

## Mark 2:23-3:6 Jesus is Lord of the Sabbath

<sup>23</sup> One Sabbath Jesus was going through the cornfields, and as his disciples walked along, they began to pick some ears of corn. <sup>24</sup> The Pharisees said to him, 'Look, why are they doing what is unlawful on the Sabbath?' <sup>25</sup> He answered, 'Have you never read what David did when he and his companions were hungry and in need? <sup>26</sup> 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.'

<sup>27</sup> Then he said to them, 'The Sabbath was made for man, not man for the Sabbath. <sup>28</sup> So the Son of Man is Lord even of the Sabbath.'

### Jesus heals on the Sabbath

<sup>3</sup> Another time Jesus went into the synagogue, and a man with a shrivelled hand was there. <sup>2</sup> Some of them were looking for a reason to accuse Jesus, so they watched him closely to see if he would heal him on the Sabbath. <sup>3</sup> Jesus said to the man with the shrivelled hand, 'Stand up in front of everyone.' <sup>4</sup> Then Jesus asked them, 'Which is lawful on the Sabbath: to do good or to do evil, to save life or to kill?' But they remained silent. <sup>5</sup> He looked around at them in anger and, deeply distressed at their stubborn hearts, said to the man, 'Stretch out your hand.' He stretched it out, and his hand was completely restored.

<sup>6</sup> Then the Pharisees went out and began to plot with the Herodians how they might kill Jesus.

## Mark 2:23-3:6

### A talk by Rev David Eastwood on 13 June 2021

We continue our series through the gospel of Mark. All the gospel writers are concerned that we understand **who** Jesus is. We've already seen in these first two chapters, that Jesus has **power** over disease, **power** over Satan and demons and temptation, we'll soon see his **power** over death, and we've seen he can even forgive sin.

How important this is, if he is the Saviour, to be able to forgive sins

Mark clearly shows us – this Jesus, is God in human flesh – The true Saviour and Redeemer.

And now he's identified by another title – v 28 The Son of Man is Lord even of the Sabbath

Son of Man - underlying his humanity, but nevertheless, the one the prophet Daniel said would be given all authority, and glory and power. (Daniel 7:13-14)

But, Lord of the Sabbath? What does that mean? This was in fact **the most** troublesome claim Jesus made

To say to the Pharisees, the religious leaders, I am the Lord of the Sabbath, was an outrage.

The Pharisees were well aware that **God** ordained the Sabbath.

Genesis 2 – Having created everything in 6 days, on the 7<sup>th</sup> day God rested, and blessed it, and made it holy.

And so, to claim to be Lord of the Sabbath, was a claim to be God.

Jesus was striking a severe blow at the heart of the Pharisaic system.

The Pharisees had built up a system of works, self-righteousness, of attainment, of merit – ceremonies and rituals and law keeping that found its central point in the Sabbath – and in so doing had hardened their **hearts**

Every 7<sup>th</sup> day was the main day for the Pharisees, from sunset on Friday, to sunset on Saturday.

When Jesus defied them here, he put himself in direct conflict with them. And they hated him.

And as we see, they even got together with their enemies, the Herodians, to find a way to kill Jesus. And in both passages today, we see Jesus attacking the Pharisees' treatment of the Sabbath, and their hardness of heart.

So, one Sabbath, Jesus and his disciples were going through the cornfields and his disciples began to pick some ears of corn. They were hungry (Luke says). But this was reaping, according to the Pharisees, and that was work.

You can't do that on the Sabbath. The Pharisees had invented all sorts of rules and restrictions for Sabbath conduct.

They made it as restrictive as possible. The more difficult they made it, the more holy you became.

And they demanded that every person in the nation observed them all.

And Jesus rejected it all. Jesus, the Lord of the Sabbath, was here. And everything was about to change.

The time had come, the kingdom of God was near. This was the time to repent and believe.

As we saw last week, this was not the time for fasting, for rituals. Jesus, the bridegroom, was present, this was a time to celebrate.

The old had gone. Old cloth can't be put onto new cloth, or new wine into old wineskins.

And so Jesus hit the Pharisees at the heart of their system.

They were callous, compassionless, brutal, and their hearts were hard. They weren't concerned about the man with the shrivelled hand. What they were concerned about, and watching out for, was whether Jesus would heal this man on the Sabbath – something they did not allow.

*'What is lawful', Jesus asks, 'to do good or to do evil, to save life or to kill on the Sabbath?'*

And they remained silent – they had nothing to say. Jesus was always getting people to decide.

Will you accept my gospel of humility, of repentance, of grace and faith?

Or a religion based on pride, self-righteousness, merit and works?

Choose the gospel. Or choose Judaism – a false religion.

And it's the same today. Will you choose the good news of Jesus? Or one of the false religions of our day?

Old wineskins and old cloth? Or new wine and new material? Do you want a new heart, or keep your hard heart?

Sabbath means to cease, to rest. God rested on the 7<sup>th</sup> day. And the Sabbath was when people were to rest, to cease working. That's all the Old Testament says – simply that you're not to work – a day of rest, of joy, and a day for worship.

But the Pharisees had made so many rules that the Sabbath was the worst day of the week.

You couldn't walk more than 1999 steps. Nothing could be carried on the Sabbath more than a dry fig, or half a fig twice. If you threw an object in the air and caught it in the other hand, that was a sin, but with the same hand, that was okay. A tailor couldn't carry his needle, a student his books. Women couldn't look in the mirror because they might find a white hair and pull it out! And it was all unscriptural, all ungodly, and brutally unkind.

Jesus came to set people free from this bondage and religion.

*'Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened and I will give you rest.*

*Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle in heart and you find rest for your souls.*

*My yoke is easy and my burden is light.'* (Matthew 11:28-30).

I am the Lord of the Sabbath. I am God. I designed this day. I am the Creator. You Pharisees don't rule the Sabbath. I do, Jesus says. Jesus is full of grace. The Pharisees were full of merciless law.

Jesus didn't have to heal this man on the Sabbath. The man hadn't even asked to be healed! But Jesus did, to make a point, to confront, to face the Pharisees head on. Gentle Jesus meek and mild? I don't think so!

Jesus looked at them in anger and Mark says he was deeply distressed at their stubborn hearts. (3:5)

Yes, as Tim said last week, a small number of Pharisees did become followers of Jesus, but in the main they were his fiercest enemies – plotting to kill him because Jesus challenged their entire law based religious system of works and achievement, all based on pride, because their hearts were hard.

So Jesus abolished the Sabbath, but God's pattern for us is that one day in 7 is when we rest and worship.

For the Early Christians, and right up to quite recently, that day was Sunday, the day when Jesus rose from the dead

I don't think it matters which day. If your work is sitting in an office or on a computer at home, then this day probably needs to be more active, going for a walk. If your work is back breaking and strenuous, then maybe you need to sleep a bit. It's meant to be a different day. But we are not to create rules. As Paul says in Romans 14:5-6 – it's for us to decide. There was a time as a young solicitor when I choose to work far too hard and it crushed me.

God says – rest, take one day off each week, and make it special and different. And build in other rest times as well.

This is the pattern God has given us.

We see here the Pharisees' hardness of heart, their critical spirit, their hatred of Jesus.

Let's make sure our hearts don't become hard.

Come to me, Jesus says, all you who are weary and burdened

This is good news for every burdened person. Stop all the effort

Jesus is gentle and humble in heart. And he will give you rest.

AMEN