

13 Even when you were dead in your trespasses and the uncircumcision of your flesh, God made you alive with Christ by forgiving us all our trespasses. 14 God erased the record of our debt brought against us by his legal demands. This record stood against us, but he took it away by nailing it to the cross. 15 After disarming the rulers and authorities, he made a public display of them by triumphing over them in Christ.

16 Therefore, do not let anyone judge you in regard to food or drink, or in regard to a festival or a New Moon or a Sabbath day. 17 These are a shadow of the things that were coming, but the body belongs to Christ.

Take a Relaxing Walk with Jesus

When the weather is right and the sun is about to set, I will go on a relaxing walk around the neighborhood with my wife and my dog. We look at the landscaping of the homes and talk about a variety of topics. Or sometimes we just say nothing and soak in nature. It doesn't make the evening news, but it doesn't have to. The simple things in life. It is a highlight of my day.

Did you ever stop to consider what an amazing thing it is? Thousands of years later, we gather together to talk about how a man and his followers ate some grain in a field. You would think, "Now what on earth could cause this story to be so important for people to be talking about it for thousands of years?" But then we remember who is eating the grain. It is Jesus, God in the flesh. Whenever He does anything, even the most minute thing, it becomes miraculous and heavenly and awe-inspiring. How so? We will see.

And who would think that you could get someone angry by picking a little bit of grain and eating it on a Saturday afternoon? According to Jewish law it was completely permissible for a traveler to forage a little bit of grain in a field to eat on the spot. But when people hate you or are threatened by you, they will find any reason to get angry with you and accuse you. The Pharisees accused Jesus and His disciples of sinning by working on the Sabbath. Jesus didn't get angry with them. Instead, He spoke an awesome truth. **The Sabbath was made for man, not man for the Sabbath.** And here's something even more awesome. **The Son of Man is Lord of the Sabbath.**

What does it mean? "Was ist das?", as they say in German. It meant that God made the Sabbath as a blessing to humanity. It gave him an opportunity to recharge his body and refresh his soul as he listened to the word of God. It also means that Jesus is the master of the Sabbath. He is the center and focus of it. This day was set aside so that people would see and find Jesus the Messiah in the Word.

As the disciples were walking through the field on a Saturday afternoon, they were getting the Sabbath, because they were with Jesus. They were simply enjoying being in the presence of Christ. Every day must have been an adventure as they faced demon possessed people, healed the sick, and preached to the poor. Just imagine, sinful men walking with God through the fields and being in the presence of God Himself. What could be better? It was a Garden of Eden on earth, and this time they weren't running from God. They were walking with Him. All was well with the disciples. His words and His actions brought them and the people peace.

This is still what the Sabbath is supposed to be about today. We gather together on Sundays. We get the day off of work. We make sure we get to bed at a decent time on Saturday night. We set our alarms in order to get up and hear the word of the Lord. We wait in eager anticipation for the absolution, where we confess our sins and hear that our sins are forgiven from the minister as from God Himself. We look forward to singing songs of praise that are loaded with comforting words that point us to the cross and the sacrifice Jesus made for us. We can't wait to receive Jesus' body and blood for the forgiveness of our sins. We leave refreshed. Why? Because we got to spend time with Jesus. We also go home and relax in preparation for another week of work. This is our time to walk and talk with Jesus through prayer and Bible study, through repentance and faith. There's something about this hour and this day that makes the rest of our week seem to be better.

There was another group of people who were not at rest in the field that day. The Pharisees were filled with anger over everything that Jesus said and did. In the very next chapter they wanted to kill Jesus for healing a man on the Sabbath. It didn't matter what Jesus did, even if He raised the dead, if He was doing it on the Sabbath, He was sinning in their eyes because He was working. Jesus was doing the Sabbath "wrong." They found no joy at all in Jesus. They didn't find joy in the Sabbath either. They had turned it into a rule book of what they could and couldn't do.

I can get that way too. I've got some Pharisee in me. Instead of being happy over the people that are here and instead of enjoying the Word and sacrament that I am receiving, I can get pretty upset over the ones who aren't here. I can listen to how loud people are singing or see what the offerings are for the week, and it can make me say, "What is wrong with these people?" The devil likes to get us to focus on a lot of peripherals in order to steal our joy and keep us from Sabbath. Go to a pastor's conference, and it's hard for a pastor to enjoy a sermon. He's too busy critiquing the methodology of the pastor and the wording and the way in which he preaches. This is a sad thing.

Are you any better? Are there things that steal your peace on Sunday? You don't like the way that child fidgets through church. The elder irritates you because he's the one who called you to come back to church. You refuse to sing because you didn't like the song or the music. You didn't like the liturgy, so you folded your arms and frowned. Instead of resting and enjoying your time here, do you eagerly wait for the last note to be played so you can hurry up and get on with your day? I can still vividly remember a young lady who visited church with her mom in Topeka. She was in such a hurry to get out of church. You could see it in her facial expression and her body language. It was as if she had been tortured for the past hour. I was thinking to myself, "Was it really that bad to be here? Jesus was in the liturgy. Jesus was in the music. But you didn't hear Him. You didn't see Him. Your mind was everywhere but here." Do you fall into the same type of sins?

Let's stop again and think about the miracle in the story that we tend to take for granted. Jesus had a body and a stomach that made Him hungry. God was walking through a field. God was hungry. Why was He walking in flesh? Because our flesh is corrupted. Because our bodies are dying. Because our appetites are out of control. He took on flesh to eliminate a big obstacle on our way to heaven. Jesus took on flesh to be an eraser of sorts. **God erased the record of our debt brought against us by his legal demands. This record stood against us, but he took it away by nailing it to the cross.** This is an interesting way of putting it, right? Jesus was nailed to the cross. But Paul describes it as the law being nailed to the cross. The record of God's demands was standing against us, like a mighty and unconquerable warrior between us and heaven. It was saying to us, "You

shall not pass!” Jesus grabbed the law and climbed on the cross with it. He died there to put the law to death. He was buried with it, and then He left it in the grave. He did this to pay for our sins and give us peace in our hearts and in our souls.

It used to be in the olden days, before cell phones and GPS, that people would get lost quite often. So you’d have a husband and a wife in a car trying to figure out how to get somewhere. Well, it was said that the husband was too stubborn to ask for directions. So the husband and wife would argue for about a half an hour as they came to one dead end upon another, until the husband finally gave up and pulled over and asked someone, or they just returned home. You might use this as an illustration for the law. It gives directions on how to live life, but it was way too difficult. No human could ever seem to get there. But when the law finally wears you down and you give up, you have to pull over. You are exhausted and angry and at your wit’s end. Your car is out of gas and your wife is angry at you. But then Jesus knocks on the window and invites you into His house. He provides you with clothing, shelter, food, forgiveness and salvation. You don’t need to go back on the road. You don’t want to go back on the road or back to the map. You’ve gotten to your destination.

There seemed to be a dangerous contingent of Jews who wanted to cling to the Old Testament rituals and rites, even though they were brought into Jesus’ house. They wanted the Gentiles to keep these laws as well. It was as if they were climbing back in the car and looking for another destination. Paul wrote to the Colossians, and to us, to warn us against them. **16 Therefore, do not let anyone judge you in regard to food or drink, or in regard to a festival or a New Moon or a Sabbath day. 17 These are a shadow of the things that were coming, but the body belongs to Christ.**

I don’t know if you listen to Christian radio or watch any shows on television, but it seems to me that there is a larger and larger contingent of preachers today who like to talk about the Old Testament festivals and regulations, focusing still today on how the Jews did things. The thing is, the festivals and regulations are kind of interesting to learn about, especially if you’ve never heard of them. But then they’ll use this history and try to apply it to America and how we can be blessed here in America, if we go back to those regulations.

But Paul says, “**Therefore, don’t let anyone judge in regard to**” those very things. Why? Because Jesus nailed them to the cross. He died to fulfill them. They were only a shadow of things to come. But the body belongs to Christ. The NIV translates this, “**The reality is in Christ.**” The Greek actually says, “**the body.**” So I like the new EHV translation, “**the body belongs to Christ.**” But what does that mean?

As I looked through the book of Colossians, Paul emphasizes two things. First of all, he emphasizes that Jesus had a body. He wasn’t just a spirit. He needed to become human in the flesh so that He could be born under the law and live our lives for us. The Bible also emphasizes that Jesus rose with His body. He took on flesh permanently. He became human and is still God, forever. So when we think about our humanity, we are eternally joined with Jesus in having the same flesh as Him. He really has become our brother. “**The body belongs to Christ.**” The body of Christ is important. It affects how we view Jesus and our salvation.

Paul also uses body in a different way. He refers to the church as the body of Christ. He is the head. So we, as the body, are supposed to stay connected to Jesus and grow into Him as the head. We are a physical church. We do things to the glory of His name. We are not our own. “**The body belongs to Christ.**”

So let's look at these verses again. **Therefore, do not let anyone judge you in regard to food or drink, or in regard to a festival or a New Moon or a Sabbath day. 17 These are a shadow of the things that were coming, but the body belongs to Christ.** If Jesus took on a real body, and His church is a real body, we are, in fact, talking about a reality. His personal body is physical. His church is physical. Church is not just a concept. It is real people doing real things. Forgiveness is not just a concept. It was really accomplished through an actual death and resurrection of the actual God in the flesh. All of this church stuff is real too. We come together bodily and take the body and blood of Jesus. We sing with our mouths. We serve with our hands. We live in the reality of who Jesus is and who we are.

So why would we as a church go back to the car and return on the pathway that led to Jesus? We look back on the pathway that led to Christ. We think about the markers that pointed to Jesus. We cherish how God brought the church here. But we have arrived at our destination. It is a real place. And we are headed to a real place called heaven, as long as we are in Jesus. Why would we go back to the shadows when we are already in the body? This would not be a progression in our faith. It would be a regression. That's why I can't figure out why any Christian would want the Jews to rebuild the temple in Jerusalem and start their sacrifices again. Why would they want that? The sacrifice has already been made. The Messiah has already come.

There's always distractions when we go on our walks. My feet tend to hurt. There's a rottweiler that tries to climb the fence and get after us. Sometimes its really hot out. Sometimes we don't walk as fast as we would like. If I constantly complained about my feet, or if I obsessed over our time, then I could quickly turn a pleasant walk into a miserable walk, even in perfect weather.

It seems to me that is a good picture of what happens on the Sabbath. The Pharisees didn't like what Jesus was doing on His walk. Even though He was giving people peace of body and peace of soul, that didn't matter to them. He didn't do the Sabbath like they wanted Him to. And I suppose the disciples could have complained as well. Jesus, who turned water into wine, could have provided them with steak and potatoes. Instead, all He provided them with was some raw grain gleaned from some wheat on the road.

Many people think that this morning walk is too slow for them. They have places to go. They don't like the music. It's too hot. It's too early. It's too boring. But if they'd just get out of their cars of life and slow down to walk with Jesus and stop to look at HIM, they would have so much more peace and less road rage. They would find forgiveness and comfort. They would find nourishment and strength, if they just stopped and focused on Jesus.

It's such a simple picture. A man walking through a field, picking a few pieces of grain. There's peace here. It shows us what the Sabbath is really about. It's about being with Jesus and eating with Him, listening to Him speak forgiveness and salvation to us. He has brought us here to feed us with Himself. He led us on a journey through the Word. He said to us, "I am the Lord of the Sabbath. I am the Sabbath." I hope and pray you enjoyed your walk. Amen.