

“How to Spend your Sundays”

-Luke 13:10-17

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Luke 13:10-17 *Now He was teaching in one of the synagogues on the Sabbath. 11 And behold, there was a woman who had a spirit of infirmity eighteen years, and was bent over and could in no way raise herself up. 12 But when Jesus saw her, He called her to Him and said to her, "Woman, you are loosed from your infirmity." 13 And He laid His hands on her, and immediately she was made straight, and glorified God. 14 But the ruler of the synagogue answered with indignation, because Jesus had healed on the Sabbath; and he said to the crowd, "There are six days on which men ought to work; therefore come and be healed on them, and not on the Sabbath day." 15 The Lord then answered him and said, "Hypocrite! Does not each one of you on the Sabbath loose his ox or donkey from the stall, and lead it away to water it? 16 "So ought not this woman, being a daughter of Abraham, whom Satan has bound—think of it—for eighteen years, be loosed from this bond on the Sabbath?" 17 And when He said these things, all His adversaries were put to shame; and all the multitude rejoiced for all the glorious things that were done by Him.*

Each of the four Gospels record at least one account of conflict between the Pharisees and Jesus over the issue of the Sabbath (Luke: Luke 6:6-11; 13:10-17; 14:1-6; Mark 3:1-6), and this one is fairly typical. The whole matter may seem to be trivial to many of us, but it apparently wasn't for these boys. For they came at Jesus again and again on this and Jesus repeatedly slapped them down. But again, maybe we are left wondering what all the 'hub-bub' is about because for most of us it is a non-issue no matter what side of the matter we fall. Apparently there was more to this issue than just how to spend your Sundays.

One thing for sure is this Sabbath controversy demonstrates that the religious leadership had lost its way...*if they ever had it in the first place*. For such demonstrated that for these men, religion was all about *doing* not *being*. They were consumed by the outward manifest of faith without regard as to the motivation and heart behind the actions. They thought that *doing* made them who they were, but that is never the case! At least not first and foremost. **DOING** is merely a **reflection** ...*certainly undeniable given time and testing*, of who we truly are. It expresses the condition of our hearts and manifests what our priorities and passions are. But it doesn't *make us* who we are or provide an accurate picture of our honest spiritual state. People can **DO** diligently right up to death and hell.

For these guys, as long as they DID the stuff they were supposed to do, they thought they were ‘good to go’ and were ‘square with the house.’ But Jesus repeatedly told them *and us*, that such is just flat out not true! They thought that the totality of their stance with God was all about following the rules! And while obedience is crucial for the Christian, that obedience must stem from a passion and motivation that is driven by love or it is a meaningless waste of time. In Matthew 7 Jesus Himself spoke on this saying "*Many will say to Me in that day, 'Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in Your name, cast out demons in Your name, and done many wonders in Your name?' 'And then I will declare to them, 'I never knew you; depart from Me...' "* Apparently those guys did a lot of great stuff too, but they were still lost.

Christ wants from us what Paul spoke of when he said in 1 Corinthians 9:16-17 that "*preaching the Good News is not something I can boast about. I am **compelled** by God to do it. How terrible for me if I didn't preach the Good News! If I were doing this on my own initiative, I would deserve payment. **But I have no choice**, for God has given me this sacred trust.*" This does not speak of a man that is being strong-armed nor is he trying to garner points in heaven! He *acts* because He is consumed by a grander force! The language speaks in the vein of *having* to do it...not because someone held a gun to his head, but because the passion for Christ and the compassion for others drove him onward and made any other life-path impossible for him to live.

For many of us, our religious life is lived with ideas such as “this is a *good* thing to do” or “it is *best* to live a life in this fashion” or “I *should* live a good life” etc. Rare is the individual that lives with a fire in his belly...overwhelmed by the love of Christ and the wholesale commitment to it that cannot be altered. This is the true believer, and the one who has found the “narrow way.”

A lot of church-going folk just don't understand this. For them, they are here because it serves their worldview at the moment and supplies something for them personally; *like safety, community, friendship, and worldly care*. All of these folks have one thing in common and that is the need for immediate and personal gratification. But when those things are adequately spent or found to be provided elsewhere, they move on down the road: *to the next church or the next life or the next vice*. Sadly, this story is repeated over and over.

However while we remain a member of the ‘Christian club’ we do as we are told because of what we personally get out of that arrangement. And yet there is that rare individual that does what HE does because he is in love and is consumed by its ramifications. He would “take a bullet” for his brothers and sisters, and is here to *give not get*, though he knows instinctively that He cannot out-give God and the more he pours his life out the more alive he becomes!

All this brings us to the issue before us...the ‘**battle for the Sabbath.**’ This matter uniquely represents the conflict between *passion* and *adherence to the rules*. Because for many us the handling of our Sundays is set according to the stance of the church we attend and scripture and passion have little if anything to do with it.

I ask you often why you are here. I wonder how many have ever really answered that question within themselves. This question is exceptionally pertinent in the summer season that we are currently enjoying. Most of us work 5 days a week and we are indoctrinated with the “thank-god-it's-Friday” mentality which means the weekends are for play. So we hit the beach, the lakes, the parks, and the ‘cabin up north,’ and church takes a back seat. And as “Christian Americans” we of course know just enough Bible to be dangerous, and we clutch the passage that says God "*rested on the seventh day from all His work which He had made*" (Genesis 2:2). I wonder if we think that after 6 days of creating God was “tired” and needed to go fishing?

We conveniently forget Exodus 20:8-11 and Deuteronomy 5:12-15, wherein God gave the fourth of His Ten Commandments that says we are to "remember" the Sabbath day and "keep it holy." Was not the passage in Genesis honestly speaking of the fact that God "stopped building" on the 7th day after 6 days of being busy and as the text says, He "*saw everything that He had made, and indeed it was very good?*" The original word 'rest' in that Genesis 2:2 means 'to cease': nothing there involving a hammock.

The passage goes on therein to say that God "blessed the seventh day and *sanctified* it." (Vs 3) We know that "sanctified" means that something is "*set aside for a special purpose and use.*" Therefore we can righteously declare that whatever is going on on the Sabbath, it was a day not to be like the others.

For clarity and honesty sake, let's acknowledge that Pharisees are alive and well today. These Pharisees, and the ones who walk the earth today, had a general insensitivity to human need, a lack of love for others, and a blindness as to their own lack of passion for a relationship with God. They know how to go at everyone else, but apparently don't own a mirror.

Jesus' in this passage was just coming off a confrontation in the synagogue, where He painted a very vivid picture of dead religion, and that too has not ceased to exist. These folks were measuring their religious position and status by what they **did** instead of what they *were*. Not much has changed. We still are apt to hold others feet to the fire on inconsequential issues and in doing so we miss the point. It's the proverbial "can't-see-the-forest-through-the-trees." Jesus...never one to be tolerant of such, simply and frankly labels this as 'hypocrisy.' He already had reminded His disciples that He had not come to make peace but rather division. And this issue is indeed a "dividing" aspect in the walk of faith.

As Jesus taught, He discovers a woman in His midst that the text says had a "spirit of infirmity." Such does not mean that every ailment and health issue is demonically driven, though in this case it seems that such was so. It seems that while Satan may not *cause* every sickness, addiction, and ailment, he does so often exploit them! Ultimately the issues of sickness and death were never God's design for man and we suffer them now because of the fallen world under the effects of sin. It appears that this woman understood her situation and quite likely came to church looking for answers. We don't know for sure that she came looking specifically for Jesus, but He found *her* anyway. He has a way of doing that if the heart is receptive to Him.

Jesus, *seeing the need*, healed her of her infirmity 'on the spot.' In doing so, Jesus broke protocol and religious rule. No wonder the religionists didn't like Him! They wanted to hold to the letter of the law, while missing completely the spirit of the law.

So what about this issue of the Sabbath? How did Jesus see it? How did such play out for Christ? Well, firstly Jesus apparently didn't own a 'cabin up north.' That's doesn't mean you shouldn't have one...it is just what it is. Call it priority or necessity, but Jesus just seemed to be busy about the kingdom and serving His Dad. But the point is the 'kingdom business' happened on the Sabbath. Or at least it does for the average joe. Do we see it that way? Is it not that we rather see Sundays as a day to kick back and chill and/or a day to "go to church?"

Humanity is by necessity busy about our secular work 5 days a week...albeit such is ultimately to be our weekly mission field. It appears that for Christ, the "Sabbath" ...Sundays for us here in the protestant church, is to be a day to serve God, kingdom and community. Once again...not as an issue of obligation and appearance

sake, but rather a day “sanctified” unto God. A day about worship, blessing the faith community, and serving the needs of and furthering the kingdom of God.

Note that Jesus was indeed “in church” on the Sabbath. So let’s at least start there. I don’t think He was obligated...he was God-in-flesh and knew it all and was done all ready. So He didn’t HAVE to be there. He was there clearly because He wanted to be. Do you *want to be*? Looking further, we see He was there to give and receive in the matter of teaching. We know that because that was the format of a Jewish synagogue. So that was an important aspect of the day. He wasn’t there to work in the coffeehouse, or to hang out after and eat and fellowship. We would like to believe that is exactly what happened, but he was there for more. He was there to bless others and do the work of the kingdom.

I wonder what our Sundays around this nation would be like...what church services and our faith communities would be like, if that was priority. If we came together to worship, learn, give, teach, and serve? But in truth, our Sabbath’s have been melted down to a “program.” One where we sing some songs, listen to the pastor teach, say ‘amen’ and head out. But if the day was dedicated to all things kingdom, would such not greatly glorify God as his people came together in unity and fellowship to remember...once a week, that Jesus is our center and our purpose and our reason we breathe on the other 6 days?

Jesus healed this woman, because for Him the love of the people was how we were to live. He was the example as always! While Jesus was in the ‘full time ministry’...so his week was no doubt kinda weird in comparison to most of ours, He was still expressing a pattern for the rest of us who work down at the factory during the week. His example was this: His “rest” wasn’t an afternoon nap on the beach, it was interaction with believers and serving them as much as hearing a Bible study.

This was the issue every time the religion boys came at Jesus over this subject. He was determined to love the people even if He had to break a sweat on the Sabbath to do it. Jesus was there because He wanted to be there over any other place. Again, *He was there because it was very important to Him to be there*. Not out of rule, but out of love and a heart’s desire. The bottom line is that Jesus wanted to be there more than he wanted to be someplace else. He wanted all that ‘church’ had to offer, and wanted to be a part of making that happen.

In many ways, our Sabbath is to be a picture of things to come. A time when all of our earthly work and pursuits are done and we are together on the other side. What will that look like? Will it not be full of worship, and engaging our heavenly Father and one another? Scripture tells us that there will still be work in heaven, at least in the context of service...serving the Father and serving each other. Even Christ Himself will still be serving...serving us at the “marriage supper of the lamb.” Can you imagine that? Jesus coming by with chips and salsa? Of course, there will be no more crippled souls, for everyone there will have new bodies. Which is good because most of us will have worn these out!

So all of this leads us back to the heart. It always seems to end there doesn’t it? We can *do* it all...religiously speaking, in this life, and still fail to ever be one of His own. Unless we have the right ‘mo’ behind what we do, it will all come to nothing for us. The Sabbath...our gatherings each week here in this church, are the same issue. If it is just ritual and habit, there will be no joy and no blessing.

So I ask you once again: ***Why are you here?***