

Vacation requires faith.

To go on vacation is to stop doing the ordinary work of making a living and enjoying the fruits of labor.

To fully enjoy vacation, we disengage from our regular work – we trust that the business, or chores, or church will survive without us for a time.

We trust our petsitters to care for our animals.

We trust neighbors to bring in mail and newspapers, to keep an eye on things.

We trust in God to provide for us and protect us.

faith is utter trust in God.

Such trust is grounded in God’s faithfulness to his Word.

God fulfills his promises and keeps his Word.

We can stop working for a time and trust God for what we need.

A vacation happens occasionally – but there is a regular stopping of work that is very important.

It is called Sabbath. Literally, it means to stop.

On the 7th day of creation, God stopped. God rested. This was the beginning of Sabbath.

³ So God blessed the seventh day and made it holy, because on it God rested from all his work that he had done in creation.

At the end of a Friday evening synagogue service, the rabbi will often say, “We invite our visitors to join us for an *Oneg Shabbat* after the service in the community room.”

An *Oneg Shabbat* is an after worship social hour where there is good food, good wine, good conversation, maybe even some good music.

The whole experience of worship and fellowship is a Sabbath delight.

The Hebrew text in our Isaiah reading today says, “if you call the Sabbath (*shabbat*) a delight (*oneg*) ... ” then you shall take delight in the Lord.

Keeping Sabbath is an act of faith each week.

In our catechism, the 3rd Commandment is “Remember the Sabbath Day to keep it holy”.

We are to fear and love God that we do not despise preaching and God’s word, but gladly hear and learn it.

I will let Martin Luther preach a little here, from the Large Catechism:

Accordingly, when asked, What is meant by the commandment: You shall sanctify the Sabbath?

answer: To sanctify the Sabbath is the same as to keep it holy. But what is meant by keeping it holy?

Nothing else than to be occupied in holy words, works, and life.

At whatever hour, then, God's Word is taught, preached, heard, read or meditated upon,

there the person, day, and work are sanctified, not because of the external work, but **because of the Word, which makes saints of us all.**

Therefore not only those sin against this commandment who grossly misuse and desecrate the holy day,

as those who on account of their greed or frivolity neglect to hear God's Word or lie in taverns and are dead drunk like swine;

but also that other crowd, who listen to God's Word as to any other trifle, and only by habit come to preaching, and go away again, and at the end of the year know as little of it as at the beginning.

For up to now, the opinion prevailed that you had properly hallowed Sunday when you had heard a mass or the Gospel read;

but no one cared for God's Word, as also no one taught it.

Now, while we have God's Word, we nevertheless do not correct the abuse; we allow ourselves to be preached to and admonished, but we listen without seriousness and care.

Know, therefore, that you must be concerned not only about hearing, but also about learning and retaining it in memory,

and do not think that it is optional with you or of no great importance, but **that it is God's commandment**, who will require of you how you have heard, learned, and honored His Word.

Thank you Pastor Luther.

Luther has challenged us to delight in taking time away from our work to receive from God the riches of his Word.

**For it is God's Word that the Holy Spirit uses to give us faith,
to refresh our souls, and to restore our relationship with God.**

**It is God's Word that gives us life, as Jesus demonstrates by the
healing of the crippled woman.**

Jesus heals us, too, on the Sabbath,

– forgiving the sins that separate us from God,

- giving us his own body and blood as the Savior who died on the cross for us;
- and infusing us with his resurrection life.

In God's Word, we find the stories of God's mighty acts

- Noah and the ark,
- David and Goliath,
- Samson and Delilah,
- Esther,
- and the Exodus – to name a few.

These stories demonstrate the power of God and his faithfulness to his own promises.

In God's Word we find wisdom for daily living, as in Proverbs and Ecclesiastes.

We find the voices of the ages in prayer, praise, lamentation and thanksgiving in the Psalms.

In God's Word, we discover Jesus as the living Word of God, Son of the Father and giver of the Spirit.

We hear Jesus' declarations of love for us and challenge to live as those who inherit his heavenly wealth.

In God's Word, we have the preaching of the prophets and the apostles, the teaching of the Holy Spirit.

In God's Word, we receive our commission as the church – to go and make disciples of all nations.

There is so much in God's Word, written and preached, that we cannot learn it all at once.

Nor can we rely on our memory of what we learned when we were 6 or 10 or 15.

God's Word is a living word

–a dynamic conversation

– in which the Holy Spirit is constantly drawing us into closer relationship with our Lord and Savior.

God's Word is also sacramental

- presented with water and oil,
- bread and wine,
- the laying on of hands and prayer
- **– that we might know and trust the saving grace of God in Jesus Christ.**

What we receive when we sanctify the Sabbath

- is the delight of God's love for us.
- The delight of abundant life in Jesus.
- The delight of sharing the marriage feast of the Lamb of God.

To neglect God's Word then, is like starving our souls, or filling up on candy and cookies with no nutrition.

Our faith withers and falters and we have no foundation to stand on when Satan comes to test us.

So Keeping Sabbath is important for our sake – not only to rest from work, but to engage with God.

There is also another dimension to the Sabbath delight – and that is giving rest to others.

This is a matter of justice for those who work to serve us.

They, too, need an opportunity to rest and worship the Lord.

It is oppressive to expect workers to labor every day, all the time.

Just as the Lord delivered his people from oppression in Egypt, **so the Sabbath is deliverance from the exertions of work.**

And just as we have faith that our work can do without us for a time, so we trust that it can do without others.

God himself has made the Sabbath a delight for the sake of our faith.

Let us be sure not to squander it.

In the Name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. Amen