

Church of the Lutheran Confession's
Ministry By Mail

"Faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the Word of God." Romans 10:17

16th Sunday of Trinity

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Scripture Readings

Ephesians 3:13-21; Luke 7:11-17

Hymns from The Lutheran Hymnal (1941)

#11 | #27 | #410 | #47



Prayer of the Day

Almighty God, You never cease to uphold Your creation and work for our good. Grant us faith to rest in Your gracious care and to trust in the saving work of Your Son, Jesus Christ, our Lord. Amen.



Sermon Text

(John 5:5-18 NKJ) "Now a certain man was there who had an infirmity thirty-eight years. 6 When Jesus saw him lying there, and knew that he already had been in that condition a long time, He said to him, "Do you want to be made well?" 7 The sick man answered Him, "Sir, I have no man to put me into the pool when the water is stirred up; but while I am coming, another steps down before me." 8 Jesus said to him, "Rise, take up your bed and walk." 9 And immediately the man was made well, took up his bed, and walked. And that day was the Sabbath. 10 The Jews therefore said to him who was cured, "It is the Sabbath; it is not lawful for you to carry your bed." 11 He answered them, "He who made me well said to me, 'Take up your bed and walk.'" 12 Then they asked him, "Who is the Man who said to you, 'Take up your bed and walk '?" 13 But the one who was healed did not know who it was, for Jesus had withdrawn, a multitude being in that place. 14 Afterward Jesus found him in the temple, and said to him, "See, you have been made well. Sin no more, lest a worse thing come upon you." 15 The man departed and told the

Jews that it was Jesus who had made him well. 16 For this reason the Jews persecuted Jesus, and sought to kill Him, because He had done these things on the Sabbath. 17 But Jesus answered them, "My Father has been working until now, and I have been working." 18 Therefore the Jews sought all the more to kill Him, because He not only broke the Sabbath, but also said that God was His Father, making Himself equal with God."

Theme

OUR GOD NEVER STOPS WORKING

Dearly Beloved Fellow Believers,

Each year, our country observes Monday holidays such as Memorial Day and Labor Day. On these days, government offices, banks, and schools are closed, so many who would ordinarily be working on a Monday have the day off. But there are also many who have to work on those Monday holidays. Some work in retail businesses that like to remain open on holidays to attract shoppers who have the day off. Others do the work needed to keep essential services running.

Some have to work if others are to rest or enjoy recreation. We all understand this, even if we aren't always thinking about it. We know that hospital emergency rooms need people to run them. We know that water systems and electrical systems—though they are mostly automated these days—still need people to operate and maintain them. But do we realize that the same is true of our world? The Scriptures teach that our world is not merely a machine that God made and wound up and that now runs on its own. God preserves and upholds the world. He watches over His creation and is actively involved in it. We see this in the Psalms, which speak of God as actively providing for the needs of His creation by sending rain and fruitful seasons: "You visit the earth and water it, You greatly enrich it; The river of God is full of water; You provide their grain, For so You have prepared it. You water its ridges abundantly, You settle its furrows; You make it soft with showers, You bless its growth" (Psalm 65:9–10). God's upholding of His creation is activity; it is work. And it is work that never stops. God doesn't take any time off; He doesn't slumber or sleep (Psalm 121:4). If He did, the world itself would fall apart.

In our text, Jesus speaks of this ongoing, unceasing divine work. By His act of healing, He shows that this divine working is for our good and blessing.

****OUR GOD NEVER STOPS WORKING****

—We see His unceasing activity in the gracious works of His Son.

It's easy for us to take for granted that which is always there for us. God is so faithful in His work of upholding the world that we rarely think about it. We don't think about it until God reminds us in the Bible that He upholds all things by the word of His power

(Hebrews 1:3). Those who don't know the Bible may never think about God's working or how they benefit from it. Some deny that He does anything or that He even exists.

But how can we tell that God is maintaining our world? God has given us one witness to this in His creation. We see His handwriting all over the world and the universe; we see it in the beauty and order of things. I once learned some wonderful and amazing examples of this in a talk given by a forensic scientist from the organization Answers in Genesis. An expert on fingerprints, she explained how an individual's fingerprints are unique and what makes them unique. She also showed us how the same patterns found in fingerprints occur throughout creation and can be observed in animals, plants, sand, water, land, clouds, and even the Milky Way Galaxy. Throughout His creation, God has left the prints of His fingers, enabling us to see that He is the One who made all the things we see and that He is the One who now upholds and sustains them.

But we see the working of God especially in the life and work of Jesus Christ. His three-year ministry was filled with activity. Jesus spent those years traveling throughout Judea and Galilee, even venturing into places such as Samaria, Tyre, and Sidon. Wherever He went, He was busy teaching about the kingdom of God. The record of Jesus' activity includes not only preaching to multitudes but also one-on-one conversations, such as those with the Samaritan woman at Jacob's well and with Nicodemus. The latter conversation took place late at night, showing that Jesus didn't always stop working when the sun went down. He also devoted much time and effort to instructing His disciples.

And then there were the healings. Healings formed a large part of Jesus' activity. The Gospels record many of them, but it is clear that the healings recorded are only a representative sample—a fraction of the total number. For example, Matthew tells of a time when multitudes followed Jesus and "He healed them all." Out of a huge crowd, Jesus tended to every sick person, every sad case brought to Him in the hope of healing. Every bit of Jesus' activity was unselfish; all of it was directed outward. And it was hard work. It wasn't hard because healing was difficult for God. It was hard because Jesus had become Man, and He put in long hours and kept an exhausting schedule. Jesus' work was also hard because He labored in the face of so much opposition. He would be teaching in public, and predictably, representatives of the scribes and Pharisees would show up. They would pepper Him with hostile questions, always trying to get Him to say something they could use against Him.

But the hardest work of all came at the end. Jesus' passion was also work. As He suffered under Pontius Pilate and was crucified, Jesus wasn't merely enduring the abuse heaped upon Him and the pain inflicted upon Him. He was actively doing something: He was offering Himself as a sacrifice for our sins. He was redeeming us and saving us from our sins, delivering us from the eternal wrath of God.

Jesus did His work as both God and Man. Because He was true Man, He worked as a man. He didn't work twenty-four hours a day; He rested and slept. But His work revealed the ongoing, unceasing nature of God's working. We see it in the healing recorded in our

text. It took place on a Sabbath day, a fact that is key to John's account of this miracle and to the response of Jesus' enemies. They "persecuted Jesus, and sought to kill Him, because He had done these things on the Sabbath." In response to their charge that He was breaking the Sabbath law, Jesus said, "My Father has been working until now, and I have been working." Jesus' works of healing were divine works. They were a continuation of the works of God that go back to the creation of the world. Those works have been ongoing and unceasing, continuing without interruption. Though God had commanded His people to stop their work for a day, God Himself didn't stop working on the Sabbath. His works of providing and protecting could not be suspended. Neither could Jesus' works of mercy be made subject to the Sabbath law.

—Because God never stops working, we can rest.

God's ongoing, unceasing work is for our blessing, our help, and our deliverance. God hears our prayers; He acts in response to them. He reaches down and lifts our burdens, relieves our suffering, and supplies our daily bread. Jesus' work of healing in our text is an example of how God's working benefits us.

The man had been paralyzed and unable to walk. That condition had been his lot for thirty-eight years. Then Jesus came to him and, with a word, made him well. At Jesus' word, the man stood up, picked up his bed, and walked. Jesus' work gave him relief from his affliction.

It wasn't only a physical burden that Jesus lifted from this man. Later, when Jesus found him in the temple, He said to him, "See, you have been made well. Sin no more, lest a worse thing come upon you." There is something worse than being paralyzed. It is carrying the burden of sin and guilt. It is being under God's wrath and condemnation. It is from that burden that Jesus freed us all when He gave His life for us on the cross. In place of the crushing burden of sin, Jesus gives us the rest that comes from forgiveness.

Because God works without stopping, we can rest. We can live each day with the confidence that He will give us our daily bread. We can cast all our cares upon Him who cares for us, for we know that He will take care of whatever troubles us. We can call upon Him in the day of trouble, no matter what hour of the day or day of the week it might be. He will hear us and act to help us. Amen.

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