

The title for today's message is: **Thank God For His Laws!**

Jesus said:

God didn't give us his laws just to be obeyed you know to show us he's the boss. No! God gave us His laws for our benefit.

What part of your Bible instruction, whether as a confirmand or in a Bible study, did you enjoy the most? Was it the lesson on Creation?

Or was it about Angels, or maybe Baptism? I must say the lesson I most enjoy is the one about Jesus.

For example, why Jesus had to become human and yet remain God to win our salvation because it demonstrates so well God's wisdom and love.

I can't say that I get as excited about the Ten Commandments. I suspect that this lesson on God's law isn't a favorite for most either.

That's because by nature we don't like to be told what we can and cannot do. Yet in our text today, we're going to learn that God's laws are not about control.

God did not give us His commands to show us who's boss. He gave us his laws for our benefit.

Jesus makes that clear in our Gospel lesson this morning so let's turn to it now and find out why exactly we thank God for His laws.

In our text, Jesus and his disciples were walking through a grain field with the Pharisees on their heels.

The Pharisees weren't there to learn from Jesus but to spy on him. They wanted to find Jesus doing or saying something that would expose him as a fraud.

The Pharisees thought they had found their evidence when they observed Jesus' disciples stripping grain from the field and popping the kernels into their mouth as they walked.

The Pharisees weren't about to accuse Jesus' disciples of stealing because in his instructions to Moses.

Deuteronomy chapter 23 we see God allowing His people to go into their neighbor's field and pluck a few stalks of grain to eat.

No, what made the Pharisees think they had a case against Jesus was that he had allowed his disciples to pluck grain on the Sabbath.

Now it was true that God had commanded His Old Testament people not to work on the Sabbath, the day of rest.

But the Pharisees had added their own rules, 619 of them to be exact, to God's original command.

In doing so the Pharisees missed the whole point of the commandments, as they did for all of God's will.

Look, they thought the purpose of the commandments was God's way of seeing whether or not His people really loved Him.

Certainly God gives us His laws to be obeyed, but the reason He wants His commands obeyed is because they really do make life better for us.

That's what Jesus meant when He said: *"The Sabbath was made for man, not man for the Sabbath"*.

Like a boss who really cares about his employees and so will order them to rest at least once a week.

There is of course more to the 3rd Commandment than not working and we'll get to it in a just a minute.

But for now consider how all of God's commands are meant to be a blessing. Take the 6th Commandment for example.

God forbids adultery because he wants peace and love to abound in families.

God forbids murder with the 5th Commandment so that we don't have to live in constant fear of losing our lives.

With the 8th Commandment God forbids bearing false witness because he wants to protect reputations.

Take any one of God's laws and you will see that God gave them for our good, not to make life difficult as many believe.

Look, the Pharisees thought that God's commands were simply there to be obeyed, so they had become legalists.

They were more concerned about the laws than the people for whom those laws had been made.

This showed in the Pharisees' attitude towards the disciples who were plucking grain on the Sabbath.

They didn't care that the disciples were hungry; they were only concerned that by plucking grain, the disciples.

As the Pharisees saw it, they were harvesting and were therefore guilty of breaking the 3rd Commandment.

To show the Pharisees that the law of love (concern for others) is to supersede all other laws, Jesus spoke about an incident from David's life.

One time when David and his men were on the run from King Saul, they stopped in on the high priest and asked him for something to eat.

The only thing the high priest had on hand was the bread in the tabernacle, bread that was to be eaten only by priests.

This is the bread that was given to David, yet God didn't charge the high priest with wrongdoing even though David and his men were not priests.

Although technically no law was broken by giving David the tabernacle bread, the law of love, concern for David and his men, superseded all other laws.

So does this mean that we can turn a blind eye to God's law in the name of love?

Should we just ignore people who are living contrary to God's Word because judging them would only make us guilty of what the Pharisees did in our text?

Not at all! God's laws are not flexible in the sense that if we don't like them, we can bend them to fit our life-style.

In love we are to call those who live contrary to God's Word to repentance.

We do this because we know that those who live outside of God's laws are hurting themselves and the people around them.

Of course as we call one another to repentance we will always want to remember why we do it.

We do it because we are concerned, not because we think that we are better, as the Pharisees often thought when pointing out sins of others.

But now why is it that we seemingly ignore the 3rd Commandment when we just got done saying that God's commands are not to be bent?

Why don't we continue to rest on the Sabbath as the Old Testament believers were supposed to do?

The reason we don't continue to observe the Sabbath as the people of the Old Testament did is because the purpose of this commandment.

It was to point ahead to the coming of Jesus and the rest He would bring from our sins. Jesus came. He brought us rest from our sins.

Therefore there is now no need to keep obeying the 3rd Commandment as it pertains to what we do or don't do on the Sabbath Day.

The spirit of the 3rd Commandment, however, is still valid. Remember I said that there was more to the Sabbath Day than not working?

God's people were to rest from their work so they could devote themselves to the study of God's Word.

God says there is still a need for us to come and worship on a regular basis. He doesn't tell us when that day should be.

In Christian freedom we can worship on any day of the week we would like but we are to gather for worship on a regular basis.

Don't think that this is just another one of God's commands, something he demands of us to see if we'll obey him or not.

Remember, God's commands are for our good. Therefore when God urges us to worship it's like receiving a standing invitation.

Look, we come to worship not because we have to but because we benefit from the Word and Sacrament offered.

I suppose that my favorite part of the Bible will always be the ones on Jesus.

It's exciting to tell people how God showed His love by sending His Son to pay for our sins so that eternal life can be ours.

But that doesn't mean that hearing about the Ten Commandments should be any less exciting.

God's love for us is also clear in the laws and commands He gives to us. Thank God for His laws.

Thank him by obeying those laws and showing concern for one another. Amen.

The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ and the love of God and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit, be with us all. Amen.