

They Remained Silent **Luke 14:1-11**

Grace to you and peace from God our Father and our Lord Jesus Christ. Amen.

On one Saturday, Jesus was invited to the home of a ruler of the Pharisees for a meal. He had been invited for a purpose, "they were watching Him carefully." You see, many people were following Jesus, listening to what He had to say, hanging on Jesus' words. On the other hand, the Pharisees seemed to have less of a following. Jesus was invited over on this particular Sabbath in order that they might catch Jesus in a slip-up. They set up the conditions so that He would break the Sabbath, because the Pharisees believed Jesus had a different view of the Sabbath than they did.

This healing is the third which Jesus performs on a Sabbath. When He first healed on the Sabbath, they were enraged at Him. On His second Sabbath healing, the Pharisees were humiliated by His teaching.

Jesus knows what they are up to, so He asked them, "Is it lawful to heal on the Sabbath?" If they said yes, they would have contradicted their previous positions. If they said that it was not lawful, Jesus had already shamed them in that answer. Not wanting to contradict themselves, or look foolish again, they remain silent.

God's Law is irrefutable. Even Jesus is not allowed to change it, neither to add to it nor subtract from it. That is true of all the commandments He gave. There were those who had taken God's laws, especially the one about keeping the Sabbath holy, and had tried to answer questions like, "OK, what can't I do on the Sabbath or I am sinning?" So, they came up with lots of rules that you had to follow in order to keep the Sabbath.

What they had done, basically was, added to the commandment in order to make it attainable. They would claim that what they did was further explanation, but it was more than that. It is easy to be lazy on the Sabbath and do absolutely nothing – giving the appearance of keeping the commandment to take a Sabbath rest. But simply lying around the house is not the same as keeping the Sabbath holy. It is equally easy to lust in the heart and explain that away as not committing adultery – yet Jesus specifically states that lust in the heart **IS** adultery.

Jesus asks them if it is lawful to heal on the Sabbath or not? They remained silent!

What does it mean to keep the Sabbath holy? Is that something about what we do? In part, yes! Sabbath means rest, so to keep the Sabbath holy, is to keep rest holy. What does it mean to rest? To rest, is to find our refreshment in God – to rest in His Word, to rest in His peace, to rest in those gifts which He gives us that make us holy.

Like the Pharisees, there are many today who see a relationship with God as all about what they do to make themselves holy, how they have fulfilled the Law. Most people in fact, see Christianity **ONLY** as what we do or what we fail to do to appease God's wrath. That is why,

when a preacher falls into some particular sin, those who like to poke fun at Christians will say, "See, he could not even practice what he preached."

It is true that most Christians would probably agree with that statement. And it is because people see Christianity as did the Pharisees, as a set of rules either to be kept or broken.

A good fire and brimstone preacher is often seen as one who preaches the Law well, "You gave it to them good today, preacher." Notice that he is good only if he was aiming the law at someone else. People call someone preachy when that person is pointing out sin, or focusing on the law. And people who take a moral stand are said to be "preaching," especially if it hits a little too close to home.

What did Jesus ask in our text? He said, "It is lawful to heal on the Sabbath, or not?" And they remained silent.

The pastor who committed adultery against God and against his wife is indeed a sinner. Of course, we all are! He no worse than we, for even our righteous deeds are as filthy rags in God's eyes. In his tears of repentance to his wife and God, as he struggles to keep his marriage alive, is when this pastor needs a preacher sent by Christ, one who proclaims the healing words of the Gospel in the forgiveness of sins.

"Is it lawful to heal on the Sabbath, or not?"

Christianity, according to what our Catechumens are learning, is the life and salvation given in and through Christ Jesus. It is about the forgiveness of sins Christ purchase with His innocent suffering and death, and delivers to us in Word and Sacrament.

But what do most people believe about Christianity? That it is about keeping the rules. Continually they point to the Law. They believe it is about what people do and do not do, about how moral they are or are not.

Some hate Christianity because they know they can never accomplish what the Law requires, and they are right. It is also because they want continue to do what they want to do, and what they want to do is forbidden in the Law.

Some who claim to be Christian want it be all about the Law because then they are better than others. These are contemporary Pharisees, who like to point at themselves and their holy lives – they are hypocrites.

Always people point to the law – those outside as well as those inside Christianity. And indeed, we are to keep God's Law. But Christianity needs to remain focused upon the root word in Christianity – Christ. It is all about Christ!

God gave His Law to point us to Christ.

God gave His Son, as the Christ.

Christ came to give His life as the ransom for sins.

Christ rose on the third day as the stamp of approval upon the ransom price of Christ's innocent suffering and death, that it was received and accepted by God.

Christ calls men to deliver that ransom to sinners in the forgiveness of sins, purchased by Christ and delivered by Christ.

Christ's ministers fulfill Christ's command and say, "Your sins are forgiven."

Baptized believers are united to Christ's death and resurrection by water and the Word, they have forgiveness of sins and eternal salvation.

Christ gathers believers together so that He might set a table before them, so that they might eat of His body and drink of His precious blood shed for their forgiveness and to grant them life.

Most people hear this and remain silent!

I ask you, is it lawful to heal on the Sabbath, or not?

I pray that you do not remain silent. I pray that you come each week and receive your Sabbath healing of sins forgiven and faith strengthened. I pray that you raise your cries of Amen when you hear your sins forgiven, that you boldly sing your thanks and praise as you receive from Christ those gifts which heal you on this and every Sabbath of all that assails you – sin, guilt, and death.

Is it lawful to heal on the Sabbath? It is why we gather together, that we might receive healing in Christ – today and every Sabbath. Praise be to Christ!!! Amen.