

## Welcome and Announcements

--Rex and Caryl Bailey have Covid. So they're staying home today. We are very fortunate to have Anthony Johnson playing piano this morning.

--Our housekeeper, Trish, has decided to stop working for us. So we may be needing some help this week to do some of the minor cleaning until a new housekeeper can be found.

--I will be out of town next Sunday. I'll be here all week, but I won't be here next Sunday. Phil Matarese, a student at Bethany Seminary here in town...will be preaching. As of the beginning of September, Phil will be our new student minister. I look forward to working with Phil...and Jane.

GREETING one another in the name of Jesus Christ

Opening Hymn—God is Here #280 v. 1, 2, 4

## JOYS AND CONCERNS

--Caryl and Rex--Covid

--John and Becki Lahrmann—John was to have surgery but both he and Becki have tested positive for Covid.

Ken Jordan—in hospital this week for pneumonia. Home now...but health concerns linger. Prayers for Ken and Pat.

--Seara Burton—continued healing

--RPD—continued healing

Our community. –Thank you note from a woman who regularly uses our Blessing Box. She says she does it for her family. Illness has taken a lot from her and she's unable to work much anymore. She says that her current struggles are just part

of her story. She's worked...she's raised children. She says...  
"Thank you so much for caring about the community. You help  
strangers out of the kindness of your heart. You don't know us or  
our stories, but you give anyway." Signed...One woman who is  
thankful and blessed.

CALL TO PRAYER--Lord, Listen to Your Children Praying #305  
(twice)

Prayer ending w/ Lord's Prayer.

SCRIPTURE AND MESSAGE

### LOVE VS. THE LAW

There was once a pastor who had his children memorize a  
different scripture passage every week. It was his way of  
teaching the kids about God's ways. Well...one day, this pastor  
heard the two kids fighting. "I hate you!" said one. "I hate you  
more!" said the other.

This father stepped in and asked the older child, "What is our  
scripture verse for this week?" The child properly recited the  
verse from 1 John--"**Beloved, since God loved us so much, we  
also ought to love one another.**" The child then promptly  
resumed screaming at his sister.

The father then called out the younger child and asked her same question--Got the same response. She correctly said the verse...then immediately returned to fighting with her brother.

We are all like these kids at some point. We know scripture. We know Jesus' words. But how often do we refuse to let those teachings from Jesus...control our actions. I love the sentence, "We must get the Bible off the shelf...and into the self!" ...Not just giving "lip service" to Jesus' teachings...but actually living them.

Our scripture for this morning has Jesus teaching a lesson about Love and the law. The Gospel of Luke has Jesus routinely teaching on this particular subject. Hear now our reading from

### **Luke 13:10-17**

<sup>10</sup> Now he was teaching in one of the synagogues on the Sabbath. <sup>11</sup> And just then there appeared a woman with a spirit that had crippled her for eighteen years. She was bent over and was quite unable to stand up straight. <sup>12</sup> When Jesus saw her, he called her over and said, "Woman, you are set free from your ailment." <sup>13</sup> When he laid his hands on her, immediately she stood up straight and began praising God.

<sup>14</sup> But the leader of the synagogue, indignant because Jesus had cured on the Sabbath, kept saying to the crowd, “There are six days on which work ought to be done; come on those days and be cured and not on the Sabbath day.”

<sup>15</sup> But the Lord answered him and said, “You hypocrites! Does not each of you on the Sabbath untie his ox or his donkey from the manger and lead it to water? <sup>16</sup> And ought not this woman, a daughter of Abraham whom Satan bound for eighteen long years, be set free from this bondage on the Sabbath day?” <sup>17</sup> When he said this, all his opponents were put to shame, and the entire crowd was rejoicing at all the wonderful things being done by him.

## **SCRIPTURE PRAYER**

Too often...way too often...we modern folks look at passages like this...and we get rather harsh and judgmental toward that synagogue leader...the man who dared to criticize Jesus for violating the law...for healing on the Sabbath. ...I mean ...who does this guy think he is? We say...Jesus didn't violate the law.

Except...here's the thing. The synagogue leader here...was kind of right. Jesus violated the Sabbath law...as it was understood. Honoring the Sabbath is one of the original Ten

Commandments—Remember the Sabbath and keep it holy.

Exodus 20:10 says plainly...do no work on the Sabbath.

The Sabbath...is sacred. It stems from God's creation of the earth. Work six days...**rest** on the seventh day.

Sabbath law appeared during God's rescue of the Israelites from Egyptian slavery. As slaves...there was no rest. They worked whenever... and for as long as...their masters ordered them to work. When God rescued them...God commanded that they rest one day a week. Sabbath liberated them. Sabbath was for their health...and well-being. Sabbath was... and is...a gift from God. This is why the sanctity of Sabbath is taken so seriously.

So... what did Jesus do? Contrary to Mosaic law...Exodus 20:10...Jesus performed work...a healing...**on the Sabbath**. It cannot be denied...Jesus violated Sabbath law.

Now...before we get into Jesus' reasons for doing what He did...let's admit how similar each of us is to that synagogue

leader. We each have ideas and beliefs on what is right and what is wrong. What is “the law”...and what is a “violation” of “the law.”

This may refer to biblical laws...religious laws. It may refer to the laws of our civil government. There are “right” ways of behavior ...and there are “wrong” ways of behavior. And when someone violates the law...well...**justice** demands that they pay for that violation. Admit it...this is our common legalistic attitude.

Unless of course...it’s us who violated the law. Then we don’t want justice—we want mercy. Justice is what we want for the other guy who violates the law. **WE** want...mercy for **ourselves**. ...But...that’s another discussion...for another time. For the purposes of our discussion this morning...how often do we proclaim...that violations of the law...require absolute justice.

Did Jesus know He was violating the law? ...Of course He did. This was no accident. Jesus frequently violated the law. He violated the law...by healing (more than once) on the Sabbath. He violated the law by touching lepers and unclean people. He violated the law by letting unclean people touch Him. He violated

the Sabbath by telling a formerly lame man to pick up his mat and walk. This was an act that was forbidden on the Sabbath. Jesus also let His disciples violate the law by working...picking grain from the fields ... on the Sabbath.

Each of these is a clear violation of religious law. The question is...why. ...Why would Jesus violate “the law?”

When the synagogue leader chastised Him, Jesus taught that showing love...and helping others...is never wrong. It doesn't matter who they are...or what they've done...or even...what day it is. ...Even on the Sabbath.

Jesus explained further...that we feed and water our animals on the Sabbath... because it's how we care for them. Should we not do the same...with each of God's precious children?

Religious laws...must never stand in the way of caring for others.

There are a few reasons why people cling so fiercely to the law. One reason... is that we see the law ...at least biblical law... as God given...and therefore... must be respected. I truly get this. The question becomes whether laws from ancient times...for

reasons and ways of living that no longer exist...are still in force. Some most definitely are. There are other laws, however, that I admit to being less sure of.

The Hebrew scriptures...have 613 commandments from God...about how human life...should be lived. Some of these laws are quite well-known. Others...not so much. There is a commandment prohibiting the use of fortune tellers...or astrology (Leviticus 19:31; Leviticus 19:26). Laws prohibiting tattoos on our skin (Leviticus 19:28). Laws requiring men to marry a childless brother's widow (Deuteronomy 25:5). Laws prohibiting wearing any garment made of two different materials (Leviticus 19:19).

So many different kinds of laws. Which ones do we follow? Which ones do we relegate to another culture...in an ancient time? It's definitely a serious discussion worth having.

This may lead us to another reason why we cling to the Law. We fear that proverbial slippery slope. Legalism makes us feel... safe...and sure. We're afraid that if we stop following one law...if

we see an exception to one law...are we throwing them all out?

Won't we just be begging for chaos to set in?

I actually think that was the issue for the synagogue leader in our scripture today. If we allow some work be done on Sabbath ...might other exceptions slip in...and then...will Sabbath lose all its sense of holiness? Will Sabbath become...just another day? ...I truly understand this fear too.

And yet...this didn't seem to bother Jesus. Our Lord lived and died...a devout and observant Jew. Not once did He say God's commandments should be chucked out! Yes, He stretched Sabbath law. Yes, He stretched the law regarding unclean women and men. Never fearing that His actions would either diminish Sabbath ...or negate all other commandments.

Jesus feared no slippery slope because Jesus saw a bigger picture...than just individual laws. Jesus possessed a deeper understanding of God's laws. There was the time in Matthew where Pharisees tried to corner Jesus about which of the commandments...was the greatest? Remember His response?

In Matthew 22, Jesus said that the greatest and first commandment is to “love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind.” In other words...**it is the greatest commandment**...that your entire being should be focused on loving and serving God.

Jesus then took the lesson one step further... when He said that there is a second similar commandment...”You shall love your neighbor as yourself.” Jesus then explained that “On these two commandments hang all the Law.” ...every one of them!

Love God. Love your neighbor. ---These are the laws of Love. And they prevail in any situation.

Let’s go back to our scripture today. The law prohibited any work... on the Sabbath. The law also required Jesus to love others. So...when He encountered a suffering woman...which law should prevail? Should Jesus let her suffer one more day...for legalistic purposes? Or should He follow the law of Love...and extend unmitigated grace to her...by healing her.

Jesus' choice...was a foregone conclusion. If any situation appeared to put various laws in conflict...Jesus always chose the preeminent law of Love. God's commandments of Love must always...*always*...prevail.

Being humans...as most of us are...we may still fear that life will unravel completely...if we fail to abide by one or more of the 613 Commandments. That may be. We may get it wrong and life may become...uncomfortable for us.

I offer a bit of reassurance for you. First...I remind you that God is Love. And so if we err on the side of Love...that should help settle our fears.

Moreover...remember that the same God who gave the law...then continued to love us. ...even as we made such a downright mess of things. That same God...who loved our sinful selves so much...sent Jesus to us...to teach us...and to show us the way. To encourage us. And...to reveal to us that ...even unto death...God will never stop loving us. Ever.

INVITATION—Following Jesus isn't always easy. As Christians, we live and respond to the world...differently. People may judge us as unChristian because we refuse to condemn the people they want us to condemn. We respond with love...to hate. We forgive...instead of holding a grudge. We offer community...to the outcast. Jesus knew His way would cause divisions. Yet...He came...and He taught...just the same. Following Jesus...is worth it. Jesus brings meaning to our frantic life. He brings healing to our brokenness. It's worth having Him in your heart...and in your life. Are you ready now?

#### MOMENT FOR MINISTRY

COMMUNION—The kind of love Jesus talked about ...is so completely foreign to the human way of thinking. Jesus' kind of love is selfless, and it's sacrificial. He showed a Love to a degree that we as humans too often can't fathom. This is why we need this Table. We need this regular reminder of just how Jesus saw...and lived...and offered Love. This is the Love...that heals us and makes us whole. It is the Love that brings us to God.

Hymn--You Satisfy the Hungry Heart #429 v. 3 & 4

Elder's prayer of blessing for Bread and Cup

Remembering Jesus' words

Partake

Closing hymn--The Voice of God is Calling #666 v. 1, 3, 4  
Sung to tune 272

**BENEDICTION**