**JESUS, LORD OF THE SABBATH**

Mark 2:23-27

Key Verse 28

So the Son of Man is Lord even of the Sabbath.”

**Introduction**



In the passage we see a confrontation between the religious leaders and Jesus. The Pharisees claimed to be Bible-centered, and adhered to the word of God. And they proudly and severely criticized the teachings of Jesus. But there was something terribly wrong with them! When Jesus taught the Bible, people were refreshed and felt the love of God in their hearts. But when the religious leaders taught the Bible people felt burdened and oppressed, inadequate and hopeless. The problem is that while they knew the Bible well, they really did not know God nor what was on God’s heart. But the religious leaders criticized his teaching in order to discredit him. In this passage Jesus demonstrates the purpose of the law in the Bible. He also demonstrates the mercy of God for the weak and the helpless. Jesus is broken hearted because those who should be the shepherds of the people have become nothing but self-serving men. They had abandoned the flocks of God. So Jesus turns his attention to his disciples, and commissions them to be shepherds and servants for these suffering people. May the Lord help us to grow up as Bible teachers and compassionate shepherds for young souls in our times.

1. Read verses 23-24. What did Jesus’ disciples do on one Sabbath? On what basis did the Pharisees accuse them? (Ex 20:8-11)

1-1, Read verses 23-24.

One Sabbath Jesus was going through the grainfields, and as his disciples walked along, they began to pick some heads of grain. 24 The Pharisees said to him, “Look, why are they doing what is unlawful on the Sabbath?”

1-2, What did Jesus’ disciples do on one Sabbath?

***One Sabbath Jesus was going through the grainfields, and as his disciples walked along, they began to pick some heads of grain.***

* Jesus had rebuked the religious leaders for their legalism and their wrong interpretation of the Bible, which hinders people from knowing God and understanding his word.
* Because of their legalism, they were blind and stubborn, and unwilling to learn anything from Jesus.
* Instead of learning from Jesus, they followed him and his disciples, through some grain fields, determined to find fault in Jesus and his disciples.
* The religious leaders were hoping to catch them in some sin. Finally time came! They saw the disciples picking up heads of grains and eating them!
* The religious leaders saw this as work being done on the Sabbath. “We’ve finally got him,” they thought to themselves. “What holy man would allow his disciples to work on the Sabbath?”
* But the disciples had to eat! They were always hungry. They traveled along with Jesus, moving from town to town preaching the word of God and serving the needy.
* They were simply eating some grains to relieve their hunger. They had already learned from Jesus that the laws of God were not given to oppress people but reflected the love and mercy of God.
* They had learned from Jesus that the laws of God were intended to serve those who served God, not to crush them.
* But now the disciples seemed to be in trouble. The religious leaders were accusing them of breaking the Sabbath law.
* It was a moment of great embarrassment for them; and perhaps a bit confusing. Were they actually breaking the law or not? What did Jesus have to say about this?

1-3, On what basis did the Pharisees accuse them? (Ex 20:8-11)

***24 The Pharisees said to him, “Look, why are they doing what is unlawful on the Sabbath?”***

***“Remember the Sabbath day by keeping it holy. 9 Six days you shall labor and do all your work, 10 but the seventh day is a sabbath to the Lord your God. On it you shall not do any work, neither you, nor your son or daughter, nor your male or female servant, nor your animals, nor any foreigner residing in your towns. 11 For in six days the Lord made the heavens and the earth, the sea, and all that is in them, but he rested on the seventh day. Therefore the Lord blessed the Sabbath day and made it holy. (Exo 20:8-11)***

* The Pharisees tried to enable Israel to live as covenant people and not break the law of God.
* According to Deut 23:25, “If you enter your neighbor’s grainfield, you may pick kernels with your hands, but you must not put a sickle to his standing grain.”
* So, what the disciples were doing is perfectly legal and permitted by the Torah, however for the Pharisees, they were violating the details of the Sabbath law.
* The Pharisees have divided the Sabbath law into 39 categories of actions that violate the Sabbath law. Each of these are further subdivided into many more laws bringing the Sabbath law to 200 dos and don’t.
* And so, on the Sabbath day rather than people focusing on God, they became preoccupied with not violating the technical details of the Sabbath.
* These rules actually became a burden and not a blessing. According to the Pharisees the disciples of Jesus were way out of line!
* In this case they would have accused the disciples of something like this (1) They were reaping on the Sabbath (2) they were threshing on the Sabbath and (3) they were preparing food on the Sabbath.
* These actions were unlawful on the Sabbath and should not be done, and so the Pharisees brought this matter to Jesus attention urging him to correct his disciples.

1. Read verses 25-26. How did Jesus defend His disciples? (1Sam 21) How did the Pharisees miss the point of God’s law?

2-1, Read verses 25-26.

He answered, “Have you never read what David did when he and his companions were hungry and in need? 26 In the days of Abiathar the high priest, he entered the house of God and ate the consecrated bread, which is lawful only for priests to eat. And he also gave some to his companions.”

2-2, How did Jesus defend His disciples? (1Sam 21)

2-3, How did the Pharisees miss the point of God’s law?

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* Jesus implied that the Pharisees was wrong because they had poor understanding of Scriptures.
* This story about David’s time of need is found in 1 Samuel 21:1-9 when he was running away from Saul and when to the High Priest for help in the town of Nod.
* The Priest welcomed him, gave him provisions even though the law is clear that the food offered to David is reserved solely for priests.
* David was not a priest, yet God did not hold this event as sin against him. Jesus is using this analogy to illustrate to the legalistic Pharisees that nothing is more important than preserving life and God’s people.
* The Law of God is God’s love for the Israelites who came out of Egypt into a vast wilderness where they lived for 40 years. God gave these laws to preserve community and to help His people taste His holiness.
* Because the Spirit of the Law is to preserve life, Jesus maintained that the disciples were permitted to eat grain picked from a field on Sabbath.

1. Read verses 27-28. What else did Jesus teach the Pharisees? (27) What does it mean that the Sabbath was made for man? What did Jesus declare about Himself? What should be the focus of the Sabbath and how can we have real rest? (Mt 11:28-29)

3-1, Read verses 27-28.

27 Then he said to them, “The Sabbath was made for man, not man for the Sabbath. 28 So the Son of Man is Lord even of the Sabbath.”

3-2, What else did Jesus teach the Pharisees? (27)

3-3, What does it mean that the Sabbath was made for man?

***27 Then he said to them, “The Sabbath was made for man, not man for the Sabbath.***

* On the other hand, these religious leaders had completely missed the purpose of the law. They were using the law to judge and condemn Jesus and his disciples.
* They seemed to know the Bible inside and out. But tragically they didn’t know God nor understand the heart of God, who made the law. When they did not know God, they didn’t love him.
* They also didn’t love anyone else except themselves. They knew how to appear religious but they did not know how to help even one person with the Bible.
* Now they were using the Bible to criticize the disciples for eating on the Sabbath. They were using the Bible to criticize Jesus for allowing his disciples to eat when they were hungry.
* The story of David and the holy bread should have been enough to help them see God’s heart. But Jesus knew how stubborn they could be. So he continued teaching them.
* Then he said to them, the Sabbath was made for man, not man for the Sabbath. God Invented the Sabbath with a clear purpose.
* When we misunderstand the purpose of a thing, it can be easily misused. The purpose of the Sabbath is to serve man’s needs – the Sabbath was made for man and not the other way around.
* Isn’t it wonderful to know that God made the Sabbath with you in mind? In Genesis 2:3, *“And God blessed the seventh day and made it holy, because on it he rested from all the works of creating that he had done.”*
* Again in Ex 20 8-11, God included the Sabbath law in the Ten Commandments. *“Remember the Sabbath day by keeping 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, neither you, nor your son or daughter, nor your manservant or maidservant, nor your animals, nor the alien within your gates. For in six days the LORD made the heavens and the earth, the sea, and all that is in them, but rested on the seventh day. Therefore the LORD blessed the Sabbath day and made it holy. ”*
* God gave the Sabbath to people as a gift in order that we may take rest from physical work and observe a Sabbath to the LORD our God.
* God blessed the seventh day and made it holy. This means that the Sabbath is a day we set apart and come to God with thankfulness and gratitude or giving us rest after a week of busy work.
* The legalistic religious Jews of the 1st century did not get this that the Sabbath was given as a gift by God so people can come to God and rest.
* To the Pharisees, the Sabbath is not for man, the Sabbath is God’s and no man dare lay claim to his sacred institution.

3-4, What did Jesus declare about Himself?

***28 So the Son of Man is Lord even of the Sabbath.”***

* He meant that the law, including the law of the Sabbath, was given to God’s people not to make them slaves to the law but to set them free and to give them life.
* The law in the Bible was given to serve God’s people and not to condemn nor oppress them. It was given to reveal the mercy of God for those who suffer.
* But these religious leaders were using the Bible to promote their own righteousness and to condemn the weak and helpless.

Matthew 23: 23 reads,

“Woe to you, teachers of the law and Pharisees, you hypocrites! You give a tenth of your spices—mint, dill and cumin. But you have neglected the more important matters of the law—justice, mercy and faithfulness. You should have practiced the latter, without neglecting the former.

* Many can read the Bible, and many can understand what it is saying. In this day and age, we can even get a degree in Bible knowledge.
* But the problem is that not many are ready to learn the heart of God in and through the Bible. We should press on to acknowledge the chemistry of the Bible.
* And if they don’t, it is so easy to become like these religious people who can only see wrong and condemn rather than help and serve and bless those who don’t know the Bible.
* But when we learn the core heart of God in the Bible, we can become like Jesus who defended and protected his disciples from the bigoted Pharisees.
* And so, we must always remember that God gave us the Bible and its laws not to oppress others with it, but to bless them and to set them free from sin and death.
* Praise the Lord help us to grow as independent Bible teachers for our times, for the true issue is lack of God’s living words showing both God’s heart and love!

3-5, What should be the focus of the Sabbath and how can we have real rest? (Mt 11:28-29)

***28 “Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest. 29 Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. 30 For my yoke is easy and my burden is light.” (Matthew 11:28-30)***

* This Son of Man is Jesus and He is also the Lord of the Sabbath. As the Lord His has power and authority to implement whatever policy He sees fit for the Sabbath.
* He is free to decide what happens on the Sabbath. He can judge, he can condemn, and he can discharge and acquit anyone he chooses.
* He made the Universe. He made all things and without him not thing has been made that was made (John 1:3). He made the Sabbath to be holy and gave it as a gift to people.
* He even invites us to come to him and find rest for our weary and tired souls. In Mat 11:28 Jesus says, “Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest.”
* We all live such busy lives. Where can we find rest in this world? Only in Jesus! Who is the Lord of Sabbath has the power of salvation, the power of forgiveness and the power to free those enslaved under the yoke of sin and Satan.
* Jesus can change us life and a new direction. “The Lord is my shepherd, I shall not be in want. He makes me lie down in green pastures, he leads me beside quiet waters, he restores my soul. Surely goodness and love will follow me all the days of my life, and I will dwell in the house of the Lord forever (Ps 23:1-3a).”
* There remains a Sabbath rest for the people of God; for anyone who enters God’s rest also rests from his own work, just as God did from his. Let us, therefore, make every effort to enter that rest…” (Heb 4:9-11a).

**Conclusion**

One of recent daily bread from the book of Hosea, it says that we are encouraged to press on to acknowledge God. Going back to the word of God is the right path to acknowledge what God is up to. God is not a slave-driver, making endless demands on the people. God is a loving Father, who only wants to see his people delivered from the power of sin, so that they can come back home to God. Jesus made that clear in His teaching. Above all, today we are reminded that Jesus is the Lord of the Sabbath. We learned that true rest is found only in Jesus. We want true rest from the load of this world and sin through coming to Jesus who is the Lord of the Sabbath!

**One word: Lord of the Rest!**