

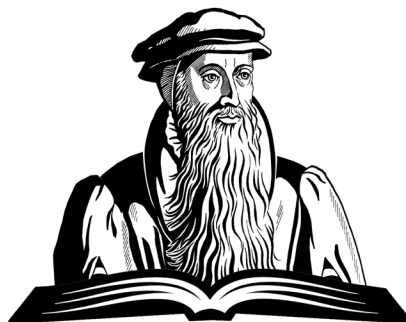
VIDEO SERMON SERIES

Sermons on the Heidelberg Catechism

by Rev. Bartel Elshout

Sermon #48, Lord's Day 38, part 1

The Fourth Commandment, part 1



The John Knox Institute
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Sermon #48 Lord's Day 38, part 1

The Fourth Commandment, part 1

Isaiah 58, verses 13–14; and Psalm 92

Question and Answer #103

i. Introduction

1. It Calls Us to Worship God

Introduction

Congregation, it's remarkable that the first full day of Adam and Eve's life was the Sabbath Day. It was the first day of rest. They were created near the end of the sixth day, and they began their life with a day of worship, which is what that seventh day was. And so, reverently speaking, that literally set the tone for their life. They entered the first week of their existence, having begun that week on the day of worship. That first day, that Sabbath Day, that seventh day, when God rested from all his work, and when he rejoiced in his work, and when he sanctified that day and set it apart.

And that's why, when we look at the texts of the law of God, in both Exodus and in Deuteronomy, you will notice that the Fourth Commandment is the largest Commandment. Thirty percent of the text of the law of God is devoted to the Fourth Commandment. And of course, all the Commandments are important, but when it comes to the life of the church, when it comes to the functioning of the church, the keeping of the Lord's Day, the proper biblical observance of the Lord's Day is at the very center of the functioning of the church.

Now, we know that the world talks about a "weekend." But for Christians, it's not the weekend. For Christians, this is the first day, this is the beginning. And just as that original day of worship was the foundation of the life of Adam and Eve until they grievously fell, so it is this day that must set a stamp on all of the days of the week. It is this day that's at the very center of God's purposes.

And with God's help, we're going to focus on the Fourth Commandment.

So let me first read the Fourth Commandment as we find it in Exodus 20, and Deuteronomy 5, and then we'll read Lord's Day 38 and the exposition of the Heidelberg Catechism.

So, Exodus 20 (verses 8 through 11)

"Remember the sabbath day, to keep it holy. Six days shalt thou labour, and do all thy work: but the seventh day is the sabbath of the LORD thy God: in it thou shalt not do any work, thou, nor thy son, nor thy daughter, thy manservant, nor thy maidservant, nor thy cattle, nor thy stranger that is within thy gates:"

—And the reason we have that detail is, God wanted to make sure that there would be nothing that would stand in the way of the proper observance of that day of rest, that sacred day.

"For"—and here comes the argument, the argument that God himself gives—

"For in six days the LORD made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that in them is, and rested the seventh day: wherefore the LORD blessed the sabbath day, and hallowed it."

So here, the argument of *creation* is used.

Now we go to Deuteronomy 5 (verses 12 through 15)

The language is slightly different, and one remarkable difference. Pay attention to the very end of the reading of this Fourth Commandment, where Moses, as he is repeating the law, gives the argument for keeping this day holy.

"Keep the sabbath day to sanctify it, as the LORD thy God hath commanded thee. Six days thou shalt labour, and do all thy work: but the seventh day is the sabbath of the LORD thy God: in it thou shalt not do any work, thou, nor thy son, nor thy daughter, nor thy manservant, nor thy maidservant, nor thine ox, nor thine ass, nor any of thy cattle, nor thy stranger that is within thy gates;"

—and then, this beautiful addition—

"that thy manservant, and thy maidservant may rest as well as thou."

Verse 15—

"And remember, that thou wast a servant in the land of Egypt, and that the LORD thy God brought thee out thence through a mighty hand and by a stretched out arm: therefore"

—here comes the reason—

"therefore the LORD thy God commanded thee to keep the sabbath day."

So, in Exodus, the argument is rooted in *creation*, and in Deuteronomy, the argument is rooted in *redemption*. And we see how all this works its way out.

So now, we turn to Lord's Day 38 of the Heidelberg Catechism, and there, we read the exposition of God's Word in,

Question #103: *What doth God require in the fourth commandment?*

And that's a proper question, because, as you have undoubtedly noticed, the first three Commandments were prohibitions—*Thou shalt not*. This is a positive requirement. *What doth God require in the Fourth Commandment?*

The Answer is: *First, that the ministry of the gospel and the schools be maintained; and that I, especially on the Sabbath, that is, on the day of rest, diligently frequent the church of God to hear His Word, to use the sacraments, publicly to call upon the Lord, and contribute to the relief of the poor, as becomes a Christian. Secondly, that all the days of my life I cease from my evil works, and yield myself to the Lord, to work by His Holy Spirit in me; and thus begin in this life the eternal*

Sabbath.

Thus far our Heidelberg Catechism.

So as we look at this Fourth Commandment, congregation, first of all, we will see that this Commandment is *A Call to Worship God*; it is the day of worship. That's the focus of that day. Secondly, *It Calls Us to Live for God*, namely, *that all the days of my life*—not just on the Lord's Day, but—*that all the days of my life I cease from my evil works*. And thirdly, *It Calls Us to Look for a Future with God*, because the Sabbath, the weekly commemoration of the Sabbath, is the beginning of what will be an everlasting Sabbath, an everlasting glorious future that awaits the people of God. So, *The Fourth Commandment, Calls Us to Worship God; Calls Us to Live for God; and Calls Us to Look for a Future with God*.

1. It Calls Us to Worship God

First of all, I want to point out to you that the word “sabbath” does not mean Saturday. There's a misunderstanding about that. The word “sabbath” literally means “rest”. And so, what God requires in the Fourth Commandment is that after six days of labor, there has to be a day of rest. And I'll address that later.

And that's why, when we now worship the Lord on the first day of the week, we are doing so in perfect conformity with this Commandment. We are worshipping God after six days of labor, and resting on the day that follows those six days, which now in the New Testament, is the first day of the week.

But congregation, for us to understand the significance of this day, to understand why this is so significant to God, that God specifically says that he sanctified that day—that means that he set it apart for a very special and sacred purpose, and that he promised to bless that day—we have to begin by asking ourselves, Why does God's Word tell us that God himself rested on that day after he completed the work of creation? And so, what was it? Now obviously, boys and girls, God did not have to rest because he was tired. And that's not what that means. But we can tell, from the book of Genesis, when we read those verses, that God beheld the work that he had done, and he saw that it was very good. And what was it that was so very good? What was it that God so delighted in when he finished the glorious work of his hands, this magnificent universe, and then this perfect globe with two human beings created in his image? Then, we have to go again to Colossians 1, verse 16—that is such an important verse in the Bible. That's the key to understanding the significance of this day. When we are told, in Colossians 1, verse 16 that “All things were created by him”—through the Son, but also—“for him,” this is exceedingly important, congregation. So, in other words, when God purposed to create this universe, he did so for the glory of his only begotten Son. And congregation, you know that I emphasize this frequently, and I must do so, because we cannot understand the theology of the Bible, we cannot understand the significance of this day, unless we begin to grasp that in all that God does, he aims for the glory of his Son. The Father who loves his Son. He created this universe for his Son. And so, when that work was finished, the Father beheld, in this magnificent creation of his, he saw the reflection of the glory of his only begotten Son, and that supremely delighted him. He rejoiced in that. So we could say that that first Sabbath was, in the perfect and full sense of the word, it was the Son's day. And that's how I would like us to think about “Sunday”, that Sunday is the Son's day. Sunday is the day on which our focus must be on the Son of God, the Son of his good pleasure.

And then we begin to understand why the transgression of that Commandment was punished so very severely by God. Israel had to learn that this day is very sacred to God. And so, what that means, congregation, is that on that day, it is God's desire, especially on that day, that man would

focus on his beloved Son, that man would focus on the glory of his beloved Son.

And if Adam and Eve had not fallen, they not have needed a written admonition for this. Because Adam and Eve had the perfect capacity to be able to read in *the elegant book of nature*—as the Belgic Confession¹ calls it—they had the perfect capacity to behold, in all that God had made, the glory of his only begotten Son. And that is God’s good pleasure.

God’s purposes all revolve around his only begotten Son. Because it is in the Son, as I’ve explained to you on numerous occasions, it is in the Son that God interacts with man. It is in the Son that God reveals himself to man. It is in the Son that God is knowable. And that’s why, especially in the Gospel of John, that special love relationship between the Father and Son receives so much attention. That’s why, on eight different occasions, we’re told that the Father loves his Son.

And that’s why God has preserved that day, even in our fallen world. And that’s why we need to recognize that the reason we must honor this day is because God loves his Son. “This is my beloved Son in whom I am well pleased” (Matthew 3:17). And it’s on this day of rest that God wants us to cease from our labors, and come to his house, and to hear his Word. Why? So that through the proclamation of his Word, we may behold the glory and the beauty of his only begotten Son, who is now set forth to us through the Scriptures, not only as the eternal Son of God, but as Emanuel, as God with us, as the Savior, as the Redeemer, who has come in the fulness of time to accomplish his Father’s good pleasure; to save and redeem fallen sons and daughters of Adam, so that through him, we might again become the sons and daughters of the living God.

And that’s why true worship—and the Lord’s Day is the day of worship—we come to this house of worship. We call our services “worship services.” But we need to understand that the only way we can worship God in a manner that pleases him, is if his Son is the focus of that worship. And that’s why we, as the servants of God, have the sacred responsibility to preach Christ to you. That’s why it was said of the apostles that “They ceased not to teach and preach Jesus Christ” (Acts 5:42). God raises up his servants to bear witness to his only begotten Son. That’s why, on this day, this day of rest, and especially in the house of God, that’s why the Son of God must have the preeminence.

And so, we should come to the house of God desiring to behold the glory of God’s Son. We should come to the house of God longing, as we sang together of David, in Psalm 27, he so desired to come to the house of God. Why?—because he longed “to behold the beauty of the LORD” (verse 27). And that beauty, of course, for him, was, of course, revealed in the Tabernacle and all that pertained to it. But David so understood the typology, he so understood the symbolism of the Tabernacle that he knew that what he was looking at was the beauty of the Lord. And congregation, it is in Christ, in his Son, that God unveils the beauty of his divine being. That’s why he said, “This is my beloved Son...hear ye him” (Matthew 17:5). And that’s why the Lord’s Day is meant to be a spiritual oasis. It’s meant to be a day of rest; not a day of laziness, not a day of doing nothing, and the Catechism beautifully highlights that, when it does not tell us what we cannot do on the Lord’s Day, but it tells us what we ought to do on the Lord’s Day, what the holy activity of this day must be.

But the focal point of our worship must be God’s only begotten Son. And that’s why the proper preaching of God’s Word will always unfold the glory of God’s Son. Because all of Scripture is

¹ *The Confession of Faith*, popularly known as the *Belgic Confession*, is a confession of faith subscribed to by many Reformed churches. It is part of what is known as the *Three Forms of Unity*, the subordinate standards of the Dutch Reformed Church. Influenced by the Gallic Confession, the initial text was prepared in 1559 by Guido de Brés, a minister in the Reformed church of the Netherlands.

ultimately about him. He is the eternal and living Word of God. That's why it's especially in his house that it pleases God to draw us to his Son, in order that we may find rest for our souls. That gives a whole new dimension to the fact that it is a day of rest. Because, as we journey through life, we encounter so many obstacles. We struggle. And what a blessing it is that God has preserved this day, this sanctified day, this holy day, to come and to find rest for our souls—where?—in his only begotten Son.

That's why this day is truly God's holy day. Our "holiday" is derived from it, but this is God's holy day. This is his sacred day. This is his day that he has set apart. And congregation, what God makes crystal clear, both in Exodus and Deuteronomy is that he takes this day very seriously, and therefore, we must take that day very seriously. So as we saw in Exodus 20, God is saying, "I rested on that day. I rested and delighted myself in the work of my hands. And because I rested after six days, so are you to follow my example." God himself has set the pattern. And what God is saying in Exodus 20, he is saying, "My pattern must be your pattern. Because I rested on that day, so must you." And of course, in Deuteronomy 5, the argument that is used for keeping it is the fact that God has not only created us, but that he also is the God of redemption. And so, on this day, we commemorate both the fact that God is our Creator, in whom we live and move and have our being, but also we commemorate his redeeming work. And that's why we now rest on the first day of the week. But I'll come to that in just a moment.

Now, the next question is: Is there any biblical basis for the fact that we worship twice on the Lord's Day, at least twice on the Lord's Day? And we need to address that, because there's a very disturbing pattern all through our Western world, where more and more, people think that worshipping God once is enough. And where more and more we see an Antinomian² interpretation of the Fourth Commandment. There are many in our day who would say, "Well, the New Testament never mentions the Fourth Commandment, and therefore we are no longer bound by the Fourth Commandment." And of course, that's a faulty argument, congregation. Because the reason why the New Testament doesn't mention it is because it didn't have to repeat it. We have to realize, as I've said here many times, that when the New Testament church was established, they did not have the New Testament. The Old Testament was their Bible. And if anything was clear, it is that this day was sacred to the Lord. There was no need for that Commandment to be repeated. If you have *The Christian's Reasonable Service*, by Wilhelmus à Brakel,³ I would encourage you to read his exposition of the Fourth Commandment, and where he argues brilliantly about the enduring nature of the Fourth Commandment. And you see, that's why I spent so much time trying to set the stage for all this. Once we understand what that day means to God; once we understand why he appointed that day; once we understand that especially this day is set apart for the glory of his Son, that we would behold the glory of his Son unveiled to us also in the Scriptures, then we will begin to understand why we need to do everything in our power to honor that day. That's why there is so much detail in both Exodus and Deuteronomy. God stipulated to the people of Israel, "Let's make sure there is nothing that detracts you from the proper observance of that day."

And so, the whole idea of morning and evening worship, and I think I've alluded to this before, but let me now address it in a bit more detail. I believe that this pattern is rooted in what God established in the garden. Because what do we read? What do we read, that in the garden, God

² Antinomianism comes from the Greek meaning *lawless*. In Christianity, it is a pejorative term for the teaching that Christians are under no obligation to obey the moral law of God, as defined in the Ten Commandments. This teaching was especially propagated during the Protestant Reformation by the Anabaptists and Mennonites.

³ Wilhelmus à Brakel (1635–1711), aka "Father Brakel", was a Protestant Reformed minister and theologian in the Dutch Reformed Church in the Netherlands, famous for his 4 volumes, *The Christian's Reasonable Service*.

communed with Adam and Eve every morning and evening, because it speaks of the “cool of the day” (Genesis 3:8). There are two times a day that we have “the cool of the day” and that’s in the morning and the evening. And so, there was this very special place, and in Genesis 3, God came looking for Adam and Eve. They heard him walking in the garden. He came looking for them. And so, from the very outset, the day began with God, and the day ended with God—morning and evening.

And that’s why it’s not accidental that when God gives his redeemed people the detailed directions of how that are to worship him, that the morning and evening sacrifice was such a very important part of that whole structure of worship that God gave to them (Exodus 29:38–39). So every morning and every evening, God communicated his grace to his people. God declared that he was a gracious God for the sake of that bloody sacrifice. Every morning and every evening God communicated to his sinful people that he was a God ready to forgive, and a God of plenteous in mercy, a God who made daily provision. And those morning and evening sacrifices were always times of worship. The godly would gather round about the Tabernacle waiting for the priest to come out and to pronounce the blessing upon them, and it would be a moment of great joy. The godly would leap for joy. And boys and girls, that’s what the people were waiting for when Zechariah came out; they were waiting for him to bless them, and of course, he couldn’t because he could no longer speak (Luke 1:18–22). But the point is this—there’s a pattern here. It’s a pattern that God himself established; a pattern for every day. And if that was to be the daily pattern, morning and evening worship was to be the pattern of the day, that certainly applies to the Sabbath Day.

And we know that Christ himself sanctioned that morning and evening pattern, when he was nailed to the cross at the time of the morning sacrifice, and he breathed his last breath at the time of the evening sacrifice. So that his suffering on the cross spanned that whole period between the morning and the evening sacrifice. And that’s why I think it’s not accidental that there is an allusion to this in the Psalm we just read. Open your Bibles again, let’s read verses 1 and 2 of Psalm 92. Notice the title. Now, the title in our Bible is in small print. Now, in the Dutch Bible, that’s verse 1. These titles are always included in the Psalms, because the Jewish Rabbis always emphasized that these titles were inspired as well. So, “A Psalm or Song for the sabbath day”—for the day of rest—“It is a good thing to give thanks unto the LORD, and to sing praises unto thy name, O most High:”—and notice what it says here now—“to shew forth thy lovingkindness in the morning, and thy faithfulness every night.” So it explicitly makes reference of morning and evening, as it summons us to worship the Lord on the Sabbath Day.

And congregation, history has proven, what a blessing it is, when the church maintains those two services on the Lord’s Day. They become the bookends of the Lord’s Day, if you will. And history is now proving what happens when churches no longer adhere to that, when they no longer honor this morning and evening pattern. I remember very well, when I was a child going to Germany visiting my grandparents, my mother grew up in a very conservative Baptist church where they worshipped morning and evening. By the time we came around, they had dispensed with the evening service. And so, as we grew up, we recognized that the people there observed the Lord’s Day in an entirely different way than we were accustomed to, and that the rest of the day became a day of recreation, a day of relaxation. In other words, what it did, the elimination of the evening service created a whole Antinomian environment. “Antinomian” means that we no longer regard God’s law. And so, what happened is that it set the stage for a dishonoring of the Lord’s Day. I believe that, in God’s wisdom and purposes, it must be so. I believe that that pattern, that when God ordered the morning and evening sacrifice, he was preserving the pattern that he himself established in the garden. And that’s why Psalm 92 begins by a reference to the morning and to the

evening. And I hope and pray, congregation, that, by the grace of God, we can continue to honor that. I know there is a time to be with our families, there's a time for private worship, but those two worship services are so significant. They are the anchors of the Lord's Day, if you will. They are the bookends of the Lord's Day.

So let's look at the Heidelberg Catechism, as it unpacks for us what we are to do on that Sabbath Day. It begins with a rather surprising statement. It says, *First, that the ministry of the gospel and the schools be maintained*. And most historians believe that this is a reference to theological schools. You would say, "Why would the authors of the Catechism begin their exposition of the Fourth Commandment in this way?"—to simply emphasize that the ministry of the gospel, the proclamation of God's Word is the essential component of the Lord's Day. And then therefore, the church must do everything in its power to make sure that the ministry of the gospel functions properly. That's the great responsibility that elders have, especially. Elders, especially, are to be the guardians of that. They are to make sure that the ministry of the gospel functions properly in the church. Because it is the proclamation of God's Word which is at the very heart of the existence of the congregation. We could say that the life of the church revolves around the ministry of the Word of God. And that's why we need to be concerned, too, that the church will train young men to engage in that ministry. That's why we often pray for that, and we pray that God would raise up young men from this congregation, called to the sacred ministry of the gospel, so that that ministry can continue. And so, the authors of the Catechism, who were greatly influenced by Calvin⁴ in the formulation of this Lord's Day, recognized that the proclamation of the gospel, the ministry of the Word, the proclamation of God's Son, the lifting up of the name of God's Son, that's at the very heart of the Lord's Day, and must be protected, and must be guarded jealously. And so, in 2 Timothy 2, verse 2, Paul writes to Timothy, and says, "And the things that thou hast heard of me among many witnesses, the same commit thou to faithful men, who shall be able to teach others also."

Then it goes on to say, *And that I, especially on the Sabbath, that is, on the day of rest*—and so, our Lord's Day is the New Testament Sabbath. It's the New Testament day of rest. *That I, especially on the...day of rest, diligently frequent the church of God*—diligently frequent the church of God. A key passage in support of that would be Hebrews 10. Again, open your Bibles please and read with me, verses 24 and 25 of Hebrews 10, where the Apostle writes, "And let us consider one another to provoke unto love and to good works"—and here comes the key phrase—"not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some is; but exhorting one another: and so much the more, as ye see the day approaching." "Let us not forsake the assembling of ourselves together." And so, what Paul is saying is this is a very serious matter, and we should be all the more diligent in assembling of ourselves together, as you see the day approaching, namely, the day of the Lord.

Oh, that simply means, also boys and girls, that means honoring the Son's day. That's what Sunday is, honoring the Son's day, honoring the Lord's Day. It means that we should never leave our place empty in the house of God unless we have a legitimate reason why we cannot be present in the house of God. Because when we are absent for illegitimate reasons, we dishonor God's Son, we grieve God's Spirit. And that's why Paul writes this exhortation, an exhortation that is especially important in our day.

And so, we ought to *diligently frequent the church of God*, first of all, *to hear his Word*. A very simple statement, and yet so profoundly important. That's why our worship services following

⁴ John Calvin, or, Jean Calvin, (1509–1564) – was a well-known French theologian, pastor, writer, and leading Reformer in Geneva during the Protestant Reformation, after whom many Reformers patterned their teaching

the Reformation are marked by utmost simplicity. Because the focal point is the Word of God. Everything in our worship services revolves around the proclamation of the Word. The Psalms we sing, the Scriptures we read, the prayers we offer, it all revolves around the proclamation of God's Word. And so, we come here to hear God's Word. We come here to hear God speak to us. We come here to hear God communing with us. We come here to hear what God has to say, what the Scriptures have to say about God's only begotten Son, the Lord Jesus Christ. That's what makes coming to the house of God such a very special event, such a very special moment. This is the house, this is where God meets with us. Christ said where two or three are gathered in his name, he will be in the midst (Matthew 18:20). That's why Calvin famously said, "When we are in the house of God, and when the Word of God is preached, it is Christ who walks among us in the garments of the gospel." This is where God and men meet.

And that's why we have to come here in a respectful way. And I'm very encouraged that that is true for our congregation, but there is a trend where people come dressed for worship services as if they're attending a picnic. This is not a picnic. This is not a casual event. This is not a social event. We are coming into the presence of God. And as you know, if we would be invited to meet with the President, or with the Governor, I don't think any of us would go there in blue jeans. There's nothing wrong with blue jeans, but I'm simply saying we would dress for the occasion. We would recognize that meeting with such an important person means that our whole demeanor has to reflect the fact that we respect the person with whom we're meeting. When we come here, we're coming to the house of God. We're coming to where God meets with us. We're coming here to hear the Word of the living God.

Then, it mentions *the sacraments, to use the sacraments*, a very important part of public worship, that special gift of the Lord, by which he reassures his people. And as you know, what is the focus of the sacraments?—God's Son. Everything about worship all revolves around him. And so, in the sacraments, God visually unveils the beauty and the preciousness of his Son and his finished work.

Then, it says, *publicly to call upon the Lord*. In other words, the reason why we sing, and the reason why I pray is I am praying on your behalf. For the prayer I prayed before this sermon, I prayed on your behalf. On your behalf, I called upon God's name. And that should be our proper response. That's why we conclude the service again by singing. Because when God speaks to us, when God reveals himself to us, we must respond by worshipping him, a worship that is informed by the very Word of God itself.

And then, it also mentions that we are to *contribute to the relief of the poor*. And so, let me read to you what we find in 1 Corinthians 16, verse 2, a very simple statement. Paul writes there, "Upon the first day of the week let every one of you lay by him in store, as God hath prospered him, that there be no gatherings when I come." And so, already it was established then, early on, that when the people of God would come together for worship, they would also give to the service of the Lord. And that's why our giving each Lord's Day is an important component of worship. Because by giving to the service of the Lord, we are honoring the service of the Lord, and our gifts make it possible for the service of the Lord to function properly. And of course, by giving to the Lord's service, we are confessing that everything we have and everything we own comes from him. That's why tithing, proper biblical tithing, is such a powerful antidote against materialism. Tithing confronts us with the reality that everything I have, everything I own, everything comes from him. And all God is asking of us is that, of all that he gives us, we return at least ten percent to him to sustain his service. Really, that applies to the week too. Out of the seven days, God is saying, "For six days, you may pursue your lawful calling, but one day is mine; one day is sacred;

one day belongs to me; one day belongs to my Son.

And sixthly, it says, by conducting ourselves *as becomes a Christian*. That's why I read to you Isaiah 58, verses 13 and 14. Let's turn there again. Open your Bibles please to Isaiah 58. Let's read those two important verses. Because, parents, when children ask you, "Well, what can we do, and what can we not do on the Lord's Day?" This is a passage that will help them understand what proper conduct on the Lord's Day is. And as you'll notice, I've said very little about what can or cannot be done, purposely, following the Catechism. Because I think, once we grasp what that day means to God, once we understand what God is saying in these two verses, I think it will not be difficult for us, if we're honest and upright, to determine what is appropriate and what's not appropriate. So, what does it say? "If thou turn away thy foot from the sabbath, from doing thy pleasure"—look, look, God is speaking here—"doing thy pleasure on my holy day"—he says, that day belongs to me, and that day is not meant for your pleasure; that day is meant for you to do my pleasure; this is my day—"doing your pleasure on my holy day; and call the sabbath a delight, the holy of the LORD, honourable; and shalt honour him, not doing thine own ways, nor finding thine own pleasure, nor speaking thine own words." So very simply, that means, on the Lord's Day, we don't do our own thing, we don't do our own pleasure, and we don't speak our own words. That means that even our conversation on the Lord's Day should be sanctified. Even our conversation should be fitting for that day. My entire ministry, I have wondered what those conversations are like after the service. Are you reviewing the sermon? Is that the focus of your conversation? Sometimes I feared that the seed that is sown is taken away when we engage in conversation that contradicts this. This is the Lord's Day. We have just been in the house of God. We have just heard the Word of God. And God says, "On my day, on my holy day, don't seek your own pleasure, don't do your own thing, don't speak your own words, but honor me." "For then," it says, "then shalt thou delight thyself in the LORD."

That's why it's so important for us to understand what this day means to God, why he has sanctified this day. Once we grasp that, then we will be able to figure out how we are to keep this day, how we are to honor him, how we are to do what he directs us to do in this passage.

Just a few comments as to why we now worship on the Lord's Day. Obviously, I have no time for the second and third points; I hope to do that in a couple of weeks when I return. So, why is it that we now worship on the Lord's Day? And so, let me just quickly give you a few reasons.

First of all, because Christ arose on the first day of the week. So what happened, he died on Friday, and what happens, the Lord of the Sabbath takes the Sabbath into the grave. The Lord of the Sabbath is resting on the Sabbath. And then, arises on the first day of the week. And that's significant, because the symbolism there is that this marks an entirely new beginning. Remember how I started. The life of Adam and Eve, the very first day of their life was the Lord's Day, the Sabbath, the day of the Lord. So Christ arose on the first day.

He appeared to his disciples on the first day, and eight days later, again on the first day. The first time, Thomas was missing. He forsook the assembling of himself with fellow believers. And then, a week later, Christ comes again.

So, he arose on the first day, he appeared to his people on the first day. And then, the Holy Spirit was poured out on the first day, fifty days later, again, on the first day of the week. So, the Spirit sanctions that first day.

And then, in Revelation 1, when does the risen Christ appear to John? It says clearly, "on the Lord's day" (verse 10). That's where the expression "the Lord's Day" comes from, from Revelation 1. So, the risen Christ, who rose on the first day, who poured out his Spirit on the first day, appears to John on Patmos on the first day of the week, to give him the final revelation of the Scriptures.

And that's why, immediately, from early on, right away, the New Testament church recognized that God himself had sanctioned this day as the New Testament day of worship. And so, we could say that it was sanctioned by the Father, who raised his Son on the first day. It was sanctioned by the Son, who established that pattern right away with his disciples, and sanctioned by the Holy Spirit. And so, we must leave it there for tonight.

And so, my beloved congregation, I have tried to set before you what this day is all about. I hope and pray that for you, it will be a sacred day. It should be a day of delight. That's why, and it's not original with me, but it has been said, "Tell me, tell me what Sunday means to you, tell me what the Lord's Day means to you, and I will tell you who you are." And so, our attitude towards the Lord's Day is the litmus test of who we really are spiritually. Because, if we love the Lord, then we should love his day; then we should especially love his day; then that day will be the central day of our lives; then that day will grant us what we need to live a godly life during the week, and will make us long for the next Lord's Day to again gather with the people of God, and to hear God's witness about his only begotten Son, the Lord Jesus Christ.

And so, may God grant that, by grace, we examine our hearts, we examine our practices, that by the grace of God, we endeavor to honor this day as the Son's day, that it will be a day in which we are well pleased with the Son, in whom the Father is well pleased. Amen.

Let's pray.

Our gracious God, our heavenly Father in Christ, we thank thee for the privilege of having been here again today, on thy day, thy holy day, sanctified by thee, blessed by thee, thy day, in which thou dost draw near to us in thy beloved Son unveiled to us in the Scriptures. Oh, Lord, we pray that we would therefore love this day, that we would desire to assemble ourselves each Lord's Day to come and hear the proclamation of the everlasting gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ. And Lord, forgive us all the ways in which we have transgressed this Commandment; that we would earnestly search our own hearts and souls, and our practices, and to endeavor, by grace, to honor that day in such a way that it will honor thy well-beloved Son. And so, forgive us our sins for his sake. Go with us now into the week that has begun. Bless us in the labor of our hands. And we pray that this day would sanctify our lives, that we would carry with us what we have heard in thy house today. Keep us safely, and bring us again together on Thursday, when we gather to give thee thanks, the God from whom all blessings flow. We ask it in Jesus' name. Amen.