



From Your Pastor *Why Keeping the Lord's Day Holy is Glorious!* Rev. Charles R. Biggs

"Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy" (Exodus 20:8)

Why is keeping the Lord's Day holy glorious?

- * Keeping the Lord's Day *holy* is glorious because it is an opportunity to please and glorify God in obedience to His commandments.
- * Keeping the Lord's Day *holy* is glorious because it is a privilege and blessing of the Covenant of Grace.
- * Keeping the Lord's Day *holy* is glorious because it can remind us that the Lord Jesus created it, kept it, and fulfilled it, and gave it to believers as a way of imitating Him.
- * Keeping the Lord's Day *holy* is glorious because it is an opportunity for growth and maturity in Christ.
- * Keeping the Lord's Day *holy* is glorious because it can be a time well spent that helps us not to live overly busy and distracted lives.
- * Keeping the Lord's Day *holy* is glorious because it can be a time to further put off self and sin (mortification), and put on Christ (vivification).
- * Keeping the Lord's Day *holy* is glorious because it is a way of joyfully, peacefully, and graciously witnessing publicly to whom it is you belong, and to whom it is you ultimately submit!
- * Keeping the Lord's Day *holy* is glorious because it is part of our confessional heritage as particularly Reformed Christians.

Suggested Questions to Ponder and Ask Yourself to Help You to Keep the Lord's Day Holy:

Is this activity on the Lord's Day going to glorify God above all things? / Is this activity a work of necessity or mercy that I lovingly desire to do to love God and neighbor? / Is this activity going to hinder me (or others) from publicly worshipping God and attending to any calls to worship that God calls me to through his ordained servants? / Is this activity loving and the best use of my time for myself, my family, my guests, my neighbors, and those who look to me for leadership? / Is this activity going to be consistent with God's Word, and particularly His clear teaching on how he desires the Lord's Day to be remembered? / Is this activity work that I normally engage it on other days, and can it wait? / Is this activity a distraction from my taking time to grow up in God's Word? / Is this activity something that will not be conducive to remembering what I learned in the morning worship sermon and meditating upon it and hiding in my heart so that I won't sin against God? / Is this activity properly living a godly example before a broken and lost world? / **Prayer:** Dear Jesus, I want to keep the Lord's Day holy, please help me. Grant me your wisdom and discernment. Amen

In Christ's love,

Pastor Biggs

Keeping the Lord's Day Holy is glorious because it is an opportunity to please and glorify God in obedience to His commandments.

God has given His people commandments for His glory and our good. The law of God, as summarized in the Ten Commandments, is a clear revelation of God's righteousness and holiness. The commandments are a clear expression of what it means when believers are admonished: "*Be holy, as God is holy*" (Lev. 20:26; 1 Pet. 1:15-16).¹ God commands His people in the fourth commandment to "Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it *holy*". This commandment teaches us that God wants us to set apart one day in seven for holy worship and rest. He desires that we make the Lord's Day special.²

As Christians we should desire to fear God and keep all of His commandments. Indeed, the fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom (Prov. 1:7; Ecc. 12:13). Fearing God and keeping His commandments is a constant teaching throughout Holy Scripture (Exo. 20:20; Deut. 10:12-14; Jer. 32:38-42; Psa. 130:4; 2 Cor. 7:1). As believers, we are taught to work out our salvation with "*fear and trembling*" (Phil. 2:12-13; cf. Exo. 20:20; Isa. 66:2). Although there is absolutely no fear of God before the eyes of the wicked and foolish in this world (Psa. 36:1-2; Rom. 3:18), Christians have been granted the fear of the Lord as a blessing and gift of the Holy Spirit in Christ (Jer. 32:38-42; Heb. 12:28-29)! Do you understand fear of the Lord as a blessing and aspect of the work of the Spirit? God promises in Christ that by His Spirit He would cause His people to fear Him:

I will give them one heart and one way, that they may fear me forever...And I will put the fear of me in their hearts, that they may not turn from me (^{ESV} Jeremiah 32:39-40b)

In Holy Scripture, the fear of the LORD is another manner of describing a desire to obey and please God and to keep His commandments (2 Cor. 5:9-11: "***We make it our aim to please Him...Knowing the fear of the Lord, we persuade others...***"). In Christ, the commandments for Christians are not merely a duty or obligation (although they are that!). Rather, in Christ, the commandments for Christians are privileges of grace (Matt. 5:17-20; Rom. 6:17; 8:1-6). Christians have been set free to please God in this way before a dying and dark world infested and possessed by sin. Only a Christian can truly say with David, "*O how I love your Law! It is my meditation all the day!*" (Psa. 119:97); and with the Apostle Paul cry out, "*The law is holy, and the commandment is righteous and good!*" (Rom. 7:12).³

¹ Note that Old Covenant people were addressed by God's commandment as those He had redeemed out of slavery: "*I am the LORD your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of slavery...*" (Exo. 20:2). So that we are to understand that all of the commandments are made in the context of God's covenantal grace to His people who once were enslaved, but now freed by His grace (indicative). The commandments can only be kept by those who ultimately received God as their Savior, and believed in His promises of grace made to Abraham and his seed.

² The distinction between Sabbath and Lord's Day is made later in study.

³ The ***Westminster Larger Catechism***, Question and Answer 97 is helpful here: ***What special use is there of the moral law to the regenerate?*** A. Although they that are regenerate, and believe in Christ, be delivered from the moral law as a covenant of works, so as thereby they are neither justified nor condemned; yet, besides the general uses thereof common to them with all men, it is ***of special use, to show them how much they are bound to Christ for his fulfilling it, and enduring the curse thereof in their stead, and for their good; and thereby to provoke them***

God is very clear that although the ceremonial and civil laws of Israel have been fulfilled in Christ (Col. 2:16-17; Mark 7:19; cf. Rom. 14:17), nevertheless, the moral law, summarized in the Ten Commandments is still a duty and privilege for God's creatures to keep, particularly His own people. There is no other commandment where God so fully exegetes and unpacks the meaning as to why His creatures, particularly His set-apart people are to keep the Lord's Day *holy* than the fourth commandment. Although many evangelical Christians emphasize (rightly!) Jesus's fulfillment of the ceremonial and civil laws of Israel, and his fulfillment of the moral law (summarized in the Ten Commandments) as a Covenant of Works, they often fail to teach the importance of the ongoing requirements of the Law of God for believers. For instance, our Lord Jesus clearly said:

Do not think that I have come to abolish the Law or the Prophets; I have not come to abolish them but to fulfill them. For truly, I say to you, until heaven and earth pass away, not an iota, not a dot, will pass from the Law until all is accomplished. Therefore whoever relaxes one of the least of these commandments and teaches others to do the same will be called least in the kingdom of heaven, but whoever does them and teaches them will be called great in the kingdom of heaven. For I tell you, unless your righteousness exceeds that of the scribes and Pharisees, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven (ESV Matthew 5:17-20).

Jesus with a holy hatred despised the legalism of the Pharisees. Jesus was constantly pointing out that the Law as a way of righteousness or as a Covenant of Works was impossible for sinful man (Matt. 5:20), but He as Lord of the Sabbath, also upheld and honored the moral law revealed in the Ten Commandments. The Apostle Paul taught that faith in Christ's righteousness was not to overthrow the moral law of God: "*Do we then overthrow the law by this faith? By no means! On the contrary, we uphold the law*" (ESV Romans 3:31). God's people in Christ should also seek to uphold the moral law in reliance upon His grace and Spirit.

As fallen and sinful human beings, let us be honest that we often desire to go about doing our own work in our own way, selfish and stingy of our time. We want to work as much as we possibly can to get ahead, and to live our lives as fallen people as separated from God as we possibly can! The natural, fallen man sees the Lord's Day as a hindrance and something that prevents him from doing what he wants to do. And we don't like to be out of control (in our estimation!) of our calendars and our schedules. This was one of the reasons why Israel often did not rejoice and delight in keeping the Sabbath, and this can be our reason, too!

Yet God in His mercy and covenant faithfulness counters the sinful heart that deceives us by alluring His people to a promise of "*Riding on the heights of the earth*" in our delight of His holy day! Who in their right minds would not want to enjoy this treasure of a promise given by a Holy and Faithful God and Father?! *Have you ever ridden on the heights of the earth??!!* God promises as loving Father and blessed Savior:

to more thankfulness, and to express the same in their greater care to conform themselves thereunto as the rule of their obedience.

If you turn back your foot from the Sabbath, from doing your pleasure on my holy day, and call the Sabbath a delight and the holy day of the LORD honorable; if you honor it, not going your own ways, or seeking your own pleasure, or talking idly; then you shall take delight in the LORD, and I will make you ride on the heights of the earth; I will feed you with the heritage of Jacob your father, for the mouth of the LORD has spoken. (^{ESV} Isaiah 58:13-14).

“THEN you shall take delight in the LORD...!” Don’t miss this promise. God in His merciful kindness and grace desires to set His people free from our selfishness and self-centered “will worship” of doing our own thing the way we want to do it (“...*From doing your pleasure...going your own ways, seeking your own pleasure...*”), so that we can experience the liberty of life in the Spirit and the peace that goes with that in Christ! (Gal. 5:1; Rom. 6:1, 14; 8:6: “...*The mind of the Spirit is life and [glorious!] peace*”). Our great God and Father wants us to understand that true Christian freedom is keeping the Lord’s day with delight! Do you call the Lord’s Day a delight? Do you take delight in the LORD? If your life is joyless, and you have asked God to search your heart for sin that may be hiding, that you’re not seeing (Psa. 139:23-34), perhaps this is something that you haven’t taken seriously enough?! In Christ, we are set free from selfish focus on ourselves, to live unto God, gratefully desiring to do His will. Let us pray more that we will not only *do God’s will* as we are commanded, *but to will to do it from tender and loving hearts* that have been thrilled by His grace and love! “...*For it is God who works in you, both **to will** and **to work for his good pleasure***” (Phil. 2:13).

Keeping the Lord’s Day Holy is an opportunity to show the freedom we truly possess in Christ. As a Covenant of Works, the law summarized in the Ten Commandments, particularly the fourth commandment on keeping the Lord’s Day has been fulfilled in Christ. No fallen sinner could ever keep God’s law as a way of works, or as a covenant of works to earn or merit their salvation. Jesus Christ, the glorious God-Man has accomplished this perfect law-keeping for us in our stead, on our behalf (Gal. 2:16-21). This glorious God-Man has died in our place under the just wrath of God because we did not keep God’s commandments, and we did not take seriously his teaching to keep his Sabbath holy. The glorious Gospel is that when we believe in Christ alone by faith alone through grace alone, this perfect righteousness, or perfect law-keeping of Christ is imputed to believers as if we have never sinned and perfectly kept the commandments of God. “*And the life I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, **who loved me and gave himself for me***” (Gal. 2:20).

Keeping the Lord’s Day Holy is glorious because it is a privilege and blessing of the Covenant of Grace.

While the Old Covenant saints enjoyed a blessed holy day on the last day of the week, New Covenant saints that confess and believe the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead are blessed to keep the Lord’s Day on the first day of the week (Rev. 1:9-10). It is a privilege and blessing of the Covenant of Grace to have a Christian Sabbath that is also the Lord’s Day. This is a particular privilege and blessing of

the Covenant of Grace because only God's people who are recipients of His saving grace can properly keep the Lord's Day *holy*.

God gave the Old Covenant saints the last day of the week as the Lord's Day or Sabbath to point them to the Promised Messiah and Hope that was to come. Now that Christ has come and has been resurrected according to the Scriptures (1 Cor. 15:1-4; Luke 24:25-27; 44-47), the Lord's Day or Christian Sabbath is on the first day. This first day of the week reminds us that we are part of a new creation, the first fruits of the resurrection in Christ Jesus—Hallelujah!! (1 Cor. 15:20ff). Although the day has changed now for the commandment to be kept (from last day to first day), *the commandment remains the same in substance and in the goal to promote the glory of God and the good of His people!*⁴

We should reiterate again that believers in Christ can never keep any of God's laws in order to merit salvation or the favor of God (that is as a Covenant of Works), but we can keep it *holy* and set apart from all other days with a sincere heart that desires to please God. As God's people in Christ, it is a privilege and blessing to be those who are set apart for the LORD's own chosen possession to be a holy people, and to be different from the world in order to glorify God (Titus 2:11-14; 1 Peter 2:9-12): "*Keep your conduct among the Gentiles honorable...they may see your good deeds and glorify God on the day of visitation*" (1 Pet. 2:12; cf. Matt. 5:13-16).

Keeping the Lord's Day is glorious because it can remind us that our Lord Jesus created it, kept it, and fulfilled it, and gave it to believers as a way of imitating Him.

The Lord Jesus Christ who is God and man created the Sabbath, kept it joyfully, and fulfilled it. These are three aspects of Christ's work that we should consider. As God, the Lord Jesus Christ created the Sabbath for the good of man as a creation ordinance to order man's time pattern and rhythm according to God's own time-keeping as His redemptive story unfolded in space and time history.⁵ Our Lord Jesus can say: "*The Sabbath was made for man, not man for the Sabbath*" (Mark 2:27). Jesus Christ our Lord also kept the Sabbath Day joyfully as a true human being in obedience to God (John 17:4). Christ said that "*Heaven and earth shall pass away but not one jot or tittle shall pass away*" from the moral law, particularly the fourth commandment as given by God to man (Matt. 5:17-20). It was our Lord's delight to keep the Sabbath Day holy unto God.

⁴ The **Westminster Larger Catechism**, Q&A 116: **What is required in the fourth commandment?** A. The fourth commandment requireth of all men the sanctifying or keeping holy to God such set times as he hath appointed in his word, expressly one whole day in seven; *which was the seventh from the beginning of the world to the resurrection of Christ, and the first day of the week ever since, and so to continue to the end of the world; which is the Christian sabbath*,(1) and in the New Testament called The Lord's day.(2) (1)Deut. 5:12-14; Gen. 2:2,3; 1 Cor. 16:1,2; Acts 20:7; Matt. 5:17,18; Isa. 56:2,4,6,7 (2)Rev. 1:10

⁵ The fourth commandment is a commandment that is rooted not merely in redemption, but also in creation teaching that this is a commandment that is binding on every creature who has ever lived, does live, and will live (contrast Exodus 20; Deuteronomy 5). One important implication of keeping the Lord's Day holy is that it is imitating God as He rested after His glorious creation work and following His work-rest pattern (Gen. 1:31).

Jesus fulfilled the Sabbath Day as a Covenant of Works, but He opened up for believers the power and transformative grace to fulfill it, too, not as a basis for works righteousness, but as a privilege of grace for the glory of God. Jesus fulfilled the law's perfect demands, so that we could be free to live God's law as a glorious way of life. Jesus became Savior to *save us* from the law, but he is also our example to teach us *how to live saved* according to the law. The Lord Jesus fulfilled all the moral law for believers, particularly as revealed in the Ten Commandments, so that in Him, by His power, we might meet the righteous requirements of God's Law who "*Walk not after the flesh but after the Spirit*" (Rom. 8:4). The Apostle Paul teaches this great and glorious news of freedom from the Law as a Covenant of Works, and the opportunity and privilege for believers now to live as Christ lived according to the law:

For God has done what the law, weakened by the flesh, could not do. By sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh and for sin, he condemned sin in the flesh, in order that the righteous requirement of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not according to the flesh but according to the Spirit (ESV Romans 8:3-4).

Note very importantly in Romans 8:3-4 that God doesn't change the holy and righteous requirements of His Law. **God changes us!** God doesn't overlook or disregard or abrogate or abolish His law, but He changes our hearts and writes the Law on our hearts as He promised in the Old Covenant (Jer. 31:33; Heb. 10:15-17)! God doesn't change the law, he changes our relationship to it! Once we were "married" to the law as a binding Covenant of Works, but now we are "married" to Christ by faith, and in Him, we live according to the law as a way of life: "*...In order that the righteous requirement of the law might be fulfilled in us...*" (Rom. 8:4; 1 Cor. 7:1-12). God upholds His just law and graciously changes us from within (in a way the law is powerless to do!) so that we might uphold it, too. He truly is the God who is just and also the justifier of all who believe in Christ Jesus!! (Rom. 3:24-26).

Keeping the Lord's Day Holy is glorious because it is an opportunity for growth and maturity in Christ.

The Lord's Day gives us as God's people the honored privilege of worshipping and serving God in a special way! The Lord's Day provides an opportunity (out of our busy schedules!) to respond as believers to invitations and calls to worship from the ordained servants (pastors/elders) in our local church and other faithful, Bible-believing places of worship, to come and worship God, to come and pray, to come and fellowship, to come and partake in the preaching of the Word and the Sacraments. We are called, or invited to enjoy and delight in these important means of grace that the Risen-Ascended Christ promises to use for the growth and maturity of His people (Acts 2:41-47; Eph. 4:7-16).

By keeping the Lord's Day a separate and special "holy day" or better (perhaps for emphasis to appeal better to American Christians) a "holi-day" we can be more confident of growth and maturity in Jesus.⁶

⁶ One of my favorite things as a Daddy is to announce with joy on Saturday evenings to my girls: "Girls, tomorrow is the Lord's Day! We have such a glorious holiday and opportunity to rejoice and worship the living God tomorrow!" Then, when the Lord's Day comes, it is so exciting to see the joy and enthusiasm on their faces (even when they

God gives us the day off so that we can attend to growth and maturity in Christ without distraction. What a gracious and loving God! God knows our hearts, and He knows our selfish tendencies to disregard what He teaches to us, only to find out later in a hard way that we have played the fools. Let us be wise in listening, learning and following God as His disciples (Ecc. 5:1-7; 1 Cor. 10:1-13).

One of the wonderful privileges on the Lord's Day is an opportunity through preaching and teaching of the Word by God's ordained servants to grow up into Christ, and to no longer be "tossed to and fro by the waves and carried about by every wind of doctrine..." but, "Rather, **speaking the truth in love, we are to grow up in every way into him who is the head, into Christ...**" (Eph. 4:11-16). As we learn God's Word together especially on the Lord's Day, so we desire to grow up in Christ as Christians, even in better understanding this particular truth. Or, to put it another way, keeping the Lord's Day can help us to be faithful to God in the obeying of the rest of the commandments in Christ. If we are not using the Lord's Day primarily for the preaching, reading, meditation, memorization and study of God's Word, I would be surprised if we are doing this *well* on any other day.

The Lord's Day has been given for us to take time to learn God's Word, to grow up in our faith, to pray to seek after Christ as persons, as a people, as families, as a congregation. Do we disregard this privilege as if it were nothing?! If we are using the Lord's Day for other purposes (even normally good purposes on any other days), it is highly unlikely we are truly growing in God's word and thus in our faith. Additionally, what we're doing on the Lord's Day might teach us what is truly important for us. Perhaps this is one way of getting at idols that refuse to abandon us so that we can enjoy full liberty and joy in Christ? Perhaps this might reveal idols that continue to demand that we serve them rather than Christ? It is something to ponder (if we have time).

Keeping the Lord's Day Holy is glorious because it is a time well spent that can help us not to live overly busy and distracted lives.

The Lord Jesus teaches us about the importance of "*seeking first the Kingdom of God and all its righteousness—first, before all things*" (Matt. 6:25-33; cf. Luke 10:38-42). What better way to do this at the beginning of every week than keeping the Lord's Day holy? This can produce a proper and holy rhythm in your weekly time and work and rest pattern that is not only obedient to God's word but will be pleasing to your conscience and even your body.⁷ The Apostle Paul teaches that we are apt to waste the valuable time that God has given to us and so he admonishes us in Christian love to make the most of every opportunity, to be wise with our time spent:

are a bit sleepy!) as they understand to some degree that they get the privilege of keeping the Lord's Day! This is a true delight and highlight of my week. May God grant us grace to always enjoy this with our families.

⁷ Studies have shown that there are outstanding results on the body and mind from keeping Sabbath even from non-Christians.

Look carefully then how you walk, not as unwise but as wise, making the best use of the time, because the days are evil. Therefore do not be foolish, but understand what the will of the Lord is (ESV Ephesians 5:15-17).

Honestly, before God, are you walking wisely, making the best use of your time? Is this a serious problem for you? Are you constantly distracted? Do you recognize it as a sin? In a world as constantly busy and distracted as ours is, we must be extra wise, and to pray for discernment with regard to the way we spend our time—especially on the Lord’s Day. As pastor, I am often met with folks asking me to pray for them to spend their time better, especially in bible reading and prayer. I am grateful to pray for you on that as your pastor. *Please pray for me as well!* But we must act by faith on this impulse and desire for change. Often through obedience by faith in Christ, particularly in God’s commandments, the feelings of desire, the good habits, and the character that are needed to be faithful to God in this important privilege and duty will come as you step forward by doing what you know to be right in your union with Christ. From now on, when folks ask me to pray for them about this, I am going to ask them how they are using the Lord’s Day to develop this desire toward more obedience (Rom. 6:17).

It is important to note that Ephesians 5:17 says: ***“...Understand what the will of the Lord is”***. There is no better place to find the will of the Lord than in the Ten Commandments!⁸ There is no place to find out how one may love God and keep His commandments! One way to love God and neighbor is to remember the Lord’s Day and to seek to keep it holy. Remember, our Lord Jesus said that often the reason we don’t live according to God’s way and will is that our hearts are divided, we love something or someone more than we love God (Matt. 6:21-24; Luke 14:26-27). When our Lord asked to define what the will of God looked like, he responded: *“To love the Lord your God with everything in you, and your neighbor as yourself”* (Mark 12:30). Is there a better way to love God and neighbor than keeping the Lord’s Day *holy*? There are other ways to love God and neighbor, but are they better as far as the time God has specifically given to us believers on the Lord’s Day? Or perhaps to ask the question a different way: *Can we truly love God and neighbor as ourselves if we know that we are to keep the Lord’s Day holy, and we do not?* Remember the full exegesis of the fourth commandment given to us by God, and particularly the responsibility we have to family members, guests, neighbors, etc. God’s scope of this commandment is broad, and publicly noticeable by others. It is important to note that if the commandment is broad as it is in the fourth commandment, the consequences of our disregard of it will be broad as well:

Remember the Sabbath day, to keep 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, 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. For in six days the LORD made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that is in them, and rested the seventh day. Therefore the LORD blessed the Sabbath day and made it holy (Exodus 20:8-11)

⁸ See especially the **Westminster Larger Catechism** on how to keep God’s commandments in Christ, Question and Answers 97-153, 115-121 for the fourth commandment on the Lord’s Day particularly.

The fourth commandment as it is exegeted and unpacked by God in Exodus 20:8-11 shows that our understanding of the Lord's Day will have an effect on others. This is one reason why it is so important to think about it as Christians. Let us ask ourselves some challenging questions that may be helpful to consider: Is it loving for us entrusted as the head of our homes to disregard the Lord's Day given to us and our family as a gift of grace? Is this not only disregarding God, but also disregarding the gracious love that should be demonstrated to our family? If we are in a position of leadership (like a pastor or a Christian leader) and something is unnecessarily scheduled on the Lord's Day, have we considered the distraction this could bring to others, even hindering them from public worship of God? Have we considered that our position granted to us by God could be an opportunity for us to do good, particularly in helping others to keep the fourth commandment? Perhaps we can seek to use our God-given positions to reschedule some unnecessary events for another day?⁹ Have we thought about the obligation for others involved and how this might tempt them to go against what is good and right and according to their consciences? Let us think about these things if we are to seek to love God and our neighbors as ourselves.¹⁰ Pray for me to have wisdom in this, particularly as your pastor.

Keeping the Lord's Day Holy is glorious because it can be a time to further put off self, and put on Christ.

Another benefit of keeping the Lord's Day holy is that you have a time set apart, an entire day, to drink deeply of God's truth and to put on Christ (vivification) by faith, coming to more fully understand who you are in Jesus (Eph. 4:17-32). Also, very importantly, it is a day to commit yourself to mortifying or killing the sin and selfish sinful impulses that so easily hinder you day in and day out. The Lord's Day is a day that has been given to you as a gift to work out your salvation with fear and trembling and to be by the power of the Spirit and through faith to cleanse ourselves in Christ, and to bring holiness to completion in the fear of the Lord. The Apostle Paul writes to Christians who are God's new holy temple in Christ, His very dwelling place by the Spirit:

Since we have these promises, beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from every defilement of body and spirit, bringing holiness to completion in the fear of God (2 Cor. 7:1).

⁹ Every year there is a fun run that I would enjoy taking part in here in Purcellville. But it is on the Lord's Day. I have often written with respect to those who are organizing the event, asking them to change the day so that they might honor God in the fourth commandment, but that I also might participate, and others as well. As of today, there has been no change. This can be frustrating, but all that we are called to do is try to speak into the situation and trust God with the rest.

¹⁰ There are some who must work on the Lord's Day. They may have spoken up about it to their superiors, but they still must work. This is a good work if required, and characterized in Scripture as a work of necessity (Matt. 12:11; Luke 13:15; see also **Westminster Larger Catechism**, Q&A 117). But should this work be normal? I think this is especially important for Christian leaders to consider who are the bosses or superiors of those Christians who feel obligated to work on the Lord's Day, and who may be tempted to go against their conscience which is unwise and very unsafe (see further **Westminster Larger Catechism**, Q 126-133). It seems that the works of necessity are works that are exceptions, not rules to live by.

If you are not recognizing and mortifying your selfishness and sinfulness on the Lord's Day, are you really doing it on any other day? If you're not using the day that God has given to you and set apart for you, then is it possible that you are not really using the other days to do this important and God-glorifying work? Perhaps a first work in mortifying is to kill your sinful tendency to disregard God's commandments? Perhaps a first work of mortification is repentance for taking lightly the commandments of God, but knowing God is faithful and just in Jesus to forgive you when you repent and confess your sins? (1 John 1:8-2:2).

Keeping the Lord's Day Holy is glorious because it is a way of joyfully, peacefully, and graciously witnessing publicly to whom it is you belong, and to whom it is you ultimately submit!

How are we unlike the culture around us as the people of God? The Bible teaches us that the grace of God has appeared to teach us how to live, and what to say "no" to, and how to show forth to the world the freedom that comes to us in Christ! What better way of doing this in Christ than through keeping the Lord's Day holy and set apart. While the rest of the world (even many evangelicals sadly!) go about treating the Lord's Day with disregard, we can by faith uphold the commandments of God and show forth to the world the beauty of holiness! Are you being "trained to renounce ungodliness"? Are you living "self-controlled, upright, and godly lives in the present age"? Are you waiting on Jesus, at least to some degree on one day out of seven? Do you know that you have been redeemed from "all lawlessness" (including the disregard of the Lord's Day and the other blessed commandments of God!)? The Apostle Paul wrote triumphantly what we should love and confess:

***For the grace of God has appeared, bringing salvation for all people, training us to renounce ungodliness and worldly passions, and to live self-controlled, upright, and godly lives in the present age, waiting for our blessed hope, the appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior Jesus Christ, who gave himself for us to redeem us from all lawlessness and to purify for himself a people for his own possession who are zealous for good works* (^{ESV} Titus 2:11-14)**

Let us flee from all lawlessness in our culture, particularly the disregard for making the Lord's Day holy. Let us seek to show forth to our culture in our habits, character, and our lives that we are the redeemed and we are different—and blessed in Christ! Remember when Daniel involved himself faithfully and with excellence in the good vocation he had in the Babylonian culture, and yet he made a public stand against idolatry that was visible to all, and for that God richly blessed him! (Daniel 1). Daniel did not withdraw completely from the world, God doesn't call His people to that, but Daniel made sure that he was not taking part in an idolatrous, foolish, unbelieving culture. And Daniel was greatly blessed. What kind of blessing might we expect from keeping the Lord's Day holy? Perhaps our health could be better? Perhaps we struggle with anxieties and worry and joylessness that can be cured by obedience in this way? Perhaps we can learn that there is a joyful, peaceful, gracious, and even powerful work that can be done by us as a congregation if we just believe! (John 11:40).

I ask you honestly, for we as Christians to consider prayerfully, what can politics and certain places or positions of power do to change the culture and the world that hasn't already been given (better!) in the keeping of the Lord's Day holy! This is a commandment that can have an immediate effect upon our town, our commonwealth, our nation, our culture—immediate change would come if every Christian took a stand and sought to better and more faithfully keep the Lord's Day *holy*.¹¹ I am often reminded of God's goodness and grace when on Sundays, I cannot get my mouth around a Chick-fil-a! Praise God for at least one man who had a conviction, and whose conviction causes others to take note. How might culture be impacted, and folks around us be loved if we were to seek to fulfill the commandment joyfully in Christ?! My pastor friend was once eating out on a Lord's Day, not making it his normal practice, but had an opportunity to do so, and it seemed good. As the waitress came to the table, he invited her to worship at his church the following Sunday. She said I would love to, but the "Sunday, Church crowd" keeps us so busy on Sundays for brunch I cannot get off to come to worship.¹²

I must ask you, do folks online, or in your neighborhood see visibly any difference in you and your family on the Lord's Day than anyone else in the culture or the world? Could you be recognized as a believer based on your rhythm and pattern of life and work-week?¹³ Are you different in the way you live your life in culture? Are you different in the way you live your life before other Christians? Honestly, before God, are you living like a slave like the rest of the culture and the world?? Remember, beloved, as the Apostle Peter teaches us:

For this is the will of God, that by doing good you should put to silence the ignorance of foolish people. Live as people who are free, not using your freedom as a cover-up for evil, but living as servants of God (ESV 1 Peter 2:15-16; cf. Gal. 5:1)

Keeping the Lord's Day Holy is glorious because it is a part of our confessional heritage as particularly Reformed Christians.

I would invite you to further study of this matter by reading our Confession of Faith and Catechisms on the moral law, but particularly the fourth commandment. I would invite you to consider the thoughts

¹¹ Wouldn't it be a shame to find out that all of the good intentions we had as Christians in cultural and political involvement were somehow undermined by our refusal to honor the fourth commandment and keep the Sabbath holy? Would it not be a true day of revival when all Christians, especially evangelical ones could get as worked up and zealous for keeping God's commandments in Christ as they get for political parties and powerful people that they think can really "change things"?! It seems to me that the first kind of change our churches need is to return to honoring God and His commandments? It seems that this would have a profound effect on our nation by God's grace!

¹² I realize that excuses made by unbelievers are not necessarily always true, but this does serve as a helpful thought, doesn't it?

¹³ I want to remind us that there are legitimate works of mercy and sometimes of necessity that would prevent us from keeping the Lord's Day as we would like. Some folks seek to be off from work on the Lord's Day and they cannot. If one is able to just state a conviction about working on the Lord's Day, even if one is not able to get off from work, this is still graciously witnessing and seeking to be obedient to God!

of John Calvin on the Sabbath Day that are found in His *Institutes of the Christian Religion*.¹⁴ I would encourage you to think about the great heritage we have as Reformed Christians who have been known to place an important emphasis on the Lord's Day because it is indeed a glorious day to enjoy! As your pastor, I never would want us to fall into legalism of any sort with regard to this glorious day, but I must honestly and truthfully from a heart of love teach you what I think we need to understand from Scripture and our heritage as Reformed Christians. As I conclude, let us look at the Westminster Larger Catechism, Question 121, and think about how we might prayerfully apply these truths:

The Westminster Larger Catechism, Question and Answer 121 says helpfully: *Why is the word Remember set in the beginning of the fourth commandment?* A. The word Remember is set in the beginning of the fourth commandment,(1) partly, because of the great benefit of remembering it, we being thereby helped in our preparation to keep it,(2) and, in keeping it, better to keep all the rest of the commandments,(3) and to continue a thankful remembrance of the two great benefits of creation and redemption, which contain a short abridgment of religion;(4) and partly, because we are very ready to forget it,(5) for that there is less light of nature for it,(6) and yet it restraineth our natural liberty in things at other times lawful;(7) that it cometh but once in seven days, and many worldly businesses come between, and too often take off our minds from thinking of it, either to prepare for it, or to sanctify it;(8) and that Satan with his instruments much labour to blot out the glory, and even the memory of it, to bring in all irreligion and impiety.(9) (1)Exod. 20:8 (2)Exod. 16:23; Luke 23:54,56 with Mark 15:42; Neh. 13:19 (3)Ps. 92:(title) compared with Ps. 92:13,14; Ezek. 20:12,19,20 (4)Gen. 2:2,3; Ps. 118:22,24; Acts 4:10,11; Rev. 1:10 (5)Ezek. 22:26 (6)Neh. 9:14 (7)Exod. 34:21 (8)Deut. 5:14,15; Amos 8:5 (9)Lam. 1:7; Jer. 17:21,22,23; Neh. 13:15-23

“...Because we are very ready to forget it.” Isn't this very true of your own heart? I know it can be of mine (so very easily in fact!). But with great faith in Christ, and by the power of His Holy Spirit, let this be another way that our congregation at KCPC can have more peace, being built up in the LORD, walking in the fear of the Lord, and the comfort of the Holy Spirit, and multiplying in this year!! (Acts 9:31). Think about it: Christians can walk in the fear of the Lord, keeping God's commandments, and have the comfort of the Holy Spirit. It might be counterintuitive to have fear of the Lord and the Spirit's comfort together like this?! But isn't it just this fear of the Lord that brings more comfort of the Spirit? While it is not our works that are the foundation of our salvation—Christ alone and His righteousness gives us that! Nevertheless, our works that we do sincerely in Christ can comfort us and bring us to assurance of our faith and more joy than we can imagine! How? Because we can see the work of the Spirit in our works for Him (cf. Eph. 2:10) and thus we are encouraged to assurance that we belong to God, and thus we can be comforted! Indeed, by His grace, we will be comforted! (2 Peter 1:3-12; John 15:1-17). Jesus has

¹⁴ John Calvin in his *Institutes* gives three primary reasons for the Christian Sabbath or Lord's Day: "First, we are to meditate throughout life upon an everlasting Sabbath rest from all our works, that the Lord may work in us through his Spirit. Secondly, each one of us privately, whenever he has leisure, is to exercise himself diligently in pious meditation upon God's works. Also, we should all observe together the lawful order set by the church for the hearing of the Word, the administration of the sacraments, and for public prayers. In the third place, we should not inhumanly oppress those subject to us. (John Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, ed. John T. McNeill, trans. Ford Lewis Battles [Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1960], 2.8.34)

chosen us to go forth and be joyful (John 15:11) and fruitful in obedience to Him (John 15:16). Let us expect that as believers here at KCPC!

Do we walk in the fear of the LORD, knowing that God hates sin, and we are still capable of sin? Do we walk in the fear of the LORD, knowing that God has clearly revealed His will to us so that we may know the true path of life, satisfaction of our souls, and the glory of holy lives in this present age?! Do we walk in the fear of the LORD, knowing that Jesus walked in the fear of the LORD on our behalf to merit salvation for us, and then to give us His precious Holy Spirit, who will also in Christ, make us a true and holy God-fearer?! This is the Spirit that has been given to us who believe!

And the Spirit of the LORD shall rest upon him, the Spirit of wisdom and understanding, the Spirit of counsel and might, the Spirit of knowledge and the fear of the LORD. And his delight shall be in the fear of the LORD (ESV Isaiah 11:2-3a).

So how can we better keep the Lord's Day holy? Another way of asking this is: ***How can we better fear God and keep His commandments joyfully in Christ Jesus?*** This is not the time for lists that can easily fall into the trap and ditch of legalism, but here are a few offered pastoral suggestions that I try to live by. These are only suggestions. Perhaps you can share some of yours with me?! I ask you to please pray for me to be more consistent in my own life—*I want to be holy, humble, and honest above all things*—but sin still remains in me. Please pray for me, and kindly and with love approach me when you see I'm being inconsistent with what I am encouraging you to believe!

Eugene Peterson translated our Lord's words in Matthew 11:28-30 that might help us to think about the proper spirit of the Christian Sabbath or Lord's Day, and yet another advantage of keeping it as *holy*: "Are you tired? Worn out? Burnt out on religion? Come to me. Get away with me and you'll recover your life. I'll show you how to take a real rest. Walk with me and work with me—watch how I do it. Learn the unforced rhythms of grace. I won't lay anything heavy or ill-fitting on' you. Keep company with me and you'll learn to live freely and lightly" (Eugene H. Peterson, *The Message* [Colorado Springs, Colo.: NavPress, 1993]).¹⁵

Suggested Questions to Ponder and Ask Yourself to Help You to Keep the Lord's Day Holy:

Is this activity on the Lord's Day going to glorify God above all things? / Is this activity a work of necessity or mercy that I lovingly desire to do to love God and neighbor? / Is this activity going to hinder me (or others) from publicly worshipping God and attending to any calls to worship that God calls me to through his ordained servants? / Is this activity loving and the best use of my time for myself, my family, my guests, my neighbors, and those who look to me for leadership? / Is this activity going to be consistent with God's Word, and particularly His clear teaching on how he desires the Lord's Day to be remembered? / Is this activity work that I normally engage it on other days, and can it wait? / Is this activity a distraction from my taking time to grow up in God's Word? / Is this activity something that will

¹⁵ From Tom Schwanda, Reformed Spirituality Network: <http://reformedspiritualitynetwork.org/>

not be conducive to remembering what I learned in the morning worship sermon and meditating upon it and hiding in my heart so that I won't sin against God? / Is this activity properly living a godly example before a broken and lost world?

A Prayer: Dear Jesus, I want to keep the Lord's Day holy, please help me. Grant me grace and wisdom.
Amen.

In Christ's love,

Pastor Biggs