

**Lent 3 (B)**  
Pastor Ed Harkey

Exodus 20:1-2, 8; John 2:17  
TLC, Keene, NH

**[OPENING SLIDE]**

*"I Just Want to Celebrate"*

*And God spoke all these words, saying, "I am the LORD your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of slavery ... "Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy." (Exodus 20:1-2, 8)*

*"Zeal for your house will consume me." (John 2:17)*

*"And Celebrate the worship day, that peace may fill your home and pray, and put aside the work you do, so that God may work in you. Have mercy, Lord." (LW 331)*

*"The glory of God is the person fully alive."*  
(Irenaeus of Lyons)

**Introduction**

*[Letters Revisited]*

They do get to the heart of worship ... and why the Lord gifted it to us. Amen?  
Where, Jesus once remarked:

*"The Sabbath was made for man, not man for the Sabbath." (Mark 2:27)*

**Main Thought:** Even during the season of Lent – the people of God rejoice to celebrate their life in, and love of God – a fear, love and trust in Him that flows freely from His grace, returning in joy and celebration to our King!.

RETURN (to the Lord's house and your Baptism), REMEMBER (coming to the better part of repentance by remembering the Lord's rescue and redemption with "a mighty hand and an outstretched arm"), REST (in His gracious word of forgiveness), REJOICE (to live another day in Him and His grace), and REPEAT!

RETURN to REMEMBER. REMEMBER to REST. REST to REJOICE!

**[SLIDE # 2]**

RETURN, REMEMBER, REST, REJOICE ... REPEAT!

Amen.

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[SLIDE # 3] RETURN in order to REMEMBER

Well, at first, glance, the Ten Commandments hardly seem to have anything at all to do with “celebration.” And yet, God’s Word makes the profound observation that the Law of God was never given to be “one and done.” It is to be celebrated with each reading ... and each rereading. Flowing out of God’s great love for us the Commandments are, in every way, a gift!

**<sup>1</sup> And God spoke all these words, saying, <sup>2</sup>“I am the LORD your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of slavery ...**

Return to remember. Return often to the deep pool of grace ... where, in the Jewish numbering of the Commandments – v. 2 is the First Commandment.

[SLIDE # 4] Bidding us still - by way of the roadmap of God’s grace – we return year after year in order to remember God’s love towards us ... returning simply to take it all in, where the Lord – in His divine service to us – pours His gifts into us: grace, mercy and peace.

Where, aside from keeping us out of our neighbor’s front yard, and serving as a mirror to govern our life together, when the Commandments are kept – especially the one regarding worship – our lives become richer, an expression of joy and celebration for being in a relationship with Him, as we render divine service back to Him by way of our *“psalms, hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody to the Lord with your heart.”* (Ephesians 5:19)

Return to remember, and second:

[SLIDE # 5] REMEMBER in order to REST

**<sup>8</sup> “Remember [actively “observe as a present and continuing priority”<sup>1</sup>] the Sabbath [“stop”<sup>2</sup>] day, to keep it holy [“fully alive”<sup>3</sup>]. <sup>9</sup> Six days you shall labor, and do all your work, <sup>10</sup> but the seventh day is a Sabbath to the LORD your God.**

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<sup>1</sup> Temme, *CPR*, 10:2, 16

<sup>2</sup> “The word itself has nothing devout or holy in it. It is a word about time, denoting our nonuse of it – what we usually call *wasting* time.” (Peterson, “The God-for-Nothing Sabbath,” in *Christianity Today*, 4/494, 34)

<sup>3</sup> Colageo, *CPR*, 19:2, 18; “Observe the stop day, to keep it totally alive, because the Lord blessed the stop day and made it totally alive.”

*On it you shall not do any work, you, or your son, or your daughter, your male servant, or your female servant, or your livestock, or the sojourner who is within your gates.* <sup>11</sup> **For in six days the LORD made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that is in them, and rested on the seventh day. Therefore the LORD blessed the Sabbath day and made it holy.**

There was once this irate parishioner who called up his Pastor on Monday morning. "Pastor," he said, "I tried to get you on Friday, but you weren't in."

"It was my day off," the Pastor replied.

"Day off?" the parishioner stormed. "The *Devil* never has a day off."

"Well, if I didn't have a day off," the Pastor rejoined, "then you'd have two of us to worry about!" [Adapted from [www.sermoncentral.com/illustrations/sermon-illustration-revd-martin-dale-humor-sabbath-67040.asp](http://www.sermoncentral.com/illustrations/sermon-illustration-revd-martin-dale-humor-sabbath-67040.asp)]

Of course, a day off isn't necessarily a Sabbath. But how precious *is* the time the Lord gives to us for rest! Descending to us by way of His Word – from the beginning to the end of the service – speaking into and laying on us His Name. The very day we worship (Sunday) was intentional, to commemorate the greatest joy-producing event on the planet – our Lord's resurrection! Party anyone?

**[SLIDE # 6]** Yet, consider German artist, Walter Haddank's (1930-2001): *Tretmühle*.



Resemble anyone you know? Who can carry on this way, seven days a week? Where, our escape needs to be something more than a golf course or garden or boat. (Adapted Moellering, "Worship Is for Idiots," *LW*, 9/1997, 17)

Remember to rest, for it is from our rest – abiding – that we are called to work.

[SLIDE # 7]

*"Come to me, all who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest."*  
(Matthew 11:28)

Wherein, remembering and dwelling on the Lord's rescue and redemption – with *"a mighty hand and an outstretched arm"* – we come to rest in His gracious promises that, in turn, restore us to His purposes, and fuel our joyful service.

One colleague puts it this way: "Creation would not have been complete without the Sabbath. Neither is our week complete without remembering with celebration what God continues to do for us." (Temme, *CPR*, 10:2, 17)

Return to remember. Remember to rest.

[SLIDE # 8] REST in order to REJOICE

***"Zeal for your house will consume me."*** (John 2:17)

*"Zeal"* – a jealous love. Akin to being "passionate" about something. Where, "as in any marriage, the relationship does not admit third parties." Jesus' zeal was "not sinful jealousy, but a righteous desire for His people to be faithful." (*TLSB*, 128)

So how do we maintain that passion, that ardor, that celebratory hunger and thirst for righteousness? How do we keep the Sabbath – holy, wholly, joyful?

† [SLIDE # 9] When we "don't despise preaching and [God's] Word but hold it sacred and gladly hear and learn it." (*The Small Catechism*)

*"We thank God constantly for this, that when you received the word of God ... you accepted it not as the word of men but as what it really is, the word of God, which is at work in you believers."* (1 Thessalonians 2:13)

Celebration at the coming of the Lord in His Word abounds:

Jesus in the temple as a boy, gladly hearing the Word of the Lord. (Luke 2:41-52)  
Mary, Jesus' mother, treasuring and pondering God's Word in her heart. (Luke 2:19)  
Another Mary, sitting at the feet of her Savior. (Luke 10:39)  
Jesus' disciples at the resurrection – the 2<sup>nd</sup> time! (John 21:1-14)  
The Bereans, in the book of Acts, who did what every Pastor longs for God's people to do after a sermon – to go home and search the Scriptures in order to see if what he says is true! (Acts 17:11)

Second, we keep the Sabbath holy, wholly and joyful when we not only ...

† [SLIDE # 10] Hear and learn God's Word, but also keep it.

*"Blessed are those who hear the word of God and keep it!" (Luke 11:28)*

"Sabbath-keeping is elemental kindness," says Eugene Peterson (*Working the Angles*). It's an elemental kindness to ourselves, and to others around us. As we cherish not only God's Word and Sacrament to feed our inner core, but as we would cherish our relationships, our bodies, and the land God has given us – to enjoy them, to recreate, to allow God to re-create.

*"You shall meditate on [the Word] day and night, so that you may be careful [also] to do according to all that is written in it. For then you will make your way prosperous, and then you will have good success. (Joshua 1:8)<sup>4</sup>*

"The commandments are not given to show us how to become holy. [They] are given to show us how holy people live." (*Life Date*, Winter 2005, 19)<sup>5</sup>

Wherein, finally, we keep the Sabbath holy, wholly and joyful as we ...

† [SLIDE # 11] Set about diligently to spread it. (Mark 16:15)

Yes, thanks be to God, that Jesus is *"the Way, the Truth and the Life"* – whose way leads to life. Yet, there is more. He also "gives us His Holy Spirit to make possible this new walk. It is His very GRACE that gives us the response-ability" to walk His way. Where, "grace alone gives us the response-ability to deal with the challenges to health, claim abundant living in personal and family life, school us and embolden us for the work in the harvest field." (Eckrich, "Renewal of the Body: Christ's Call to Abundant Health in This Time," in *Life for the World*, Oct. 2005, 6)

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<sup>4</sup> LUTHER: "Yield to God so that all we do is done by him through us ... [for] herein belongs everything required of us: serving God, listening to what is preached about God, doing good deeds ... so that all we accomplish is God's and nothing our own." (*LW* 43:22)

<sup>5</sup> "It is of utmost importance ... that ... the Decalogue is in *indicative*, not imperative form ... These are statements of what the believer who has experienced God's grace *will* voluntarily do." (Hummel, *The Word Becoming Flesh*, 74)

Where, each day – *“as long as it called today”* (Hebrews 3:13) – we are given the privilege and joy participating in God’s (re)creative action. Each day – by His grace – *“we wake into a world we did not make, into a salvation we did not earn,”* called forth *“to enjoy and share and develop the work he initiated.”* [Peterson, “The God-for-Nothing Sabbath,” in *Christianity Today*, 4/494, 34]

### Conclusion

C. S. Lewis writes about what he calls the “Pleasant Inns” with which God gifts His people – glimpses of God’s grace that we may enjoy – to park for a while and take in the scenic view ... where, in a world, in which ...

[SLIDE # 12] “The settled happiness and security which we all desire, God withholds from us by the very nature of the world: but joy, pleasure, and merriment, He has scattered broadcast. We are never safe, but we have plenty of fun, and some ecstasy. It is not hard to see why. The security we crave would teach us to rest our hearts in this world and oppose an obstacle to our return to God: a few moments of happy love, a landscape, a symphony, a merry meeting with our friends, a bathe or a football match, have no such tendency. Our Father refreshes us on the journey with some pleasant inns, but will not encourage us to mistake them for home.” [The Problem of Pain]

Worship and the dedication of ourselves to God’s Word is about as good as it gets. In fact, as far as I can tell from the Bible, these are among the few things we will be carrying with us onto the other side of the grave: where we will be given to the worship and praise of God – Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

Let us rejoice to ready ourselves now. Let us continue to rehearse what will be, by rejoicing to celebrate ... now.

Then, “go forth as an ambassador of joy and celebration! What this lost world needs is not a measuring stick but an invitation to experience the Master’s House Party.” [Anderson, “Celebration,” in *Silencio*, April © 2016]

*Those who sow in tears shall reap with shouts of joy! He who goes out weeping, bearing the seed for sowing, shall come home with shouts of joy, bringing his sheaves with him.* (Psalm 126:5-6)

[SLIDE # 13]

**RETURN** to REMEMBER. **REMEMBER** to REST. **REST** to **REJOICE** [REPEAT!]

Which makes for more than a 70’s rock tune. It is the disciple’s way of life. *Amen.*

[Friday E-mail:]

*“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 and His Word, but hold it sacred and gladly hear and learn it.” Such is the theme this Sunday’s worship, based on the Ten Commandments in Ex 20:1-17, and Jesus’ remark in Jn 2, when in a fit of holy ardor, Jesus said, *“Zeal for Your house shall consume me.”*

Oh, to feel such a passion for worship! Where, in Mark’s Gospel, Jesus once added this regarding the Sabbath, *“the Sabbath was made for man, not man for the Sabbath.”* In other words, the Sabbath is a pure gift of God, rather than some burdensome beckoning; and that the important thing to recall is *that* we keep it – not only for our spiritual health, but also for our physical well-being as well.

It is a day that is rooted in creation itself. Where, from the very beginning – *“evening and morning”* – God built a Sabbath into our day ... a rest, a time to cease from working. I mean, think about it, what time of the day are you the most absolutely useless? It is when we lay our heads down to rest, when “nature” [aka the Lord of heaven and earth] kicks in, to do His restorative and reparative work, to renew and renovate us for that time when – by His grace – we arise anew.

So also the weekly celebratory ritual of our worship. Here, God renders His Divine Service to us – restoring us with His gifts of grace – so that we might render our Divine Service back to Him by way of our worship and our work. It’s genius!

Let us not neglect this vital celebratory dimension of our lives. *“Come to Me,”* Jesus still says, *“all who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.”* Wherein, while God has not given a specific day for us to do so, Sundays are just as good as any – especially since it’s the day our Lord Jesus rose from the dead. Where, I don’t know about you, but have you ever wondered what the Lord did that glorious 7<sup>th</sup> day, before He made Himself known to the disciples? Did His own celebration involve a cigar, a good Claret and an easy chair? Or did it involve just reveling in the joy of it all, as He watched heaven and earth dance and clap their hands in joy? Child of God, our Lord is at play still, whenever His people rejoice to come together in His name: taking in a nice meal, some delightful conversation, and great company. Yes, “be present at our table, Lord. Be here and everywhere adored; these mercies bless, and grant that we may feast in Paradise with Thee.” Amen. SYOS