

Sabbath Day Rest

21 8 16

Almighty God,
who called your Church to bear witness
that you were in Christ reconciling the world to yourself:
help us to proclaim the good news of your love,
that all who hear it may be drawn unto you;
through him who was lifted up on the cross
and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit
one God, now and forever.

Our text today may be found in the Book of Exodus, chapter 20 and verse 8:

'Remember the sabbath day and keep it holy.'

How many of the Ten Commandments can you remember off by heart . . . ? Not the latest test for Alzheimer's but it is a good way of seeing how what you once learnt at school or Sunday school has stuck after all those years. Well, how about an easier starter for ten ? What number commandment is our text today – **'Remember the sabbath day and keep it holy'** ? And if you said the fourth, then you'd be dead right.

So do you in fact have a rest on a Sunday ? Do you make time to come to church regularly on a Sunday ? Do you have downtime time on a Sunday, time to

reconnect with what gives you energy: time for yourself, time for your friends and your family, and, above all, time for God ?

So today's gospel from Luke 13 has my attention because we seem to see Jesus dissing the fourth commandment by actually working on the Sabbath. He's teaching in a synagogue, as you might well expect a visiting Rabbi to do on the Sabbath day. A woman comes in who's been crippled with an illness for some 18 years which sounds something like a very bad case of osteoporosis - she's bent over double and is unable to stand upright. As soon as he sees her, Jesus calls her over to him and says to her, **'Woman, you are set free from your ailment'** and with that, he laid his hands on her and, immediately, she could stand up straight. Her reaction was to praise God but the leader of the synagogue was scandalised because, in healing the woman, Jesus was actually breaking the Fourth Commandment - working by healing on the Sabbath. But Jesus points out that any sensible owner will look after his livestock even on a Sabbath day so how much more important it is to look after a daughter of Abraham ? And the congregation was well impressed with Jesus and not with his critics.

And the key to our understanding of what is right and what is wrong in keeping the Sabbath day as a day of rest can be found in a verse in Mark's gospel (2 v27) **'The sabbath was made for man not man for the sabbath.'** Here, we have a clear understanding that however good a rule may be, that rule is not an end in itself but only a means to an end. If there is a persuasive reason why that rule should be broken, then it can be safely set aside to do a greater good. So an act of

healing, though strictly speaking it could be defined as work, it is a work of God if it is done for the greater good.

That said, I am concerned that life nowadays is creating a 24/7 society. We seem to be encouraged to work 24 hours a day, seven days a week, without a proper rest. Mobile phones, internet connections mean that we are on call all the time and shop on line whenever. We're connected with our friends and our workplace wherever we are, often ignoring the actual present, those actually physically present, while our attention is engaged elsewhere. Okay, I appreciate I must sound like I'm getting old and past it – no longer with it – but I am concerned that we should literally have a time to rest and be present in the present.

So let me leave you with the question: do you keep one day a week as a time when you can be connected to what is important to you – yourself; those you love; and the God who loves you ?

I have spoken in the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit, Amen.

Preached at the Eucharist

All Saints Vendée

21st August 2016

G: Sermons 34 : Sabbath day rest

