

Remember The Sabbath - 6/3/2018

Pentecost 2B (Baptism of Elysia Noel Fields)

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Deut. 5:12-15; Mark 2:23-28 (3:1-6)

6/3/18

“Remember the Sabbath”

“The Sabbath was made for man, not man for the Sabbath” (Mark 2:27).

In the Name of Jesus. Amen.

In the beginning, before God Sabbaths, He first creates.

After the fall, before God Sabbaths, He first redeems.

And today, before God Sabbaths, He first re-creates...

In the beginning, before God Sabbaths, He first creates.

For apart from creation, there is no Sabbath -

there is no communion of God and man.

For that is, after all, what the Sabbath is all about, right?

The Sabbath is nothing other than the everlasting communion of God with man.

It is the activity of heaven and earth that follows immediately from creation.

In six days, God created the heavens and the earth, and then we are told He Sabbatheth.

He had created man in His image, which is to say, for community -

for communion with Him and with one another.

Indeed, in the same way that God is love - specifically, a communion of persons, Father, Son, and HS so intimately united that we confess them as One God,

He made man in His image, not only uniting them as man and woman so intimately that we confess them as one flesh,

but also uniting Himself to them in that mystical communion of God and man for eternal bliss.

This He called the Sabbath: God with man,

delighting in and receiving together all that He had made and given.

One Lutheran theologian put it this way: “After creating all things in six days, the Lord rested on the seventh.

Let this not be understood to mean that God lay down to sleep and thus left the created world unattended...

Rather, God was satisfied with the aforesaid creatures and made no new ones.

So as soon as man had been created there followed a blessed day of rest and feasting;

for God wished from thenceforth to rest in man as in His own property, residence, and temple,

to celebrate His day of joy and peace with man,

to fill man's heart to the brim with His wisdom, righteousness, holiness, light, and life, and evermore find in man His rest, delight, gladness, and pleasure.

Man, for his part, was simply to rest in God -

[to participate in this Sabbath, this communion] -

to expect all good things from Him,

to have his day of delight, joy, and peace in God,

to find his enjoyment in God, to receive nothing from God but love and goodness in eternal peace,

and to speak of God's works in constant tranquility" (Valerius Herberger, "The Great Works of God," 1601).

On the Seventh Day, God Sabbathed...

Now recall that God is Holy, which means He is absolutely "other" - utterly separate from all things created.

And so, if God is to have this relationship with the world and the man He created in His image, He must come to us.

He must locate Himself within this creation for us.

For our participation in the Sabbath could never come by our reaching out to or climbing up to our Holy God.

Rather, the direction of our joy and peace and life in communion with God is from heaven to earth.

God comes to us and communes with us.

The Sabbath was made for man, not man for the Sabbath.

Unfortunately, sin has corrupted our sense of direction in this regard.

For by rejecting God's Word and breaking God's Sabbath,

we broke the bonds that united us to light and life and meaning and purpose and contentment and joy within creation.

In the moment of our fall, we became enslaved to the devil and to the very world

over which we had been given dominion.

Curved inward on ourselves and viewing everything through the lens of me, myself, and I,

we have been turning everything upside down ever since.

We think we provide for ourselves.

We constantly strive to justify ourselves.

And when it comes to our relationship with God, we think we can reach out to Him!

The Sabbath then becomes the work WE do, the rules and rituals and sacrifices WE make to bring God and heaven to us and restore His communion with us.

Hence the absurd, burdensome, Christ-denying regulations the Pharisees had put their fear, love, and trust in to reconcile themselves to God.

Hence the absurd, burdensome, Christ-denying ideas we ourselves may have that “going to church” or “giving our tithes” or anything else we might do can reconcile us to God and restore us to His Sabbath rest.

This is backward.

For the Sabbath was made for man, not man for the Sabbath.

And it is God who comes for us.

Before God Sabbaths, He first comes for us and redeems us.

For even after the fall, God never stopped loving us!

Rather, He promised to rescue, redeem, and restore us to His Sabbath rest by sending a Savior who would open the way for us out of slavery back to that blessed communion for which we were created.

He gave us a glimpse of this deliverance when He brought His people out of Egypt with a mighty hand and an outstretched arm (Deu 5:15).

After redeeming them at the cost of the first-born, He then Sabbathated, locating Himself among them in His Holy presence,

feeding them from His altar and communing with them every seventh day.

Dr. Kleinig writes, “Every Sabbath was an eternal moment in the temporal order, a foretaste of heaven on earth” (Grace Upon Grace).

God had delivered His people through the waters of the Red Sea,

and then He provided for their ritual cleansing, gathering them into His presence week in and week out,

presenting Himself to them at the tabernacle,

communings with them at His altar,

Sabbathing with them throughout their sojourn and ultimately in the Promised

Land itself.

The Sabbath was made for man, not man for the Sabbath.

And to this day, God continues to gather us into His blessed communion, locating Himself among US with His Holy Presence, feeding US from His altar – God with us, forgiving us and giving us of Himself that we might have our joy and everlasting rest in Him.

By His life, death, resurrection, and ascension,

Jesus opened for us a new and living way into the heavenly sanctuary, the presence of His holy Father (Heb 10:20) –

the communion of God and man –

the very Sabbath wherein we behold His glory, participate in His holiness, and receive His gifts for life everlasting.

Of course, we dare not come into the presence of God and take our places in the Sabbath as unclean sinners.

For this would desecrate God's holiness and destroy us in the process.

Which is why, before He Sabbaths, God first RE-creates –

He gives us new birth –

He makes us a new creation (2Cor 5:17) – not because of righteous things we had done,

but because of His mercy (Titus 3:5).

And He does this through the waters of Holy Baptism.

This morning, through the washing of rebirth and renewal by the Holy Spirit,

Elysia Noel has been made a new creation, holy and righteous in God's sight.

She has been restored to Communion with God –

a participant now and forever in the Sabbath, which is a wonderful thing to behold...

For when she was brought through those doors this morning, she was dead in her trespasses and sins (Eph 2:1).

Conceived and born into sin,

she was an enemy of God, deserving only of His eternal wrath and condemnation.

But God, being rich in mercy, because of the great love with which he loved her, even when she was dead in her trespasses,

has made her alive together with Christ.

By grace she has been saved – sins forgiven –

raised up with Him and seated with Him in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus

(Eph 4:2-6).

She has been justified by God's grace and made an heir of His kingdom having the hope of eternal life (Titus 3:5-7) -

a life in communion with God, the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit whose Name she now bears -

a life of Sabbath rest with God not only in the light of His glorious kingdom to come, but even now as she begins her difficult pilgrimage through the darkness of this fallen world.

For God has made her his own dear child, and He will never leave her or forsake her (Psa 94:14; Heb 13:5).

Nothing shall separate her from His love or from His Sabbath rest into which she has now been gathered -

Only she can do that, just like you and me...

Of course, that would not only be foolish, but deadly -

which is why God continually calls us back into communion with Him when He says, "Remember the Sabbath Day by keeping it holy" (Deu 5:12).

Do not ignore it! Do not despise it!

Do not forsake His grace and mercy.

Rather, remember who you are and whose you are as a new creation in Christ, and take your place in that blessed communion with Him who loves you and forgives you all your sins.

Yes - Let us remember the Sabbath Day by keeping it holy.

Let us come into His presence with thanksgiving -

Let us kneel before the LORD, our Maker!

For he is our God, and we are the people of his pasture -

the sheep of his hand (Psalm 95:6-7) -

in the Name of Jesus. Amen.