

10/4/09 **“The World is not Our Lord; Christ Is” Luke 14: 1-7**

Jesus often engaged in a serious theological debate with scholars of the religious law. One of them put the following question to Jesus, “Is it lawful to heal the sick on the Sabbath?”

On the Sabbath, the Jews were to refrain from all labor, and engage only in prayer, worship, and contemplation.

However, this meaning of the Sabbath had been forgotten over a period of several hundred years, and, by the time of Jesus, the Sabbath keeping had become a social and religious way of defining piety toward God.

The particular episode read earlier this morning took place against this social and religious background.

In seeing a man who had abnormal swelling, a scholar of the religious law asked Jesus if it was lawful to heal him on the Sabbath.

For this scholar, healing this poor man on the Sabbath was bad, because such an act broke the law.

For Jesus, on the other hand, healing on the Sabbath was good. Jesus' reason was clear enough. The worth of human beings depended not on compliance with the law; it was rooted in the fact that they were objects of God's absolute and unbounded love.

I think we can understand the meaning of this episode better if we substitute “the standards of society” for “religious law.”

When the love of Christ and the standards of society are in conflict, we often choose the standards of society over the love of Christ. In this sense, we are like the scholar of the law.

Example one. When AIDS became a serious disease in the United States in the late 80s, some Christians refused to help. They insisted that the disease was divine punishment against the AIDS patients.

Example two. Today many Christians brand Islamic faith as the religion of the devil without having read a single page of the Koran. We, Christians, tend to follow the social opinion prevalent in our society.

That is why we need constantly to pray for courage, commitment, and resilience.

Today is World Communion Sunday. We are celebrating Holy Communion with other Christians throughout the world. At the Lord's Table, we are all affirming together that the world is not our lord. Christ is.

He will encourage us when we are discouraged. He will strengthen us when we are weak. He is our Savior. He is our Lord. His love is everlasting.

Thanks be to God. Amen.