

Sermon for August 25, 2013

Fourteenth Sunday of Pentecost, Luke 13:10-17

BLESSINGS TO YOU AND PEACE FROM GOD THE FATHER, OUR LORD JESUS CHRIST, AND THE HOLY SPIRIT. AMEN.

Good morning, it is **great** to be back with you today. Last Sunday at this **same** time I was making my way south on Interstate 15. I had **just** left my sister and brother in law's house outside of Logan, Utah. As you might imagine the traffic was **rather** light on a Sunday morning so I was **pretty** intentional about paying attention to the number of businesses which were **not** open along the way. One thing about Utah **many** of the grocery stores, small businesses, and fast food restaurants still observe the Sabbath by being **closed** on Sundays. As I drove along I was **reflecting** upon a time when I was young that if one did not get **gas** or **groceries** on Saturday you would have to **wait** until Monday to do it. Places of business were **just not** open on Sunday back then. Last Sunday I even found a **very nice** radio station. It played rather **soothing** good driving music. When the announcer came on he said, "*This is music for the Sabbath.*" HMMM—nice idea I thought.

Where have those days gone when observing the Sabbath was a priority? **What happened** to the time in this country when it was **not** about the almighty dollar, where businesses didn't **need** to be open 7 days a week, when **sporting**

events—for youth **especially**—did not begin until noon on Sunday mornings so people **could** attend church if they chose, and when people actually **did** set Sunday aside to be with family, to **have** a picnic, or to **just** relax so they could **recharge** their bodies, minds, and spirits, for the upcoming week?

Now, don't get me wrong, I am **just** as guilty of **all** this busyness as anyone else. I do try to be **very** intentional about taking my days off—to be **disconnected** if you will, to **not** answer emails or phone calls **unless** they are urgent. I try, but I am **not always** successful at it. We **all** need a Sabbath of some sort, we **all** need to rest our bodies-minds-and spirits, or **dis**-ease will set in in one form or another.

Sabbath—a time to spend *remembering* God's blessings in our lives, a time for *renewal*, a time for *regeneration*, a time for *refreshment*, and a time of *freedom or liberation* from those things which **bind us** and **weigh us down** the other 6 days a week.

One thing I **do** want you to know—because I know there are **some** of you who work on Sunday. There is **no** place in the bible where it **specifically** says that Sunday *“has”* to be the day of Sabbath. This is what it says in Exodus 20:8-11 as part of the 10 commandments, *“Remember the Sabbath day by keeping 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, neither you, nor your son or daughter, nor your manservant or maidservant, nor your animals, nor the alien*

within your gates. For in six days the Lord made the heavens and the earth, the sea, and all that is in them, but he rested on the seventh day. Therefore the Lord blessed the Sabbath day and made it holy.” There you have it. **One** of the reasons we Christians **have** designated Sunday as the day of worship and Sabbath is because that is the day Jesus **rose** from the dead—but; as you **may or may not** know, not **all** Christians adhere to this idea of **Sunday** being the Sabbath.

The idea of keeping the Sabbath **holy** is what our **gospel** lesson for today is about. The idea of **keeping** the Sabbath holy is where the **conflict** came in for the leader of the synagogue where Jesus was teaching that day. This is a story regarding **confrontation** about the Sabbath laws as well as a story about **renewal** and **liberation** from the power of Satan in one woman’s life. Here we have a **perfect** example of what we Lutherans call: **law** (following the letter of God’s laws) and **gospel** (the grace and compassion of God which is found in the person of Jesus Christ).

Jesus was **teaching** in the synagogue on the Sabbath. A woman appeared who had a spirit which had **crippled** her for 18 years. Could you imagine—not being able to **stand** upright? Now **think** about it—if you were bent over from the waist—**how** would you be able to see **who** you were looking at? **How** would you be able to see the **beauty** of the day without *looking sideways*, you would be constantly **turning** your head to **see** where you are going, you would continually

be looking at the **ground** as opposed to looking straight ahead. Sleeping on your back would have been an **impossibility**. It must have been an **awful** way to live.

When Jesus saw the woman he **called** her over to him and said, “*Woman, you are set free from your ailment*”. Now let’s stop here for a minute: does it seem **odd** to you that Jesus would **call** this woman over to him **instead** of going over to where **she** was? After all, it does sound like she was **pretty** crippled. But here it is: Jesus wanted the woman to **come to God**. To **come to the one** who could **set her free** from the condition she had been living in for 18 years. To **come to the one** who could *renew* and *restore* her to wholeness. In **compassion** for her Jesus **laid** his hands on her and she was *immediately* **unbound-untied**, Satan’s power over her had been **released** by no less than **God** himself. No **wonder** she began to praise God—how would **you** feel if you had been **set free** from being in bondage—*bent and broken* for 18 years and suddenly you could **stand up** straight—**look** people in the eye—**see** more than the tops of shoes and the dirt on the ground. ***Praise and thanks be to God!!!!***

But—the leader of the synagogue was **not** as elated as the woman. Why **would** he be—in **his** eyes Jesus had just broken one of **God’s** laws—there are 6 days to work—come on one of those days to be cured—**not** on the Sabbath he said. After all, isn’t that what I **just** read in Exodus 20? In the eyes of the **leader** of the synagogue **healing** was considered **work**.

This is where the **gospel** part of the story comes in. For you see, Jesus **was** keeping the day holy because he was blessing and liberating the woman on **God's** behalf. He was **healing** in God's name, **glory** was being given to the Father, and the power of **Satan** was being overthrown.

In Jesus' **mighty** compassion for this woman his **answer** to the criticism was, *"You hypocrites! Does not each of you on the Sabbath **untie** his ox or his donkey from the manger, and lead it away to give it water? (Isn't that work also?) And ought not this woman, a daughter of Abraham (one of your own people) whom Satan has bound for 18 long years, deserve to also be **untied/unbound** from this bondage she has been in on the Sabbath day as well?"* Is this woman not worth **more** than an ox or a donkey?

There you have it. The **core** question here is **not** WHETHER to keep the Sabbath, but HOW to keep it. The leader of the synagogue was **correct** in his interpretation of the Sabbath law, but you see the point he **missed** was that Jesus was **not** working on the Sabbath. A miracle happened in the **name** of God.

Liberating the woman from the power of Satan, **untying** bonds that had been **binding** her for 18 years, giving **glory** to God as we heard that the freed woman **praised** God, the crowd was **rejoicing** at all the wonderful things Jesus was doing. **That** my friends is how the Sabbath is kept. Living in the **hope** of God's

liberating act of setting us free from those things which **bind us** the other 6 days of the week.

Each and every one of us are given the **gift** of Sabbath rest *each and every* week. The gift of *renewal and rest*, a *reminder* of God's grace, faithfulness, and power in our lives. There is hope, beauty, and freedom in this gift. The **choice** is up to us whether we **accept** the gift,,,,, or not.

My prayer for all of us this week is, **take** some Sabbath time to **release** the ties that bind you whether they be emotional, spiritual, or physical ties. If you cannot give up a **whole** day, which for many of you may **not** be possible, take it **one** step at a time—little by little—**release** your life to God. Maybe just **15** minutes or an **hour** here and there. Remember—Sabbath does **not** have to be the **same** day or **same** time every week, mine isn't. Just **release, let go** of those things which bind you, those things which hold you back from having a relationship with God. Let God's love, grace, and mercy guide you. You will be **amazed** at what a difference it will make. Even God **himself** took a break after he created the heavens and the earth. On the **sixth** day he saw what he had made and it was **very** good. On the **seventh** day he **rested** from his work, **blessed** the day, and **made** it holy. May God bless you **all** on your Sabbath journey! AMEN.

