

Valley Bible Church
Sermon Notes for August 21, 2016

Sabbath Controversy
Mark 2:23-3:6

I. The purpose of the Sabbath (2:23-28)

A. The accusation on the Sabbath (2:23-24)

One Sabbath he was going through the grainfields, 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?"

-Notice the progression of controversy from the religious leaders

-Questioning in their hearts (2:6)

-Questioning the disciples (2:16)

-Questioning Jesus (2:18)

-Accusing disciples of unlawful actions (2:24)

-What do we know about the Sabbath from OT?

-Genesis 2:2-3 "And on the seventh day God finished his work that he had done, and he rested on the seventh day from all his work that he had done. 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."

-Exodus 20:8-11 "Remember the Sabbath day, 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, you, or your son, or your daughter, your male servant, or your female servant, or your livestock, or the sojourner who is within your gates. For in six days the LORD made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that is in them, and rested on the seventh day. Therefore the LORD blessed the Sabbath day and made it holy."

-An issue arises because disciples are plucking heads of grain on the Sabbath

-Plucking heads of grain from a friend's field was normal

-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."

- According to the oral tradition of the Pharisees, the following are examples of what is not lawful to do on the Sabbath: reaping, threshing, winnowing, tying a knot, untying a knot, start a fire, extinguish a fire, cutting, sewing, cleaning, travelling a certain distance, carrying a certain amount of things, etc.
- According to rabbinic tradition, plucking heads of grain for eating involved reaping, threshing, winnowing, and preparing food

B. The appeal to Scripture (2:25-26)

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 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?"

- “Have you never read” would be insult to the intelligence of the Pharisees
- Jesus references 1 Samuel 21:1-6
 - David and some of his men were running from Saul
 - David came to the Tabernacle, then located at Nob
 - Ahimelech, the high priest, granted the weekly showbread to David
- The showbread was set up in the tabernacle/temple in the OT
 - Exodus 25:30** “And you shall set the bread of the Presence on the table before me regularly.”
- The showbread was intended for the priests
 - Leviticus 24:9** "And it shall be for Aaron and his sons, and they shall eat it in a holy place, since it is for him a most holy portion out of the LORD's food offerings, a perpetual due."
- Jesus acknowledges that this Davidic story might appear to violate the Law
 - However, helping needs like hunger must supercede the Law

C. The authority of the Son of Man (2:27-28)

And he said to them, "The Sabbath was made for man, not man for the Sabbath. So the Son of Man is lord even of the Sabbath."

- Jesus shared a most simple and telling proverb regarding the Sabbath
- The Sabbath was implemented to serve man
 - Exodus 23:12** "Six days you shall do your work, but on the seventh day you shall rest; that your ox and your donkey may

have rest, and the son of your servant woman, and the alien, may be refreshed.”

- There are no specifics in Scripture detailing “work” on the Sabbath
- Pharisees and Judaism had written copious amounts on this issue trying to delineate between working and resting
- In doing so, they had become obsessed with resting on the Sabbath and had lost the very purpose of the Sabbath
- Additionally, Jesus stated that the Son of Man has authority over the Sabbath
 - Earlier, Jesus said the Son of Man has authority to forgive sins (v. 10)
 - Jesus is saying that He is God—the Creator, Giver, and Lord over the Sabbath

II. The plotting on the Sabbath (3:1-6)

A. The setup (3:1-2)

Again he entered the synagogue, and a man was there with a withered hand. And they watched Jesus, to see whether he would heal him on the Sabbath, so that they might accuse him.

- This is the same scenario in that it is on the Sabbath
- This is different because Jesus is in the synagogue
 - Last time, Jesus was a welcomed guest teacher (1:21-28)
 - This time, Jesus is set up as a prey to be trapped
- Now the religious leaders are attempting to accuse Him by planting this man with a withered hand in the synagogue
 - The Pharisees believed it was unlawful to heal anyone on the Sabbath unless their life was in danger
 - Their intention was clearly to accuse Jesus of violating the Sabbath
- It is ironic that they will accuse Jesus of healing which admits that He was a miracle-worker as they also expected of the Messiah

B. The silence (3:3-4)

And he said to the man with the 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.

- Jesus embraced this setup head on by summoning the man to Himself
- Jesus asked a most obvious yet piercing question

- Obviously, it is never right to do harm or kill on any day
- Thus, one must answer in the positive (Good>Harm)
 - However, that answer would endorse and support His imminent healing
- Therefore, the only way to respond for the Pharisees was silence
- On a subtle level, Jesus is showing the difference between the Pharisees and Himself
 - Jesus does good on the Sabbath by healing this man
 - The Pharisees were already doing harm in planning this setup
 - The Pharisees will actually plot to kill Jesus at the end of this interaction (3:6)

C. The stretch (3:5)

And he looked around at them with anger, grieved at their hardness of heart, and said to the man, "Stretch out your hand." He stretched it out, and his hand was restored.

- This was an anger at their spiritual blindness and hard hearts
- The "heart" included the mind and the emotions in Hebrew thought
 - 2 Corinthians 3:14** "But their minds were hardened. For to this day, when they read the old covenant, that same veil remains unlifted, because only through Christ is it taken away."
- Scripture describes someone with a hardened heart as an unbeliever
 - Ephesians 4:17-18** "Now this I say and testify in the Lord, that you must no longer walk as the Gentiles do, in the futility of their minds. They are darkened in their understanding, alienated from the life of God because of the ignorance that is in them, due to their hardness of heart."

D. The scheme (3:6)

The Pharisees went out and immediately held counsel with the Herodians against him, how to destroy him.

- What do we know about the Herodian?
 - The Herodians were not a religious group but a political party
 - They were supporters of the dynasty of Herod's family
- The Pharisees and the Herodians were an unlikely team but they saw the potential threat of their common enemy
- At this point, the controversy had escalated and their desire was to destroy Jesus

-There is irony to be found in the fact that the ones who claimed to meticulously uphold the Law were now breaking the Law by plotting to kill someone on the Sabbath!