

## ***SECOND SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST***

***Mark 2:23-3:6***

Everyone was trying to figure Jesus out so they kept a close eye on Him. They asked Him questions and they watched what His disciples were doing, hoping to understand the ultimate end of all His teaching and miracle working.

Then, one Sabbath as Jesus and His disciples were walking to the synagogue, the disciples were seen breaking grain off the stalks as they walk through a field and eating them. Of course as travellers the laws of Moses gave them that right, but on the Sabbath? Was Jesus teaching His disciples not to keep the Sabbath Holy?

Some of the Pharisees confronted Jesus about this, hoping to put a wedge between Him and the people who followed Him. But Jesus made it clear that God saw the necessity of satisfying human hunger, even on the Sabbath. Jesus said, "God created the Sabbath for people, not people for the Sabbath." In other words God considered keeping people more important than keeping the Sabbath.

With these thought and words still in the people's minds, Jesus entered the Synagogue. There was a man there with a withered hand and the Pharisees wanted to see if He would heal the man on the Sabbath. When Jesus saw what was happening He called the man forward and asked the Pharisees "Is it lawful to do good or bad on the Sabbath." It is always lawful to do good and not to do bad, but they were silent because their hearts were hard. So Jesus told the man to stretch out his hand, and he did, and was

healed.

It seems silly to us that so much was made of the Sabbath by the Pharisees, but consider it from their point of view. God had declared that the Sabbath was holy and should be kept holy. It would be proper for them to be concerned that some new teaching might compromise that belief in the people. So they were concerned when the disciples appeared to be breaking the Sabbath. Which raises an issue for us. How do we keep the Sabbath?

What does it mean to keep the Sabbath holy. In the Bible the word “holy” means set apart. Holy things are set aside for divine purposes. The temple was holy because God set it apart for sacrifice and worship. Israel was holy because God set them aside for a divine purpose. So, the Sabbath is holy because it is a day set aside for divine purpose. Even though we Christians should worship everyday, and the church holds service at other times, our main worship service as a congregation is held on Sundays. But how do we keep this day holy, set aside for divine purpose.

Jesus’ words help us understand the true meaning of the Sabbath for Christians. Jesus said that God created the Sabbath for humans, not humans for the Sabbath. God did not declare that we keep one day out of seven holy just to lay an extra burden on us. God knows that we need that time. We need to be able to stop and focus on our real purpose for living. In our day to day lives we tend to lose sight of that, so we need to be reminded every week. God knows that we need spiritual rest and nourishment, so God established that one day in seven should be set aside.

The problem is, most people know Jesus said that the Sabbath was created for humans, so they decide they can use it as they

see best. But Jesus didn't say that we are lords of the Sabbath. Jesus is Lord of the Sabbath. So does that mean it is wrong to work on Sunday? We can all agree that Doctors and nurses and Pharmacists and emergency workers need to be on the job on the Sabbath. People who work in nursing homes or who operate other essentials need to be on the job. But what about restaurants, or grocery stores. Is it a sin to mow your yard on Sunday?

The real issue is, "Is Jesus Lord of our Sabbath?" What is important is that time is set aside as holy - for divine purpose.

Under special circumstances, God set aside times other than Sundays for people. Christians need to take those times for worship and spiritual renewal.

But all this talk of working on Sunday is skirting the real issue: "Is Jesus Lord of our Sabbath?" What do we do on Sunday?

Everyone here has come to church this Sunday. One would consider that a good thing to do to keep the Sabbath holy.

But why did we come to church? Was it to worship God and become better disciples throughout the week? Or did we come to see friends or be seen? Did we come to relax in beautiful surroundings, to hear some good music, and maybe a good message? Remember that the Pharisees were in the Synagogue on the Sabbath just as Jesus was. But they came to accuse the Son of God. Jesus, on the other hand, came to serve God by healing a man. Do we come to church for Jesus or for ourselves?

Some of us get together with family for Sunday Dinner. That can be good. In an age when the extended family is being pulled further apart it is good and a Godly thing to try to hold those relationships together. But is the purpose of that Family time to glorify God or to serve self? And does that family time prevent

us from going to church or participating in congregational activities?

Is Jesus Lord of our Sabbath? Do we wake up on Sunday with the goal of focusing on him and being refreshed and nourished by his presence. Or do we see Sunday as just another day with an hour at church - sometimes. If we are not sure whether Jesus is Lord of our Sabbath then there is a larger issue at hand. If Jesus is not Lord of our Sundays, then who is Lord of the rest of our life?

**AMEN.**