

The Third Commandment

Thou shalt sanctify the holy day.

What does this mean? We should fear and love God that we may not despise preaching and His Word, but hold it sacred, and gladly hear and learn it.

1. The Jews thought they served God by not working from Friday sundown to Saturday sundown, since death was commanded for the one who worked during that day (*Ex 31:12–17*). But for what specific purpose did God really give the Sabbath (*v. 13*)?
2. What did Jesus, who came *to be our sanctification* (*1 Cor 1:26–31*), teach about the Sabbath? *Mk 2:23–28*. What did he do on the Sabbath? *Lk 4:16–30; 13:10–17; Jn 5:1–18; Mk 3:1–6; 15:42–16:1*. Note especially the last!
3. Given what the Sabbath was *really* for, under the sign of resting (*Ex 31:13*), how did Jesus, in that last Sabbath, fulfill the Sabbath for us? What is our Sabbath now, and where is it kept? *Col 2:16–19* [where “substance” (ESV) or “reality” (NIV) is really the word “body”]; *Heb 4:1–16*.

From Luther's *Large Catechism* (I: Ten Commandments)

⁸⁴ [M]ost especially, that on such day of rest (since we can get no other opportunity) freedom and time be taken to attend divine service, so that we come together to hear and treat of God's Word, and then to praise God, to sing and pray... ^{91–93} At whatever hour, then, God's Word is taught, preached, heard, read or meditated upon, there the person, day, and work are sanctified thereby, not because of the external work, but because of the Word, which makes saints of us all. Therefore I constantly say that all our life and work must be ordered according to God's Word, if it is to be God-pleasing or holy. Where this is done, this commandment is in force and being fulfilled.

On the contrary, any observance or work that is practised without God's Word is unholy before God, no matter how brilliantly it may shine, even though it be covered with relics, such as the fictitious spiritual orders, which know nothing of God's Word and seek holiness in their own works...

^{94–95} For this, then, fixed places, times, persons, and the entire external order of worship have been created and appointed, so that it may be publicly in operation. Since, therefore, so much depends upon God's Word that without it no holy day can be sanctified, we must know that God insists upon a strict observance of this commandment, and will punish all who despise His Word and are not willing to hear and learn it, especially at the time appointed for the purpose.

⁹⁸ 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.