

“The Sabbath Made For Man”
Mark 2:23-28 – 3:1-5
(Preached at Trinity, November 17, 2009)

I’m supplying these notes for the benefit of busy pastors who may be engaged in bi-vocational work, feeling the pressure of preparing to preach twice on the Lord’s Day while trying to balance full-time secular work as well as caring for their families. While the notes of another man are no substitute for personal study, I pray that these may aid in the process of preparing to preach.

Disclaimer: These are the actual notes I bring with me to the pulpit, which I follow loosely. They are not designed for publication. While I try to make every effort to give proper credit to my sources from the pulpit, adequate citations will sometimes be absent from my notes. If anyone feels their intellectual material has been used without adequate citation, please contact me and I’ll make immediate correction giving credit.

1. As I’ve pointed out before, this section of Mark contains five narratives that are probably not in chronological order or even the same period of Christ’s ministry but Mark probably places them together because of their common theme – conflict with the scribes and Pharisees.
 - A. In the first section the scribes accused Jesus of blaspheme because He forgave the sins of the paralytic.
Mark 2:7 – “Why doth this *man* thus speak blasphemies? who can forgive sins but God only?”
 - B. After Jesus called Matthew the scribes and Pharisees criticized Jesus for consorting with sinners.
Mark 2:16 – “And when the scribes and Pharisees saw him eat with publicans and sinners, they said unto his disciples, How is it that he eateth and drinketh with publicans and sinners?”
 - C. As we came to **Verse 18** it would seem that the Pharisees along with the disciples of John the Baptist were taking offense with Jesus and His disciples because they weren’t fasting.
Mark 2:18 – “Why do the disciples of John and of the Pharisees fast, but thy disciples fast not?”
2. The last two narratives deal with criticism that Jesus and His disciples received over the issue of the Sabbath.
The Sabbath has been a source of dispute from the beginning. There are two extremes. Either the Sabbath is disregarded and ignored or it is obeyed legalistically and enhanced with all manner of man-made rules and regulations. Both extremes can be seen in Israel’s history. Both extremes can also be seen today.
3. On this particular Sabbath Jesus and His disciples picked heads of wheat as they walked through a field.
The Pharisees weren’t questioning the legality of their actions. They weren’t accusing them of stealing. Their actions were completely lawful:
They were accusing them of doing it on the Sabbath.
4. These two narratives demonstrate that the Sabbath is distinct from the rest of the Law. This does not imply that it is not a part of the Moral Law – it is. It is the fourth commandment.
5. These two accounts in no way imply that observing the Sabbath is no longer valid. God demands absolute obedience to His Law. We will be judged according to His Law.

6. But as we saw last time, the 4th Commandment stands distinct from the rest of the Law
- A. There were positive or ceremonial regulations attached to the Sabbath.
1. The Fourth Commandment is unique because it also carried certain ceremonial aspects which were fulfilled in Christ.
 - a. Numerous Sabbaths were established apart from the seventh day Sabbath.
 - b. There were festival Sabbaths that were not necessarily tied to the seventh day Sabbath.
 - c. These ceremonial days were fulfilled in Christ
Because the ceremonial aspects have been abrogated some insist that the whole of the Sabbath has been abolished.
 2. In addition, the Pharisees, notable for their legalism, in an attempt to protect the law actually buried it deep beneath the traditions of men.
 - a. The Sabbath in Jesus' day was a ritual void of joy
 - b. There were more than 1500 rules attached to this day.
 - c. Jesus set the Sabbath free from these rules and regulations that had been attached to it. Rather than destroy the Sabbath, Jesus came to affirm it, restore it, and enforce it.
- B. Along with being freed from the traditions and legalism that had been attached to it, the Sabbath took on a new meaning with the Resurrection of Christ.
1. The Sabbath was a part of the Moral Law but it was also a sign of God's covenant relationship with Israel
Exodus 31:16 – "Wherefore the children of Israel shall keep the sabbath, to observe the sabbath throughout their generations, *for a perpetual covenant.*"
 2. With the arrival of the New Covenant the Sabbath has become a celebration of the Resurrection
- C. The Sabbath should be seen as a joyous celebration of God's grace
1. It shouldn't be seen as simply a set of rules and regulations
 2. The Sabbath was made for man. It is a time for celebrating our relationship with God through Christ. It is truly unique from the rest of the Law. The Fourth Commandment is uniquely a sign of the New Covenant – a celebration of the resurrection and of the rest we have in Christ.
 3. Because of this we are granted certain liberties in its observance.
 - a. In other words the believer is free to order the day for the best spiritual benefit of himself and his family
 - b. Liberty, however, never means liberty to sin. The Sabbath is binding upon all people - it is God's moral law – God has declared it to be a holy day
 4. There are certain things that call for exceptions in how we observe the Sabbath.

5. This doesn't mean the Sabbath can be disregarded. It simply means that in the joyous observance of the Sabbath we must always reflect God's mercy and goodness to others and it is essential to remember that since the Sabbath was given for our good the keeping of it must also work for our good.
Mark 2:27 – "The sabbath was made for man, and not man for the sabbath"

I. Necessity may overrule the Sabbath

A. Jesus called to mind David eating the Showbread - **Mark 2:25-26**

1. Every Sabbath the bread was exchanged for fresh loaves and the priests were allowed to eat the old bread
2. It was not lawful for just anybody to eat the bread
Leviticus 24:9 – "And it shall be Aaron's and his sons'; and they shall eat it in the holy place: for it *is* most holy unto him of the offerings of the LORD made by fire by a perpetual statute."
3. God allows acts of necessity to govern the observance of the Sabbath.
4. Jesus gave other examples of necessities that might overrule the Sabbath
Luke 13:15 – "The Lord then answered him, and said, *Thou* hypocrite, doth not each one of you on the sabbath loose his ox or *his* ass from the stall, and lead *him* away to watering?"
Luke 14:5 – "And answered them, saying, Which of you shall have an ass or an ox fallen into a pit, and will not straightway pull him out on the sabbath day?"

B. Practical application for today

1. Necessity would include things unexpected
 - a. Normally we prepare in advance to keep the Sabbath
LBC – Chapter 22:8
"The sabbath is then kept holy unto the Lord, when men, after a due preparing of their hearts, and ordering their common affairs aforehand, do not only observe an holy rest all the day, from their own works, words and thoughts, about their worldly employment and recreations,³⁰ 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."
 - b. There are times, however, when things happen unexpectedly
Illus: the time I came home and discovered a broken water pipe
Luke 14:5 – "And answered them, saying, Which of you shall have an ass or an ox fallen into a pit, and will not straightway pull him out on the sabbath day?"
2. There are certain occupations that demand activity on the Sabbath
Police and fire, medical professionals, certain infrastructure positions such as electric company employees.
3. One of the busiest days of the week for a Pastor is the Lord's Day.
Making possible the worship by God's people demands that some be permitted to abandon the regulation of a Sabbath rest.
Matthew 12:5 – ". . . have ye not read in the law, how that on the sabbath days the priests in the temple profane the sabbath, and are blameless?"

- II. Works of mercy also allow for an adjustment in how we observe the Sabbath
- A. The Pharisees were strict in obedience to the Law but they lacked pity and kindness.
1. They condemned Jesus and His disciples for gleaning food on the Sabbath. They Pharisees condemned but though they saw these men in need of food they had no desire to help.
 2. They also condemned Jesus for healing on the Sabbath. There was no compassion and no joy in the healing of this afflicted man.
- B. The Sabbath was given as a day of mercy.
1. God graciously provided a day of rest
Exodus 23:12 – “Six days thou shalt do thy work, and on the seventh day thou shalt rest: that thine ox and thine ass may rest, and the son of thy handmaid, and the stranger, may be refreshed.”
 - a. The word for rest is שָׁבַת (shabath) – this is a form of the word Sabbath
 - b. All would rest from the servants to the animals
 2. God could have demanded toil every day of our life. He has blessed us with a day of rest.
 It is similar to the tithe. God could have demanded one half, or three fourths of our increase, but only demands one tenth.
 3. God has appointed a day where we can be refreshed physically and spiritually. God taught this at creation
Exodus 31:17 – “It is a sign between me and the children of Israel for ever: for *in* six days the LORD made heaven and earth, and on the seventh day he rested, and was refreshed.”
- C. In this passage Jesus is teaching that it is permissible for you to do good and show mercy on the Sabbath. In fact you *must* do good and show mercy on the Sabbath.
1. For example it is good for you to go and help your neighbor remove a tree that has fallen on his home?
 2. It is good to stop and help someone change their tire even though you may labor hard and work up a sweat and get dirty.
 3. Employers should be merciful to their employees – how many are robbing their workers of this day? When Israel was in Egypt they never had a day of rest. The mercy of the Sabbath demands it.
 - a. Employers today might remind us that their workers get off another day
 But God has appointed THIS day.
 - b. One reason we avoid commerce on the Sabbath is because of our desire to allow others to rest on this day. You may say, Well they are working anyway. Perhaps, but the sin rests upon their employer. You must not contribute to their sin and thus make it your sin.

4. Mercy is always permitted on the Sabbath. God loves mercy
 LBC – Chapter 22:8
 “The sabbath is then kept holy unto the Lord, when men, after a due preparing of their hearts, and ordering their common affairs aforehand, do not only observe an holy rest all the day, from their own works, words and thoughts, about their worldly employment and recreations,³⁰ 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.”

Conclusion:

May God grant us to be lovers of mercy. May He grant us to be lovers of His Law. May He grant us to be lovers of the Sabbath

^{NAS} **Isaiah 58:13-14** "If because of the sabbath, you turn your foot From doing your *own* pleasure on My holy day, And call the sabbath a delight, the holy *day* of the LORD honorable, And shall honor it, desisting from your *own* ways, From seeking your *own* pleasure, And speaking *your own* word, ¹⁴ Then you will take delight in the LORD, And I will make you ride on the heights of the earth; And I will feed you *with* the heritage of Jacob your father, For the mouth of the LORD has spoken."