

Sermon for the Twelfth Sunday after Pentecost

'Is it lawful to heal on the Sabbath?'

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It seems our Lord is disputing some small article of the Law of Moses with the Pharisees. But I tell you, all salvation is found in this question.

In six days did our God labor to create all that is seen and unseen; all that is and ever will be; in six days He did this, that there might be a seventh, a day of rest; blessed is He.

For it is written: *'Thus the heavens and the earth were finished, and all the host of them. And on the seventh day God finished his work that he had done, and he rested on the seventh day from all his work.'*

Therefore, Moses commanded that *'six days shall you labor, and do all your work, but the seventh day is a Sabbath to the LORD your God. On it, you shall not do any work, you, or your son.'*

Rest, therefore, on the seventh day, for there is no eighth; no eighth day written of in the books of Moses. For the eighth day is but the making eternal of the seventh, a rest without end, after the toil of all life. Rest, therefore. Moses has commanded this not that we might have another rule to live by, but that we might be imitators of God, for even as God rests on the seventh day, upon the completion of His work, so should we.

A sick man stands before our Lord. The Pharisees watch quietly; what shall the Lord do? It is the Sabbath, and it is a day of rest, not work; and indeed this is *the Son of God*, shall He not all the more rest on this day?

The Pharisees test Christ. But Christ teaches the Pharisees. *'Is it lawful to heal on the Sabbath?'* *'But they remained silent. Then he took the sick man, and healed*

him, and sent him away.'

Seven days are recorded in Genesis, and the seventh is the last, the day of rest. *'Is it lawful to heal?'*

The Pharisees believed He was disputing some small article of the Law of Moses. But I tell you, all salvation is found in this question.

For on the seventh day, when the Eternal Son in heaven had ceased from His labors; and looked upon all creation as it was made; behold, He saw a sick man; a sick mankind, with a *sickness unto death*.

He saw you, in your sickness: for you see those better than you, and resent. You see those more beautiful than your own, and you lust. You see those more prosperous than you, and envy. You see those more powerful than you, and hate. You see those more blessed than you, and sorrow. For you are sick, with a *sickness unto death*.

The Son spoke to His Father: *'Is it lawful to heal on the Sabbath, or not?'*

The Father responded, *'give to this sick mankind your place, that in shame you may take the lowest.'* *'and give a feast, invite the poor, the crippled, the lame, the blind.'* Our Lord left His beatific rest, that He might labor, even labor in His Sabbath.

Our Lord *was incarnate by the Holy Spirit of the virgin Mary*, a virgin, meek and lowly, of no noble house, of no wealth, of no power, of no prestige, *he was incarnate, and was made man*. That He might *take the lowest place*, even the lowest place among created men; born not of kings or princes, but of servants.

He was born in the lowest place, that he might *give a feast*. A feast of His own flesh; a symposium of His own blood; torn from his body; shed from his veins; a feast that flows from a cross placed between two murderers, two robbers; and in giving His flesh and blood, He gives His life, and descends into Hell, for He has taken *'the lowest place'*.

All this, that we who are *'the poor, the crippled, the lame, the blind'* might dine. We *'who cannot repay.'*

Do you not see? When our Lord asks the Pharisees *'Is it lawful to heal on the Sabbath?'* He is not asking a theoretical question of what may or should happen. He is asking a rhetorical question about what is and will happen. For our *God is love, who has humbled himself, being found in the form of man, humbling himself, that he might become obedient to death, even death on a cross.'* *'That you may be healed.'*

'What language shall you borrow to thank him' dearest friends? What shall you do to repay Him, who did all this, that you might have a banquet? Who *came down from heaven?* Who grew *in stature* beneath the gaze of a fearful mother, who knew all the days of her motherhood that, because of this child, *'a sword would pierce her soul'*. Who was a heretic to the religious, and a fool to the wise; a pariah to the rich; a mockery to the powerful; who lived his days in shame, and was followed only by the filthy mass. Who would even be forsaken by this mass upon his deliverance to Pontius Pilate; who would be abandoned by His own friends in His suffering.

Who would water the pavement of the whipping post by His blood; the blood He would have you drink; who would be stripped naked and scorned with a crown of thorns, that you *might have the glory of kings, to search things out.*

Crucify Him, that He may descend into Hell. That He descend on His Sabbath, for you are sick.

'What language shall you borrow?' With what shall you thank Him? With what sacrifice will you show your gratitude? With what work shall you show your recognition?

There is none. For you, who come to this feast, are *poor, crippled, lame, and blind.* But recall, He never bid you to repay Him, only to follow Him. Therefore live out your days, as the *birds of the air, and the lilies of the field.* And follow Him into death, yourself buried, even as He was, for He only commanded, *'follow me.'* Therefore, follow Him, into death, into Sheol, into the *lowest place.*

'For he who humbles himself will be exalted.'

Our Lord is arisen, our Lord has ascended *'to the right hand of the Father, to judge the living and the dead.'* For the Father has given Him the exalted place in the marriage feast of the Lamb.

Follow Him, then, in death, to the feast; the feast of the sick, and sit.

You know who you are, your sin, your evil, your vices, your envies, your pettiness. On that day, there is no doubt, you shall feel humiliated, ashamed, and in the feast of the sick, you shall take the lowest place, because there is no word to offer, no gift to give, no praise to sing that shall justify God's love for you, *'because you cannot repay.'*

But Jesus looks down to you, you who were once sick, and [at His table] speaks:

'Friend, move up higher.'

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Preached by Pastor Fields

Sermon texts: Proverbs

25:2-10, Psalm 131, Hebrews 13:1-17, Luke 14:1-14.