

May 2023

Ministers Message

Mission Department Newsletter



Noteworthy

Upcoming Events

LLC 2023 Ministers Webinar #2
Gender Fluidity—The Security of God's Word in a Society of Changing Values
May 25, 2023
8:00 pm CDT

LLC Summer Services
July 6–9, 2023

LLC 2023 Ministers Webinar #3
August 24, 2023
8:00 pm CDT

LLC Ministers & Wives Camp
Stony Lake Camp
September 22–24, 2023

SLC Bible Course
Stony Lake Camp
October 6–9, 2023

LLC 2023 Ministers Webinar #4
November 2, 2023
8:00 CDT

In the Face of Changing Societal Values

In recent years transgenderism and sexual fluidity have been among the dominant issues in the public arena. Believers encounter the issue in the workplace and at school and perhaps even within their own families. We have asked Daren Hendrickson to give his presentation “Gender Fluidity—The Security of God’s Word in a Society of Changing Values” at the upcoming LLC Ministers Webinar. The webinar will be held on May 25th at 8:00 p.m. Please mark it on your calendar. We’ll send out a reminder and a Zoom link a day or two prior to the webinar.

Summer camp activities are now ramping up. Many of you will serve at camps this summer. This is an important part of our work as servants of the Word. It offers an opportunity to further establish the Word of God as the sure and enduring foundation in the life of God’s children. As Luther did with the Small Catechism, we can aim to help camp participants to understand their own lives and the issues and challenges of daily life in the light of God’s Word. The call to teach and preach at camp also offers each of us the opportunity to apply ourselves to prayerful study of God’s Word and thus strengthen our own knowledge and understanding of It. May God bless your service and study in this precious work.

We look forward to seeing you at the May 25th Webinar.

Christian Freedom and the Law's Slavery

Esa Tuomaala

“And it came to pass, that he went through the corn fields on the sabbath day; and his disciples began, as they went, to pluck the ears of corn. And the Pharisees said unto him, Behold, why do they on the sabbath day that which is not lawful? And he said unto them, Have ye never read what David did, when he had need, and was an hungred, he, and they that were with him? How he went into the house of God in the days of Abiathar the high priest, and did eat the shewbread, which is not lawful to eat but for the priests, and gave also to them which were with him? And he said unto them, The sabbath was made for man, and not man for the sabbath: Therefore the Son of man is Lord also of the sabbath” (Mark 2:23–28).



JESUS CONVERSES

The gospels present us with a rich picture of Jesus' public ministry. There we find His works and miracles, teachings, parables, and also some of His conversations. Some of those conversations were with adversaries, some with the curious, and others with the downcast or seeking. Some of the conversations were with individuals and others were with groups.

In these conversations we can see how Jesus approached people and responded to their questions. His teaching, methods, and manner offer us valuable lessons. We can apply them in our own lives and in our work as servants of the Word. The articles in this series will examine some of the enlightening conversations that took place between the Son of God and His contemporaries.

THE FIRST DAY OF THE WEEK—SUNDAY

The Jewish day of rest was and still is the last day of the week or the seventh day, the Sabbath day. The rationale for this is the Creation narrative's mention that the Creator rested after His Creation work on the seventh day and sanctified it. The 3rd Commandment of the Law of Moses is thus not actually the oldest argument for the day of rest, although it commands a person to remember the example of the Creator and to sanctify the day of rest in one's own life.

Already early on, Jesus' day of resurrection, which was the first day of the week, or the day of the Lord, became the Christian day of rest. The Sabbath has always remained as an example for Sunday. Almost everything that Scripture reveals of it also fits well for Sunday.

THE PHARISEES' INTERPRETATIONS CONCERNING OBSERVATION OF THE SABBATH

The interest of the Pharisees always focused on the correct observance of the Sabbath day. The people were not as strict in all

respects about its observance. It was said among the rabbis that if all of Israel observed even one Sabbath day correctly, the Messiah would come as a result.

A pious Jew had, in fact, much to ponder with regard to what he could or could not do on the Sabbath. Work was generally considered to be forbidden. The disciples' plucking heads of grain was definitely considered sin, because it was equated with harvesting. On the Sabbath a person could not carry a load from one house to another, which amounted to a clear commandment but one that was difficult to apply to life itself. Jewish teachers then came up with various interpretations. For, example carrying a load on the same street was interpreted to be permissible, since all of the houses bordering the same street were construed to be one house. This kind of pondering and explanation occupied the minds of many scribes from generation to generation.

JESUS REJECTED THE ACCUSATIONS AGAINST THE DISCIPLES

When Jesus heard the disciples being accused, He did not join the accusers. It is interesting to notice that Jesus saw, often in fact, things to rebuke in the disciples' speech and conduct. He did not even nearly accept everything in them. However, Jesus regularly rejected the accusations and complaints coming from those on the outside. We have experienced the same thing even today. There is much in us Christians that needs instruction and correction. However, we do not generally speaking see this in those matters for which the world reproaches or scolds us. The world's yardstick is different from what the Holy Spirit establishes in the congregation.

In answering the Pharisees' accusation against the disciples for breaking the Sabbath, Jesus referred to the Old Testament. As Jesus often asked, even in other discussions, "Have you never read?" This question implies that although the Pharisees knew exactly the decrees of the law and many words of the prophets as well, they did not grasp the message of many Scripture portions because of their unbelief. In a moment of need, King David and the men that were with him had to satisfy

their hunger with the shewbread, which was only lawful for the priests to eat. The Old Testament writer does not say that David received any rebuke, curse, or punishment for this.

David in his own life situation did that which a necessity—hunger—and Christian love—he also gave to his companions—required, even though he technically broke the Law of Moses. The disciples who had plucked the heads of grain received permission for their actions from the King of the New Testament. Jesus had led them to freedom from the dry shackles of the traditions of the fathers. No Pharisee could limit or break this freedom.

THE SABBATH IS FOR MAN

Jesus states that the Sabbath is made for man. In saying thus, He says something that is important in considering the keeping of the Sabbath even yet. It is not intended to be a suffocating shackle, but rather a blessing. God's children have, in fact, generally understood it in this way. When a person has diligently and conscientiously come to Saturday evening after working at his job either physically or mentally, it is a joy for him to leave his week's work. It is freedom for the benefit of a person's soul and body. We don't envy those people to whom the sanctity of the Sabbath is unknown. Their everyday life lasts for weeks and months. We give thanks that work and drudgery is interrupted at least once a week for a peaceful day of rest. However, it does not mean the stopping of work necessary for life.

LIVING FAITH IS NOT A RIGID CHRISTIANITY

Along with the teaching concerning the Sabbath, the discussion between Jesus and the Pharisees also reminds us that we would never fall into legalistic, rigid Christianity. Therein a person continuously ponders his and other's life in the light of large or especially small questions of morality. Detailed analysis and dry watching, especially in the endeavor of others, is characteristic of this. Living faith guides one to endeavor according to the conscience, but above all it guides us again and again to look upon Golgotha. Even now you can gaze upon Christ's sacrifice and His perfect righteousness. Therein you can own your soul's freedom, peace, and salvation.

Acts 1:12–14

Awaiting the Holy Spirit

Matti Taskila

AS THOSE AWAITING GOD'S PROMISES

After His resurrection, Jesus had gathered His disciples in Jerusalem and encouraged them to remain there to await the power of the Holy Spirit. This Spirit of Truth would guide God's children. Jesus had spoken of this before His suffering and death (John 14:16,17). Through that power, the disciples were to go and testify of their Savior to all the world.



6th Sunday after Easter

The 6th Sunday after Easter follows Ascension Day. Its message speaks about waiting: Jesus had promised to send the power of the Holy Spirit to His own after He had gone from here to His Father in heaven. The early congregation members remained to await the fulfilment of this promise. The Year Two epistle text portrays it briefly, but sensitively.

Taken as a whole, the Sunday texts emphasize the work and power of the Holy Spirit. Through it, the work of the Heavenly Father continues in this world. The Third Person of the Godhead creates one-mindedness and love. Luther teaches that the Holy Spirit “calls, gathers, enlightens, and sanctifies the whole Christian church on earth, and preserves it in union with Jesus Christ in the one true faith.” The Holy Spirit is also the Comforter and Defender. It is the spirit of wisdom, which reveals God’s omnipotence and grace. The Apostle Paul asks for this wisdom and understanding for the members of the young Ephesian congregation in the Year Three epistle text. Every Christian can also pray for this for him– or herself.

As a pledge given to man by God, the Holy Spirit assures us of the final inheritance which is prepared for us in heaven. We await the fulfilment of that inheritance. This viewpoint comes forth especially powerfully in the Year One text from Romans.

JESUS' FAMILY WERE AMONG THE WAITING GROUP

When the disciples saw the Son of God ascending into heaven, they descended from the Mount of Olives into Jerusalem and settled down to live in the upper floor of the familiar house. Only Judas Iscariot was absent since he had betrayed his

Epistle Postil

master, and as a result was driven in his life to ultimate destruction. With the disciples was a large group of witnesses of Jesus' ascension into heaven. Jesus' mother was also with them, whose care God's Son had especially left for John (John 19:27). Jesus' brothers also belonged to the group.

The entire early congregation waited for the fulfilment of the promise which the Savior had given. Jesus' followers believed like children do that God always keeps His word. That's why they followed Jesus' encouragement to return to Jerusalem. However, the disciples could not know the exact moment of the shedding of the Holy Spirit since Jesus had not revealed that to them. They just had to wait for it.

God has always hidden the times of future events from us. All will come as a surprise to us, even if much has been prophesized of them in the Bible. For example, the time of Jesus' birth and the moment of Jesus' resurrection were big surprises, although they had been very precisely written about in God's Word. The amazement these happenings caused for the shepherds and the disciples showed how little we understand about the future promises contained in God's Word.

IN HARMONY OF THE SPIRIT

Jesus' departure unified the members of the early congregation. Now they were alone without their teacher, but they had a living connection with the Heavenly Father. The congregation members also prayed diligently.

They could securely feel that Jesus was not far from them after all. Awaiting the final realization of the promise that the Savior had given, the congregation members unanimously decided to choose a new apostle in place of Judas Iscariot. Under Peter's direction, they cast lots between Barsabas and Matthias, with the latter being chosen (Acts 1:26). Harmony, love, and humility were a living reality in the mutual life of the early church.

The Holy Spirit helps God's congregation to interpret from God's Word and the signs of the times, what hour of our watch we are living. We still wait for Jesus' second coming, of which a promise was already given to the disciples on the Mount of Olives after our Savior's ascension into heaven (Acts 1:11). Waiting is a part of the life of a child of God.



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