



**2<sup>nd</sup> Sunday of Pentecost – June 1-2-3, 2024**

**Preacher: Pastor Scott Oelhafen**

**Sermon Text: Deuteronomy 5: 12-15**

**Sermon Theme: Seven Days Without Worship Makes One Weak**

1. How the devil makes us weak      2. How God makes us strong

**12 “Observe the Sabbath day by keeping it holy, as the Lord your God has commanded you. 13 Six days you shall labor and do all your work, 14 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 ox, your donkey or any of your animals, nor any foreigner residing in your towns, so that your male and female servants may rest, as you do. 15 Remember that you were slaves in Egypt and that the Lord your God brought you out of there with a mighty hand and an outstretched arm. Therefore the Lord your God has commanded you to observe the Sabbath day.**

Dear friends who follow Jesus Christ as the one who gives true rest,

I have a confession to make, and it's this: I like ice cream. Oh, you heard me right. I like ice cream – Peanut Butter Cup, Strawberry, you name it. And from the looks on your faces, I'm not the only one. So what's the big deal of liking ice cream? The problem isn't liking ice cream – it's eating too much of it. You've heard that saying -- “a moment on the lips is a lifetime on the hips?” Oh, I've tried to work off ice cream on my own: walking, running, sit-ups – you name it. But, sadly working out on my own doesn't work for long. Nothing holds me accountable – I should say: there's no one to hold me accountable. So to help me in this “battle of the bulge”, I went to the pro's. I now work out at Vogel. So how often does a person need to work out on the treadmill or lift weights -- once a month, once a week? Maybe I should just be a “Creaster”? (work out only at Christmas and Easter and expect results). Most experts agree that you need to work out 3-4 times every week to make any difference. So I guess doing the bare minimum doesn't work in this case either. It's important to take care of our bodies which are temples of the Holy Spirit. And if that's true of our bodies which are only temporary, how much more important is it to take care of our souls which are eternal? Yes, how infinitely more important to feed, care for, and exercise our souls? So let me ask you a personal question: how have you been taking care of your soul in the last 30 days? Especially this summer, when worship attendance in every church is down, how has your personal soul care been going for you and your kids. Jesus talked about how important souls were to him when He asked: <sup>36</sup>**What good is it for someone to gain the whole world, yet forfeit their soul?** <sup>37</sup>**Or what can anyone give in exchange for their soul? (Mark 8: 36-37).** Good questions Jesus. And we know the right answers, don't we? Nothing is more important than our souls. Our souls are our personalities -- what makes you, you, and what makes me, me. Our souls operate in this life to serve God and other people. And our souls will live forever in either heaven or hell when we die. What most people don't realize is that our souls are so fragile – they need to be fed. And without feeding our souls, we can lose the Christian faith we've been given in

Holy Baptism. We know that in here (our brains) but do we really believe that in here (our hearts)? Certainly, we can do this on our own by reading the Bible and devotions at home. But, we need more. I need more. Let me put it this way. You need a church for the same reasons, I need a health club. We need people to help us and hold us accountable. We especially need a public place of worship to be encouraged and encourage others. We need a place where people pray for us, teach both young and old God's Word, spiritual leaders to involve us and give us trusted Christian counsel, and especially to hold us accountable. And it's good to worship God together in this place, to sing together, to pray together, to hear God's Word together, to share Holy Communion together to feed our faith. Romans 10:17 tells us it's the only way to get more faith: ***Consequently, faith comes from hearing the message, and the message is heard through the word about Christ.*** We only get more faith when we receive God's Word and Sacrament. So how often should we do that? God answers that important question in the words of Moses, Deuteronomy, chapter 5, starting at verse 12. So today, let's consider those inspired words and remember this sermon theme: **Seven Days Without Worship Makes One Weak.** As we dig deep into God's Word today, we'll soon learn how the devil makes us weak and we'll hear the Bible truth how God makes us strong.

The words I read before should be familiar. You probably memorized them in Sunday School. Very simply, it's a form of the 3<sup>rd</sup> Commandment: ***Remember the Sabbath Day by keeping it holy.*** These words were familiar to the people Moses first spoke to, the Israelite people, God's chosen people. Moses had first shared God's will with them in Exodus, chapter 20, when he brought those 10 Commandments down from Mt. Sinai on two stone tablets inscribed with the finger of God. But, now it is 40 years later. A new generation of Israelites came on the scene. Many of them had heard God's word, but not every one put it into practice. Now, you know why God included the book of Deuteronomy in the Bible, a word that literally is translated from the Latin: "The Second Giving of the Law". In a second glorious way, God was reminding His people how to stay strong in the LORD and in His mighty power.

So why the reminder? Don't we know these words? Of course. Just remember, my Christian friends, we're not alone in this world. Satan, that evil angel who wants to make our lives hell here on earth and wants to take each one of us to hell when we die has every believer marked for attack. Satan doesn't worry much about the unbelievers – He's already got them because He's cut them off from contact with the Bible which would make them wise for salvation. Instead, Satan has believers like us in his cross hairs and tries to weaken us every day. And if he can stop us from hearing God's Word, He can cause us to stumble and fall, he may achieve a double victory with a single blow. If he can stop us from worshiping God in His house, just maybe he can stop our children or others we may bring from coming into contact with God's forgiving love in Christ. So how does the devil make us weak? First, he tries to get us to be busy, oh so busy with our jobs, our family responsibilities like doing the dishes to mowing the lawn, summer recreation like fishing, going to festivals, going swimming. We're so busy that the priority of hearing God's Word gets pushed to the side – we don't have time for that ... we have other things to do. Is that ever a temptation for you like it is for me?

Second, the devil tries to get us to rationalize our schedule. We already went to church or heard that devotion in school – was it last week or last month (I don't remember). Been there, done that. The sinful nature that clings to us doesn't need much rationalization – but silently pushes God to the side. Over the years, I've heard people say that they were forced to go to church as a child. (Usually, I ask if they were forced to eat their vegetables too.). Can I give you a postmodern examples? In a book called **Amusing Ourselves to Death**, author Neil Postman fleshes out cultural examples how Satan tries to make us weak. He reminds us that before most homes had cable or streaming television, before video games that begged us to live large chunks of our lives in cyber worlds or before the Internet made it possible to lose ourselves in web sites from the harmless to the spiritually destructive, in an information age where we can access the world on our phones, do we really take time to **Be Still and Know that He is God (Psalm 46:10)?** Let me be clear: technology isn't a sin, video games aren't sin, and the internet isn't sin, but they tend to be Satanic competition that gets us distracted from hearing God's voice and lead us down dark paths. Sin isn't just missing church out of convenience but simply going through the motions of worship when we are here without much paying attention – something even pastors, teachers, and church leaders need to remember, like right now. Yes, that's how Satan makes us weak and we need to be on guard. But, we also need to know how God makes us strong.

We need God's voice speaking loud and clear when the devil makes us weak and tries to rob us of real forgiveness and joy. God rescues us from this confusion and stress when He says: <sup>12</sup> **"Observe the Sabbath day by keeping it holy, as the LORD your God has commanded you.** More than just "if you remember", literally the Hebrew word for Observe is: **exercise great care** as you worship God. Keep it holy: set it aside and don't just find time for God, make time for God because He's worth it. In the Old Testament, God commanded His people to worship on the Sabbath or Saturday and do no work. Now, as God's New Testament people, God says: worship me anytime and we are free to pick any day. That's why St. Paul's members have chosen to have Saturday-Sunday-Monday worship each week. Each week, we come into God's presence, the one who loved us and gave himself for us. We also have Tuesday nursing home worship services, Friday chapel services during the school year, and special worship services many weeks of the calendar. Don't just make worship a convenience, make it a commitment to thank God, the one who loved you first.

So how does God make us strong in worship? Just listen to the good news or the Gospel message God had for his people in the final words of our reading: <sup>15</sup> **Remember that you were slaves in Egypt and that the LORD your God brought you out of there with a mighty hand and an outstretched arm. Therefore the LORD your God has commanded you to observe the Sabbath day.** With these words, God reminds the people what life is like without God. They were slaves -- helpless and hopeless in Egypt. But, God rescued His people with His mighty power. That was just a shadow or picture of how God has rescued us through Jesus Christ. God makes us strong every time we hear that Gospel message. Jesus gives us true rest for our souls. In that Gospel, we hear how Jesus made up for every one of our sins. Jesus came to church **as was His custom (Luke 4:16)**. He came to church for every time we missed, for

every time we didn't pay attention. In that Gospel message, we hear the good news how Jesus paid for sins with His innocent sufferings and death. By His resurrection, we are *healed*. That means we are forgiven and free, free not to make the same mistakes in worship, but free to believe and follow God even closer. Yes, **Seven Days Without Worship Makes One Week**.

Now every time we come to worship, it's like an all-you-can eat buffet of faith-food for our souls. I've always heard it said: if something went wrong in our week, we need to be in church to ask God for His help. And if something went right in our week, we need to be in church to tell God thanks." My friends – have all the ice cream you want. But, remember the purpose of our church – it's not a country-club for saints, but a hospital for sinners. Remember: **Seven Days without Worship Makes One Week**. Today, we've learned how Satan makes us weak and how God makes us strong. Will this sermon make a difference in your life? We'll see next week. May we respond with Joshua: ***As for me and my house, we will serve the LORD (Joshua 24:15)***. Amen.