

## Sermon † August 21, 2022

Luke 13:10-17

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If you are old enough . . . you remember when Sunday (the day) was pretty much relegated to going to church followed by a family dinner . . . and in some homes that was it.

Folks didn't really participate in any "regular" or "normal" activities. You didn't go to the mall because all of the stores were closed. And in many places even the movie theaters and all of the restaurants were closed. In Kenosha, my hometown, the gas stations and drug stores took *turns* being opened on Sundays . . . and only for a few hours.

So why did we do this? You know the answer . . . "*Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy . . .*"

It is one of the Ten Commandments. (Of course, if we are going to be purists ... the Sabbath day observed by the early Hebrews was the day we call Saturday. Christians observe Sunday as it is the day Jesus' resurrection.)

In this text, Jesus is accused of breaking a religious rule . . . that of what to do and not to do on the Sabbath. So . . . what does it mean to keep the Sabbath? And are there *Sabbath-rules*? Well, to start with it's really all about boundaries.

We talk a lot about "boundaries" these days. It is the maturity of knowing where I start and you stop. The maturity of knowing what is my problem and what is not my problem. We can imagine these maturities as part of our Sabbath-keeping.

When we order our lives to include more of God and less of people:

- † We draw hard lines and don't let other people and their expectations run our lives.
- † We self-differentiate, while including God in the circle of our lives.
- † We listen to God more than we listen to anyone or anything else.

Thus Sabbath is kept.

Each of us must draw our own lines. In the words of author, Tillie Olsen, Sabbath makes sure we have proper margins on the page. Sabbath makes sure the page breathes.

We remain people capable of selfless giving . . . but not capable of egoless self-sacrifice. We don't bleed into other people's lives or let them merge or bleed into ours. We stay separate; we use Sabbath to do what its word means, to *separate ourselves enough from the world so that we may connect to God*.

Our fully realized spirituality comes in the proper bordering of life with God at the center and the margins . . . and we enclosed . . . appropriately fit and held.

That word *spirituality* remains a little fuzzy. It is not a particular word but a general word. It is a word that many outsiders use to talk about *making-whole* — the very kind of thing we do when we put boundaries in our life and say what is and what is not ours.

Theologian, Janet Hagberg, defines spirituality this way: *Spirituality is an intimate connection with a power beyond us which seeks to dwell within us. Spirituality involves the way we live out our response to that power, the Holy, who invites us to take a courageous inner journey to a place where we have never been before.*

I think spirituality is an inner journey to the place where we come from *and* where we've never been before. It is our connection to eternity, time before and after and during our life.

Spirituality is one way of talking about the wholeness of our life. And Sabbath-keeping keeps us connected to eternity and to wholeness.

When we define our own life and our own borders, when we set our own boundaries, rather than letting culture set them for us, we enjoy a spirituality. We connect to what is really true and what really matters and we *disconnect* from what is not true and what does not really matter. We become less available to the rules that other people put on us.

Sabbath-keeping properly borders our lives by reminding us of a framework for living that *includes*, rather than *excludes*, God.

So ... how does all of this fit into our own faith life ... our own faith journeys? We need to be Sabbath-keepers.

Remember, Sabbath is to *separate ourselves enough from the world so that we may connect to God*. You need to find the time and space that works for you. It might be Sunday morning worship *or* an early morning walk down tree-covered path.

Sabbath-keeping involves prayer, reflection, corporate worship, fellowship. Sabbath-keeping is not legalism, it's an attitude. We need to be a people who set spiritual boundaries in our lives; but they must be boundaries that work for us. The modern world . . . the modern culture in which we live, is a world where, for many, God is an option. Sabbath-keepers differ. And thus we save our lives.

May we, like Jesus, choose to obey a larger rule . . . that of genuine Sabbath-keeping . . . that which connects us to God.

It is this connection that keeps us whole . . . and spiritually healthy.

And, for this connection, we thank and praise God.