

[Exodus 20:8-11:] "Remember the Sabbath day by keeping 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, neither you, nor your son or daughter, nor your male or female servant, nor your animals, nor any foreigner residing in your towns. For in six days the LORD made the heavens and the earth, the sea, and all that is in them, but he rested on the seventh day. Therefore the LORD blessed the Sabbath day and made it holy.

[Luther's Explanation to the Third Commandment:] We should fear and love God that we do not despise preaching and his Word, but regard it as holy, and gladly hear and learn it.

1. This will be the tenth and final sermon of our summer series of how Jesus upholds the Ten Commandments in the Gospel Lessons. So far we've talked about the 4th, 5th, 6th, 2nd, 9th, 8th, 1st, 7th, and 10th Commandments. That only leaves us with ... the Third Commandment! In our Lutheran shop-talk, it is the commandment we use to address the topic of worship, especially going to church. And the topic of worship will always bring conflict. Jesus will tell us in our Gospel Lesson that conflict is necessary because we worship Him.
2. There is the obvious conflict that happens because we take the time to worship the Lord when others don't. The Lord of the Bible isn't their god. But He is ours! And sadly, that conflict can (and often does) touch us in the closest of our relationships, within family. For our hearts that is sad and *frustrating*.
3. Then there's the conflict about worship in our own hearts. We find many reasons to not uphold the Third Commandment. It's so easy to do something else than take the time to worship with other believers. It might even seem that the "something else" is praiseworthy. For our hearts, this is even more scary. That's because we *are frustrated* from worship by our own hearts and don't recognize the sadness not worshiping should bring. And so our hearts are in league with the people on the other side of the conflict without us recognizing it!
4. God's Old Testament people were called to worship every Saturday for a time of rest and devotion. We now worship on Sunday in honor of Jesus' resurrection from the dead on Easter Sunday. Like God's Old Testament people, Christians are still set apart from the world (thus, the conflict Jesus will talk about in the Gospel Lesson). The Old Testament pointed forward to the rest we would have in Christ. The New Testament points back to His completed work which gives that rest. [From Colossians 2:16-17:] do not let anyone judge you ... with regard to a religious festival, ... or a Sabbath day. These are a shadow of the things that were to come; the reality, however, is found in Christ. The New Testament still encourages God's people to gather for worship in Hebrews 10: let us consider how we may spur one another on toward love and good deeds, not giving up meeting together, as some are in the habit of doing, but encouraging one another—and all the more as you see the Day approaching.
5. Speaking of that Last Day, Jesus had just been talking about His Second Coming right before our Gospel Lesson for today. That's what triggered what He says in our reading. There was so much to do the first time before He comes the second time! {Read verses 49-50.} Jesus wouldn't be at liberty to kindle the fire of judgment until His work of

salvation was done. He here calls it a special baptism He must undergo. Only He could do the work of the Messiah. And that special work was work that would necessarily bring conflict. {Read verse 51.} Think of how that conflict touches us in the closest of family relationships when it comes to worship—or as Luther put it: gladly hearing and learning preaching and God's Word. In the face of conflict, Jesus did not shy away from proclaiming the truth. In the face of conflict Jesus did not fail to uphold doing the things of God, even when those things cause worldly division. {Read verses 52-53.}

6. Who among us doesn't have family members or friends who reject preaching and the Word? Who among us doesn't have people who are closest to us who think that we are wasting our time when it comes to all this "Jesus-stuff"? Who among us haven't felt the pain of rejection when we put the things of God first which puts us at odds with people we care about who don't put the things of God first? It's awful and hurts a whole lot ... almost as much as honest self-reflection.
7. We know when we've compromised on the truth of God's Word to avoid conflict. We know when we've avoided God's house to keep the peace in an earthly house. We know the hollow weakening of our resolve to engage in the conflict ... and *not* because it's over. No, that could never be! Jesus promised there will be division. It's a hollow weakening in our soul because it's so much easier to skip gathering with other believers to hear preaching and God's Word which fight against the decay in our souls. When the Third Commandment falls, we make those closest to us, or—let's face it—the laziness of our own hearts closer than God Who lives in our hearts.
8. Now a pastoral plea: really think about why you go to church ... and why you should. Embrace the conflict in your heart against your sinful nature which will always find a reason not to keep the Third Commandment. The sinful nature promises a rest that comes from avoiding conflict. But what sin doesn't tell you is that then you will then have conflict with a holy God instead. Avoiding conflict just makes it bigger and worse in the end. Speaking of ends, Jesus underwent His baptism, His conflict ending with death on a cross to wash away our cowardice. This is so that when He comes back with fire at the end of time, we will have no conflict with Him. Praise God Jesus took on conflict for us! In the meantime, how do we handle the conflicts within and without that we face in this world of sin while waiting to enter glory at the end of our lives? That's where church comes in. When families are divided, you gather with a church family. When earthly conflict makes your soul hurt, God's Word and its preaching bring the Sabbath rest we need. We gather on the Lord's day to be encouraged and encourage one another with Word and Sacrament to grow and share our faith, to sing God's praises for His victory over conflict. We need this. Amen.