

The 10 Commandments – Exodus 20:8-11  
Third Commandment

Sermon  
August 12, 2018

**Remember the Sabbath Day by keeping it holy.**

*What does this mean?*

**We should fear and love God that we do not despise preaching and his Word, but regard it as holy and gladly hear and learn it.**

Dear Friends in Christ,

The following news article was broadcast June 2, 2017 by *BBC World Service, Japan*. The title was “**Young Japanese working themselves to death.**” It is by BBC reporter, Edwin Lane.

Lane reported on an old trend that is making a comeback. He tells stories of young people working themselves to death. The Japanese culture pushes people to work long hours. People regularly work six days a week, even holidays. He also reports that the Japanese government is putting pressure on business to have workers put in less hours.

*“In the local government offices in Toshima, a district of downtown Tokyo, they have resorted to turning the office lights off at 7pm in an effort to force people to go home.” “We wanted to do something visible,” says manager Hitoshi Ueno.” It's not just about cutting working hours. We want people to be more efficient and productive, so that everyone can protect and enjoy their spare time. We want to change the work environment in total.”* In the article lane reveals that among the G7 countries Japan is the least efficient. Their workers work the longest hours, but the country is the least productive.

The Lord God did not want his people working seven days a week. He wanted them to get physical rest and he says so in the Third Commandment. The Lord had another purpose in giving the commandment. He wanted them to have time to receive rest for their souls. To accomplish this, the Lord ordered a Sabbath day, a day of rest. This day does more than help the Israelites of old. It also is a foreshadowing of the spiritual rest for all people in the Savior.

Today as we remember the Third Commandment we learn that **A Day of Rest Teaches Us About Our Spiritual Rest in Jesus.**

### **1. God blessed his people with a Sabbath or day of rest.**

We heard these past Sundays that the Lord God who brought the Israelites out of slavery in Egypt, gave them the 10 Commandments at Mt. Sinai. The Third Commandment is, **Remember the Sabbath day by keeping it holy.**

(20:8) The **Sabbath Day** for the Jewish people went from sundown on Friday to sundown on Saturday. The Israelites were to keep the day as a holy day. What does that mean? How does this apply to us?

A. The Lord tells them not to do their regular work. **9 Six days you shall labor and do all your work, 10 but the seventh day is a sabbath to the Lord your God. On it you shall not do any work, neither you, nor your son or daughter, nor your male or female servant, nor your animals, nor any foreigner residing in your towns.** As an example the Lord offers himself. In Genesis, chapter one he spent six days creating and working. But on the seventh day he rested. There is a purpose in having this day of rest.

1. On this day they would take time to remember and thank the Lord for making them his special people. Immediately after he gives this commandment the Lord says to Moses and the people, **“I gave them my Sabbath as a sign between us, so they would know that I the Lord made them holy.”** (12) The fact that they belonged to the Lord meant that he would take them to the promised land and that eventually he would take them to live with him in his house in Heaven. The Israelites were to remember and speak of these things on the Sabbath Day. There is more.

2. They had been set apart as the nation from which the Savior of the world would be born. Every believing Jewish person had heard the story of Adam and Eve breaking God’s command. They had learned that a Savior was needed to come and rescue us. He would be right with God and would keep all his commands. He would bring people back into a right relationship with God. The Lord had already revealed by this time that the Savior would be born from the tribe Jacob’s son, Judah.

B. The Sabbath rest then was a time for the people to receive spiritual rest by reviewing and remembering God’s promises, particularly the promise of the Savior. Through the prophet Isaiah the Lord made a promise. **“Those who hope in the Lord will renew their strength.”** (Isaiah 40:31) As they gathered around God’s word, their spiritual strength would grow. That promise stands today. As we take rest from our regular life and we spend time with the Lord and his word, he will strengthen our faith and he will give us spiritual rest.

C. We have to be careful how we apply this. The Lord wants us to gather, but he does not command us to gather on the seventh day of the week.

1. We heard St. Paul’s words in Colossians 2 during the Scripture readings. **“Do not let anyone judge you by what you eat or drink, or with regard to a religious festival, a New Moon celebration or a Sabbath day. These are**

**a shadow of the things that were to come; the reality, however, is found in Christ.”** Colossians 2:16,17 Those old holy days served their purpose. We are no longer bound to use them.

2. We do need to take time from regular work and life to remember that we are God’s special people and to receive rest for our souls. We are to gather to hear the word as it says in Hebrews 10:25, **“Do not give up meeting together, as some are in the habit of doing, but encouraging one another—and all the more as you see the Day approaching.”** We are not to go on a spiritual diet. **“Let the message of Christ dwell among you richly as you teach and admonish one another with all wisdom...”** (Colossians 3:16) When come to God’s word, we are coming to Jesus. And he invites in Matthew 11:28, **“Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest.”**

## **2. Jesus is our true Sabbath rest.**

The reason Jesus can give us rest is because, as our Savior, he is our true Sabbath rest.

A. The Third Commandment acts as a mirror. That shows that we need Jesus.

1. We break God’s commandments, including the Third. Already in the 1<sup>st</sup> Century people were skipping church. We heard in Hebrews 10:25 that some Christians were in the habit of not going to worship services. Jesus warns us in the *Parable of the Sower* in Luke’s Gospel that we should not let the thorns and weeds, which are the troubles and pleasures of life, to choke out the reception of God’s word. (Luke 8:14) We are to do more than hear the word. We are to take it to heart. James tells us in the New Testament that it is wrong if we hear the word, but don’t do what it says. (1:22-24)

2. When we don’t hear or don’t take to heart what God says, we are under his condemnation. Our sins should earn us an eternity in Hell.

B. The Good News is that Jesus kept this commandment perfectly as our substitute.

1. St. John tells us, **“But you know that he appeared so that he might take away our sins. And in him is no sin.”** (1 John 3:5) In Luke 4:16 we hear Jesus went to worship regularly, **“He went to Nazareth, where he had been brought up, and on the Sabbath day he went into the synagogue, as was his custom...”**

2. Jesus fulfilled the Third Commandment and all commandments perfectly on our behalf. Jesus exchanged his life and blood at the cross for our sins.

This is why the children of Israel were a holy people before God. This is why you and I are a part of God's holy people. Jesus graciously fulfilled the law for us. So we look to Jesus as our Sabbath rest.

### **3. Christians honor Jesus by keeping this command.**

Let's go back to the question, "Why do we worship today?" Certainly, God wants us to. However, it is not as some have suggested that is a moral obligation. If Jesus came to fulfill the law for us, then why are we obligated? We are not. However, God's word is good for us. Martin Luther put it this way, "*We still live in the devil's territory and are under attack daily.*" (Large Catechism, Bente & Dau, page 28) We need to regularly receive God's word so that we continue to have spiritual rest.

A. We heard before that Jesus promised rest for our souls when we come to him. There was an occasion when some friends brought a paralyzed man to Jesus for healing. The first thing that Jesus said was, "**Take heart, your sins are forgiven.**" (Matthew 9) There is a benefit in hearing these words not just in our heads as we read the Bible, but having God's representative say them personally to you in God's house. We also receive that forgiveness in Holy Baptism and Holy Communion.

B. Because of this the Lord told Joshua in the Old Testament, "**Keep this Book of the Law always on your lips; meditate on it day and night...**" (1:8) We are to make every effort to gladly hear and learn God's word.

This is one of the reasons that from the earliest days of Christianity, the church has had special seasons. (slide) There is *Advent, Christmas, Epiphany, Lent and Easter*. With those seasons we have "holy" days or holidays. All of this is help us to gather around God's word to receive his blessings and thank him. When we get in the habit, it can be easy and fun. Conclusion: The Catechism has wonderful illustrations. (slide) They summarize the main thoughts behind the lesson, today the 3<sup>rd</sup> Commandment. This commandment is all about spiritual rest. The Sabbath gave rest to the Israelites, but it pointed to the great rest all believers have in Christ. That motivates us to avoid despising God's word and it moves us to gladly hear and learn it. As we do, Jesus is blessing us with the spiritual rest which he won for us. Amen.

**OLD TESTAMENT SABBATH** pictured  
**REST IN CHRIST**  
told us in



**God's  
WORD**



**DO!**

- **Worship regularly**
- **Hear and study  
God's Word**
- **Believe and obey  
God's Word**
- **Proclaim God's Word**



**DON'T DO!**

- **Neglect worship**
- **Fail to read the Bible**
- **Consider other things  
more important than  
hearing God's Word**
- **Refuse to believe and  
obey God's Word**