, or the sojourner (*traveler*) who is within your gates. For in six days the Lord made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that is in them, and rested on the seventh day. Therefore the Lord blessed the Sabbath day and made it holy.¹

In some churches they do things a little different from how we do things here. In some churches they set aside all of Sunday as a time for God. In those churches they do not have just one service. They have three. They have one in the morning. Then another after lunch, and finally a third after supper time. The rest of the time they go to Bible studies, or read the Bible by themselves. The youth are taught in Sunday School on that day. There are light meals also served. In those churches you should also know that sermons are not 10-15 minutes. They are sometimes two hours long.

The truth is in those churches the Sabbath isn't much of a day of rest. It is a bunch of rules and regulations that require a lot of people to do a lot of work. The pastor has to write and deliver three different sermons, and lead three different services. The teachers have to prepare and teach their day-long classes. The students have to do their homework. People have to prepare and service the food.

¹ Exodus 20:8-11

The list of work goes on. In doing all of that stuff, I think, they are losing the point about what the Sabbath Day really is meant to be. It is supposed to be a day of rest. A day away from the regular work of the week.

Psalm 84 reads:

How lovely is your dwelling place, O Lord of hosts!
Blessed are those who dwell in Your house, ever singing
Your praise! For a day in your courts is better than a
thousand elsewhere. I would rather be a doorkeeper in
the house of my God than dwell in the tents of
wickedness.²

You see this commandment is not only about gathering together to hear and study God's Word, and to receive the Holy Sacraments that He gave to us. It is about rest, or maybe a better word would be balance. It is about bringing balance into your life.

A regular work week is generally defined as eight hours a day, five days a week. If you are good at math you can calculate eight time five and you will figure out that comes to forty hours a week of work. If you work forty hours a week you still have time to do other things, but in our world, people often work much more than forty hours. Some work sixty hours, some work eighty hours. Some work even more than that in a week.

They go to work, get home to sleep, and then get right back up and go back to work. They never get to do anything else but work and sleep, work and sleep, seven days a week. Some people do that because they want to. They think that lots of money will make them happy. I did that for a time. Others work that much because they have to. They can't get a single job that pays all the bills, so they have to work two, or more, jobs so they can feed their kids and pay all the bills. The problem is, in all of that work it is difficult to find rest or balance.

On page 79 in your Catechism, a little more than half way down, there is a paragraph that starts "The Large Catechism..." Let me read that to you.

The Large Catechism teaches: "Whenever God's Word is taught, preached, heard, read, or meditated upon, the the person, day, and work are sanctified [*or holy-ified – made holy*]. This is not because of the outward work, but because of the Word, which makes saints of all of us all..."

2 Psalm 84:1,4,10

Note, therefore, that the force and power of this commandment lies not in the resting, but in the sanctifying, so that a special *holy exercise* belongs to this day...

Here a work is to be done by which a person is himself made holy. This is done (as we have heard) only through God's Word."³

You see this commandment is about far more than just going to church every week. It is about far more than just following the rules to make God happy. It is about far more than showing up to put on a show. It is about taking the time to recharge. It is about taking the time to relax and enjoy the things around you. It is about receiving the blessings of God, including most importantly forgiveness of sins and salvation which are most prominently displayed in Holy Absolution, Holy Baptism and Holy Communion. This commandment is more than being about enjoying the profits of your work. The Bible says:

What will it profit a man if he gains the whole world, and forfeits his soul? Or what shall a man give in return for his soul?⁴

If all you do is work until you die, what was the point of the work? You need to find a balance between the work and the play. You need both. Going to work is necessary so that you can have food and a house, but if your house is so big you have to work all day, everyday, so you can afford it, then your house is too big, or your car is too expensive, or you have too many clothes, or you'll have to use last year's smart phone. (Oh my!!) This command is about balance.

It is also a command about worship and the study of God's Word. It is a command to give praise and honor to God who has saved us. We praise Him because He wants to hear from us His Children. He wants us to praise Him and not forget all the blessings He has given us. He wants us to remind ourselves of all those blessings, by saying thank You in church. In America we forget how rich we really are. We forget how much we really have. We have far, far more than other people in the world.

As some of you may know, my mom worked with missionaries in Ghana, Africa for almost three years. I went to go visit her, while she was there, and over there some people are so poor that on Sunday, they didn't eat that day so that they could go to church. You see they have to choose between going out to hunt for

3 Luther's Small Catechism p. 79

4 Matthew 16:26

food, and working in the fields gathering things to eat, or going to church. Those people thought going without food for a day, and walking ten miles to go to church, and then ten miles back again, was more important than eating one day a week. In church, they sing hymns of praise for all the rich blessings God had given to them. They feel they are rich because they have a Bible that the whole town can share, and a building they could use as a church, or the shade under a big tree. They considered themselves rich.

The culture shock I experienced coming back home really hit me. I had spent, only a week, seeing such poverty, and then came back to:

You deserve a break today.

This mattress will change you life.

This food blender will extend your years upon the earth.

You deserve it.

You need it.

It hit me so hard coming back to see all of that, when they have so little. It really struck me and reminded me of something a missionary once told me. He spoke of being in a country where war was breaking out. Very probably very much like Afghanistan recently, for our missionaries there. War was coming and staying there was too dangerous. They had to leave.

The missionary conveyed to me, there were tears, prayers and promises to try to return. The missionaries said, "We will pray for you."

The Christian people of that country said, "No. We will pray for you. You are going to a rich land where you have everything you need. Here we have nothing but our faith in Jesus to help us. We know we are rich because of Him. You will forget that when you go home. We will pray for you." The, very high, likelihood that death was coming for them, didn't change their view. They felt they were rich, because they were saved. How rich are we?

We have so much more than they could imagine. That is why we should always thank God for His blessings. Living in America we are wallowing in wealth. You may not always feel that way when the bills come due, but compared to the vast majority of the world, we are filthy rich.

God has blessed us with riches that cause coveting among other people. (We'll talk about that at the end of November.) The blessings in which we live are over the top. We may have become accustomed to them, so that we don't recognize how

much we have, but we should give thanks to God, and we do that by coming to church, giving one day, or one hour, a week to worship Him.

You see this command is really about love. It is about how much God loved us. The Bible says:

We love because God loved us first.⁵

The Bible also says:

God shows His love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us.⁶

This command was given not so that God could get something from us, but so that we could get something from God. The Bible says:

[Jesus] said to them, “The Sabbath was made for man, not man for the Sabbath.”⁷

God gave us the sabbath day, the day of rest, so that we could learn about Him, receive gifts from Him, give thanks for His blessings, and enjoy those blessings every week. This command was given because God loves us, and wants the best for us. So we should honor this commandment by honoring God, and doing the best we can to take one day a week off. One day to relax and enjoy the gifts God has given us. One day to rest and give thanks to God for all He has done.

Thanks be to God.

Amen.

Proclaim God's Word,
Encourage one another in faith,
Witness to God's love and
Serve all people



5 1 John 4:19
6 Romans 5:8
7 Mark 2:27