

XVII Trinity 2020  
Sermon – Saint Joseph Parish  
Father Craig Looney  
*Ephesians 4.1-6 St. Luke 14.1-11*



Observe the Sabbath Day and keep it holy...the Fourth Commandment tells us! There was a time when almost every business in town was closed on Sunday. Churches on the other hand...were open for business...and not just on Sunday. The doors were never locked!

Sunday is sometimes called the Christian Sabbath. Strictly speaking it is not! Sunday is more appropriately called the Lord's Day. In the Bible the word Sabbath always means Saturday...the Seventh Day...a Day of Rest!

Today's Gospel begins with Jesus getting an invitation to an after-service luncheon on the Sabbath at the home of an important religious leader who is a Pharisee. This seems unusual since Jesus and the Pharisees are often at odds with one another over the finer points of the Law.

When Jesus arrives for the luncheon, he encounters a man sick from the dropsy...a swelling of the legs and arms we know today as edema. Jesus made a habit of healing people on the Sabbath...he knows the Pharisees have arranged for the sick man to be there to trap him.

Jesus uses this opportunity to teach the Pharisees and lawyers a lesson in what the Fourth Commandment is really all about. The Pharisees had hijacked the Fourth Commandment and added a list of complicated rules and regulations. The people spent all their time worrying about breaking the rules, instead of using the Sabbath as God intended...a day of rest and relaxation. Jesus heals the sick man and sends him on his way.

He then poses a question: When the luncheon was over and you arrived home to find one of your best farm animals or even your son had fallen into a well and was in danger of drowning...what would you do? Wouldn't you do the sensible and right thing and pull him out of the well...even on the Sabbath. None of the Pharisees tried to answer the question...they had been caught in their own trap...and made to look like the hypocrites they were.

The Pharisees were overly concerned about how they looked to other people...especially when it came to the Ten Commandments. Jesus shows in healing the man with the edema that rigid observance of rules and regulations and ceremonial instead of showing kindness, compassion and humility does not impress God. It does the exact opposite. Helping someone out on the Sabbath IS the proper way to observe and keep it and every day of the week holy.

Jesus then turns his attention to a lesson in humility. He watches other invited guests rushing to get the best seats at the table close to the host. In the short story about the wedding feast...he tells the people not to take a seat near the host...he might ask them to move and they would be embarrassed. But if the host asks them to move closer to him... everyone present will know what honor the host is showing to those who first took the seat at the opposite end of the table.

Compassion and humility are inseparably linked in our lives and are at the heart of today's Epistle and Gospel. Saint Paul tells us in the Epistle, life is not about impressing God. Jesus makes it clear that's impossible anyway, since he already knows what's in our hearts.

Paul encourages us to live up to the standards he calls us to...with quiet dignity and not to try to show off or impress others. We are to show our love by being tolerant with one another. We are to be humble, gentle and patient. We are to do everything possible to preserve the unity we have in God's peace that binds us together...here at Saint Joseph Parish...and in fellowship with other Christians throughout the world.

Jesus shows us ultimate compassion and humility...primarily in his actions. We must always be ready to do the same...and not just on the Sabbath...but on Sunday and every other day of the week!

We must also remember spending too much time at our jobs without a day off isn't good. We need time to rest and recharge our batteries. God worked for six days and then he took a day off. He expects us to do the same.

