

PENTECOST 2 (2018)

Mark 2:23–28 One Sabbath [Jesus] was going through the grainfields, and as they made their way, his disciples began to pluck heads of grain. And the Pharisees were saying to him, “Look, why are they doing what is not lawful on the Sabbath?” And he said to them, “Have you never read what David did, when he was in need and was hungry, he and those who were with him: how he entered the house of God, in the time of Abiathar the high priest, and ate the bread of the Presence, which it is not lawful for any but the priests to eat, and also gave it to those who were with him?” And he said to them, **“The Sabbath was made for man, not man for the Sabbath. So the Son of Man is lord even of the Sabbath.”**

In the Name of Jesus.

Jesus is FOR US, for us men! That’s what HE is all about! That is what HEAVEN is all about! FOR MAN! Talk about new wine in new wineskins! (The lesson just before this one!) Oh, He DELIGHTS to call Himself ONE OF US: The Son of Man! And THIS ONE Who is one of US, takes even the most solemnly enjoined commandment of the Ten that survives in living fashion today among so many religions of FEAR—A partitioned day of the week, a day of obligations and rules and so on—and He takes this ‘COMMANDMENT!’ in Hand, and says, ‘WHAT COMMANDMENT?!’ The Sabbath—a word that means REST!—the Day of REST is for you! No-no-no.... ‘For US,’ the Son of Man is pleased to say! And we begin to learn what it means that HE is Lord; but now, also, WE!

The Day of REST is FOR US, my dear ones, REST, as opposed to WORKS of the LAW—
 REST...FROM...FEAR and TOIL and PLUSES AND MINUSES and ANY lingering doubt about how any child of Adam now stands with Adam's Maker! For HE is FOR US, the Maker Himself; the Lord! So, no end in sight for Rest AND Gladness! This day—but also, no reason to leave out ANY DAY!

And so the FULFILLMENT of this Word of God does NOT lie in our gearing up and getting our heads and hearts and hands set 'just so' for a special 'one-off' event during the week. Oh, my dear ones! The NEW WINE BURSTS the old wineskins! And now, for us Men, for us lords of REST, for us, the new wine, for us-n-Jesus, the dry HUSK of the commandment peels away and is fitting only for the dry and dusty and perishing to belabor—while WE take rest, while WE delight in the kernel, the seed, the nourishment of God's Word: the Gospel!

So, Doctor Luther was overflowing with the Spirit of the Son of Man when he wrote down, ACTUALLY, in the Small Catechism, that FOR US men-and-lords of the Sabbath, THIS Word from Sinai best rings true in us like this: 'Sanctify the Holy Day!' And what makes the Holy Day holy? The Gospel! And how silly to think that the word about 'GOD joining in with our Baptism,' 'GOD living and dying and DELIGHTING to live and die among

the UNGODLY’—that Word is somehow chained, limited, CONTAINED to one day out of SEVEN?! Ha! That old skin is burst! And there’s not a day in sight that need not be a day of the Good News of the God Who is Man Who has GOD now UTTERLY ignoring all the ways we are NOT like Him; NOT as the Law says we ought to be!

This Gospel was there, in the Old Covenant. Moses knew all about it. The Lord had taken His people from the land of commands, the land of slavery and fear and toil and sighing—NOT to make life even WORSE! But to LIMIT...WORK to six days of seven, and leaving a day of Promise, a day of Hope, a day of the Lord, in which He will come and abolish ALL WORK!

It’s one of the top two or three sins the Old Covenant prophets condemn among our ancient co-religionists, the children of Israel. NOT happy to take even one day off, utterly, from buying and selling and scheming and piling up and this and that. FAR from being LAW-LESS people, the PROBLEM was that the people, at least the LOUD ones of the people, turned the WHOLE DEAL into Law and oversight and the hair-trigger of condemnation. While the WHOLE POINT OF THE LAW, as Doctor Luther taught the Church, was to drive us to our knees, to drive us into the Jordan River to confess what we are, all of us: lawless; some pretending otherwise, some despairing, some giving up and living-it-up! But lawless, one and all.

So, the best the world had ever seen had nothing better to do—ON THE DAY OF REST, MIND YOU!—this activity, is REST?!!!!—

The Pharisees had nothing better to do than to hover over the children of the New Testament, mouths watering and eyes peeled wide and lips pursed and ready to burst into indictment—for what? Of what were the disciples of Jesus guilty?

Murder and mayhem? Cold and closed hearts? Not even HARVESTING a whole field! Plucking some grains to keep them on their feet as they walked through a field! The Horror!

God help us! To what depths of sadness we drag His Word!

Remember, my friends, these things are recorded for the desperate unending WORK in which the Holy Spirit is ALWAYS engaged: TRYING to save a few of us! None of these things are recorded to make US poor souls feel superior over men whose entire EXISTENCE was about feeling superior! No; it was written to save us!

What saves us? God's Word! From our sins, from the devil, from a world that would mislead us, from our own wayward hearts. Hearts that are all too ready to boil down EVERYTHING in the Word of the Lord into a weapon, a gavel, lawsuit, a justification; ugh!

Recite with me again, if you will, my dear Lutherans, the meaning of the Third Commandment from the Small Catechism: What does this mean, to sanctify the holy day? '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!'

The word 'gladly' just RINGS with the Gospel! That Luther! The Ten Commandments—now making men GLAD?! The Son of Man is Lord of all, even the Sabbath!

So, with the word 'gladly' ringing in our ears, hear your poor pastor's burden!

I am lousy at attracting a crowd; it is not a goal I see for a minister of the New Testament!

And, yet, how do I tell the world, even y'all, that there's nothing more glad than to have the Gospel heard and read and sung and studied and prayed and marked and

learn and inwardly digested—without turning all the gladness back into sighs and burdens?

My friends: I have not yet found relief for this burden of mine; other than just to keep standing up on my hind legs, when and where I can, for whoever shows up at our set times and places, and just sticking to what the Word says, not adding or subtracting—and laying it out in the glad manner of the Small Catechism and our faith.

But let me say this too y'all—and if it bothers your conscience a bit, in the midst of a service of receiving Christ's Body and Blood and praying the Prayer He gave us, I will run the risk.

My dear ones, the Bible says that preachers can even save themselves by announcing the Word of the Lord! Now THAT should make all men glad! 'God is even glad to call PASTOR holy!'

But preaching and God's Word were never intended JUST for the preacher and the reader of the Word. I am asking for your help.

I work very hard, every week, to study the Word, seek out the Law and the Gospel, and to lead it all to the rest The

Spirit has pledged us.

Hear me and forgive me and bear with me.

And so, if and when the Church sets up times and places to hear this Word and study this Word—I am always assuming that y'all know that such places and times have been set up FOR YOU! NOT as another burden that must somehow squeeze into your otherwise busy life! But as times and places to receive REST, the Gospel, the Sanctification of the Holy Spirit! When? Where? What day should we leave out? Or what place?

I'm telling y'all that—sorta as a LAW thing!—that every son of man here, every lord of rest, adult and child, could benefit from MORE! More what?

Bible study times?

Visiting the shut-in and sick and despairing to bring them a word of rest?

Cherishing the Word that lives in, the Spirit Who lives in your fellow communicants—maybe comparing that with how much we are also invested in others who would

NEVER share with us this Meal of Gladness?

Well, that's about as harsh as I can be about such things. If y'all have something to repent of and change, put it in your prayers and the Lord will lead you; He has promised to!

But never leave off praying that YOUR minister's proclamation of the sanctifying Word would always be dominated by the Gospel, always ring with the glad news of sins forgiven by the King enthroned on the cross, now enthroned in heaven above!

Holy Spirit, Light Divine, shine upon this heart of mine! Chase the shades of night away! Turn the darkness into day!

Let me see my Savior's face; let me all HIS beauties trace! Show those glorious truths to me, which are only known to Thee!

A blessed holy day to y'all in the Name of Jesus.
Amen.