

Celebrating Sabbath

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[0 : 0 0] Mark chapter 2 and as we continue our way through the gospel of Mark, the hits just keep coming.! From the time that Jesus came out of temptation and came on the scene, healing came to those who were hurting.

Evil was driven out and lives were changed and crowds came from all the surrounding areas. It was a phenomenon to the entire region. And with all that commotion, as they would believe, the religious leaders, the church leaders heard about it.

They were the scribes. They were primarily made up of Pharisees. They were holier than thou. They were proud of their positions.

And they were feeling challenged by Christ. One they saw as a rebel rouser, as an upstart. Trouble.

[1 : 1 0] We first see them witness Jesus healing a paralyzed man. And it was amazing to watch those four friends lower that man in front of Jesus as he taught.

And then Jesus to heal that man. But he also forgave that man's sins. And only God can forgive sins. And the Pharisees were there watching what was happening.

Next, he saves and calls Levi, a crooked tax collector. And then attends a banquet feast at Levi's house.

Later called Matthew. And we believe that Jesus is the one that renamed him. Matthew means gift of God. And he was eating with sinners and tax collectors at Matthew's house.

And while the Pharisees were fasting for the Lord. They didn't like that. And they called him out on it. And Jesus set them straight. And they didn't like that either. But they're not done.

[2 : 1 6] I want you to look at what's recorded next. And I want you to understand that when Mark wrote this gospel, he is building a pattern here. He kind of emphasizes that in these episodes that we're looking at in these two chapters.

Of how the Pharisees are just getting more keyed up about the difference that Christ is making. And how they don't like it. It says one Sabbath, beginning in verse 23.

He, speaking of Christ, was going through the grain fields. And as they made their way, his disciples began to pluck heads of grain. And the Pharisees were saying to him, look, why are they doing what is not lawful on the Sabbath?

And he said to them, have you never read what David did when he was in need and was hungry?

He and those who were with him. How he entered the house of God in the time of Abathar, the high priest.

And ate the bread of the presence. Which is not lawful for any but the priest to eat. And also gave it to those who were with him. And he said to them, the Sabbath was made for man, not man for the Sabbath.

[3 : 3 0] So the Son of Man is Lord even of the Sabbath. It was completely legal for someone to walk through another person's field.

As a matter of fact, in the country, they didn't have a lot of roads. And so it was often that you had to walk between rows to get where you were going in someone's field. And it was fine to grab a handful of grain and eat it as you went.

As long as you didn't bring a bag with you or a sickle with you and collect everything they had. Now I will tell you that I had a neighbor growing up that had a grapevine in the backyard. And they didn't feel that way.

They didn't like what I came through and grazed. Nor the people with the apple trees that were across the street from them. They needed to read scripture. Because it says in Deuteronomy 23 verse 25, If you go into your neighbor's standing grain, you may pluck the ears with your hand.

But you shall not put a sickle to your neighbor's standing grain. That's all the disciples were doing. However, they were doing it on the Sabbath.

[4 : 38] Now, let's understand what scripture says about the Sabbath. It is mainly addressed in the fourth commandment of the ten commandments in Exodus chapter 20.

And that's what they're referencing here. Beginning in verse 8, it says, Remember the Sabbath 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. That's the key phrase that they go back to. You, or your son, or your daughter, your male servant, your female servant, or your livestock, or the sojourner who is within your gates.

For six days the Lord made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that's in them and rested on the seventh day. Therefore, the Lord blessed the Sabbath day and made it holy.

Now, that's what the commandment says. Later in scripture, it says that you don't kindle a fire on the Sabbath. And that you don't gather fuel, which would be wood or brush.

[5 : 47] That you don't gather fuel on the Sabbath. The prophet Jeremiah added that you don't carry a burden on the Sabbath. And what he was talking about when he mentioned that was, and it says don't carry a burden through the gates either.

And so what he's saying is, don't bring your harvest into town on the Sabbath and set up to sell for the next day.

You say, well, I can't sell, so I'll bring it in and set it up. He says, no, don't do that. That's what means carry a burden. So that's the stipulations and that's the guidelines that they went off.

Nehemiah mentions not buying from them on the Sabbath. However, when these rabbis, these Pharisees got a hold of that, they got a lot more specific about it. As a matter of fact, they had 39 different types of work mentioned in the rabbinical law.

And remember, that's the law that's not in Scripture, but it's been added to define what Scripture means. It's not inspired by the Holy Spirit.

[6 : 55] It's inspired by a bunch of Pharisaic rabbis. And they had 39 different types of work mentioned in the Sabbath. Some of them were interesting. If a building collapses on the Sabbath, you can clear the rubble enough to find the bodies.

And if someone is alive, you can rescue them. However, if they're dead, you have to leave them there because it's not reviving life.

It's not protecting life. If you fracture a bone, you can't set that bone on the Sabbath because that's not life-threatening. But if you cut your finger, you can wrap your finger, but you can't treat it.

You just stop the bleeding. If a lady gives birth on the Sabbath, you can help her. And I will say you better if she wants help.

You can spit on a rock. But if you spit on the ground, that's cultivating. That's watering. That's work. And they took this stuff seriously.

[8 : 07] In the 2nd century, some of the Maccabean Jews took refuge in caves. But when the Syrian soldiers pursued them on the Sabbath, they would not surrender, nor would they resist.

And the Syrians threw fire into the caves. And the Jews would not even walk out of the caves to defend themselves. Would not even run out of the caves to escape the fire and smoke.

They stayed. And died. In order to honor the Sabbath. When Pompey, the Roman general, besieged Jerusalem, he built his mound to bombard them on the Sabbath.

Because he knew they would not defend themselves. The Romans required military service. But they exempted the Jews because they knew that on the Sabbath, they were not going to fight.

I mean, I'm telling you, this was rigid. It was inflexible. And some of that was finally changed later. But it's not changed here. You could not travel more than a half a mile total for the day on the Sabbath.

[9 : 20] And therefore, if you live more than a fourth of a mile from a synagogue, you couldn't worship on the Sabbath. It was too far to go.

That's why, as we mentioned, when Jesus went village to village and would speak in synagogue after synagogue, if a village was large enough to have 12 men, 12 families there, they would build a synagogue.

Because otherwise, they couldn't go to synagogue. They lived too far from it. More specifically, concerning our passage, you could not reap, thresh, winnow, or prepare a meal.

So when they plucked, that's reaping. And when they rubbed, and Luke chapter 6 is a synoptic gospel. It's a parallel passage of this. It says that they rubbed the heads of the grain. So when you rub the heads of the grain, they were threshing. When they blew the husk, they were winnowing. When they put it in their mouths, they were preparing a meal.

[10:29] So for the Pharisees, four rabbinical rules were broken just by these guys walking by, grabbing a head of grain, rubbing it, and sticking it in their mouth.

So Jesus asked the Pharisees, have you never read what David did?

Now I hope you pick up on the slap that that is that he just gave them. Because that's exactly what it is. These men who are dedicated to studying scripture.

And Jesus said, have you ever read? They were so worried about the trees that they missed the forest, quite honestly.

And he reminded them of a circumstance that's in 1 Samuel chapter 21. When David and his men came to the high priest, they were fleeing the pursuit of Saul.

[11:24] And they were hungry. I mean, they were starving. And the only food that was available for them, or available period, was the bread of presence. Now, the bread of presence was bread that was kept on the table in the tabernacle as a reminder of God's provision.

And it was 12 loaves, freshly baked every week, put in two rows of six. And it just sat there on this golden table for six days to remind people of how God had provided for them when they escaped Egypt and was in the desert and God brought manna.

And so when you saw that bread, it reminded you of how God had provided. On the seventh day, the priest would collect that bread, and they would live off that bread for the next week. But they were the only ones that was to eat that bread.

When David come, that was the only bread available. His men were starving. So the high priest gave it to him. And so Jesus concludes this, and he says this. The Sabbath was made for man, not man for the Sabbath.

So the Son of Man is Lord even of the Sabbath. We'll come back to that in a bit. But I want you to look at this next encounter. It's in Mark chapter 3, verse 1 through 6, and it says this.

[12:48] Again, he entered the synagogue, and a man there with a withered hand. And they watched Jesus, talking to the Pharisees again, to see whether he would heal him on the Sabbath so that they might accuse him.

And he said to the man with a withered hand, come here. And he said to them, is it lawful on the Sabbath to do good or to do harm, to save life or to kill?

But they were silent. And he looked around at them with anger, grieved at the hardness of heart, and said to the man, stretch out your hand.

He stretched it out. And his hand was restored. The Pharisees went out and immediately held counsel with the Herodians against him.

How to destroy him. I want you to notice that the purpose of the Pharisees was to watch Jesus heal a man, change his life, and then accuse Jesus of breaking the Sabbath.

[14:15] They knew the man was there. Some even believed that they planted the man there to see how Jesus would respond, knowing how he would respond. And that says a lot.

Their plan was to catch him healing. Now, if it was saving a life, that would be okay.

However, a withered hand could wait another day. That was not to be done on the Sabbath. That was the mentality. So Jesus tells the man, come here.

He's not trying to hide a healing. He's not backing away from these people. He wants it front and center. And he asked, as the man stands there, is it lawful on the Sabbath to do good or to do harm, to save life or to kill?

But they were silent. They didn't know how to respond. And Jesus gets angry. And yet, there's a combo there.

[15:22] Because he's angry, but yet grieved all at the same time. He knows their hearts. He knows they're not concerned really about honoring God on the Sabbath. They're concerned about keeping everyone else in line, keeping their finger on everyone else and controlling everyone else.

They're pious. They have a haughty attitude. And it made him mad. And the callous, unrepentant, hard heart made him grieve. And he told the man, stretch out your hand.

He didn't blow on him. He didn't wave a Yankee, a Hanky, or a Yankee. He didn't yell at him. He didn't have him fall out.

Stretch out your hand. And the man stretched his hand out. Jesus had not worked. He spoke. And the man did just as he was told. He stretched it out. And his hand was restored. [16:40] That man won the arm wrestling competition the next year with that hand. He was healed. There was no physical therapy involved. He was healed.

He was restored. So what happened next? I wish I could tell you the Pharisees rejoiced. But no, instead it says the Pharisees went out and immediately held counsel with the Herodians against him how to destroy him.

That's an amazing statement. And it's an amazing statement for a lot of reasons. How do you walk away from such a healing wanting to kill the guy that did the healing? How do you do that?

Makes no sense unless you have a mighty bitter heart. It says they immediately held counsel. I believe that was premeditated. They held counsel with the Herodians.

That reminds me of the Greek word do what? The Herodians. They were secular. Get this now.

[17:38] They were secular Jews that had left Judaism. That's what Pharisees prized themselves on. Had left Judaism. Left their religious background.

And had become loyal to the invading culture of the Greco-Romans. They were the opposite of the Pharisees. They were the people that had let you down.

They're the people that were a pain. Their nickname was the Herodians. I mean it was bad. But they came together for this cause.

It would be like the Democrats and the Republicans coming together and trying to build budgets. Apparently it don't work. And in the same way the Pharisees and the Herodians had never partnered with these folks.

And never would. But they did for the possibility to destroy Christ. And all of this was over the Sabbath. And that was their attack on Christ.

[18:49] So what do we learn? What's that got to do with us? What do we learn about the Sabbath from this? Well three things because I'm a Baptist preacher. One is the Sabbath is to be celebrated.

Sabbath is a Hebrew word for seventh. Sabbath. And it recalls God resting on the seventh day after creation. Sabbath was given as a gift of rest.

Not a burden of rules. It was never meant to be an added burden. But a blessing. We don't celebrate the Sabbath day anymore.

But we do celebrate the Sabbath. The early church in the book of Acts shifted the worship to Sunday instead of Saturday.

To celebrate the day that the Lord rose from the grave. They changed their worship day from Saturday to Sunday.

[19:57] And that's when they worshiped. There's no command in the New Testament to keep the seventh day Sabbath. There is a command for us together.

It's in Hebrews chapter 10 verse 24 and 25. And it says, The church recognized that the resurrection had changed the calendar.

As a matter of fact, As a matter of fact, in Revelation chapter 1 verse 10, John even calls Sunday the Lord's day. So understand our rest is not found in a day.

Our rest is found in a person. Our rest is found in the empty tomb. Hebrews chapter 4 reminds us that our rest is in Christ.

Still, we need a rhythm of rest and reflection. We need to stop. We need to worship.

[21:08] We need to remember God's provision. Now I want you to think about something. I believe that Jesus did what he did that day to that man's hand in the way that he did it to prove a point.

Because there was no work done. He told the man to come here. That was less than a fourth of a mile. It was from there to there. And he told him, Stretch out your hand.

And the man stretched his hand out. Christ spoke. And the man was healed. Reminds me of creation.

In day one, God spoke and created. In day two, God spoke and created. He did it for six days and on the seventh day he rested.

Was he tired? No. He was not. He didn't need to rest. All he had done was speak. Now some of you may speak so much that you get tired.

[22:13] But that's another matter. That's another matter. Why did he make the seventh day a day of rest? For us.

He didn't need the rest. We do. And he made it a day to rest and reflect upon what he had done for us.

The Sabbath is to be celebrated. Second thing is this. The Sabbath was made for us. Jesus says it. I mean, we live in a world that's too busy.

It's too restless. It's too hurried. And God says in the midst of all of that, stop. Rest.

Remember me. Your body needs rest. Your soul needs rest. And the Pharisees missed this. They were so focused on what people needed to do through rules and regulations and all that stuff.

[23 : 18] Instead of what God, what Jesus could do. They love to point out what we couldn't do. While Jesus focused on what we needed.

It's amazing to me. In the Pharisees' mind, healing a hand is work. But get this. Plotting to kill a man is not.

Because Scripture says they went out immediately. Secondly, I want you to hear what Isaiah chapter 58 says about the day of rest and reflect upon the Lord.

It says this. If you turn back your foot from the Sabbath, which means you don't go places. You chill out. If you turn back your foot from the Sabbath, from doing your pleasure on my holy day, and call the Sabbath a delight and the holy day of the Lord honorable.

If you honor it, not going your own ways, or seeking your own pleasure, or talking idly, then you shall take delight in the Lord.

[24 : 26] And I'll make you ride on the heights of the earth. I'll feed you with the heritage of Jacob your father, for the mouth of the Lord has spoken. In other words, take the Lord's day to rest.

We need a day to clock out and to refocus on the Lord. And we do that through worship and reflection. It was made on our behalf.

The Sabbath was made for us. And lastly, we're not the Lord of the Sabbath. Verse 28 of Mark 2 says, So the Son of Man is Lord even of the Sabbath.

That means that Christ sets our agenda, not us. We don't get ownership of the Lord's day. It's not our day.

It's His. It's not for enslaving people into a lot of rules. It's not for enslaving people and drawing lines in the sand for someone to not dress a certain way, or to not do a certain thing, or to not go a certain place.

[25 : 43] Listen, if you're a Christian today, and He is the Lord of your life, you've given Him your life. And that means you give Him this day.

Not an hour of it. All of it. Is that to enslave you? No, it's not. It's to free you.

It gives you rest. Now, how do we work that out? Well, I believe in two adages that you'll hear me say quite a bit.

It's become an old adage with me, and it fits in quite well. First one is this. Be faithful to church. Listen.

Christ came to live a sinless life, to die for our sins. He rose again, ascended into heaven, to make intercession, to pray for us, to prepare us a place, and He's coming back to receive us.

[26 : 53] And we ought to acknowledge that. He came for those reasons. Number two, He came to establish the church. He got 12 men around Him.

We'll study those in coming days. 12 men around Him, and He taught them. He taught them what it means to be a follower of Christ. And when Christ ascended in the book of Acts, those men, particularly just some of them, began to plant churches, groups of people, worshiping together, based upon what they had learned from the Lord.

Christ came, not only to die for our sins, but to establish the church. Because He knew you'd need it. He knew we'd need it.

And He knew we'd need each other. And the reality is, whether you realize it or not, you need the congregation of believers, believers, as Hebrews 10, 24 says, to stir up each other, to keep each other accountable, to help each other grow in the Lord, to somehow survive in a ever-wicked world in which we live, and to have the strength to go day to day, keeping our minds set upon Him.

It's not enough just to come to church to live for the Lord. Don't misunderstand me. But you're going to have a hard time doing it without a constant nourishment of God's people around you.

[28 : 33] We need this. But not only do you need it, but we need you. The church is only strengthened by its members.

And the reality is, God has put this church together, as He's put the human body together, as Corinthians talks about. And each one of us has different roles and responsibilities and those type things, but God has put us together for the purpose of making all of us stronger.

So don't ever walk in these doors and think, I don't need to be here. It's not true. You do need to be here. Christ established the church for you to be strengthened by being together.

And don't ever walk out of here thinking nobody needs me here, because that's not true. There are people who walked in here this morning with burdens that are much heavier than you could ever imagine.

And if all you're concerned about is yourself and making sure that I get taken care of, you've missed half the joy of what it means to come together as God's people. Because when you pause and stop and listen and pray with people who are hurting, we all grow stronger.

[29 : 50] You become a better person, they become a stronger person. We need to be faithful to be here. We need to be reliable. We need to be faithful to church.

The second thing is this. Miss for the extraordinary and not the ordinary. There are things that will come up that will be red-letter days.

They're big days. They're special days. You get a chance to get with people. You get a chance to go somewhere. You get a chance to do something. Man, go and do and enjoy, okay?

But make sure it's an extraordinary day to do it. Because if you're not careful, it'll be easier the next week to find something else to do. It'll be easier to find something else to do and find something else to do.

And anytime you find something else to do enough times, the devil gets involved in all that. And I'm going to tell you, Satan don't want you faithful in worship.

[30 : 57] He don't want that. He don't want this choir up here singing their praises. He don't want you here in the Word of God. He don't want you in a life group. He don't want you growing in him.

He don't want you encouraged in him. He don't want you to leave here better than he felt when he came in. He don't want any of that. And so what does he do? Well, one of his strategies, there's a lot of them, we won't get into all of them this morning, but the one that I'm talking about is the busyness of justifiable actions.

It is easy for us to come up with stuff that keeps us belabored. And before long, it's just ordinary stuff. Our schedule just didn't work out to come.

Feels justified, feels right, but the reality is it's not. And you find yourself sinking and sometimes it's unrecognizable, but the reality is Christ came to establish the church, to strengthen all of us.

And so when you get the opportunity to do something extraordinary, I've got something on my calendar. It's extraordinary. I'm not going to be here one Sunday because the opportunity that I have, I think, is extraordinary.

[32 : 11] Don't you dare miss for the ordinary because if you're not careful, you'll just keep on missing. There's a satanic strategy here. I promise you that. That's not to scare you.

It's not to baffle you. I'm just telling you, you're strengthened by being together. We need to make sure that there are not idols in our lives. Purchases that we've made, hobbies that we love, places that draw you away, that become more important than your faithfulness to gather and worship, to lift up his name, to rest in his presence, to stir others along in their faith.

Please don't misunderstand me. We are free in Christ. We're free in Christ. We're free to worship him in the spirit and in the truth of God's word together.

So let's be faithful about it until he comes. With every head bowed and every eye closed, I want to ask you this morning, if you've ever given your heart and life to the Lord Jesus Christ, there's a great chance that there's somebody here this morning who's never surrendered his or her life to Christ.

And I'll tell you, that's where it all starts. is acknowledging that there's sin in your life and that you need God's forgiveness, asking him to forgive you and to cleanse you and to come into your life and to change you.

[33 : 41] He'll do just that. He'll empower you with the power of the spirit of God to help you rise above the very things that sometimes in your life keep you from ever coming to Christ. The reality is, your victory is found in Christ.

If you've never given your heart and life to the Lord Jesus, I encourage you, when we stand and sing in just a moment, I encourage you to come down and say, Pastor, I need to give my life to

Christ. I'll take time after this worship hour to share with you what it means to give your life to Christ. Maybe you're here this morning and you have done that. You've prayed to receive Christ, but you've never publicly acknowledged that. There's no such thing as a Christian faith that's private. There's nothing about that. Jesus was very public, told people to be very public. His great commission is for us to go and tell. So the reality is, we have that responsibility. And by his commission and by his example, the first step to someone who's given their heart and life to the Lord is to be baptized.

If you've never been baptized as a believer, I encourage you to come. I'm not talking about if you did it a long time ago and you never did give your life to Christ. But if you've given your life to Christ and there's been a time in your life when you've never been baptized since you gave your life to Christ, you need to come.

[34 : 50] We'll stand in just a moment. We'll begin to sing. And as soon as we begin to sing, you come and say, Pastor, I've given my life to Christ, but I need to be baptized as a believer. We won't do it this morning. We'll schedule it in the coming weeks.

But I encourage you to be obedient to God in that. And then there's others that maybe God's drawing you to First Baptist Church. God's doing a wonderful work in our church and I'm thankful for that. And if God's drawing you to come to this church, I encourage you to come.

We'll be happy to guide you in that process, what that means. Or maybe God's burdened you. Burdened you this morning with something else. It's in your life. Maybe it's in someone else's life that you're burdened for.

I want you to feel free when we stand in just a moment to not sing, but to bow your head and to pray through that matter. If you'd like for me to pray with you, you come down here and tell me. Pastor, I need you to pray for me about something.

Maybe you can go to this altar and pray. Lift that up before the Lord. I have no idea what God's told you. I just want you to be obedient and do everything that he tells you to. Just trust him. He won't lead you astray.

[35 : 49] Trust that still, small voice that speaks within your heart today. Be obedient to follow him in whatever he'd have you to do. Heavenly Father, lead us right now to do only what you'd have us to do and everything that you'd have us to do.

Oh God, I pray in Jesus' name. Amen. And you're happy with you.