

I LOVE SUNDAYS
“How Sundays Changed the World”
Galatians 3:21-26; Matthew 25:31-40

31 “When the Son of Man comes in his glory, and all the angels with him, he will sit on his glorious throne.

32 All the nations will be gathered before him, and he will separate the people one from another as a shepherd separates the sheep from the goats.

33 He will put the sheep on his right and the goats on his left.

34 “Then the King will say to those on his right, ‘Come, you who are blessed by my Father; take your inheritance, the kingdom prepared for you since the creation of the world.

35 For I was hungry and you gave me something to eat, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you invited me in, **36** I needed clothes and you clothed me, I was sick and you looked after me, I was in prison and you came to visit me.’

37 “Then the righteous will answer him, ‘Lord, when did we see you hungry and feed you, or thirsty and give you something to drink?

38 When did we see you a stranger and invite you in, or needing clothes and clothe you?

39 When did we see you sick or in prison and go to visit you?’

40 “The King will reply, ‘Truly I tell you, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers and sisters of mine, you did for me.’

Introduction (video clip)

This is the last time we can Love Sundays (no, I didn’t say that right)... This is the last of five Sundays with a worship theme “I Love Sundays.” Sunday can be the best day of the week, a day God designed for rest, refueling, and refocusing on the important things in life; a good Sunday can help make a better Monday because the Lord designed it for us. Sabbath is a gift from God; Sundays can help make for better relationships; and can change a person’s eternity because everything wrong in the world and in our lives can be made right in Christ. Today, we look to how Sundays have changed the world. God gathers his people together for worship on Sunday and then sends us out into the world with the “I Love Sundays” message.

I. The Reality of Judgment (vs.31-32)

At the end of the first teaching of Jesus in the Sermon on the Mount in Matthew 7, Jesus told about the wise and foolish builders. Have you built your house on the rock? Or on sand? Now in chapter 25, in his final teaching in Matthew’s Gospel account, Jesus said, “When the Son of Man comes in his glory... he will separate the people one from another as a shepherd separates the sheep from the goats. He will put the sheep on his right and the goats on his left.”

“When the Son of Man comes...” Son of Man was Jesus favorite designation or name or identity for himself. He said things like, “I want you to know that the Son of Man has authority on earth to forgive

sins” (Matthew 9:6). And, “The Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many” (Matthew 20:28). And, “I say to all of you: From now on you will see the Son of Man sitting at the right hand of the Mighty One and coming on the clouds of heaven” (Matthew 26:64 right out of the Book of Daniel).

Jesus knew himself to be the Christ, the son of man found in that messianic prophecy in Daniel 7. “In my vision at night I looked, and there before me was one like a son of man, coming with the clouds of heaven.”

Make no mistake. Jesus Christ is Lord over all and has the authority to judge us all: individual lives as well as the whole world. But also know that Jesus Christ is the Redeemer/Savior who forgives and offers new life, yes, eternal life to all, to anyone who trusts in him.

II. Saved for Serving (vs. 35-36)

Then the King will say to those on his right, “Come, you who are blessed by my Father; take your inheritance, the kingdom prepared for you since the creation of the world. For I was hungry and you gave me something to eat, I was thirsty... I was a stranger... I needed clothes... I was sick... I was in prison.” Then the righteous will answer him, “Lord, when did we see you hungry or thirsty? When did we see you a stranger and invite you in, or needing clothes and clothe you? When did we see you sick or in prison and go to visit you?”

From the very beginning, Christians have known that Jesus saves us from sin and death through his death and resurrection AND has saved us to serve. Through Sunday, Resurrection Day, God has established his Church in every generation over these two millennia and more.

The King will reply, the Lord Jesus said, “Truly I tell you, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers and sisters of mine, you did to me.” You may have noticed I left out the second part of this teaching of Jesus, the part about those on his left. He also said, “Whatever you did not do for one of the least of these, you did not do for me.”

“On a dangerous seacoast notorious for shipwrecks, there was a crude little lifesaving station. Actually, it was a hut with only one boat. With little thought for themselves, people would go out searching for those in danger or those who were the lost. Many lives were saved and this tiny lifesaving station became a famous place.

Some of those who had been saved as well as others were willing to give their time and energy and money to help. New boats were purchased. New crews were trained. The station began to grow.

Some of its new members were unhappy that the hut was so unattractive and poorly equipped. Emergency cots were replaced with lovely furniture. Rough, handmade equipment was discarded; sophisticated systems were installed. The hut had to be torn down. The new facility was needed. It

became a popular gathering place, and its mission began to shift. It was now sort of a clubhouse, an attractive building for public gatherings. Saving lives, feeding the hungry, strengthening the fearful, and calming the disturbed rarely occurred by now.

There developed a division among the members. Most wanted to stop the club's lifesaving activities and all involvement with shipwrecks. "It's too unpleasant, it interferes with our social life, it's opening the door to folks who are not like us." A few still insisted on saving lives. They could begin their own lifesaving station down the coast... They did.

As years passed, the new station experienced the same old changes. It evolved into another club... and then another station was begun. History repeats itself. If you visit that coast today you'll find a large number of impressive clubs along the shoreline owned by the members and operated by professionals. They too have lost all involvement with the saving of lives.

Shipwrecks still occur in those waters, but now, most victims are lost. Every day they drown at sea, and so few seem to care" (that's A Parable: "Saving Lives" by Charles Swindoll).

God is interested in his church being more like a Lifesaving Station than a Clubhouse. There are thousands of people living and working in Salt Lake navigating their way through life. And there are many people who experience shipwreck of one kind or another. People are hungry for the word of God and thirsty for the grace of Christ. There are people who feel like strangers needing a friend or who need the clothing of compassion, kindness and goodness. People are sick with various ailments of mind, heart, and soul, and people in prison under the bondage of addiction or depression.

We live in a dangerous world notorious for problems that confront and can destroy life. And so God, in his infinite mercy, created the church, followers of Christ who keep a constant watch over the turbulent sea. Earlier in the gospel, Matthew says that "Jesus went through all the towns and villages, teaching in their synagogues, proclaiming the good news of the kingdom and healing every disease and sickness. When he saw the crowds, he had compassion on them, because they were harassed and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd" (Matthew 9:35-36). The same is true today. Just go into a local high school and notice the many kids who seem lost in the demands of youth culture. Just go out and observe people in the workplace. Many struggle to get through the day lacking in purpose or fulfillment. Just visit a hospital or nursing home and realize how many people face sickness and death alone (except for the professionals hired to care for them).

In the simple perhaps crude livery stable, First Presbyterian Church was established by 12 people back in 1871. By 1875 a beautiful wood frame sanctuary was built on 2nd South and 2nd East for a growing congregation. In 1906 this amazing red sandstone building was completed to accommodate hundreds of members. Here we are 110 years later continuing the mission that God has set before us.

But I have to ask. Are we more like the lifesaving station of original purpose? Or are we more like the clubhouse mostly concerned with the comfort of our members? Again, earlier in the gospel, Matthew recounts Jesus' words for his followers. "You are the salt of the earth," seasoning that that brings out the God-flavors for life. "But if the salt loses its saltiness," how will people taste the godliness that our Lord offers to all? "It is no longer good for anything," said Jesus. And, "You are the light of the world," bringing out the God-colors in the world. God is not a secret to be kept. You are meant to be a "city on a hill that cannot be hidden. Let your light shine," said Jesus, "so that they may see your good deeds and glorify your Father in heaven" (Matthew 5:13-16).

The apostle Paul always urged the church to be about this evangelical, "good news" mission. "Devote yourselves to prayer," he said, "being watchful and thankful... that God may open a door for his message, so that we may proclaim the mystery of Christ... Be wise in the way you live and work among outsiders. Make the most of every opportunity. Be gracious in your speech, always full of grace, seasoned with salt, so that you may know to answer everyone" (Colossians 4:2-6).

Conclusion

Sundays have not really changed the world. But God has and does change the world through the Church. There is a gigantic amount of good that has been done by the people who call Sunday their Sabbath – person to person, family to family, culture to culture. I dare say that the Church has done more good for this world than any other group in history.

Throughout history, wherever you find the Church, you will find flaws and failures. The Church, this church, is made up of people. We are flawed failures who know that we need Jesus and his salvation to have any hope for a full life here and in the age to come. There are no excuses for some of the awful things done in or through the Church in the name of Christ.

Yet, throughout history, hospitals, the orphanage, public literacy were first offered by Christians. The ideas that we enjoy of civil rights, personal rights, the dignity of each person, the balance of power in government all grew out of the Christian worldview. Our culture tends to forget that. The Salvation Army, the YM and YWCA, Compassion International, Samaritan's Purse, World Vision, Food for the Hungry: these and many others were founded, led, and funded by members of the Church.

So, yes! I Love Sundays and I hope you do as well. And then, let us all go out into our world. Feed the hungry; visit the sick; offer a drink; come alongside of the stranger. And so meet the Lord Jesus Christ. Amen? Amen.

Galatians 3:21-26

Is the law opposed to the promises of God? Absolutely not! For if a law had been given that could impart life, then righteousness would certainly have come by the law. But Scripture has locked up everything under the control of sin, so that what was promised, being given through faith in Jesus Christ, might be given to those who believe. Before the coming of this faith, we were held in custody under the law, locked up until the faith that was to come would be revealed. So the law was our guardian until Christ came that we might be justified by faith. Now that this faith has come, we are no longer under a guardian. So in Christ Jesus you are all children of God through faith, for all of you who were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ. There is neither Jew nor Gentile, neither slave nor free, nor is there male and female, or you are all one in Christ Jesus. If you belong to Christ, then you are Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise.