

XVII Trinity 2022
Sermon – Saint Joseph Parish
Father Craig Looney
Ephesians 4.1-6 St. Luke 14.1-11



Is it OK to work on the Sabbath? The first part of today's Gospel answers that question. The second part of the Gospel is a lesson in humility and hospitality.

Before we talk about the Gospel we must understand the Sabbath is not Sunday. Sunday is sometimes called the Christian Sabbath. Sunday should more properly be called the Lord's Day!

The Gospel begins with Jesus having lunch on the Sabbath at the home of an important religious leader. People came to see him...the Gospel says they "watched him closely".

A man with edema came to Jesus for help. Jesus asked the religion teachers if it was OK to heal someone on the Sabbath. According to the Book of Exodus...we're supposed to work six days and not do any work on the seventh day (the Sabbath).

The religious leaders knew better than to answer Jesus. If they said yes, they would look like hypocrites for violating the Law and what they were teaching people not to do. If they said no, they would appear uncaring and unkind about the sick man. So Jesus heals the man and sends him on his way.

Jesus told the religious leaders they wouldn't think twice about rescuing a son or ox that fell into a well on the Sabbath. Jesus had many discussions with the religious leaders about work on the Sabbath. In Matthew he said the Sabbath was made for man...it is a blessing and a gift from God.

The point Jesus is trying to make is God created the Sabbath. Jesus is God...he is free to do whatever he wants on the Sabbath or any other day of the week. But since God worked for six days and then took a day off...so should we. That doesn't mean staying idle...it's perfectly OK to have a BBQ, take a road trip, wash the car or paint the house. We do, however, need to make time for God, even on our day off.

In the second part of the Gospel Jesus is watching guests arriving for lunch falling all over themselves trying to get the best

seats...closer to the host. Jesus gives the people seated near him a lesson in humility. Take the closest available seat...you might be asked to come and sit closer to the host...a place of honor. But if you push people out of the way to get a better seat...you might be asked to move. Think how embarrassed you will be.

Jesus then tells a short story about hospitality. He tells us not to invite friends or relatives to lunch or dinner. They will want to repay you by inviting you to dinner. Instead go invite a stranger or homeless person...they are in no position to repay you for your kindness. And that's the point of the story. Our acts of kindness and hospitality must be unconditional...never a quid pro quo.

Jesus often takes on the lawyers and religious leaders over their literalistic and self-serving interpretation of the Law...they used the Law to control people's lives...to browbeat them into submission...to make themselves look and feel more important and better than everyone else. Jesus also tells us in Matthew he didn't come to abolish the Law...he came to make it come true. He did so in giving it a new and rich meaning.

In the *Oxford Prayer Book Commentary*, Father Massey Shepherd explains what we should learn from the Gospel...*"The people who think themselves important in the world may very well find that in the Kingdom of God their places of privilege will be taken by others who are not so self-centered and self-regarding"*.

Saint Paul tells us in his Letter to the Ephesians we are to...*"live lives that measure up to the standard God set when he called us"*.

The word "Church" comes from the Greek word *Ekklesia*...*"the called out ones"*. We are called out to be a Community of Believers driven by love, compassion, humility, gentleness, patience and tolerance with one another.

We have a prime directive to live as Church...on Saturday, Sunday and every other day of the week. We honor God even when our jobs require us to work on Sunday...it too is a blessing from God.

