

Lord Of The Sabbath  
 Mark 2:23-28  
 August 17, 2025  
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*<sup>23</sup> One Sabbath he was going through the grainfields, and as they made their way, his disciples began to pluck heads of grain. <sup>24</sup> And the Pharisees were saying to him, "Look, why are they doing what is not lawful on the Sabbath?" <sup>25</sup> 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: <sup>26</sup> how he entered the house of God, in the time of<sup>d</sup> Abiathar the high priest, and ate the bread of the Presence, which it is not lawful for any but the priests to eat, and also gave it to those who were with him?" <sup>27</sup> And 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." . "*

My title for this sermon is "The Lord of the Sabbath".

Often times, you have probably heard me refer to Jesus Christ as the Lord Jesus Christ. Why? Because that is who we proclaim. Our message to believers and unbelievers alike is the proclamation or the declaration that Jesus is Lord!

The Apostle Paul writing to the church in Corinth said in 2 Corinthians 4:5, "*For what we proclaim is not ourselves, but Jesus Christ as Lord, with ourselves as your servants for Jesus' sake.*"

When we say "Lord", we mean "one who has power and authority"

In the United Kingdom, you have people in upper house of the parliament called the House of Lords. Each member of this house is called a "Lord". The House of Lords examines government bills, scrutinizes public policy and proposes changes to legislation. The House of Lord is similar to the Senate in the United States. Being in the position of a "Lord" or Senator can carry some responsibility and limited authority.

However, when we say Jesus is Lord, we do not mean that Jesus has some authority or power but Jesus is Lord of all heaven and on earth. Jesus is supreme in authority. To him service and obedience are due.

The early disciples of Jesus called him Lord. Even a Roman Centurion addressed Jesus as "Lord" (Matthew 8:8). And Jesus approves of his disciples calling him by that title.

Jesus has authority over all seen and unseen. We have seen in the Gospel of Mark, at least until now, that Jesus has authority to heal, to forgive and call people to himself as his disciples. Jesus called Peter, Andrew, James, John and Levi and they followed him immediately. They left everything and followed Jesus. *Following Jesus will cost you emotional, relational, economic and material capital and even your life but you will gain all of heaven and all of God when you submit to the Lordship of Christ.* (John 12:26).

So, as a believer or disciple, if you call Jesus as Lord, it has implications for you and how you live your life. Because, if Jesus is truly the Lord of your life, then you are simply his servant. Servant is a modest word. Paul referred to himself as a “slave of Jesus Christ”. (Romans 1:1)

When you became a disciple or a follower of Jesus Christ, you have given up and are giving up self-seeking desires and have denied and are denying all of yourself to become a slave of Jesus Christ.

1. To put it a different way, don't call Jesus as “Lord” if you are *not* willing to do all that Jesus commands. If there are compartments, areas or part of your life that resist the Lordship of Christ, then you must bring into submission to Christ.
2. It is quite a serious thing to call Jesus Lord because Jesus demands that you give him singular and exclusive obedience. You shall no other Lords except the Lord God.

Here are a few reminders:

1. *“No one can serve two masters, for either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will be devoted to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and money”* Matthew 6:24. The word “masters” is the word “Lord”. Decide who you will serve – money or the Lord Jesus.
2. *“Not everyone who says to me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ will enter the kingdom of heaven, but the one who does the will of my Father who is in heaven”* Matthew 7:21. You see lip service to Jesus is not going to work in the end. Doing the will of God is to become a slave of Jesus Christ.
3. In the Gospel of Luke, Jesus, after his Sermon on the Mount, Jesus says, *“Why do you call me ‘Lord, Lord,’ and not do what I tell you?”* Luke 6:46.

And here in this passage, we see the Lord Jesus Christ referring to himself, for the first time, in the Gospel of Mark as “Lord” - Lord of the Sabbath. The Pharisees don't know about the full identity of the Jesus Christ. They called themselves “disciples of Moses”

(John 9:28). They prided themselves as lay keepers of the Law of Moses. They exalted tradition over the spirit of the Law. The Sabbath was important to them. And here we see that the Pharisees have a problem with how the Lord Jesus Christ operates on the Sabbath.

This is not the first time the Pharisees are critical of Jesus or his disciples.

- When Jesus forgave a paralytic “they question in their hearts saying ‘he is blaspheming’!” (Mark 2:7). So Jesus responds and tells them that He has authority to forgive sins, which by the way only God has.
- The *second* time the Pharisees are critical again when Jesus calls Levi and has dinner with him, they question “why does he eat with sinners?” (Mark 2:16). Jesus tells them that he had come to call sinners not the self-righteous.
- The *third* time the Pharisees are critical about Jesus is when everybody around was fasting but the disciples of Jesus were not. So he responds to them and tells them, when Jesus is around his disciples cannot fast. (Mark 2:19).

Look at verses 23 and 24.

*23 One Sabbath he was going through the grainfields, and as they made their way, his disciples began to pluck heads of grain.*

*<sup>24</sup> And the Pharisees were saying to him, “Look, why are they doing what is not lawful on the Sabbath?”*

Why were the disciples plucking corn or grain in the fields? Because they were hungry. Mark does not tell us the disciples were hungry but the Gospel of Matthew does.

Matthew 12:1 - “*At that time Jesus went through the grainfields on the Sabbath. His disciples were hungry, and they began to pluck heads of grain and to eat*”. The Gospel of Luke gives us even a little more detail. Luke 6:1 - “*his disciples plucked and ate some heads of grain, rubbing them in their hands*”.

But the day was a Sabbath day meaning the day of rest. The Pharisees had become so obsessed with rituals, traditions and ceremony that the slightest departure from the Law or the Sabbath was a problem. They were not willing to see the human need involved. The disciples of Jesus were hungry. They picked up heads of grain or corn, rubbed them in their hands. And they began to eat.

So what was unlawful? Hunger. No. Eating on the Sabbath. No.

If we look at Genesis 2:3 we see why the Sabbath was instituted.

The Sabbath was created as a day of rest and was to be treated as holy.

*“So God blessed the seventh day and made it holy, because on it God rested from all his work that he had done in creation”*

Deuteronomy 5:14 *“but the seventh day is a Sabbath to the LORD your God. On it you shall not do any work, you or your son or your daughter or your male servant or your female servant, or your ox or your donkey or any of your livestock, or the sojourner who is within your gates, that your male servant and your female servant may rest as well as you.”*

So the Sabbath was a day of rest. No work is to be done. The family, the workers, the animals all of them need to take a break. Take rest. So what was the issue?

Verse 24 tells us what they accused the disciples of *“Look, why are they doing what is not lawful on the Sabbath?”*

The Pharisees see the plucking of the grains as *doing* work on a Sabbath.

That was the issue!

Plucking grains and eating itself was not a problem but the fact that they were doing it on a Sabbath was the problem.

The Law had several concessions and exceptions for human needs. For example, pregnant mothers who would give birth on a Sabbath was one exception.

But what exactly was the kind of work that was prohibited? Was the Pharisees' criticism even valid? Look at Deuteronomy 23:25 - *“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”*

What was unlawful was the reaping of the grain. Not plucking of the grain.

And how does our Lord answer the Pharisees. He answers by asking a question from Scripture.

Let's see verses 25-26

*<sup>25</sup> 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: <sup>26</sup> how he entered the house of God, in the time of Abiathar the high priest, and ate the bread of the Presence, which it is not lawful for any but the priests to eat, and also gave it to those who were with him?"*

Notice Jesus answers his question again with a question. Jesus wants the Pharisees to remember David the King of Israel. David when he was in a desperate condition. David was running away from Saul who was trying to kill him. In his desperation, David gets hungry and finds himself in the temple. And there he eats the Holy Bread.

See 1 Samuel 21 verse 1-6.

*Then David came to Nob, to Ahimelech the priest. And Ahimelech came to meet David, trembling, and said to him, "Why are you alone, and no one with you?" <sup>2</sup> And David said to Ahimelech the priest, "The king has charged me with a matter and said to me, 'Let no one know anything of the matter about which I send you, and with which I have charged you.' I have made an appointment with the young men for such and such a place. <sup>3</sup> Now then, what do you have on hand? Give me five loaves of bread, or whatever is here." <sup>4</sup> And the priest answered David, "I have no common bread on hand, but there is holy bread—if the young men have kept themselves from women." <sup>5</sup> And David answered the priest, "Truly women have been kept from us as always when I go on an expedition. The vessels of the young men are holy even when it is an ordinary journey. How much more today will their vessels be holy?" <sup>6</sup> So the priest gave him the holy bread, for there was no bread there but the bread of the Presence, which is removed from before the Lord, to be replaced by hot bread on the day it is taken away.*

Here we see Ahimelech the priest giving him bread. In Mark 2:26, Jesus says Abiathar was the high priest. The ESV says "in the time of Abiathar". The LSB says "around the time of Abiathar". The Greek appears to say "when Abiathar was high priest". But we see in 1 Samuel 21 that Abiathar is not even mentioned.

It's likely that the interpretation "when Abiathar was high priest" is incorrect. That is why we see ESV and LSB translate the way they do. Also, Abiathar was the son of Ahimelech.

What was Jesus' point in his response? There are times when human needs become higher than religious ritual ceremony or even the Sabbath.

But Jesus' answer to the Pharisees was more than just meeting human needs on a Sabbath. Yes, the Sabbath was for resting.

Jesus had more to say about the Sabbath. Jesus had more to say about Himself. Jesus closes his response with two very important observations or statements.

Verses 27 and 28.

*<sup>27</sup> And 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."*

First statement

The Sabbath was created for the benefit of man. It was God's gift to human beings. It was for your own good. The Sabbath was instituted to provide rest from labor and work *so you can worship and praise God.*

Why is it so hard for us to devote one day to set aside for God? Start planning for a Sunday on a Saturday. Not Sunday morning. No wonder the unbelieving world is partying and drinking themselves to death. By Monday morning, they are out of shape they cannot even work well. The Sabbath was not created to put heavy burdens that are hard to bear.

The Pharisees were imposing unnecessary and unscriptural burdens on people.

Second statement: Jesus Christ is Lord even of the Sabbath. He has authority to even overrule the Sabbath.

Jesus has authority over sickness. Jesus has authority over demons. Jesus has authority over who he calls to be his disciples. Jesus has authority to forgive sins. Jesus has authority over the Sabbath.

Jesus did not come to put strict regulations on outside rituals and traditions but rather to call people into a loving relationship with him.

Jesus uses his authority to serve his disciples and wants his disciples to do the same.

*<sup>13</sup> You call me Teacher and Lord, and you are right, for so I am. <sup>14</sup> If I then, your Lord and*

*Teacher, have washed your feet, you also ought to wash one another's feet. <sup>15</sup> For I have given you an example, that you also should do just as I have done to you. John 13:12-15*

Ultimately, at the end of the three years of his ministry, Jesus uses his authority to save sinners. Jesus laid his life down for sinners like you.

*<sup>18</sup> No one takes it from me, but I lay it down of my own accord. I have authority to lay it down, and I have authority to take it up again. John 10:18*

There are only two classes of people. Those who live under the authority and the dominion of Satan, the world and self. And those who live under the authority of God. Under whose authority would you rather be?

“..everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved” Romans 10:13

----- Discipleship Questions-----

MESSAGE SUMMARY: Lord of the Sabbath? Mark 2:23-28

HEAD: These questions help you examine the truth of God's Word.

1. What do we learn from Jesus' response to the Pharisees about the Sabbath?

HEART: These questions help you wrestle with what you believe.

2. What do you believe about the Lordship of Jesus in your life? What are some implications when you call Jesus Lord?

3. What is God convicting you of and to believe in light of this message?

HANDS/HABITS: These questions help you bring the truth into your everyday life and develop behaviors that change your habits.

4. For personal reflection: What will you change to bring any parts in your life that are not yet in submission to the Lord Jesus Christ?