

The Seventeenth Sunday after Trinity Sunday
St. Luke 14:1-11
October 9th, 2022
Sts. Peter and Paul Evangelical Lutheran Church, UAC
Simpsonville, SC
St. Michael and All Angels Evangelical Lutheran Mission, UAC
Augusta, GA
Pastor Jerald Dulas

Is It Lawful to Heal on the Sabbath?

In Nomine Iesu!

In the Name of the Father and of the + Son and of the Holy Ghost. Amen.

Prayer in Pulpit before Sermon:

Lord God, Heavenly Father, we pray Thee so to govern and guide us by Thy Holy Spirit that we may with all our heart hear and receive Thy Word, and truly sanctify the Lord's Day, to the end that we may, in turn, be sanctified by Thy Word, that we may rest all our confidence and hope on Jesus Christ, Thy Son, amend our lives in accordance with Thy Word, and avoid every offense, until we shall, by Thy grace in Christ, be saved forever through the same Thy Son, our Lord, who liveth and reigneth with Thee and the Holy Ghost, ever One God, world without end. Amen.

Grace, mercy, and peace be to you from God our Father and from our Lord and Savior + Jesus Christ. Amen.

St. Luke the Evangelist presents to us in the Gospel reading a healing *and* a parable by our Lord + Jesus. At first the two seem unrelated. In the healing our Lord addresses the Pharisees' misunderstanding of the Sabbath regulations. In the parable our Lord addresses the clamoring for the best seat at the table by the Pharisees. They do not seem to be related. However, the last sentence of the Gospel pericope today connects the two events. He who exalts himself will be humbled, and he who humbles himself will be exalted. The Pharisees were filled with pride both in the case of their trying to test the Lord + Jesus with the sudden appearance of the man with dropsy to see if He would heal on the Sabbath, and with their chasing after the best seat in the house—for the seat of honor. In both cases pride rules their hearts.

Pride is a sin that infects our hearts, too. This Gospel reading is for our own admonishment. For we often seek to do our own thing, be our own person, get our own way. We exalt ourselves in many areas of our life. We look down on other people, especially people with which we disagree. We demand that everybody else humbles himself because they are really prideful, when it is us who need to be taken down a peg or two. We are full of pride because the devil wants us full of pride. He wants us looking at other people and judging ourselves better than them. St. Luke the Evangelist presents a Gospel reading that condemns our pride and teaches us to place our trust in only One worthy of being exalted. The One Who humbled Himself by taking upon Himself our flesh and perfectly fulfilling the Law of God, so that He might redeem us from the devil, sin, and death by His death on the tree of the holy cross.

The root cause of pride is a lack of love; love for the Lord God above all other gods, and love for our neighbor, all of our fellowman, as ourselves. We look down our noses on other people because we possess neither love for the Lord God, Who created everyone else. Nor do we possess love for our neighbor with whom we are commanded by the Lord God to love as ourselves in the Second Table of

the Law. The first part of the Gospel pericope is an example of the Pharisees lack of love for both their fellowman, and for the Lord God.

Our Lord + Jesus asks, "Is it lawful to heal on the Sabbath?" He is directing our minds to the Third Commandment which demands that we are to sanctify the holy-day. What does it mean to sanctify the holy-day? The Pharisees understood it to mean doing absolutely no work, as the Lord commands through Moses. Healing was a work; therefore, it must be unlawful. So, in their minds the Lord + Jesus was breaking the Law. But the Third Commandment, as are all the Commandments, is about love. Specifically, as we learn from the Small Catechism, it is about fearing and loving God, so that we do not despise preaching and the Word, but hold it sacred, and gladly hear and learn it. In other words, the Commandment is about taking time to spend in the Word of God—it is about spending time with the Lord God in prayer and study of His Word; it is about doing holy things.

What could be more holy than healing someone on the Sabbath? What could be more loving than restoring someone to full health on the Day of the Lord? Our Lord + Jesus uses the example of animals. If a donkey or ox fell into a pit none of the Pharisees would think twice about rescuing it from the pit, even though this would be considerably more work than was allowed by the Jewish traditions. None of the Pharisees would think of waiting till the next day to rescue an animal—a beast of burden. Why would their fellowman be any different? It is because they are filled with pride. They think they are better than other people.

We fall into this sin when we think ourselves are better than other people, too. We show that we do not possess love for our neighbor, nor for the Lord God Who created our neighbor. Pride and love do not mix. There can be no love where pride exists, for love is the opposite of pride. Love means to give over our will so that the other person will benefit. Love cannot exist where pride exists, because in our pride we desire to do what pleases us to the detriment of the other person. Love causes us to humble ourselves; to exalt the person which we love above our will and desires. Love seeks to benefit our fellowman, and not ourselves. Love seeks to give praise to the Lord God alone, and not to our own selfish and sinful desires.

With the Third Commandment this means seeking to find time for prayer and studying of the Lord God's Word above all other activities that draw us away from that time spent with the Lord. It means making every effort to come to the house of the Lord God to hear preaching and to receive the Sacraments, for this is where they are given. We cannot truly worship the Lord God sitting at home, for we cannot receive the Sacrament. We cannot receive our Lord's Body and Blood given in bread and wine for the forgiveness of sins. The Church is the communion of saints. It is the place where we love each other enough to gather together with one another, and share in the reception of the Blessed Sacrament.

In the Apostles' Creed when we confess that we believe in the holy Christian Church, the next phrase is connected to that statement: the communion of saints. The communion of saints is a description of the holy Christian Church. This is why a comma follows holy Christian Church, and a semicolon follows all the other statements in the Third Article. There should be no pause between Christian Church and communion of saints, because they are one thought. In the holy Christian Church, the communion of saints is where we express love for each other. We express our love by humbling ourselves through the confession of our sins. We confess our sins, and we forgive the sins of those who sin against us. We forgive one another our sins. We heal each other on the Sabbath of our disease of sin; the sin in which we are drowning each day.

This is from what the poor man with dropsy was suffering. Dropsy is a disease that involves an excess of water in one's system. This man was literally drowning from this disease. Just like we are drowning each day when we cling to our pride, and refuse to love our fellowman. We are drowning in

our sins whenever we exalt ourselves above our neighbor, thinking that we are better than he is. We are no better than the Pharisees who would leave this poor man with dropsy to suffer because it was a certain day. We are no better than those who sought after the best seat at the table. Pride filled them so much that they had no love for their fellowman, and they really had no love for each other, as they believed they all deserved the best seat in the house, and everyone else deserved to be below them. They also showed they had no love for the Lord God, for they hated and tested the Lord + Jesus, Who was the Lord God.

Our Lord God—the Lord + Jesus, the Christ—teaches the Pharisees the proper way to love. He teaches us how we are to love the Lord God above all gods and our neighbor as ourselves. For He heals the man with dropsy to show that it is lawful to do good on the Sabbath, and He tells a parable meant to get the Pharisees to repent of their pride.

There is never a bad day to do something good for our neighbor, our fellowman. We know our sin; we know our need for forgiveness. Our sins humble us. When we realize how filled with pride we are, we should humble ourselves in repentance. For our fellowman is just as much a sinner as we are. When it comes to sin, there is no one who is better than another person. When it comes to the keeping of the Law of God, no one can stand before the Lord God and claim perfection; no one can exalt his works and say, “Look how good of a person I am.” For we are all drowning in our sins; we are all unworthy of the best seat, both our neighbors and ourselves.

However, our Lord + Jesus has perfectly fulfilled the Law of God. He perfectly fulfills the Third Commandment in today’s Gospel reading from the Evangelist St. Luke. He heals this man of his drowning, and He rescues the Pharisees from their pride with His parable. He humbled Himself by taking upon Himself our flesh so that He might come and perfectly fulfill the Law of God on our behalf; so that He might perfectly love the neighbor which we fail to love in our pride. He humbled Himself to the point of death on the holy cross to redeem us and all of mankind—all of our neighbors—from sin, death and the power of the devil. He does this so that through repentance we might be given the best seat—a seat in the Kingdom of Heaven.

Therefore, my dear friends, let us confess our sins of pride, of our lack of love for our fellowman, our tendency to think ourselves better than other people, and cling in faith to the works and merits of the Christ, in Whom alone we have forgiveness for our sins of pride and hatred for our fellowman. He has come to us to rescue us from our pride, to turn to Him and the forgiveness found in Him alone. He has come to redeem us from ourselves, so that we might only boast in what He has done for us. Then let us continue to gather together on the Sabbath Day to receive healing from Him through the preaching of the Gospel and the reception of the Blessed Sacraments. Let us continue to love one another as the holy Christian Church, the communion of saints here in this place, and let us give up our selfish will and love our fellowman as ourselves, so that we may find glory in the presence of those who sit at table with us. In the Name of our Lord + Jesus Christ. Amen.

Prayer in Pulpit after Sermon:

Almighty God, be pleased to accompany Thy Word with Thy Holy Spirit and grant that Thy Word would increase faith in us; bring into the Way of Truth all such as have erred; turn the hearts of the unrepentant; and for sake of Thy Name grant succor to all heavy hearts and those who are heavy-laden, that they may through the mercy of the Lord Jesus Christ be relieved and preserved so that they succumb not to the temptation of despair but rather that they gain the victory over the world, the flesh, and the devil; through the same Jesus Christ, Thy Son, our Lord, Who liveth and reigneth with the Thee and the Holy Ghost, ever One God, world without end. Amen.

The Votum:

The peace of God, which passeth all understanding, keep your hearts and minds through Christ

Jesus. Amen.

Soli Deo Gloria!