

XVII Trinity 2025

Sermon – Saint Joseph Parish

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Ephesians 4.1-6 St. Luke 14.1-11



How do we as Christians keep the Sabbath Day holy? Sunday has sometimes been called the Christian Sabbath. However, the Sabbath is Saturday...the seventh day of the week. Sunday is the first day of the week and should properly be called the Lord's Day. All Sundays, even those during the Penitential seasons of Advent and Lent...are festivals celebrating the Resurrection.

The action in this morning's Gospel takes place on a Sabbath Day. One of the leading Pharisees, a religious leader of the day, had invited Jesus to his house for lunch. The Gospel tells us the people were watching Jesus closely. It's clear from what happens next, the Pharisees were trying to trap Jesus into saying or doing something they could use against him.

A man whose legs and arms were swollen...a condition we call edema (water retention) came to Jesus for help. The man's condition would have made walking and other movements very painful. Jesus knew what the Pharisees were up to so he asked them if the Law allowed healing on the Sabbath, or not.

Jesus spent much of his public ministry healing people. The Pharisees knew this. The Fourth Commandment says to observe the Sabbath Day and keep it holy; work six days in the week; but the seventh day is a day of rest dedicated to God; on that day no one is to work. That seems straight-forward enough.

The Pharisees had placed themselves in a no-win situation in their own game. They couldn't answer the question Jesus posed about healing on the Sabbath either "yes" or "no". If they said "yes", they would have looked like hypocrites for violating their own strict interpretation of the Fourth Commandment. If they said "no", they would have showed themselves to be unkind and uncaring. Jesus healed the man with the edema and sent him on his way.

Jesus then poses another question to the Pharisees about work on the Sabbath. He asks them what they would do if they had a son or valuable livestock that fell into a well on the Sabbath. Would they wait until the following day to rescue them. Of course not. Again, they

couldn't answer the question. In the Book of Genesis we read God was busy six days creating everything and then took a day off on the seventh day to rest. We can and should take a day off to rest, but that doesn't mean ignoring someone who needs our help.

The Pharisees and religious leaders were more concerned about rules and regulations than doing what was right for others. They were making life harder for others. Jesus would later say they had missed the point of the Law when he said the Sabbath was made for man; man was not made for the Sabbath.

Jesus then gives us a lesson in humility and hospitality as he watches some of the Pharisees pushing other guests out of the way so they could get the best seats. The Pharisees wanted to impress people with how important they were. Jesus tells a short story about a wedding banquet. Lesson: It's better to take a seat in the back and be asked to come up closer to the host than to be asked to give up that coveted seat and be asked to move to the back. Think of how humiliating that would be.

In his commentary on the Gospel, Father Massey Shepherd writes, *"The people who think themselves important in the world may very well find that in the Kingdom of God their places of privilege will be taken by others who are not so self-centered and self-regarding"*.

Jesus tells us to first show some hospitality by taking a lower seat at the table. We might actually have to stay where we are and that's OK. The back of the room can also be a great place to people watch. The host might ask us to come and sit next to him. We show humility when we thank our host for his kindness and take a seat next to him.

In his Letter to the Ephesians, Paul tells us we are to "live lives that measure up to the standard God set when he called us". That standard is what binds us together as a Community of Believers driven by love, compassion, humility, gentleness, patience and tolerance with one another.

How do we as Christians keep the Sabbath Day holy? We can start by following Saint Paul's advice with honesty and sincerity, on Saturday and Sunday and every day.

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