

The Seventeenth Sunday after Trinity Sunday
St. Luke 14:1-11
September 22nd, 2024
Sts. Peter and Paul Ev. Lutheran Church, UAC
Simpsonville, SC
St. Michael and All Angels Ev. 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.

Sermon Text:

“And behold, there was before Him a certain man that had the dropsy. And Jesus answering spake unto the lawyers and Pharisees, saying, ‘Is it lawful to heal on the sabbath, or not?’ But they held their peace. And He took him, and healed him, and let him go.”

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.

My dear friends, we cannot enter into the Kingdom of Heaven without much tribulation. For while the Kingdom of Heaven is a magnificent and glorious and undeserved gift, it does not come easily. Not because the Lord does not freely give it, but because we do not readily receive it. For by our actions—our chasing after the things of this life—we show that we tend not to prefer this gift of the Lord’s Kingdom. And we are also prone to see it not as a gift, but as something we have a right to, something we have earned and deserved on account of who we are, and to what parish we belong, and with what diocese we affiliate. Therefore, we must pray, “Thy kingdom come,” not because we need fear that the Lord will forget, but because we are inclined to forget, to ignore, and to make light of His Kingdom—and the entrance He has so graciously given us in the waters of Holy Baptism. We are prone to forget, ignore, and make light of the fact that right now, here in this place, we miraculously stand within the Lord’s Kingdom with our Lord and Savior + Jesus, the Christ.

And although we stand in the Lord’s Kingdom at this moment, we cannot sidestep affliction, heartache, and grief in this life. Rather, the tribulations we endure in this life are precisely the route we must take as we enter into the Kingdom of the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost. For there is no other way. There is no smoother route. There is no short cut. For all who believe on the Lord + Jesus, the Christ will suffer persecution from the devil, the world, and their own flesh, because through faith we have made of them enemies that will not tolerate our happiness. But, in enduring the persecutions of this life through faith we will enter into the eternal Kingdom of Heaven.

So then, my friends, we should never think that our life together in Christ will be free of struggle, suffering, or hard work. For when we were baptized, we not only took on a great Friend in our Lord + Jesus, but we also lined ourselves up against a determined enemy. Certainly, we were delivered from the power of sin, death, and the devil because we were buried with Christ in our Holy Baptism, and received all the benefits that He won for us on the tree of the holy cross. But at our Holy Baptism, (some of us through our sponsors,) we also renounced the devil, and all his works, and all his ways—and the devil will not take that sitting down. We also promised to live courageously against our fears and to forsake our sinful desires—and the devil and society will do all they can to help us break that promise, and to forfeit our inheritance. This is why we cling to our Lord + Jesus, the Christ, in faith that He will keep His promises and grant us a peaceful sleep and an eternal home in Heaven. The reward is very great. It is something we should greatly desire. Therefore, as long as we have breath, we struggle, and make every effort, to enter through the narrow gate, which is only obtained through much tribulation from the devil, the world, and our sinful flesh.

But do not believe that our struggles and strivings are chiefly against the many things that are thrown at us that we cannot control. And do not believe that our greatest struggle and striving comes when we are sick, or when disaster strikes, or when we are ridiculed, or when we are prevented from practicing the Faith. These are certainly things that try the soul. But our chief enemy is ourselves. Our failure to keep the Commandments, and our desire to do whatever our sinful flesh desires. This leads us into pride, thinking that we have a right to do what we want, because we are basically good people. When we reach this point, we have forgotten that all we are and all we have depends on the Lord's mercy. And it leads us to ignore the reality that our heart's desire should be nowhere else than here—in the Lord's Kingdom, gathered with the saints and martyrs, with the holy angels and the blessed dead, eating the Bread of eternal life and drinking the Cup of everlasting salvation.

In reality, we have no right to be here. But we are here, not because we impressed the Lord with our greatness, but because the Father by His Holy Ghost impressed upon our heart and mind the transforming image of His Son, our Savior + Jesus, the Christ. So, we stand here, today, in the presence of the Blessed Holy Trinity, only because He is merciful; because He is compassionate; because He is willing to overlook our past; because He has resurrected us from being dead in our sins and trespasses through the washing of regeneration; and because He desires us even though we do not always desire Him.

Our Lord's mercy is so great, so wonderful, so large, that He even uses your pastor—as unworthy as he is—to invite you—as hesitant as you are—to eat and drink at the table with Him; to come up and be seated at a better seat—in fact the best of seats. For through your pastor, your Lord summons you to eat bread in the Kingdom of God at the table of God. And through His faithful Ministers, our Lord flings open the gates of His kingdom and says, "Enjoy the Sabbath rest found only in the Word of God, which proclaims you to be a cleansed and spotless child of God."

Yet when you come, do not forget how you got here. For if you forget, then you will falsely believe that you have earned the right to enter the Lord's kingdom through your own striving. That is how it is when our base desires take over; when we believe that our works mean something; that they merit something. But here, in the Lord's Kingdom, there is no salvation found in anyone or anything other than the Lord + Jesus, the Christ. No one's works are better or worse than another's. All of us, in the Lord's Kingdom, are equally undeserving. And all of us, by His mercy, are equally invited to partake of His divine nature.

If you forget what got you here—if you believe that your striving to live godly is what allows you to stand before God—then you are no different than those people who scheme to get best seats at a banquet. They must inevitably bump someone else out of their seat. And they risk being embarrassed by their brashness. Yet they do so to be noticed.

But our heavenly Father already notices you. In His mercy, He notices your willingness to submit yourself entirely to Him through faith. He notices your desire to live against your sinful desires through faith. He notices your striving to do what is good and right in His sight through faith. But most of all, He notices the mark of the holy cross on your forehead and your heart; and the seal and gift of the Holy Ghost given in Holy Baptism which created that faith for Him in you. Therefore, He notices the image of His Son + Jesus, the Christ, and sees His works and His merits covering you through faith.

Therefore, my dear friends, have no fear that you will go unnoticed; or that the Father will forget you. Do not give into your desire to better yourself at the expense of someone else. Do not compare yourself with anyone else so that you can see how you measure up. And do not strive as if you are in competition with others. Instead, know and understand and believe that our Father, due to His inexplicable and unspeakable mercy, gives you a place at His table in the marriage feast of the Lamb which has no end. For He says to you, "Friend, go up higher" and "Come into my heavenly Kingdom prepared for you by My Son." And repenting of yourself, strive not for the highest place, but for the lowest place—so that you might honor everyone else that has been baptized and allowed to stand before the Lord in His Kingdom. For then you will, as St. Paul tells the Church at Ephesus, "walk worthily of the calling wherewith ye were called, with all lowliness and meekness, with longsuffering, forbearing one another in love; giving diligence to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace."

And with the help of this Spirit, you will learn to endure tribulation and pain in this life. For our Lord + Jesus heals us on this Sabbath, even as He did the man afflicted with dropsy. He heals us on this Sabbath, this day of rest in Him, on this Sunday, by preaching into our ears the promise of His gifts. He gives us healing by healing our affliction of sin, and promises to take us to Himself in heaven. There, for all eternity we will know no affliction, tribulation, pain, or sickness. We will live forever with new and glorious bodies, and rejoice forever that our Lord and Savior has brought us into His eternal Kingdom. Here is this place, on this day, we get a foretaste of that eternal joy. Therefore, my dear friends, let us not forget what our Lord + Jesus gives us here today. For He gives us shelter from the storm of life, and rescue from the pains and sorrows that fill our lives. In the Name of our Lord + Jesus, the 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!