

The Third Commandment

Remember the Sabbath day by keeping it holy.

What does this mean?

We should fear and love God
so that we do not despise preaching or God's Word,
but instead keep that Word holy and gladly learn and hear it.

More by Luther From the Large Catechism:

The commandment [para. 78]
Definition of Sabbath as rest [para. 79]
Meaning of Sabbath in Old Testament [para. 80-81]
Meaning of Commandment for Christians [para. 82-85]
Summary of meaning [para. 86]
How does one keep the day holy? [para. 87-89]
Holy day vs. day of idleness [para. 90]
God's Word makes things holy [para. 91-94]
Violating the commandment [para. 95-99]
 The gross misuser [para. 96]
 The audience member [para. 96-98]
 The know-it-all [para. 99]
Power and Benefit of the Word [para. 100-102]

"Accordingly, when asked, What is meant by the commandment: Thou shalt sanctify the holy day? answer: To sanctify the holy day is the same as to keep it holy. But what is meant by keeping it holy? Nothing else than to be occupied in **holy words, works, and life.** For the day needs no sanctification for itself; for in itself it has been created holy [from the beginning of the creation it was sanctified by its Creator]. But God desires it to be holy **to you.** Therefore it becomes holy or unholy on your account, according as you are occupied on the same with things that are **holy or unholy.**" (para. 87)

"Therefore this is the simple meaning of the commandment: since holidays are observed anyhow, such observance should be devoted **to hearing God's Word,** so that the special function of this day should be the ministry of the Word for the young and the mass of poor people; yet that the **resting** be not so strictly interpreted as to forbid any other incidental work that cannot be avoided." (para. 86)

"For the Word of God is the sanctuary above all sanctuaries, yea, the only one which we Christians know and have. For though we had the bones of all the saints or all holy and consecrated garments upon a heap, still that would help us nothing; for all that is a dead thing which can sanctify nobody. But **God's Word is the treasure which**

The Third Commandment

sanctifies everything, and by which even all the saints themselves were sanctified. At whatever hour, then, God's Word is taught, preached, heard, read or meditated upon, there the person, day, and work are sanctified thereby, not because of the external work, **but because of the Word**, which makes saints of us all. Therefore I constantly say that all our life and work must be **ordered** according to God's Word, if it is to be God-pleasing or holy. Where this is done, this commandment is in force and being fulfilled." (para. 91-92)

"Note, therefore, that the force and power of this commandment lies not in the resting, but in the sanctifying, so that to this day belongs a special holy exercise. For other works and occupations are not properly called holy exercises, unless the man himself be first holy. But here a work is to be done by which man is himself made holy, which is done (as we have heard) alone through **God's Word**. For this, then, fixed places, times, persons, and the entire external order of worship have been created and appointed, so that it may be publicly in operation." (para. 94)

"It is the commandment of God [not just to hear God's Word, but to learn and retain the Word of God], who will require of you an accounting of how you have heard, learned and honored his Word" (para. 98).

"Likewise those fastidious spirits are to be reprov'd who, when they have heard a sermon or two, find it tedious and dull, thinking that they know all that well enough, and need no more instruction. For just that is the sin which has been hitherto reckoned among mortal sins, and is called *akadia*, i.e., torpor or satiety, a malignant, dangerous plague with which the devil bewitches and deceives the hearts of many, that he may surprise us and secretly withdraw God's Word from us." (para. 99)

"For let me tell you this, even though you know it [the Word] perfectly and be already master in all things, still you are daily in the dominion of the devil, who ceases neither day nor night to steal unawares upon you, to kindle in your heart unbelief and wicked thoughts against the foregoing [first two commandments] and all the commandments. Therefore you must always have God's Word in your heart, upon your lips, and in your ears. But where the heart is idle, and the Word does not sound, he [the Devil] breaks in and has done the damage before we are aware. On the other hand, such is the efficacy of the Word, whenever it is seriously contemplated, heard, and used, that it is bound never to be without fruit, but always awakens new **understanding, pleasure, and devoutness**, and produces a pure heart and pure thoughts. For these words are not inoperative or dead, but creative, living words. And even though no other interest or necessity impel us, yet this ought to urge every one thereunto, because thereby the devil is put to flight and driven away, and, besides, this commandment is fulfilled, and [this exercise in the Word] is more pleasing to God than any work of hypocrisy, however brilliant." (paras. 100-102)

The Third Commandment



HEARING AND DESPISING PREACHING AND HIS WORD (NUMBERS 15)