

Sermon for the Second Sunday after Pentecost

'The Sabbath was made for man.'

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'By the sweat of your brow, you shall eat bread.'

Indeed, the life we live is a life of toil. Not merely work, but toil. For man was always meant to work, whether to keep the garden, or to keep his family, or to keep his thoughts; he was to labor mindfully and joyfully, knowing that all he did, according to his vocation, was the work of God.

Yet now this is not so. We do not work to create and recreate all God had intended; rather we work to survive. We go to our jobs to gain money that we may eat and have a house over our heads so that the rain will not wet us nor disease waste us. Even what was meant to be endless joy becomes to us in our sin a labor.

To eat good food made, as they say, with love, is what makes a good life, yet now such food is only gained by *the sweat of your brow*. A home, which is what we all long for, is only sustained in this life by an endless cycle of botherences, brokenness, repairs, spackling, painting, and bills.

It is too obvious, that our life is one of sweat, of toil. Even the greatest joy given to man, of husband and wife and family we, being evil, have made into sweat. It is for this reason that one often hears that to have a good family, one must *work* on their marriage. If marriage and family is work, fallen we are, and we have fallen far.

Adam was given all things that bore fruit to be his food; he was given a garden, free from guile to be his house; he was given Eve to be his help; all these things, that he might have one thing: a home; a place to rest; a place where everything was as it should be.

These things God gave Him, that God and man may dwell together, and everything being in its right place, they might rest; that is, that they might have a Sabbath.

We all know this to be true. Do you not long for this day of rest? Every moment of every day is little less than a demand imposed on you lest your life collapse beneath you. You must wake up early, so that you may go to your job, early. You must fulfill the demands of your vocation quickly, lest you get fired. You must not get fired, lest you not have an income. You must have an income, lest your family despair.

And even having the income you have made, even the use of it is work. You must take your children to practice. You must take your family to the game. You must take your husband or wife, on a good day, to the market; or on an evil day, to the hospital. You must pay doctors for the privilege of being able to live a little longer; you must pay barbers for the privilege of being able to be presentable a little more.

And in the meantime, the minutes are filled with noise. Noise of disobedient children, and of unsatisfied spouses. Of unhappy friends, and even more unhappy enemies. Of the fear of a call from work by a boss that does not particularly like you, or of a coworker that likes you too much.

Like a decade brood of cicadas, all these things haunt you by day when you long to be awake, and by night when you waking dream of sleep. And let us not speak of business trips and family visits and travel. Even vacations, we admit, make us tired.

'For by the sweat of your brow, you shall eat bread.'

In the midst of this cacophony, do we not long for the Sabbath? That day of rest, the seventh day?

The Sabbath was not instituted by God as a day of laziness; it is a day of rest. To rest means to stop; and more importantly to stop in the presence of something. Something that is greater than the toil of this life; the only thing greater than the labors of this day.

This only greater thing is God, that we might reside in the presence of the

Creator, and the Creator in the presence of the creation. That we might walk with Him in the cool of the evening, and speak as friends. This alone is the Sabbath.

The disciples walk with Christ through a field of wheat; of plants bearing their fruit; and as they walk, they pick of what they see. This was lawful, for part of any cultivated land was to be left unharvested for the sojourner, as Moses wrote in the Law.

As they talk with Christ, yet they are now even in the garden, eating, drinking, that they might be merry; and talking, that they might have rest, even rest in God.

Yet the Pharisees are scandalized, for to them such harvesting of the fruits of the earth seem to them to be work, even toil, and such is forbidden on the Sabbath.

They accuse the disciples, yet the Lord execrates the Pharisees, for, though being teachers of the Law, they understand it not. For *the Sabbath was made for man, and not man for the Sabbath*. For indeed man was made to rest in the presence of God.

Indeed *the Son of Man is Lord even of the Sabbath*, for it was always the intent of God, that man should walk, even *in the cool of the evening*, with their God, and eat of *every plant bearing seed*. In this, they have a home.

Yet there is something in us that sympathizes with the Pharisees. Who are these wandering vagrants, following a homeless teacher, that they dare eat the fruit of others labor, even eat it on a holy day?

The disciples seem to us to be indigents. Should they not be accused?

Yet the Lord does not say that some should not work, but that they work should be done not by the servants, but by the master, for *the son came not to be served, but to serve*.

Verily, God's curse placed upon man in the Fall remains valid. Yet this curse shall be taken on not by man, but the Son of Man.

For it shall come to pass that this very Son and Lord shall undergo many labors, many sufferings, and finally, in a garden, sweat blood, and pray, even pray upon the wood of the cross, that we, His friends, might have forgiveness; that we, in

Him, might find rest; that we, by Him, might have a home; that our Sabbath may come; that we might cease from our labors, even as the angels in heaven, and rest.

That we might this day, and for every Lord's Day until the dawn of eternity, might come to a table, drink of the cup that overflows, and eat of the bread of the Temple. Yet this cup and this bread, we only have from the God who *even now still works*.

And how does He work? He works even as a slave, *in the form of a slave, a man without help*, beneath the lashing of a whip, and the contempt of man, and crucifixion upon a tree.

And all this is necessary, for we demanded this of the first Son when we chose disobedience in our first father.

For it is written:

'That there is nothing better than to eat, drink, and rejoice in his work.' For:

'By the sweat his brow, you shall eat bread.'

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Preached by Pastor Fields

Sermon Texts: Deuteronomy 5:12-15; 2 Corinthians 4:5-12; Mark 2:23-28.