



# FIRST PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH (PCA)

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April 10, 2020

Greetings Dear Ones in Christ,

Our lives have been interrupted unlike they have ever been interrupted before! Our ancestors could surely tell us of similar experiences during the 1918-1919 Spanish Flu Pandemic, but alas we will have to wait until heaven to hear how they persevered through such interruptions unless we read the anecdotes recorded in their biographies or such places as the minutes of the General Assemblies in those years.

Many of us are working from home or furloughed and stuck at home! As one day creeps into the next, perhaps some of us are wondering, "what day is it," and longing for just a bit of structure!

Thankfully our God has given us a structure to govern and organize our time when He created the world, and that structure transcends even stay at home orders:

***T***hus the heavens and the earth were finished, and all the host of them. And on the seventh day God finished his work that he had done, and he rested on the seventh day from all his work that he had done. So God blessed the seventh day and made it holy, because on it God rested from all his work that he had done in creation. (Gen. 2:1-3)

Moses later shows how God's rest one day in seven sets an important pattern for the lives of God's people:

***R***emember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy. Six days you shall labor, and do all your work, but the seventh day is a Sabbath to the LORD your God. On it you shall not do any work... For in six days the LORD made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that is in them, and rested on the seventh day. Therefore the LORD blessed the Sabbath day and made it holy. (Exod. 20:8-11)

God has given His people six days to do their work for His glory and one day in seven to rest, worship Him, and serve one another for His glory. In a day when many of us are kept from our employment, it's helpful to remember the *work* spoken of is not strictly our "jobs," but also any work that glorifies God (housework, school work, yard work, etc.).

Rather than consign His sinful and rebellious creatures to endless toil week in and week out, God gave all people and calls all people to rest, worship, and holy service one day out of seven. We would do well to remember how none of us deserve a Sabbath rest because of our sin, but God gives us one anyway!

In the New Testament, the Sabbath principle that was instituted at Creation took on new significance and new richness. During the Old Covenant, the Sabbath day looked back with thanksgiving on God's rest at Creation (cf. Exod 20) and to Israel's rest and redemption from slavery in Egypt (cf. Deut. 5). But under the New Covenant, the day the church observed the Sabbath is changed to reflect the new reality and spiritual blessings of Christ's resurrection.

During the days of the Apostles, the Church transitioned from meeting on the Seventh Day of the week to meeting on the First Day of the week. We see this, for example, in Acts 2 as the church is gathered together in that one room in Jerusalem, again in Acts 20 when Paul is preaching an evening worship service in Troas, and also in Paul's instruction to the Corinthian Church regarding their offerings being collected "on the first day of the week" (1 Cor 16).

Why did the day of the Sabbath change? Because the Apostles recognized the profound change that had taken place in Christ's resurrection and the significance Christ's resurrection has for the Christian life. No longer did they simply refer to the day on which they gathered for worship as "the Sabbath,"



but “the Lord’s Day” (Rev. 1:10). When Christians come together every week on the First Day, we are testifying to our hope because of Christ’s resurrection that he is only, “the firstfruits of them that sleep” (1 Cor 15:20).

So even if our lives and schedules have been interrupted by the virus and stay at home orders, one thing remains the same in the Christian life: the first day of the week is the Lord’s Day and the day of the Christian Sabbath, a festival day for us to rest from our labors and our worries by remembering what Christ has accomplished for us and given to us by His grace. The Lord’s Day is also a day for us to give rest to others who might otherwise be serving us; this is a way of showing others (even non-Christians!) a measure of the grace and generosity we have received from God.

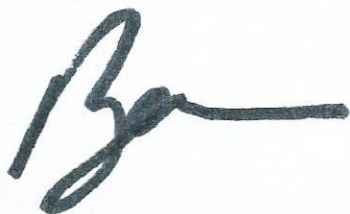
Even in quarantine our lives continue to be oriented around the pattern of six days of labor and one day of rest and worship. But what is it that dominates the pattern? It is the Lord’s Day, the First Day of the week because on that day we are confronted afresh with the truth: “Christ is risen, He is risen indeed.”

Christ’s resurrection is not a mere theological point of fact, but offers tangible comforts for us. Let’s briefly consider three of them

1. **Christ’s Resurrection Assures Us of God’s Acceptance of Us.** The Apostle reminds us the benefits of Christ’s righteousness we receive through faith: *we who believe in him who raised from the dead Jesus our Lord, who was delivered up for our trespasses and raised for our justification* (Rom. 4:24-25). Christ’s death on the cross satisfies the penalty we were due for sin and Christ’s resurrection assures us our faith in His promises will be vindicated on the Last Day. God’s justice has been satisfied for our sins, and the empty tomb testifies to that satisfaction.
2. **Christ’s Resurrection Assures Us of Victory Over the Grave.** How fitting during a time of plague in which death totals are daily before us that we should weekly remember Christ has defeated death for His people: *The sting of death is sin, and the power of sin is the law. But thanks be to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ. Therefore, my beloved brothers, be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that in the Lord your labor is not in vain* (1 Cor. 15:56-58). While we do not live in a reckless way because we “know where we’re going,” we can nonetheless be free from slavery to fear despite the pestilence that stalks the land!
3. **Christ’s Resurrection Assures Us of Resurrection Power Now.** The Christian life is a struggle, but it is not a fight we overcome by our own power: *But God, being rich in mercy, because of the great love with which he loved us, even when we were dead in our trespasses, made us alive together with Christ – by grace you have been saved – and raised us up with him and seated us with him in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus...* (Eph. 2:4-6). God’s people are presently seated with Christ in the heavenly places and currently have access to the power of His resurrection in our battles with temptation and sin. Never think that your quest for or progress in holiness and Christ-likeness are the product of your own strength. We can progress in holiness only to the extent to which we rest in Christ and rely on the strength of His Spirit working in us.

We have been made alive with Christ and so the New Creation has dawned in us already. The Lord’s Day reminds us at the start of every new week of what God has freely given us: freedom from His wrath, rest in Christ, adoption into His family, and eternal life with His son.

Your friend,



Ryan