

What a Difference a Day Makes

July 2, 2017

**Our Savior's Way
Worshiping Sundays 8:00, 9:30, & 11:00 AM**

Pastor Tyson Labuhn

9:09pm is when the National Park Service says that the fireworks will start over the National Mall on July 4th celebrating the birth of our nation. July 4th is a day filled with celebration – fireworks, parades, and picnics. Outside of many retail businesses, it's a day when many people stay home from work, and yes, even church offices are closed on July 4th. It a day given to us by God, set aside for rest, relaxation, and celebration.

But then again, today is one of those special days as well. It's a day that has been set aside for rest, relaxation and celebration.

Celebration for a different reason though. As God's Word tells us in the book of Genesis, that after He had finished creating the world in 6 days, God rested from all his work that he had done. He blessed that day of rest and made it holy.

As part of our sermon series on Luther's Small Catechism, we're continuing to taking a look at the 10 Commandments. And today, we're taking a look at the 3rd Commandment which tells us to "Remember the Sabbath Day by keeping it holy." According to the catechism, what does this mean? "It means that we should fear and love God that we do not despise preaching and God's Word, but hold it sacred and gladly hear and learn from it."

For many people, today is a day of rest, relaxation, and celebration. The weather is nice and because of that, folks are involved in outdoor sports like swimming and playing tennis. They're going outside to garden or simply going outside for a run. Some are preparing for a cookout with family and friends. And some are simply going for a walk in their neighborhood. All of it is made possible by God's command that He gives to us, so that we might physically rest from our labors each Sabbath day.

But God's Commandment also tells us that we should remember to keep it holy. And so while we enjoy the distraction from our normal routines and try to fit in as much rest and relaxation as we can, God wants it to be holy to us. He wants us to set it aside to give thanks and celebrate the blessings that He has given to us. By listening to His Word when it is preached and taught, and gladly hear it, we learn from it. Yet when we become too focused with the world around us - sometimes intentionally or unintentionally - we tend to neglect this part of the Sabbath day. We neglect it when we don't take the time to gather with others to receive His Word and sacraments so that we might receive spiritual rest and nourishment for our souls.

One day, a man decided to challenge another to an all-day wood chopping contest. The challenger worked very hard, stopping only for a brief lunch break. But the other man took time to enjoy his lunch and took several breaks throughout the day. And so, at the end of the day, you can imagine the challenger's surprise when he saw that the other man had chopped much more wood than he had. "I don't get it," he said. "Every time I checked, you were taking a rest, but you chopped more wood than I did." With a smile, the winning man said "You didn't notice that I was sharpening my ax each time I sat down to rest."

Jesus, the Incarnate Word of God, says to us in Matthew 11:28-29, “Come to me all who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls.” Rest for all the times that we have become distracted by the world around us, obeyed our own kind of rest, and neglected God’s physical and spiritual Sabbath rest. Wrought with distraction, anxiety, shame, and the guilt of our sins, Jesus reveals Himself to be the Lord of the Sabbath. He willingly takes all our burdens upon Himself, and dies with them on the cross. Yet on the third day, He rose again to New Life so that we might have true rest for our souls once again. Through His victory over sin and death with the yoke of His Gospel Message, we might have eternal life.

This Gospel Message tells us that we are free from the burden of sin, death, and the devil. And having been baptized into Christ’s death and resurrection, our lives are in Him and He lives in us. It’s in His name that we gather together as a church body each Sunday. As the apostles did so long ago, we gather to hear the Word of God so that it might dwell in us richly, teaching and admonishing us in all wisdom, and to celebrate His Word by singing psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs in celebration of many blessings that He has given and continues to give for us.

Martin Luther once said, “I believe that the apostles themselves changed the Sabbath because no one else would have ventured to do so. And I believe they did this principally in order to get the notion out of the minds of men that they are just (before God) because of the Law and its observance, and in order to firmly establish the truth that the Law is not necessary for salvation. But the resurrection of Christ (on Sunday) and the sending of the Holy Spirit on the day of Pentecost also moved the apostles to make this change.”

As we celebrate the birth of our nation, I believe that we need to remember the Sabbath day with this Gospel emphasis for ourselves, for the world around us, and, most especially, for our nation. And so, in celebration of the birth of our nation, here is a video that has been prepared for you.