

Jesus, Lord of the Sabbath

January 27, 2008

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Theme: As good as the Sabbath is, there is one thing better. It's Jesus!

Mark 2:23-28 - Lord of the Sabbath

23 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?"

25 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."

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."

Illustration: One man challenged another to an all-day wood chopping contest. The challenger worked very hard, stopping only for a brief lunch break. The other man had a leisurely lunch and took several breaks during the day. At the end of the day, the challenger was surprised and annoyed to find that the other fellow had chopped substantially more wood than he had. "I don't get it," he said. "Every time I checked, you were taking a rest, yet you chopped more wood than I did." "But you didn't notice," said the winning woodsman, "that **I was sharpening my axe when I sat down to rest.**"

[L. S. Chafer, Grace.](#)

Good point! **The Sabbath provides us with a time of rest and renewal** – a time to sharpen our axe as it were.

Last week, I was away on a retreat with our High School youth group – which was very wonderful, by the way, - except that this year I didn't play football with the kids. But that was probably a good thing. It was fun and it was spiritually impacting. The kids themselves will tell you that. I was privileged to be a part of it.

Brother Julius Toth preached for me. I thank him very much for that! He has had years of experience and has quite mastered the art of preaching. So, thank you Julius. I'm told that he preached on the honoring of Sunday as the Christian Sabbath and told why and how we might do that. Little did he know that I would be coming back from the retreat to preach on the same topic. But God knew, and it seems that the Lord would really like us to think about this. So, here I am preaching on *Jesus, Lord of the Sabbath*, and there you are listening to different speakers address the issue of the Sabbath twice in a row. Sometimes God simply works that way.

Of course, **pastors may be the worst** ones when it comes to **ignoring Sunday as the Christian Sabbath**. I'm up before dawn on Sundays. I spend time in prayer and preparation, teach Sunday School, preach and lead worship, I may have a missions preparation meeting in the afternoon, then sometimes I have a late afternoon study after that – or I might check in on the High School youth group. Sometimes I'm not home from early morning until late afternoon.

In the summertime it's more relaxed, although on several of those Sundays I'm in the Dominican Republic or Haiti preaching, teaching, etc. So, if I don't honor Sunday as the Christian Sabbath, can I, in good conscience, tell others to do so? I do take **Mondays** off, which gives me considerable rest. I'm often simply too tired to do anything but rest. **But does that really count as "The Sabbath"?**

The Jews, and the 7th Day Adventists would insist that I've already got it wrong; The Sabbath is not supposed to be Sunday, the first day of the week. The Sabbath is supposed to be Saturday, the 7th day of the week. So, in their way of thinking, I've already messed it up. By taking Monday off, I've messed it up by everyone's account. Some would say take Mondays off if you need it to "sharpen your axe", but don't forget that Sunday is the Christian Sabbath. Others would say, "No, Saturday is!"

Our text is really interesting. According to the Pharisees of the day, Jesus didn't keep the Sabbath Day properly either – and it got Him into trouble. In fact, according to Mark chapter two, **Jesus got Himself into trouble with the religious folks over a lot of things. For example:**

A. He forgave sins! Mark 2 begins by describing the story of Jesus healing a man who had been paralyzed and was brought to Jesus on a stretcher and was then lowered down through the roof because his friends couldn't get him in through the door. The house Jesus was in was just so crowded! When Jesus saw him, He took one look at the man and said, "*Your sins are forgiven*".

Those words of Jesus' assurance of God's forgiveness **got Him into trouble**. The theologians of His day wisely said, "No one can forgive sins except God. So, who does He think He is?" Good point! Either Jesus was God in the flesh, or else He had no right declaring that people's sins were forgiven. However, if He wasn't God in the flesh, He couldn't have healed this man either. So, to prove who He was and that He did indeed have the power to forgive sins, He said to the man, "*Get up, take up your mat on which you are lying, and go home.*" The man was immediately healed, got up and praised God for healing him. In the process of healing the man, **Jesus was displaying His ability to also forgive sins.**

B. He hung out with sinners. That story is followed by another story of Jesus getting Himself into trouble. Jesus called **Levi** (also known as Matthew) **the Publican** to be His follower. Jesus went into His home and sat down to eat with other Publicans. That was very much like going into the home of some known Mafia member. These guys were considered to be the scum of the earth, and one who was teaching as though He was some

great man of God should be more careful of who He hung around with, according to the Pharisees. **Jesus found Himself having to justify His spending time eating and having fellowship with the wrong crowd.**

C. Jesus' disciples didn't seem very religious. The verses that follow find Jesus being criticized again. This time He was criticized because His followers were not doing the right religious thing. **They weren't fasting.** Fasting – going without food for a period of time – was a really a big thing among the Jewish Pharisees.

In order to get a sense of this, you who have read about the **Muslims** know how important **fasting during the months of the celebration of Ramadan** is for the Muslim men. They go **all day without food or water**, and eat and drink only after the sun has gone down. (If you have been working all day out in the heat that is really difficult). No matter how difficult, good religious men are expected to do it. The Pharisees expected their people to fast too. **It showed dedication to God.** It showed how serious they were about their faith. But Jesus' disciples **were not fasting.** **So Jesus found Himself having to justify His disciples for not fasting.** He said He, the Master, was around and it wasn't the right time to fast. It would be like fasting in the middle of a wedding.

D. He ignored some of the accepted rules regarding the Sabbath. This chapter ended with Jesus having to justify Himself again. This time it was because His disciples were seen **picking a few grains of wheat** as they walked through the fields. They were popping wheat seeds into their mouth and chewing raw grain as they walked along. But do you know what picking grain is called? It's called "**harvesting**"! You are not supposed to harvest on the Sabbath. Everybody knows that!!! Don't they? Well, anybody who is truly a good observant religious Jew and who is trying to please God knows that anyway! It was one of those things that distinguished a Good Jew from a Gentile Pagan.

Pagans don't know about such things – don't care about such things. They don't know because they are ignorant pagans. They don't know the law of God. The law of God says, "*On the Seventh Day you shall rest. You shall keep it holy.*" God rested on the Sabbath Day. If you are going to be like God, you should rest on the Sabbath and thus keep it holy. **You can't go around harvesting on the Sabbath.** You can't harvest at all! You can't pick a **basketful** of grain. You can't pick a **handful** of grain. You can't even pick **one grain** of wheat on the Sabbath. **It's harvesting!**

You see, logically, you just can't allow this sort of thing.

- If someone can pick a single grain of wheat, then what's wrong with picking a handful?
- If you can pick a handful, then what's wrong with picking a basketful?
- If you can pick a basketful of grain on the Sabbath, then what's wrong with picking a hundred baskets?

It's a slippery slope. You just can't allow it, they said. Their logic was consistent.

A man who goes around pretending to be a teacher of God's Word should know that. Here He is allowing His disciples to pick grain on the Sabbath. **Jesus saw them picking grain, said nothing and thus allowed them to harvest on the Sabbath - it's wrong, according to the Pharisees!** So, Jesus found Himself **justifying disciples for picking some kernels of grain.**

Jesus was always trying to get Himself out of trouble:

- **Forgiving** sins (as though He were God).
- **Eating** with sinners (as though He were a pagan)
- **Not fasting** (as though He were ignorant of the importance of such things)
- Picking and eating grain – on the **Sabbath!** (As though he had a calloused attitude toward religion in general.)

“Jesus! Look at what they are doing? They are picking grain on the Sabbath! Why are they doing that? Don't they know how wrong that is? Just look at the Scriptures!”

OK, said Jesus, let's look at the Scriptures. Let's look at I Samuel 21: *2 David answered Ahimelech the priest, "The king charged me with a certain matter and said to me, 'No one is to know anything about your mission and your instructions.' As for my men, I have told them to meet me at a certain place. 3 Now then, what do you have on hand? Give me five loaves of bread, or whatever you can find." ... 6 So the priest gave him the consecrated bread, since there was no bread there except the bread of the Presence that had been removed from before the LORD and replaced by hot bread on the day it was taken away.*

Jesus argued in Mark 2:25 ... "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."

The logical conclusion from that is that God cared more about David and his immediate needs than about God's own rules regarding the sacred bread in the temple which was to be eaten only by priests – those were the rules. The immediate needs of David and his men were more important to God than slavishly following those rules.

Jesus argued if that was so regarding the sacred bread which had been offered to God in the temple, then logically it follows that God was more concerned about His hungry disciples and their need for some grain than about having them slavishly follow the rules regarding the Sabbath.

Then Jesus said, “Let me tell you something about the Sabbath. The Sabbath was made for the good and the welfare of man. People were not born on this earth so they could slavishly follow Sabbath rules. It's not that we should simply ignore the idea of the Sabbath, it's that there are some things more important than the Sabbath.”

Brother Julius reminded us of the importance of keeping the Sabbath (and we are going with the Christian Sabbath – Sunday – in honor of the day on which Jesus rose from the grave.) According to the book of Acts, from very early on Christians gathered on the first

day of the week – so important was the resurrection to them. Jesus was their Lord and Savior. He was God who had come in the flesh. He had suffered and died for the sins of the world. And God had overcome death on the first day of the week. Christians could not get over it. They gathered early on the first day of the week to worship the risen Savior. We have been doing that ever since. And we should. We should set it aside as a special Sabbath-like day and honor it. Julius Toth gave some ways we could enjoy the Christian Sabbath. It was a good list. The Sabbath was made for you, so you could rest without feeling guilty.

I have a book entitled: When I Rest, I Feel Guilty! Author Tim Hansel reminds us of the importance of rest. God has given us a special day to worship Him, to relax, to get away from the grind of life, to enjoy Christian Fellowship, and to rest. Don't just blow that off. It's really important. It's for your benefit.

But avoid slavish rules regarding it. Such rules can kill you, spiritually. Don't think for a moment that the way to get to heaven is to trust in Jesus and to slavishly follow the rules regarding the Sabbath. There is only one way to get to heaven – it's through the death and resurrection of Jesus. It's by repenting of your sins and trusting in that which God did for you in Jesus! Salvation is through faith and trust in Jesus, **plus nothing! Nothing!**

Jesus is Lord!

- He is Lord of the universe.
 - He is Lord of the Church.
 - He is Lord of all those who trust in Him.
- He is above all.
- He is above all rules and regulations.
 - He is above all the rules regarding the Sabbath.

Here's the bottom line.

You can be religious.

- You can go to church or synagogue or mosque or whatever you call it.
- You can go through all the formalities of religion.
- You can go through Sunday School or the CCD religious instructions.
- You can learn, even memorize Bible verses.
- You can go to church every Sunday.
- You can have read the Bible from cover to cover.
- You can even tithe to the church and do all the right things.
- You can religiously obey all the rules regarding the Sunday Sabbath.
- You can do all the right things and avoid all the things you think you shouldn't do on the Sabbath.
- And you will have become very religious.
- You will have trusted in your abilities to do all the right things and make yourself Godly.

But, you will still not have trusted in the Lord.

- When you trust in the Lord, you give up on the idea that you can do anything to please Him.
- When you trust in the Lord, you come running to Him with tears in your eyes saying, “Oh God, I can’t do this on my own. I trust in you, precisely because I don’t trust in my own efforts to be righteous”.
- When you trust in the Lord, you say Jesus, “Forgive me, I have made a mess of my life. Jesus, help me! I trust you to save me.”
- So, trust in Him who is the Lord of the Sabbath. Trust in Him who is bigger than all the rules.
- Once you trust Him you will want to please Him by obeying Him, by doing the right things. But we need to get it right. However good and wonderful the Sabbath is, there is one thing even better. It’s Jesus. The Sabbath can’t save you. Jesus can.

Let’s pray.