

It's about Time

Mark 2: 27-28, “And He said to them, ‘The Sabbath was made for man, not man for the Sabbath.

So, the Son of Man is lord even of the Sabbath”...this is our text.

Time...let's think together for a few minutes about time. We tend to take time for granted. Oh, of course there are exceptions. When you are sick or facing surgery, you start thinking about time. When you get older, you realize how fast time flies. When you are stressed because you have too much to do, you realize that there aren't enough hours in the day to get everything done. So, there are all those kinds of days. But how about normal days? Psalm 31:15 says, “My time is in your hands”, but on an average day, our time is often in the hands of people who want something from us. So, whose hands is your time in? Who is in the front of your mind when you look down into your smart phone or computer monitor? Who is in the front of your mind as you go through the mundane events of a normal day?

The title of our meditation today is “It's about time,” and the truth is, the way we spend our time shows who the lord of our life is. A few years back, a fellow named William Gallois wrote a paper called, “Time, religion and history.” In it, he examines European colonialism and how they conquered the Americas, Africa, Asia, and elsewhere in the world, and he focuses on how the Europeans imposed their understanding of time on the various cultures they found in these places. Most of these more primitive cultures based their time on the sun, moon and stars as opposed to the Europeans with their clocks and business agendas. Gallois writes, “Time often became a key battleground between the two cultures, for it was obvious this was a focal point of resistance to change. The conquest of time, and the other's experience of time became synonymous with absolute domination.” In a similar way, you and I are caught between two forces that claim us. On one side is the world and work and so many people who want to control your time. On the other

side, Jesus invites us to find our rest in Him. This is the side where I am, and I hope it is for you too. Whether you realize it or not, time, and how we use it puts us on the battlefield, and you and I should understand that how we use our time shows who is Lord of our lives.

This conflict showed in Jesus' earthly ministry. He often argued with the Scribes and Pharisees about who is the Lord of time...man or God. Our Gospel text today gives us that exact scenario. In those days, the Jews kept the Sabbath, which was on Saturday, and it was legally set aside as a day of no work according to the Laws that God gave the people through Moses before they entered the Promised Land. In Exodus chapter 20 God tells the people, "Remember the Sabbath Day by keeping it Holy. Six days you shall 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." Ok...that God's Law, but the word "Work" became a subject of debate. What does it mean not to do any work? SO, over the years, the Jews came up with elaborate rules about what you could and could not do on the Sabbath, and some of them were pretty strange. For example, you could only walk 1000 steps on the Sabbath, otherwise it was considered work. They had to cook their Saturday meals on Friday so they wouldn't be working on the Sabbath by cooking. Even today, elevators in apartment buildings work automatically and stop at every floor on the Sabbath so residents don't have to push any buttons. In our text, Jesus was taking the religious leaders to task by saying that the Sabbath was made for man, man was not made to serve the Sabbath.

Of course they didn't like that kind of talk, and it didn't help that Jesus healed and taught on the Sabbath. Our Gospel account from Mark chapter 2 tells us that Jesus and the disciples were stopping to pick some heads of grain on the Sabbath, and the Pharisees said, "Look, what they are doing is unlawful." Jesus answered them. "Have you never read what David and his companions did when they were hungry? He entered the house of God and ate the consecrated bread, which is lawful only for priests to eat. And he also gave some to his companions." Then He said to them,

“The Sabbath was made for man, not man for the Sabbath. So, the Son of Man is Lord even of the Sabbath.” This disagreement is profoundly important for how you and I understand time. Jesus here is saying that He is the Lord of time...even their most important time, the Sabbath. The Apostle Paul tells us in Colossians that the Old Testament Sabbath was pointing to Christ. He wrote, “DO not let anyone judge you by what you eat or drink, or with regard to a religious festival, a new moon celebration or the Sabbath. These are a shadow of the things that were to come that is found in Christ.” So, putting that all together, the Scriptures teach us that the legal Sabbath has been fulfilled in Jesus Christ. Jesus, the One who says, “Come to me all who are weary and heavy laden, and I will give you rest.”

Ultimately, the only satisfying rest there is, is found in Christ. In contrast to Jesus, the Pharisees’ regulations were burdensome. Can’s pluck a few heads of grain on the Sabbath, really? It misses the whole point. God intended for us simply to take a day off work to worship Him. He didn’t want us engaging in our livelihoods for one day so we could focus on Him, have a day of physical and spiritual rest, so that we can then go back out to serve Him rested and ready. Jesus and the disciples plucking a couple heads of grain wasn’t engaging in wasn’t farming...it was just filling the gap in their stomachs.

Another conflict on the battlefield of time comes right away in the next chapter of Mark. In verse one and following of chapter three Mark records, “Again, He entered the synagogue, and a man was there with a withered hand. And they watched Jesus to see if He would heal the man on the Sabbath, so that they might accuse Him. And He said to the man with the withered hand, “Come here.” And He said to them, “Is it lawful on the sabbath to do good or to do harm, to save life or to kill?” But they were silent. He said to the man, “Stretch out your hand.” He stretched it out, and his hand was restored. The Pharisees went out and immediately held council with the Herodians about how to destroy Him.” Again, this skirmish teaches us that Jesus is the “ruler of time,” He is the

creator of the “rolling spheres,” as the hymn puts it. Why did that man have a withered hand? Of course, there was a medical reason, but there is also a theological reason. We as children of Adam are born with a corrupt nature that manifests itself in physical problems. We are fallen people in a fallen world, but Jesus wants to show us that there is never a time when He does not desire to help us in our time of need. That man didn’t go to the Synagogue that day with the expectation that his hand would be healed, but Jesus showed up to meet Him in His need, and that is what He promises to each one of us as well. All of our times are in His hands, both the good and the bad.

When you get dumped on at work, when you are facing a medical problem, when you are depressed or feel as if you have no purpose in your life, those times are in His hands. In Numbers 11: 23 God asked Moses, “Is my arm too short.” And so, when you and I filter everything that happens in our lives through the lens that Jesus is truly Lord of every moment of our lives, then we will have peace, rest and the assurance that He is always with us and working all things toward our greatest good...which ultimately, is the eternal life that He freely gives us through Faith. When seen through this lens, we can be truly blessed even in the routine, daily times of our lives. Hebrews 4: 14-16 says, “Therefore since we have a great High Priest who has gone through the Heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold firmly to the faith we profess. For we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but we have one who has been tempted in every way, just as we are, yet was without sin. Let us then approach the throne of grace with confidence, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help us in our time of need.”

Jesus is the Lord of all times, and He wants us to come to Him in confidence. Because He died for our sins and failings, He wants us to rest in Him. He has healed us of the condition of sins itself, by giving us His righteousness that makes us acceptable to the Father. We do not have to spend our time trying to appease a wrathful and vengeful God, but rather spend our time serving Him with joy for the salvation we have already received. We don’t have to make up laws that burden

people unnecessarily, but rather point them to Jesus where our salvation was won on the cross and the empty tomb. Jesus said, “Come to Me all you who are weary and heavy laden and I will give you rest. For My yoke is easy and my burden is light.” Jesus is our Sabbath rest, not just on Sunday, but every day of the week, and every day of our lives.

Of course, we come to God’s House to receive His blessing and be strengthened in our faith through His Word and supper...that hasn’t changed, and our society has lost something valuable that now everything is open on Sunday, and people don’t get that physical and spiritual rest. When you see what is going on around us...how people seem to be on their last nerve, how hopelessness and depression are rampant, how people lash out at the drop of a hat, we can see God’s wisdom in mandating this day off from our livelihoods. But it doesn’t end on Sunday, Jesus is with us in all the times of our lives. Who would want to limit our time with Jesus to one hour in church or 15 minutes in morning devotions. No...true peace and rest come only when all of our times are in His hands. Those hands that were stretched out on the cross for you, now reach out to bless you and keep you in His care.

Several years ago, Thomas Troeger of Yale Divinity School visited Concordia Lutheran Seminary in St. Louis and gave a lecture about preaching. As he wrapped up his presentation, Dr. Troeger shared a personal story. A few years back, he had open heart surgery. Waking up the next morning in intensive care, he heard a loud pounding...bam, bam, bam. At first he thought there must be some construction going on and he prayed for God to make the noise stop so that he could have some peace. And what was the answer...bam, bam, bam. But as he became more awake, he remembered that the doctor had said that at first, the artificial valve in his heart would make a big banging noise. “Oh...no, take that prayer back.” And through it all, he realized that every beat of our heart is a gift from God, and He is in charge of all our time. May our lord Jesus be the Lord of all your time, and may He bless you with His rest both now and forever...amen

