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***Rest, Love, and the Sabbath* Luke 14:1-11 The Seventeenth Sunday After Trinity October 4, 2020**

Grace, mercy and peace from God our Father and our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Amen.

Our text for this day is taken from the Gospel lesson for this day, we read from Luke 14:1-4 **Now it happened, as He went into the house of one of the rulers of the Pharisees to eat bread on the Sabbath, that they watched Him closely. And behold, there was a certain man before Him who had dropsy. And Jesus, answering, spoke to the lawyers and Pharisees, saying, "Is it lawful to heal on the Sabbath?" But they kept silent. And He took him and healed him, and let him go.**

We pray: Dear God and Father, give us and renew in each of us a love for Your Word. We ask this in the name of Your Son and our Savior, Jesus Christ.

Dear fellow redeemed in Christ our Lord...

The Third Commandment says: *"Remember the Sabbath Day by keeping it holy."* (Exodus 20:8) The Third Commandment, one of the Ten Commandments, is unique. All ten commandments-demand love: love for God and love for neighbor. St. Paul says, ***"Love is the fulfillment of the Law"*** (Romans 10:13). All ten commandments require this complete outward-facing devotion, a devotion that comes from the heart and spreads to the hands and the lips and a person's whole behavior, all day, every day, from birth till death. You shall do certain things, and you shall not do other things. The commandments are God's unchanging description of how He defines love-love for Him and love for one's neighbor.

But the Third Commandment, unlike the others, has a ceremonial element to it. For God's people in the Old Testament era, there was this requirement to keep a certain day of the week holy. The Sabbath was so holy that no work at all was to be done on that day. It was a commandment that the people of Israel were to keep, not by working hard, but by not working at all. The word Sabbath means "rest".

So, where is the "love" in such a commandment? How were the Israelites to show their love toward God or their neighbor by resting? Well, first, the love for God was in devotion to His Word. His people were to dedicate the Sabbath Day to a sacred assembly, to hearing the Word of God and to

remembering God's acts of salvation for them. They were to come together and hear again of His promise of the Savior which was to come.

The love for their neighbor was in their devotion to their neighbor's need to rest and to hear God's Word. If no one was allowed to work on that day, then that means that all the people had opportunity on the Sabbath Day for some much-needed rest, to worship their God and hear His Word.

Our text for today hinges on a proper understanding of the Third Commandment and the Sabbath Law. The Pharisees and the lawyers (learned in the Old Testament Scriptures) in Israel at the time of Christ had lost the proper understanding of the Sabbath. These religious leaders had turned the Sabbath into the most loveless day of the week. It became for them a day for showing off how religious they were, a day for making them look good in front of other people. It became a day to put others down for not following their made-up rules.

“Now it happened, as He (Jesus) went into the house of one of the rulers of the Pharisees to eat bread on the Sabbath, that they watched Him closely.” If only they had been watching Jesus to learn from Him, to marvel at His goodness and mercy, to believe in Him as the coming Savior. But no. These religious leaders watched Him to see whether He would keep or break the Sabbath law.

So, Luke tells us, ***“there was a certain man before Him who had dropsy.”*** Here was this poor man suffering from this illness of dropsy, which is edema, swelling, water retention. And, that man had come to Jesus in faith; he was looking to Jesus for relief, for healing. And Jesus would heal him, but first our Lord puts this question to the lawyers and Pharisees, the religious leaders, not to learn from them, but to teach them.

Jesus asked them, ***“Is it lawful to heal on the Sabbath?”*** The Pharisees and other religious leaders could not answer Him yes, because then they could not criticize Him. Nor could they answer Him no, because they knew that the Old Testament would not support such an answer, as Jesus had pointed out on other occasions. The Old Testament recognized cases of necessity with the ceremonial laws. You might remember the time with David and the Showbread in the Tabernacle, when the priest gave him and his men

this bread to eat, that only the priests were supposed to eat (1 Samuel 21). The perfect Law of love included such exceptions when love for the neighbor required the ceremonial law to be set aside. But the Pharisees did not want to give Jesus the satisfaction of an answer. So, they kept silent.

“And He took him and healed him, and let him go. Then He answered them, saying, ‘Which of you, having a donkey or an ox that has fallen into a pit, will not immediately pull him out on the Sabbath day?’ And they could not answer Him regarding these things.” Even the Pharisees and lawyers understood that it was OK to help a hurting animal on the Sabbath. If it was OK to help a hurting animal on the Sabbath, surely it was OK to help a fellow human being and a son of Israel. God’s intention with the Sabbath Day was not to ignore the neighbor in need, but to set aside one’s own work and needs in order help the neighbor. The intent of the Sabbath Day was not hatred or indifference toward the neighbor, but love.

And the Pharisees had a very hard time understanding that because they did not know love, the love of God in Christ Jesus. And they did not know love because they did not know themselves rightly, and they did not know Jesus rightly. They thought highly of themselves and thought Jesus was a blasphemer (Matthew 27:39). These religious leaders saw themselves as good people, yes as great people, and Jesus as someone who should be done away with (John 11: 45—53). These Pharisees saw themselves as law-keepers and Jesus as a lawbreaker. They exalted themselves to the highest place, not realizing how ugly their hearts really were in not wanting the sick to be helped by Jesus. This showed how loveless and disobedient they really were, not realizing what fools they looked like, as they pretended to be more righteous than the very Son of God.

So, Jesus told these self-righteous religious leaders, a parable in the second part of our text about a wedding banquet, a parable that applies just as much to us as to them. ***“When you are invited by anyone to a wedding feast, do not sit down in the best place, lest one more honorable than you be invited by him; and he who invited you and him come and say to you, ‘Give place to this man,’ and then you begin with shame to take the lowest place. But when you are invited, go, and sit down in the lowest***

place, so that when he who invited you comes, he may say to you, 'Friend, go up higher.' Then you will have glory in the presence of those who sit at the table with you. For whoever exalts himself will be humbled, and he who humbles himself will be exalted."

Now, this is a parable, (an earthly story with a heavenly meaning) which means it is not just about where we sit at a party. It is about our heart, toward God and man. If, in our heart, we set ourselves up above the people sitting next to us and imagine that we are more important or a better person than they, then we show that we are loveless, and we will be humbled. Likewise, if in our heart we set ourselves up above the Son of God and imagine that we are good enough without Him –that we do not need Him to be saved, then we will be cast down and shamed before God and man.

So, do not do that, says Jesus. Instead, ***"go and sit down in the lowest place."*** What does that mean? It means recognize that all our labor to save ourselves is in vain. All our work, all our obedience like the religious leaders of Jesus' day – does not measure up to the standard of love set by God. All our comparing ourselves with other people is useless and vain. So, we need to recognize our place as a poor sinner; recognize anew, as we confessed earlier together, that we are the poorest of sinners and the lowliest of sinners.

And furthermore, we must know and believe that Jesus is the Savior of sinners. Know that Jesus has humbled Himself to the lowest place, as the Son of Man who came, not to be served, but to serve and to give His life as a ransom for many (Matthew 20:28), (Mark 10:45). Know that the blood Jesus shed on the cross was for you, was for me and was for all people and it paid for every single sin which has ever been committed.

In other words, the only way into heaven and into God's favor, even now and always, is by resting... Not climbing, but resting... Not trying hard, but resting... Not working, but resting, resting in repentance and faith in Christ Jesus.

Did not our Lord tell the people around Him as He carried out His public ministry, **"Come unto me all you who labor and are heaven laden and I**

will give you rest” (Matthew 11:28). Jesus came to lift the heavy burden of sins from our backs and gives us rest in knowing that our sins have been taken away.

It is Christ’s work, not ours, which counts before God. Human works are not good enough to save because we are sinners. St. Paul says, **“For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God, not of works, lest anyone should boast”** (Ephesians 2:8-9). Christ’s work alone is perfect, and by the gracious work of God the Holy Spirit we believe in Jesus and He gives us “rest” in knowing, in believing that He has done everything for our salvation.

So, Christ is the fulfillment of the Sabbath Day. We who rest in Christ, we who believe in Christ are to love God, according to the Third Commandment, by regarding His Word as holy and gladly hearing it and learning it. We are not to despise His Word.

Moreover, we are to love our neighbor by helping him to find rest, both physical and spiritual. Yes, our Lord would have us go and tell our neighbor, that family member, that work buddy of the rest which can be had, the rest of sins forgiven, in Christ Jesus. Also, as the effects of Covid-19 surround us, how we need to speak that word of encouragement in Christ, how we need to uplift and strengthen those around us who are discouraged and lonely with the Good News that our gracious God never forsakes His children, that He holds them and watches over them (Isaiah 41: 13; Hebrews 13:5)

But that love for God and neighbor does not save us; faith in Christ alone saves. Love for God and love for our fellowman comes from faith in Christ. It is a fruit of faith. And that is why the Pharisees in our text did not know love, did not have love for God or for their fellowman because they had no faith, no faith in Christ Jesus as their Savior from sin, death, hell, and Satan.

So, Jesus’ Word to you and to me today is urgent. Recognize that in us, that is, in our sinful flesh, nothing good dwells, as St Paul said in Romans 7:18. Stop trying to work and fight and claw and climb into God’s favor. Yes, stop working...and rest in the grace of God; rest in the wounds of Christ; rest in the righteousness that comes not by doing but by believing and

trusting in God for forgiveness, for the sake of Christ Jesus, the truly Righteous One.

May we one day then by God's grace feast in that eternal banquet in heaven and behold our crucified, yet risen and ascended Savior Jesus Christ.

May we know then that eternal Sabbath Rest with all of God's children, where with all the angelic host, we worship and praise Him our Lord and God through endless day.

And may God, our gracious Father grant this for Jesus sake. Amen.