

Catechetical Sermon, March 30th, 2025

Heidelberg Catechism, Lord's Day 38 "Why you can't miss church"

Scripture Lessons: Ex. 20:8-11 & Deut. 5:12-15

Lesson Aim	To understand: <ol style="list-style-type: none">1. What the fourth commandment means in context2. How it is applied today3. How the Gospel motivates us to follow the fourth commandment
Steps to Learning	Read the Heidelberg Catechism Lord's Day 38 and Ex. 20:8-11 & Deut. 5:12-15 . Discuss the sermon and the particulars of the lesson below. It may be best to work through the material over several days or sessions.
Discuss	<p>What did the fourth commandment mean in context, that is, what did it mean for Israel?</p> <p>"To keep the Sabbath day holy" meant that the people were to cease from all work (except for emergency situations) so that they could worship God. On the day of worship, they were to give food offerings, burnt offerings and grain offerings. There was also to be a national gathering for public worship. As Israel followed the fourth commandment, they honored God, worshipping him alone. The fourth commandment carried the sanction of death if it were not observed rightly as in the case of working on the Sabbath. Israel benefitted by deepening in their appreciation of God as Creator, Provider and Redeemer.</p> <p>How is the fourth commandment applied today?</p> <p>Christians are still "to keep the Sabbath day holy" but the time and the character of the day has changed. Because Christ was crucified for the forgiveness of our sins, we are not punished for failing to keep the day holy. Nevertheless, we are still required to attend the worship service in church. Now the day of worship has changed from Saturday to Sunday because Christ was raised on Sunday. While it is wise and good to cease from ordinary labor on Sunday, it is not necessary to fulfill the commandment. Labor and recreation must not, however, provide an obstacle to attending worship. There are exceptions, however, if one must work or if there are emergencies prohibiting worship attendance.</p> <p>How does the Gospel motivate us to want to follow the fourth commandment?</p> <p>When we think about Jesus being crucified for the forgiveness of our sins and raised for our justification, we will want to attend church to hear more about this good news. As we attend church and attend to the means of grace (preaching and the Sacraments), we are beginning in this life the everlasting Sabbath, which means we have inherited eternal life now and will receive the final form in heaven when we die.</p>
Bible Reading	John 1-7 (Reading through the Gospels)