

“Never On a Sunday”

August 25, 2019

[Scripture Focus: Luke 13: 10 - 17]

SCRIPTURE

Let's take a closer look at the Luke text that Glynn read earlier. We'll listen for God's Word again. This morning, I'll be reading from the Common English Bible...

Jesus was teaching in one of the synagogues on the Sabbath. A woman was there who had been disabled by a spirit for eighteen years. She was bent over and couldn't stand up straight. When he saw her, Jesus called her to him and said, "Woman, you are set free from your sickness." He placed his hands on her and she straightened up at once and praised God. The synagogue leader, incensed that Jesus had healed on the Sabbath, responded, "There are six days during which work is permitted. Come and be healed on those days, not on the Sabbath day."

The Lord replied, "Hypocrites! Don't each of you on the Sabbath untie your ox or donkey from its stall and lead it out to get a drink? Then isn't it necessary that this woman, a daughter of Abraham, bound by Satan for eighteen long years, be set free from her bondage on the Sabbath day?"

When he said these things, all his opponents were put to shame, but all those in the crowd rejoiced at all the extraordinary things he was doing.

This is the second week in a row that we've heard Jesus call out the Hypocrites! Isn't it odd that modern Millennials (those who are 18 - 34 years old) often refer to the church as being hypocritical? I wonder...

So, here's the problem: No one was supposed to work on the Sabbath. Jesus is in the synagogue preaching (which apparently isn't really work) and a woman shows up who cannot stand upright (kind of like Meghan earlier). The woman never asked Jesus to heal her but he did. After she was healed, she began to praise God for this miracle. She had not been able to stand upright for the previous 18 years and suddenly Jesus heals her. Nothing had ever been more worthy of her praise.

We are people who constantly seek loopholes - at least I am. It seems insane that I know that God knows my every thought but for some reason, I imagine that I can convince God of something that's just not true. Long before politicians challenged the meaning of words to save their political careers, scripture taught us that we were not to "work" on the Sabbath. Can't you see this large group of business owners protesting and saying "it's not work to open my deli on the Sabbath - at least not like it is on the rest of the week" or "Jesus worked on the Sabbath. Why can't we?"

To make today's discussion simpler, could we pretend (just a moment) that the "no work" rule didn't exist but the setting aside of the Sabbath for rest and worship was etched in stone? I think that we can argue from today until Jesus comes again about the true meaning of "work." So, let's not waste time doing that.

Can you imagine what would happen if we didn't have to find a loophole to explain why it was o.k. to work on the Sabbath? I wonder if the whole "work" thing was attached to "Remember the Sabbath and keep it holy" (from Exodus 20) just so that our potential loopholes would be minimized. You know how churches often add their own rules to scripture to close loopholes and clarify the meaning of God's Word. Seems that many of the rules that the church (not necessarily this one) creates are there to satisfy someone at the church (not to explain God's Word).

SO WHAT?

I remember subbing for the preacher at Grace Covenant Presbyterian Church a few years back. The guy doing the children's message was excellent! I told the congregation that I could just say "Amen" and we could all head home after the children's message. It was so good - so clear that there was nothing for me to add. However, I had already spent time on the sermon and someone had to hear it!

I almost feel the same way today; not because this morning's children's message was amazing. It's just that when we acknowledge that Jesus tells us that there's no day when it's inappropriate to do good... Bingo! We're done.

If we maintained the old rule, there are a number of things that we couldn't do on the Sabbath because it would be heretical. No more buying a Happy Meal for the homeless guy by the mall on the Sabbath because someone has to work to prepare it. No more getting gas on the Sabbath because it's work to pump gas into your car.

Here are some things that Jewish folks still can't do on the Sabbath: no sowing, plowing, reaping, binding, threshing, winnowing, grinding, sifting, kneading or baking. You also can't shear sheep, do any dyeing, spinning, threading needles or making loops. Seems to me that I may have seen some of you threshing and winnowing on the Sabbath... I'm kidding. I don't even know what threshing and winnowing are!

NOW WHAT?

Many of you have heard me mention Andy Stanley. Andy's the son of legendary TV preacher, Charles Stanley and the pastor of the North Point Community Church in Atlanta. We're actually using Andy's studies in Family Fusion where today we'll be talking about the difference in making a mistake and committing a sin. Will I be looking for loopholes? Absolutely!

Andy is a proponent of a movement that says if one followed what Christ has defined as the two greatest commandments (Love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind AND Love your neighbor as yourself), you could forget the Ten Commandments because if you Loved the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind AND loved your neighbor as yourself, you'd never murder anyone or covet your neighbor's possessions. You'd likely

never worship a false idol and you'd never think about not setting aside a day to rest and worship God.

Bottom line: We are not to ignore the Sabbath rule of resting and worshipping but Jesus tells us that we are also not to ignore the needs of others (even on the Sabbath). I have a neighbor who lives across the street from us. A few years back, I looked out our front window and saw Harold laying in the street. Harold is a kind senior man who lives by himself. He had fallen on the ice while he checking his mailbox.

Luckily for Harold, it was not the Sabbath. If it had been, I would have faced a moral dilemma and been tempted to leave Harold in the street. Actually, no, I wouldn't have...

Real bottom line: We don't always have to follow the letter of the law. When in doubt, ask yourself WWJD (what would Jesus do?) and then honestly do what you think God would have you do. I'm pretty confident that God wouldn't have been pleased with me if I had left Harold laying in the street - no matter what day of the week it was. Every day is a good day to show love or help someone in need; even on the Sabbath! Amen.