

XVII Trinity 2023  
Sermon – Saint Joseph Parish  
Father Craig Looney  
*St. Luke 14.1-11*



It's dinnertime at the house of an important religious leader. It's the Sabbath Day and Luke tells us people were watching Jesus closely.

A man with swollen legs and arms came to Jesus. The KJV calls the man's condition "dropsy". Today we call the condition "edema". The painful swelling would have made it very difficult for the man to walk. Jesus doesn't address the man...instead he asks the religious leaders if the Law permitted healing on the Sabbath.

The religious leaders must have sensed they were being baited. The Fourth Commandment states we are to keep the Sabbath Day holy. Our religious leader friends decided to keep quiet...a smart decision on their part. Any answer they would have given would have been wrong. Jesus healed the man and sent him on his way home.

He then asks our religious leader friends another question. If they had a son or ox that fell into a well on the Sabbath Day would they not pull him out at once. If they answered yes...they would have looked like hypocrites for saying it was OK for people to go against their own strict, literalistic, interpretation of the Fourth Commandment. If they said no, they would have looked like the bad guys for refusing to save an animal or human being in distress. Again they decided to keep quiet.

Sunday is sometimes called the Christian Sabbath, although it should more properly be called the Lord's Day. There was a time when businesses closed on Sunday. Even the local gas station was closed. Church was the only thing happening in town on Sunday...in some small towns that's still the case.

In Mark's Gospel, Jesus says the Sabbath Day was made for the good of man; man was not made for the Sabbath. What Jesus is telling us is the Sabbath was made as a blessing for people, not a burden. Our attendance at Sunday Mass is a blessing from God...not a burden. We get refreshed in hearing God's Word and receiving

the Body and Blood of Jesus in the Sacrament of the Altar.

There are times when we have to work on Sunday to support ourselves. It's a reality of living in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century. The days when dad went to work and mom stayed home (which is work) are a thing of the past. We keep the Sabbath (and Sunday) holy by setting time aside for God, which is everyday and all the time.

God is not just a Sunday experience...he's a lifetime and forever experience and deserves our attention and prayers. He does understand our lives can get hectic. He took a day off...we should too. That doesn't necessarily mean we should do no work...what work we do should be God directed.

There is a second part to today's Gospel. Jesus has given the people a lesson in proper observance of the Sabbath...now it's time to give them (and us) a lesson in humility and hospitality.

Jesus observes dinner guests pushing each other out of the way to get the best seats at the table...near the host. Of course who doesn't want to sit next to the dinner host. We look important, or at least we think we look important. Jesus cautions the people not to make a dash toward the head of the table. The host might ask you to leave because the seat was reserved for someone else. Think how embarrassed we would be in a similar situation. Instead, take a seat away from the host. We might be asked to come and sit near the host. If not...we should be happy sitting where we are. After all, we were invited to the dinner.

We learn two lessons from today's Gospel. First, Jesus demonstrates he has the power to heal and because he is God he can heal people on the Sabbath. The Sabbath was created for our benefit...not to burden us. Second, humility and hospitality are key ingredients in the Christian Life. We should practice them with joy and happiness.

Jesus gave glory to God in the work he did. We are called to give glory to God in the work we do on Saturday, Sunday and every day of the week. Each day is...a blessing from God!

