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Mark 2:23-3:6  
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“For the Rest of Us”

Grace and peace...

So here’s a good question for you to consider. The Sabbath is a day to be refreshed and rejuvenated but is the Sabbath about a lack of work or an abundance of the Word? The answer shapes how we seek to keep this day holy and the week manageable! Getting some rest or getting your worship in? And no, falling asleep in church is not what it means to keep the Sabbath!

But did you notice the move Luther made there in his explanation? Instead of saying the Sabbath is about a lack of work, Luther made it about hearing the preached Word! But you have to admit, Luther made a pivot in terms of how we should remember the Sabbath Day—from resting to hearing the Word. It’s not the only pivot either, as we all know the Sabbath was Saturday, not Sunday. This is why some of our Christian cousins—people like Seventh Day Adventists look at us and say, “You can’t change the Sabbath day! It’s God’s holy day! Sunday is the 1<sup>st</sup> day of the week. Saturday is the Sabbath. You can’t change what God commanded. You can’t change the ‘when’ and you can’t change the ‘what’. How do we respond to that?

We can start by admitting, we've lost the habit of resting that leads to restoration. We work, work, work, and go, go, go. A lot of you especially with families are getting by, but you're exhausted. And your spiritual life is even more exhausted. We're not resting.

We're coming off Memorial Day weekend, right? And people were so happy and thankful. A whole day off from work! Well, friends, this is what the Sabbath was meant to be *each week*. But when we treat the Sabbath like just another day, then there's no other place to get recharged. I think we're shorting ourselves and as a result, we are so tired. It's like the Sabbath has disappeared from our lives practically speaking. It's just not there.

Last week, in true Americana/Memorial Day fashion, I went to buy a package of hot dogs. I buy Hebrew Nation because I like their tagline, "We answer to a higher authority." It makes me think it's safer to eat than other brands. Hebrew Nation used to have seven hot dogs to a package, seven being that perfect number, but now they are only putting in six. Less product for the same cost, like so many other things on the shelf. But where's the seventh one? The same could be asked of us in our week, "Where's our seventh one?" It's like it's not there. God doesn't want us to be gipped. He gave the Sabbath as a gift.

But to whom did He give it? He didn't give it to you or me, at least not directly. He gave it to the Israelites. We are not the Hebrew nation. This is a really big deal when it comes to interpretation of the Mosaic law. We don't follow the Ten Commandments because of Moses. We don't have anything to do with him. Our point of connection is Christ, not Moses. We are grafted in Gentiles. We like the Ten Commandments because Jesus teaches them, and to be honest, He takes the Ten Commandments and cranks it up in their intent and intensity. We like the Ten Commandments because they are good summary of the law—much of what we call natural law is found in the Ten Commandments. But if you think the Ten Commandments are holy because Moses gave them, then you have to take with it all the other commandments in Levitical law. There's no picking or choosing. And I don't think anyone wants to go back to the Levitical code of holiness. If we did, what would that say about the work of the cross?

So when it comes to applying Scripture, we have to realize, all Scripture is for us, but not everything is written to us. We are not the Hebrew nation.

But it is interesting to see how Jesus took on those who wanted the Sabbath to be something it was never intended to be. It was meant for rest, but Jesus' opponents turn it into a test. Two tests. The Pharisees notice that the disciples are picking the heads of grain to eat. Well, that's work. And it's not OK

to do work on the Sabbath. That little act of picking grain was not lawful in their eyes. Jesus asks them, "Have you never read what David did..." well, of course they had read it. But they couldn't square it with their interpretation. David ate the showbread that was reserved for the priests to eat. David, at this point, was fleeing Saul. He was in hungry, he was in need. So he ate it. The point Jesus is making is that when there's need, meet it. Help someone. Do good. That's always in season. People are more important than the Sabbath. "The Sabbath was made for man, not man for Sabbath. So the Son of Man is lord even of the Sabbath." The claim here is Jesus is greater than David. He is lord, even of the Sabbath.

The second test also happens on the Sabbath, but it's not in a grain field, it's in a synagogue. That raises the stakes. A man with a withered hand is there. They're watching Jesus closely to accuse him. Jesus tells the man to come close and he asks them, "Is it lawful on the Sabbath to do good or to do harm, to save life or to kill?" They give no answer. Jesus weeps over the hardness of their hearts. He is grieved and upset. He tells the man, "Stretch out your hand." He stretches it out, and his hand was restored. Now, even in the Pharisees handbook, stretching out your hand was not considered work. The man didn't do any work against the Sabbath. Jesus didn't touch him. So the only way they can

be mad at Jesus is that they acknowledge He did the work by performing a miracle. But they can't acknowledge the miracle because then they would have to acknowledge the divinity of Jesus. So that's the second test they try, but fail.

When Jesus said He was Lord of the Sabbath, He meant it. We look to Christ in everything. He is the fulfillment of the Law. He didn't come to abolish the Law but to satisfy its demands and take away the curse for our failure to keep the law. When we look at the Sabbath, if it's about not working, how did Jesus keep the Sabbath more perfectly than anyone else? We have Good Friday and we have Easter Sunday. That Saturday in between is not just filler. That Saturday is the Sabbath, actually a high Sabbath, the Passover Sabbath. For that entire Sabbath, from sundown Friday to sundown Saturday, Jesus was dead. That means He did no work whatsoever. He didn't move a muscle. He eyes didn't blink. His heart did not beat. You want to see no work? He shows us what no work looks like! This means that not only is Jesus perfect in life. He is perfect in death! And when he rose on a Sunday, that was a game changer. And that's why the church—from its earliest moments (Acts 20:7) changed their worship to Sunday. Because the resurrection of Christ was pre-emptive sign of the fulfilled new covenant, not part of the old covenant which has now been replaced.

So how should we demonstrate His lordship over the Sabbath? Put everything in Christ's column. Look to Him. Love Him. Obey Him. Marvel at the gift He gave us. But in terms of the Sabbath, don't just rest. **Rest in Him.** Rest in what He has done. Like the original rest that God demonstrated after completing the work of creation. Let that rest be your worship. Mark Buchanan, wrote in his book, *The Rest of God*, "Sabbath is both a day and an attitude to nurture such stillness. It is both a time on a calendar and disposition of the heart."

What a gift the Sabbath is—so different than the legalistic approach the Pharisees had. Instead, it's a holy festival day, it's the "festivus for the rest of us." It's easy like Sunday morning. It's a time to rest and a time to worship as well as renewal. God knows we need it so on this first day of the week, or whenever we people gather for worship, God goes to work for us. He told the man with the withered hand to stretch out your hand. But He tells us, Listen to my Word. Hear me speak to you. Lift up your tired, needy hearts to me. And He takes what has been depleted and run down by a busy life and He restores and refreshes the mind, body and soul. What a gift!

In Jesus' name, Amen.

