

How Should we View the Lord's Day?

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Preacher: Rev. James Maciver

[0 : 00] Well, let's turn back for a short time to Isaiah chapter 58, where we read and looking at the last two verses, they're fairly substantial verses in terms of their length and also their content.

Isaiah 58 verse 13.

The Lord has spoken. And of course, it's God who's speaking there in verse 14. I will make you ride. I will feed you. It is the Lord himself who's saying this in relation to what he has to say about the Sabbath day.

The topic we're looking at this evening is, we can put it in the following terms, how should a Christian view the Lord's day? When I say that, of course, that doesn't mean others shouldn't view the Lord's day in the same way.

It's not just that Christians should view the Lord's day in a certain way from what the Bible teaches. It should be the case, of course, that everyone should view the Lord's day in the same manner, in the way that the Bible itself teaches.

[1 : 29] But we're looking at it in terms of our view as God's people, as professing Christians, as people who follow the Lord. How should we view the Lord's day? What should be our approach to the Lord's day?

What is the Lord's day to us? And how do people see us as a people who have a certain view of the Lord's day? What should people's view of the Lord's day be from us?

Not just when they see us coming to church, but if they were to look in when we're on our own, if they were to look into our homes, if they were to look in on the Lord's day to all our activities, what would their conclusions be?

What would they say about this day from what they see in ourselves? Now, the Lord's day, of course, is something which is a very wide subject.

I'm not going to pretend in any way to look at all the issues to do with it. Another thing we have to say is that in certain aspects of the Lord's day and what it means to Christians, Christians do disagree on certain points with regard to what is or isn't acceptable on the Lord's day or acceptable for us to engage in or to do.

[2 : 44] But it is such a hugely important subject. It is, after all, one of the Ten Commandments. And not only is it one of the Ten Commandments, but it's something which all the way through history, God specified for his people was absolutely and closely connected with his blessing.

And the passage we read actually makes it clear that blessing is attached to a proper view of and a proper practice, if you like, of the Lord's day in the way in which the Bible as a whole holds it before us.

There are two dangers, there are two tendencies with regard to our view or our approach to the Lord's day.

The first is that we phariseise it. I couldn't think of a word that was other than legalistic. The word legalistic is not quite what we want to say about it.

If we phariseise the Lord's day, that's going to one extreme. But what's meant by that is if we take the view that the Pharisees had in Christ's day, and we've seen that in the Gospel of Luke, if we take that view of the Lord's day of the Sabbath that the Pharisees took, what we will do is add human regulations, human commandments, human specifications, a whole lot of things that are mostly don'ts.

[4 : 15] Don't do this. Don't do that. Avoid this. Avoid that. And the day does become then a very legalistic thing that we approach from a pharisaic point of view, and we become obsessed with the most minute details that aren't really specified, some of them, most of them in the Bible at all.

That's one extreme. It's leaning strongly towards that legalistic view of the Sabbath, of the Lord's day. The second is the other extreme.

That we secularise the Lord's day. That we actually take out from it everything really that is to do with Christian worship or leaving it as a day that's different to the other days so that we can actually worship God or give our times to things like worship or Bible study or Bible reading or prayer or whatever.

We, in other words, secularise the Lord's day. Perhaps we can just leave a little for those who want to go to church. That's fine. But apart from that, take everything else out of the Lord's day that makes it different to the other six days of the week and just treat it like all the other days.

That's the other extreme. That's the direction, of course, in which, by and large, our society has gone. Not the pharisaic side, not the pharisaizing of the Sabbath, but the secularizing of the Lord's day.

[5 : 42] The taking out of it, the evacuating from it of all the things, or most of the things that we associate, although Christians still, of course, go to church and observe the Lord's day. And we have to say in that as well that that's where some Christians differ from ourselves.

Take it, most of us will have our own classic Presbyterian view of the Lord's day and what that entails. But there is a lot of difference of opinion within that as to what is and isn't acceptable on the Lord's day.

This is a classic passage in the Bible, although it's in the Old Testament, it's still a classic passage in dealing with what the Lord's day is about, what a Christian view of the Lord's day should be.

Of course, you have to take, along with that, New Testament passages, the teaching of Jesus himself who accused the Pharisees of having this pharisaic, overly narrow view of the Lord's day where they had a whole list of don'ts.

And the Lord pulled them up for that. The Lord saw that that was simply not in accordance with the purpose of the Lord's day as initially given by God as the Sabbath day.

[6 : 55] Not just to Israel, but at the creation, to all mankind. But in this classic passage, you will notice that there's a contrast.

And it's a contrast that we have to carry with us into our study and into all the things that the New Testament actually says as well. It's a contrast because you notice, first of all, it's saying, if you turn back your foot from the Sabbath from doing your pleasure, if you honour it not going your own ways or seeking your own pleasure, then this is what follows.

And the contrast with that is in the words which God himself uses from doing your pleasure on my holy day. You see, that's the contrast.

What he's saying to them is not having pleasure in the Lord's day. That's not what he's against. He's in favour of having pleasure on the Lord's day, of having that enjoyment of the Lord's day, of the Sabbath day that nourishes the soul, that honours God.

What he's saying is, don't do your pleasure on my holy day. Let the pleasure that you get on the Lord's day be a pleasure that's associated with treating it as my day is what God is saying.

[8 : 19] If you honour it not going your own ways, but rather do it in the way, treat it in the way that regards it as my holy day.

In other words, there's a contrast there right at the very start where the Lord is contrasting doing this for him with regard to it being his day and his service and contrasting that with going our own way, having our own ideas in other words, of what is and isn't right for us on the Lord's day or what the Lord's day is about or just having our own pleasure whatever activity we're involved in it's for our own particular purpose our own individual purpose rather than for God first and foremost.

I'm going to actually use also one of the passages from the Westminster Confession. Last time we looked at the definition of faith from the Catechism. Looking at the Westminster Confession this time there's a bit more than there is in the Catechism themselves although the Catechism then adds some questions as well but this is what it says.

I'm not going to deal with there's one paragraph here that deals with how the Lord's day is now the first day of the week taking over from the Old Testament Sabbath and that God has specified that as the due proportion of our time that we're going to we need to give to God.

In other words one seventh whether you're thinking of the Old Testament Sabbath or the New Testament Lord's Day one seventh of the time is to be devoted to God in a way that's different to the other six days.

[10 : 06] Only one seventh. That doesn't mean we don't honor God on the other days but what it is saying is that God has specifically set one seventh of our time for a whole week the whole week span of time one seventh of that is specifically for him on a particular day that he has appointed.

And then the other six days are for an ordinary course of work or activities or recreations. So that's what it deals with there but this is the passage I really want to focus on for this evening.

This Sabbath is then kept holy unto the Lord when men that's men and women of course when everyone after a due preparing of their hearts and ordering of their common affairs beforehand do not only observe a holy rest all the day from their own works, words and thoughts about their worldly employments and recreations but also are taken up the whole time in the public and private exercises of his worship and in the duties of necessity and mercy.

Now you don't have that written in front of you so it's perhaps difficult to take it all in at one sitting but let me just try and see that definition and that explanation of the basic principles of the Lord's day and the practice of it from that.

That's what they're doing is as you know these great theologians they took the teaching of the Bible and compressed it into our catechisms and confessions so that you have that summary there and all the words of it are so beautifully arranged that they carry the essential meaning of the Bible in the way that they put it and they put it very very carefully.

[11 : 59] When you look at that there's first of all a prior preparation. We keep it holy to the Lord when after a due preparing of our hearts and the ordering of that's the arranging of our common or ordinary affairs beforehand.

that's the first thing. A proper view of the Sabbath takes in a prior preparation for it. Now you cast your minds back to two three generations ago or even less than that when people have a lot more things to do in terms of preparation for heating up the home, preparing vegetables, all of these sort of things for eating, working out in the fields, all that sort of stuff which we don't really generally have nowadays.

We have convenience foods as well as that which they didn't have. Why was it that they prepared so much in advance of the Sabbath day in these sort of activities?

They would take in enough peats to see them through the Sabbath day. They would actually prepare the veg or the food or the main parts of it at least before the Sabbath set in. Now, I'm not going to suggest that none of that was at any time from a legalistic point of view.

There may well have been some who took the idea that doing these things on the Lord's day was simply wrong. That may very well have been in some ways how some people did see it.

[13 : 40] You just didn't do it because it was wrong on the Sabbath day to do that. However, that may have been for most people, that sort of preparation, that sort of prior preparation, was so that they would maximize their time on the Lord's day for the Lord, for the church, for his worship, for fellowship, for things which they associated as the Lord's.

Because prior preparation for the Lord's day, is an essential part of coming to the Lord's day with as much as possible already done, that's not going to encroach on your time in the Lord's day.

In other words, the more you leave undone, even of the ordinary things that you do in a day, the more you leave undone ahead of the Sabbath, the less time you can have for God.

That was the thinking of the Puritans, that was the thinking of the people who threw up the confession. That indeed was the thinking in the Bible of the Lord himself, as he gave them this one day, they were not honored to do any work, and it's not simply a matter that the Lord said it's not allowed on this day, he was saying that, but what he was also meaning was it's not allowed on this day, because I want you on this day to focus on myself, on my salvation, on my worship, on your being my people, on your covenant blessings, so that you give as much time as possible to these things.

Now a lot of people will, and the more we go on with our study tonight, a lot of people in the world in which you live, and perhaps even many Christians would actually say, that's really going a bit far, that's being a bit restrictive, but we're just following out what this is actually saying as a summary of what we believe the teaching of scripture to be, whether it's the Old Testament Sabbath or the New Testament Lord's Day, the same principles actually apply in what the day is about and what it's for and how we are to prepare for it.

[15 : 49] One thing I'm going to say here is with regard to preparing for the Lord's Day, and that is the Saturday prayer meeting. It's not just an appeal for people to attend the Saturday prayer meeting, you could say it is that in a sense, but having a prayer meeting on a Saturday evening is an ideal way of setting the mind towards the Sabbath day itself.

It is taking that hour out of your evening in order to focus upon what are we going to do on the Lord's Day, what is the Lord's Day about, what do we need to pray for on the Lord's Day.

Now not everybody of course can go to the Saturday prayer meeting, there are other duties, there are children, there are all sorts of things that one has to do. But, is it not a priority to prepare for the Lord's Day, to have a prior preparation so that if at all possible I can be with my fellow Christians and together we can help one another prepare our minds for a day that's devoted to God.

That should be the thinking with regard to the likes of the Saturday prayer meeting. And for that particular hour, I know it's certain of you of those who go to it, that they find it greatly useful for that purpose as well as others.

But there is a preparation of their minds, of their focus, of their thinking for what the Lord's Day is going to be for them. In other words, the Lord's Day in prior preparation you have to think, not just how much am I going to get out of this day, how much benefit is it going to be to me, and therefore what do I have to do to prepare for that.

[17 : 46] Actually you put that in many respects last. It's not thinking first how much am I going to get out of the Lord's Day, though it's not wrong to think that, it's how much am I going to put into this day in my service for God, how much am I going to give to God on this day, and of this day, of my time, of my activities, of my attitude, of all of these things that I need to be and to do on the Lord's Day, how much am I going to give to God, as well as receive from Him.

So there's a prior preparation, let's leave that point just at that. Let's throw you out a few thoughts, you can expand on them and follow them through for yourselves. But then the confession goes on to speak about the practice of the day, how we actually, what we do on the day, or what do we practice on the day.

And it divides that into two things. There's first of all, a resting from certain things. And then there's secondly, a taking up of other things.

And it's important that we see how they put that. There's a resting from certain things so that you can take up the other things.

In other words, it's not just simply that you rest from certain things, in other words, the things that you don't do on the Lord's day. It's that you don't do them or you rest from them so that you are enabled by doing that to take up the other things, especially the things of worship and of serving the Lord and works of necessity and mercy.

[19 : 29] The one actually goes towards the other. The one, the resting from, the laying aside of certain things that you ordinarily do at other times, that's in order to enable you to do the other, to take up the things that the Lord's day properly is for.

What then are the things that we need to rest from? Now, well, it says here in the passage we have, if you turn back your foot from the Sabbath, from doing your pleasure on my holy day, if you honour it not going your own ways, or seeking your own pleasure, or talking idly, or spreading a word, or speaking a word, then you shall know the blessing of the Lord.

And the Confession of Faith passage we read says this, the preparing beforehand so that we observe a holy rest all that day from our own works, words, and thoughts, about our worldly employments, and recreations.

And isn't it interesting that they used the word rest from? They didn't just say that the Sabbath is kept holy when we don't do these things.

That's essentially what it means, but they used the expression we rest from them. In other words, the Sabbath is a rest. It is a time when you rest from what you do on the other days, so that you can take up what you do properly and purposefully on the Sabbath, with to do with the worship of God.

[21 : 09] It's a resting from. The Confession really uses that language so that we'll see that it's of the essence of the Sabbath, that it's a resting day.

you rest from these things so that you feel like you can rest in the Lord, you can rest in this worship. You lay aside some things so you can take these other ones up.

What do we rest from? Our worldly, our own works, words and thoughts about our worldly employments and recreations. In other words, there's your daily employment.

You rest from that. It doesn't matter if you work in hard manual labor in a quarry or out in a field or whether you sit in an office all day. It's work.

It's your ordinary work. It's work either mentally or physically or both. But the principle of Sabbath rest is you rest from these.

[22 : 09] We'll see in a minute the exceptions. There are exceptions. But ordinarily it's so that we rest from these, our own works, words and thoughts about our worldly employments and recreations.

So it's not just our employments. That's a fairly straightforward one. It also says our recreations. The things that we do as a pastime or as a hobby.

Sometimes it can be gardening. Maybe it's sport. Maybe it's other issues that we allocate time to ordinarily. We find through the week time to watch television.

We go on Facebook. We use the internet. Do we do these on the Lord's Day? Are they part of our ways?

Or are they God's ways? things? This is in terms of what is specified here. We rest, it says the confession, all the day from our own words, thoughts, works, words, works, about worldly employments and recreations.

[23 : 26] In other words, it's saying your ordinary course of work and your recreations, the things that you do outside of your work on the other days, you don't bring that into the Sabbath day.

That would mean such things as many people would have a real difficulty with, not watching television at all on the Lord's Day. Not using the internet at all on the Lord's Day, unless as it's in a minute as we'll see within the exceptions.

Not actually playing your Xbox on the Lord's Day. Not actually engaging in things which like that can be termed recreational use of things.

that's what certainly the people who drew up the confession of faith thought were encroachments on the Lord's Day and the spirit of the Lord's Day. So there's the whole issue of employment and recreations.

And again, it's not because necessarily these things are wrong in themselves on the Lord's Day. What the confession in line with Isaiah, what the Bible's teaching is saying is this is in order to allow you and to enable you, to give all the time you can and all the activity you can to God, to his worship, to the things that you associate with God and with serving and with worshipping him.

[24 : 50] And you do notice there in the confession that it says this, that we rest all the day from our own words, works and thoughts.

That's very much in line with Isaiah 58, where it's saying going your own way. We rest from our own works, our own words, our own thoughts about our worldly employment and recreations.

We leave that aside. in terms of planning, thinking, discussing, all these things belong to the other days of the week.

And then it says that there are exceptions, except in the works and in the duties of necessity and mercy.

That's obviously different to the worship of God, which we'll see in a minute. So what are the exceptions then? To the employments we don't engage in, that we rest from, the recreations we don't engage in, that we rest from, well it says there in the confession that it is the duties of necessity and mercy.

[26 : 09] What are they? What is a work of necessity? What is a work of mercy? Well the Lord himself specified that to the Pharisees.

They didn't allow for works of necessity or mercy. A work of necessity would be for example an emergency.

If you went home from church, found that a pipe had burst in your attic, you wouldn't say, it's the Lord's day, I've just got to leave it, even if it floods out the whole house.

you'd send for a plumber because that's an emergency that itself leads to much greater damage and disaster and all the rest of it, so you don't actually include that in the ordinary things of what is and isn't acceptable on the Sabbath day.

There always will be emergencies for which you have to make provision and take action on the Lord's day. It becomes a work of necessity when it's an emergency, certainly one that threatens life and even property as well.

[27 : 18] The work of necessity, medical work. Doctors, nurses, paramedics, ambulances, they're works of necessity and mercy.

They're works of necessity because they need to be done. You can't leave somebody who's having a heart attack till Monday if they have it on the Lord's day.

Somebody's got to actually come and take care of them. These are works of necessity and indeed works of mercy as well you might say. If you have a ship at sea that's crossing the Atlantic or whatever, if it's not in port, then when you're working on that ship you're involved in a work of necessity.

You can't just leave the ship to drift for whole 24 hours on the Lord's day. It actually has to be looked after whether you're in the captain's position, whether you're up in the wheelhouse, whether you're there on the bridge, whether you're a deckhand, whether you're in the engine room, everything to do with the running of that ship properly, even making the food, everything, has to be done as a work of necessity.

You can't leave it. And therefore it doesn't actually encroach upon a work of that's not acceptable on the Lord's day. It says quite clearly that they are duties of necessity and mercy as well.

[28 : 43] Now see, this is one of the things that the Lord pressed upon the Pharisees and those who heard them. They weren't actually being very consistent because the Lord said to them, as you know, if any of you have a sheep or an ox that falls into a ditch on the Lord's day, you'll take him out.

You won't leave it there. And yet, you don't accept healing on the Lord's day as the Lord himself did.

These people that the Lord healed on the Lord's day, their life was not being threatened. The people that you read of there that were healed on the Lord's day, they didn't have life threatening injuries.

They wouldn't have been dead by Monday or by the following day after the Sabbath. if the Lord had not healed them. What the Lord was demonstrating was that a work of healing, a work of actually dealing with someone mercifully in terms of their health or their well-being in that sense, that itself is acceptable on the Lord's day.

In other words, that's why traditionally in our view of the Sabbath, we have included such things as going to visit people in hospital, doing hospital rounds, even if it's not your own family that's in hospital, it's a great work of mercy on the Lord's day to go and visit people, even if they're not in hospital, if they're confined to their homes, for example, then it's not against the Sabbath to go and visit them, spend time with them, make sure that they're alright.

[30 : 16] It's a work of mercy, a work where you follow the Lord's own example. You can enlarge on that yourself, feeding animals on the Lord's day, that's a work of mercy, it's a work of necessity as well, you can't leave them to starve, though there are ways of giving them supply over two days, I'm sure.

But all of these things show us that while it's not simple, for most of the issues involved, it's fairly clear-cut that we don't follow our own pleasure and our own way, it is the Lord's day, and it's the Lord's way on the Lord's day.

There's one issue that we do have difficulty with, sometimes there's very different opinions of, and that's public transport. Is public transport on the Lord's day necessary?

not talking here about ambulances and vehicles that obviously are emergencies, fire engines, so on, but ordinary public transport, because there's always dispute about whether this is or isn't acceptable.

Well, it would seem right to say that public transport is acceptable, acceptable, but, to qualify that by saying, it is acceptable, but it ought to be within the purpose and provisions of the Lord's day.

[31 : 51] In other words, when you think about a city like Glasgow, many, many people in Glasgow would not be able to get to a church service without public transport. And, if we're saying that public transport full stop is not acceptable, then you have to say that these people have a provision taken away, which means they can't actually come to worship God as they want to.

Now, that doesn't mean that you just lay on public transport for all sorts of things, that you can have public transport to go to the shops, that you open shops and actually have public transport for that as well.

What we're saying is that everything has to be fitted into the purpose of the Sabbath, the reason the Sabbath exists, for the glory of God, for the honour of God, for the worshipping of God, for the serving of God in works of necessity and mercy.

And public transport as it fits into those categories, surely isn't contrary to the spirit of the Lord's day. But then, of course, that's not what you have, I know, in practice.

but in terms of what ought to be the case, that surely should be how we view it. We're looking at a Christian view of the Lord's day. So that's the first thing, in terms of the practice of the day, there's a resting from.

[33 : 20] A resting from our ordinary course of employment, a resting from our recreational activities, a resting from, in other words, our own works, except for the works of emergencies or necessities and mercies.

That's the one thing. You lay aside, you rest from these. Why do you do it? So that you can take up, as the confession puts, taken up the whole time in the public and private exercises of God's worship and in the duties of necessity and mercy.

Now it says there the whole time. That's the whole Sabbath day, the whole Lord's day. Does that mean if I'm really tired that I shouldn't sleep on the Lord's day?

No, it doesn't. The Lord's day is a day of rest. And that includes physical rest. But you have to regard the physical rest, and I'm very guilty of having to apply this to myself, as all the other things there to myself as well.

You have to look at physical rest also within the purpose of the Lord's day, and indeed the wider purpose of our service for God and of what we do on all the other days of the week, if we're seeking to do to the best of our ability, as I'm sure you all are.

[34 : 46] Why do we rest? Why do we need to get plenty sleep? so that we can carry out our work to the best of our ability, and think of it as something we devote to the glory of God.

That's true of every day of the week, that's true of our ordinary work, that's true of our recreations, that's true of everything we do, we rest physically and mentally, so that we can carry out that work to the best of our ability, to the glory of God.

Same when it comes to holidays. Most people in the world think of having a holiday as the highlight of the year, so you actually work the whole of the year, or if you have many holidays you take and people take in a year, you work at the other times so that you can actually go on holiday.

And the Christian has to put that the other way around, because the teaching of the Bible is the other way around. You rest in order to work, not work in order to rest. You actually engage in the rest that a holiday provides you, you enjoy that, time off from your work.

Not because it's the thing out of the whole year, but because it's a time of refreshing your body and your mind for the serving again of God in your work or in whatever way after your holiday is finished.

[36 : 05] That's the thinking of the Bible. So you take up the whole day, you sleep when you need to sleep, you take rest when you need to rest, you take as much rest physically, mentally as you're required to take in order to recover from the rigour of the previous week.

But it's in order to further serve God. That's why you go to the catechism in number 61, how is the Lord's day to be kept?

And then it goes on to how do we transgress the Lord's day or what is not acceptable on the Lord's day. And one is the profaning of the day by idleness.

That's an interesting statement. We profane the Lord's day by idleness, by doing nothing. If you lounge about all day, you get up, you don't bother to change out of your pyjamas, or your onesie, whatever you wear, and you just scuttle about the house all day in that, you don't engage anything in particular at all, that's idleness, that's profaning the day according to the catechism.

There has to be a specific activity, and it's one especially of being devoted to God and giving him the worship and service that you owe him. Idleness doesn't fit into that.

[37 : 37] Idleness is different to resting. Resting is taking proper rest and care of your body and mind. Idleness is just whittling away your time.

So, it's a taking up of the whole time, it says, in the public and private exercises of his worship. worship. And both of these are important, the private and the public exercise of worship.

And that really, in many respects, is primarily what the day is for, although it does then say, and in the duties of necessity and mercy where that's required. But it's the public and private exercises of worship that really fill our vision of what the Lord's day is for a Christian.

Public worship. Public worship is, for many reasons, important.

It's true that the Bible, strictly speaking, only requires of us one service of worship on the Lord's day. You won't find anywhere in the Bible, as far as I'm aware, of a specific regulation or rule that says you must have two services of worship, or three services of worship, or however many on the Lord's day, the practice is that you come to worship on the Lord's day at least once.

[39 : 14] Now, that's not saying that our practice of having worship on the Lord's day twice is too much, or not necessary. It is something that the church has practiced from earliest times.

It's by no means out of keeping with the purpose of the Lord's day. And, when you think about it, if you taugth up the number of hours in a week, and out of that, you add the number of hours, that we are in attendance at public worship.

If you include, like, Wednesdays, fair enough, but there are two services on the Lord's day, and even if one was going to be very long-winded, and that service would be two hours long each end of the day, and a two-hour long service on Wednesday, what's that?

Six hours. That's not even half a day. Out of the whole expanse of time, that you have in a week. That's not a long time to prepare for eternity.

That's what it's about. It's not just for working in this world and serving God in this world. Everything about this life certainly includes that, but everything about this life is preparatory.

[40 : 45] free. And if people are really serious about preparing for eternity and spending an eternal Sabbath with Christ, then the whole of the Sabbath day is not going to feel too long.

That's really what our mind is seriously set upon. That's, you see, what was wrong with the people of Isaiah's day, and many of the days the prophets were sent to them with this message from God.

If you turn your foot from the Sabbath doing your pleasure on my holy day, if you call the Sabbath a delight and you honour it not going your own ways or seeking your own pleasure.

What Isaiah was faced with was a people, as we saw in the chapter, who came to seek the Lord, who did engage in things like fasting, but God wasn't listening to their prayers.

Why? Well, they were just saying, oh, we'll just throw a few hours together, that'll do, we'll come with our sacrifices, we'll engage in these elements of worship, and that'll be it, and then we can just forget about that, spend the rest of the day the way we want.

[41 : 58] Sadly, that's how some Christians still regard the Lord's Day and regard attendance at church and church services and the worship of God. It's a minimalist view.

And one thing you and I as Christians ought not to have, whether it's of the Lord's Day, of the worship of God, of our serving of God, whatever it is, one thing we should not have is a minimalist view of it.

A Christian approach or view of the Lord's Day is not a minimalist one. According to the Bible, it's one that maximizes it. It's one that regards the maximum that you can do for the Lord in terms of his worship on the Lord's Day.

So that means that whether we're at home or at church, prayer, reading the scriptures, meditation, thinking about our salvation, our saviour, our God, being together with other Christians, sharing in fellowship, coming together for worship publicly, that's all involved in the Sabbath well kept.

But why is it important? What really makes it important? Is it just that we as Christians have this different view of the Lord's Day from many other Christians and from the whole world out there?

[43 : 31] Is it just that we're funny about this? Is it just our culture? Is it something to do with that rather than really what the Lord's Day essentially is and is for?

Why is it important? Let me just read in conclusion, this is just a closer, from a work by Robert Shaw on the confession of faith.

And on that little paragraph that we've used as the structure of our thoughts tonight, this is what he says. The Sabbath was made for man.

It is designed for the benefit and advantage of man. It is intended to give a resting from toil. But the Sabbath is a cessation from ordinary labor so that we may attend with greater diligence to the duties of religion.

And surely one whole day in seven is not too much for the immediate service of God, for the improvement of our souls and for preparation for eternity. And he goes on to say this, remember this is 1845.

[44 : 41] This was written in 1845. What would he say nowadays? This is what he goes on to say. Scotland has long been distinguished for its decent observance of the Sabbath.

It is to be deplored however, that in this respect a sad deterioration is taking place. Sabbath profanation has of late years been making progress with fearful speed.

And as this is the source of numerous other evils, we know of nothing more harmful to the best interests of our country.

The proper observation of the Sabbath is a principal means of promoting the temporal welfare of individuals and of nations, of elevating the tone of public morals, of advancing the interests of religion, and of drawing down God's favor and blessing.

The desecration of the Sabbath, on the other hand, is detrimental to the temporal interests of men, it demoralizes the community, it lays waste religion, and it calls down the displeasure and judgments of God upon a nation.

[46 : 01] Everyone, therefore, should exert all his influence to arrest the progress of the increasing evil, and should resolve that whatever others do, he will keep the Sabbath from polluting it.

And that's surely our view as well. whatever others think or do, that's not what we set our lives by.

Our Christian attitude to the Lord's day and view of the Lord's day, is we believe directly taken from a proper view of scripture teaching.

And as it's taken from a proper view of teaching, summarized in these classic statements of our Westminster Confession and Catechisms, surely you and I now also are committed to what Robert Shaw there said in conclusion, that whatever others do, we will keep the Sabbath from polluting it.

I hope that's been helpful, particularly so to the younger ones perhaps, because I know that this is an issue which has been prominent very recently for some of you, and is always going to be a feature of a religion, and is always going to be something under attack from the enemy.

[47 : 33] In other words, it's always something that we need to come back to, and we look at, and remind ourselves of. And if it has done nothing else this evening but to show us the importance and the purpose of the Lord's day, then this topical study will have helped us towards furthering the kingdom of God.

Let's pray. Almighty God, we thank you that your word emphasizes how the Lord's day is your day, that the Son of Man is the Lord of the Sabbath, that we owe it to you that we keep it as your day.

We bless you for all the advantages and the privilege that it gives us. We bless you for the public worship that we engage in. We thank you for the opportunities we have for private engagement with you in prayer, in the study of your word, in the reading of literature concerning the things of your salvation.

We thank you in your wisdom how you have regularized the Sabbath day and the Lord's day for us in the New Testament age by giving to us directions to lay aside the activities of other days so that we may all the more give our time to the things of God and of his worship.

Bless this portion to us we pray. Grant in your mercy that we will know of your guidance and your strengthening that we will keep your day holy. We pray this in Jesus name Amen.