

Lesson 4

THE DAY OF THE LORD



On a Sabbath day, Jesus was walking through the cornfields and his disciples were picking ears of corn, rubbing them in their hands and eating them; Seeing this, some of the Pharisees asked: “Why are you doing what is not lawful on the sabbath? Jesus answered: “Have you not read what David did when he and his companions were hungry? How he went in to the house of God, took the loaves of bread offered to God, and ate it and gave it also to his followers, loaves which only the priests are allowed to eat. Then He said to them: “The Son of Man is Lord of the Sabbath” (LK 6:1-5). **By this, Jesus makes it clear about the importance of Sabbath-the day of the Lord and the kind of attitude we should have in our observance of the Sabbath.**

Sabbath in the Old Testament

The third commandment which God gave to Moses on Mt. Sinai is connected with the Sabbath. “Remember the sabbath day, and keep it holy. Six days you shall labour and do all your work. But the 7th day is a sabbath to the LORD your God; you shall not do any work-you, your son or your daughter, your male or female slave, your livestock, or the alien resident in your towns” (Ex 20:8-10).

The people of the Old Testament celebrated Sabbath on the last day of the week. They celebrated Sabbath remembering how God completed His work of creation within 6 days and rested on the 7th day. “God blessed the seventh day and hallowed it, because on it God rested from all the work that he had done in creation” (Gen 2:3). For the people of the Old Testament the term 'Sabbath' meant keeping away from all types of work. This word originated from the Hebrew word 'Sabbath', which means 'to put an end', 'rest' etc.

On Sabbath-the day of rest and worship, the Israelites did not allow any human being or animal to do any kind of work. They celebrated the Sabbath from Friday sunset to Saturday sunset. Gradually they increased the type and number of activities to be forbidden on the Sabbath day and made it a law. These strict laws rendered the celebration of the Sabbath difficult.

Jesus and Sabbath

Once, Jesus was teaching in the synagogue. There was a man with withered hands in the assembly. Some of the people wanted to find fault with Jesus and asked: “Is it against the law to cure a man on the Sabbath day?” Here is the answer Jesus gave. “How much more valuable is a human being than a sheep! so it is lawful to do good on the sabbath” (Mt. 12:12). In front of them Jesus healed the man with the withered hand. **There by, He taught that man is not for Sabbath, but Sabbath is for man. Jesus exhorted us to worship the Lord our God who is the Lord of the Sabbath too.**

Jesus was very careful to observe and keep the Sabbath day holy. But at the same time He did away with the defects of the celebration of the Sabbath among the Jews. **He healed people on the Sabbath day and thus proved that doing good is suitable to the spirit of the Sabbath and allowed on the Sabbath day. Thus, Jesus corrected the wrong notion about the Sabbath.**

Sunday: The Lord's Day

Sunday is the Sabbath day for Christians. It is the Lord's day. There are several reasons to celebrate Sunday as the day of the Lord. **A very important reason is that the most important and deciding event in the history of salvation - the resurrection of Jesus took place on that day (Mk. 16:12, Mt. 28:1; Lk. 24:1, Jn. 20) Conquering sin and death, Jesus resurrected on the first day of the week, that is Sunday. Hence, Sunday became a holy day for Christians. After resurrection Jesus appeared to His disciples and others many a time. Among them, the important ones took place on Sundays (Mt. 28, Lk. 24, Jn: 20). The Holy Spirit descended upon the disciples on a Sunday, after 50 days of Jesus' resurrection. The Church was officialy inaugurated on a Sunday, the days of Pentecost.**

In the Ecclesial Letter of Pope John Paul II entitled '**The Lord's Day**', He explains the connection of Sunday celebration with the resurrection-the center of Christ's mystery. **The Pope qualified Sunday as the Easter day of every week. The Holy Pope says that those who got the gift of faith to believe in Jesus cannot forget the importance of Sundays. Hence, Sunday is not only meant for rest but is also an occasion to meditate on the resurrection of Jesus and to share in His glory.**

Sunday is the day of the Church. It is a day set apart to proclaim the faith and to celebrate it. The Holy Mass celebrated on that day is very special. The members of the Church are expected to participate in the Holy Mass that day. The church qualifies it as the day of days. The Pope reminds us to regard Sunday Celebration not only as a commandment but also to consider it as a need of Christian life. The commandment to celebrate Sunday as a holy day helps us to grow with God and the Church.

We, the people of the New testament have to celebrate Sunday-the Lord's day in three important ways.

Day of Worship

Sunday observation is the most important factor that helps a lot in the faith formation of a Christian. It is a day for the worship of the Lord. The important purpose of the day is to offer worship and praise to the Lord our God. **The centre of Sunday celebration is the offering of the Holy Mass, the greatest adoration given to God, by the whole community together. Through the Holy Mass, we obtain the power to renew our faith, life and commitment. We must offer the Holy Mass with attention, devotion and purity of heart.** The Church teaches us that the faithful have the obligation to participate in the Holy Mass on all Sundays and other obligatory days. Sunday is also a special day for the faith formation of children.

Day of Rest

An active man needs rest. It is his right also. On Sunday he should avoid hard work which he does on other days of the week. It will help him to cherish family and social relationships. **The attitude we should have towards Sunday celebration is to find time to participate in the Holy Mass and to live the whole day in a spirit of worship and adoration. Avoid hard work so as to keep up this spirit.** The Church also teaches us not to demand, if there is no such great urgency, anything that hinders others from celebrating the Lord's Day (CCC. 2195).

Day of Mercy

The fact that Sunday is a day of mercy reveals the social aspect of Sunday celebration. Sunday is a special occasion to show mercy which Jesus had for the suffering. The Church has shown interest to reach out to the suffering ones. We see it from the beginning of the early Church. St. Paul writes to the faithful like this; "On the first day of every week, each of you is to put aside and save whatever extra you earn" (1 Cor 16:2). On Sundays we must devote at least some time for acts of mercy and to help others according to our capacity. Thus we can transform Sundays into days of mutual friendship and unity.

Obligatory Days

The Church suggests certain other obligatory days besides the Lords' day-Sunday. The following are the obligatory days of the Syro-Malabar Church.

1. Christmas - The birth day Jesus of our Lord - Dec.25
2. Dukrana - The day of commemoration of the death of St. Thomas - July 3.
3. The Assumption of our Lady - Aug.15.
4. Danaha - The Baptism of our Lord - Jan 6.
5. Feast of St. Peter and St. Paul - June 29.
6. The Ascension of our Lord - The Thursday after the 6th Sunday after Easter.

The Church gives a special instruction about the last three days mentioned above. The suggestion is that, even though they are not holidays, in certain places, we have to participate in the Holy Mass, and other holy rituals, if possible.

On these days, we have the responsibility to participate in the Holy Mass and engage in good deeds and glorify God as on Sundays. On the Lords Day, we must take care to join in the divine worship with joyful hearts. Then only we can keep the third commandment in full spirit.

Let us Pray

O Risen Jesus, help us to celebrate Sunday in such a way as to share the glory of your resurrection and to meditate on it.

Read the Word of God and Narrate

Lk 6:6-11

Word of God for our Guidance

“This is the day that the LORD has made;
let us rejoice and be glad in it” (Ps 118:24).

Let us Do

Make a list of acts of mercy that we can do on Sundays.

My Resolution

On all Sundays, I will participate in the Holy Mass
and receive Holy communion.

Find out the Answer

1. How did the Jews celebrate Sabbath?
2. What are the reasons to choose Sunday as the Lord's Day?
3. How did the early Church celebrate Sunday?
4. Describe the duties entrusted to us by the third commandment?
5. How shall we celebrate the Lord's day-Sunday?