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Sermon Summary #9

Jesus is our Sabbath rest! Mark 2:23-3:6

What connection is there between Jesus and his disciples plucking and eating the heads of grain, as described in chapter two, and his healing a man with a withered hand in chapter three? And what relevance or significance or practical help do these two stories have for us today? The fact is, these two stories are connected or linked up by **three common themes** found in each. And I assure you they have tremendous practical and relevant life lessons for us today.

First, both of these stories expose the ugly, dark underbelly of **religion and legalism**.

Second, both of these stories ask and answer the question: **Who is Jesus?**

Third, both of these stories compel us to address the issue of **the Sabbath**.

(1) What is a religious or legalistic spirit, and why is it so dangerous to the people of God?

Legalism is the tendency to regard as divine law things which God has neither required nor forbidden in Scripture. But it doesn't stop there. Legalism also involves the inclination to look with suspicion on others for their failure or refusal to conform to these extra-biblical rules as well as the belief that if I obey them I will gain acceptance with God or at least improve my standing with him and even increase his approval of my life.

Religion and legalism go hand in hand: *I create rules and expectations not found in the Bible and then feel good about myself and my relationship with God for having obeyed them all the while I judge others for not having obeyed them.*

Ex: the Pharisees and the Sabbath . . . The religious leaders of Israel had turned the Sabbath into a day of incredible stress and anguish and of one heavy burden after another. So many extra rules and regulations had been heaped upon the original commandment that **it actually was harder to "rest" on the Sabbath than it was on the other six days of the week.**

One sign of a religious spirit is the tendency always to be **looking** for what's **wrong** in another person's life, in order that you might **judge** them, instead of looking for what's **right**, in order to **encourage** them. The legalist then *feels good* when he can identify your error. It *reinforces his feeling of superiority*. He actually thinks of himself as *more spiritual, more godly, and more favored and loved by God*.

There's a *flip side* to the religious/legalistic spirit. . . .

What drives the religious spirit? It is the belief that their own efforts, achievements, gains for them acceptance with God and approval from men. They do not experience rest in Christ's achievements or confidence in what he has done for us, but re-double their own works and take pride in what they do and what others don't.

See 2:24 and 3:2 . . . The religious/legalistic spirit is **always on the look-out for someone else's sin**; always on the look-out for failure to measure up to their rules, rules that aren't in the Bible; always **spying out the behavior and beliefs of others** to root out the slightest deviation from their traditions. They nitpick and judge, nitpick and judge, nitpick and judge!

And how does Jesus feel about it? Read 3:5 . . . Their “hardness of heart” was the result of this religious spirit, this legalistic mentality which in essence said: “We really don’t care about this man with a withered hand. We are insensitive to his pain and suffering. His feelings of rejection and scorn and worthlessness carry very little weight with us. We are much more concerned that you and everyone else observe our regulations about what can and can’t be done on the Sabbath.”

(2) The second theme that unites these two stories is what they tell us about Jesus.

If the OT law did not condemn David and his companions, far less does it condemn Jesus and his, for something greater than David is here! The Levitical priests technically “broke” the Sabbath every week by performing extensive “work” in the temple Jesus declares: And something greater than the Temple is here!

This is a story about who Jesus is! It is all about Jesus saying to them and to us: I am greater than David. I am the fulfillment of all that David typified. I am greater than the Temple. I am the fulfillment of all that the Temple typified and symbolized. I am greater than the Sabbath. I bring to you a rest and satisfaction that not even the OT Sabbath could provide.

(3) Finally, we come to *the true meaning of the Sabbath for us who live under the new covenant instituted by Jesus.*

See Exodus 31:12-13, 16-17.

Jesus is the fulfillment of all that the OT prophesied, prefigured, and foreshadowed, and that includes the Sabbath. **See Col. 2:16-17.** The Sabbath was a shadow of things to come.

The immediate purpose of the Sabbath in the OT was to provide men and women with physical rest from their physical labors. When Paul says that this Sabbath was a shadow, of which Christ is the substance, he means that *the physical rest provided by the OT Sabbath finds its fulfillment in the spiritual rest provided by Jesus. We cease from our labors, not by resting physically one day in seven, but by resting spiritually forever in Christ by faith alone.*

We experience God’s true Sabbath rest, not by taking off from work one day in seven (although we certainly should do that!), but by placing our faith in the saving work of Christ. To experience God’s Sabbath rest, therefore, is to cease from those works of righteousness by which we were seeking to be justified. *The NT fulfillment of the OT Sabbath is not one day in seven of physical rest, but an eternity of spiritual rest through faith in the work of Christ.*

Physical rest, of course, is still essential. God does not intend for you to work seven days a week. Your body and spirit need to experience renewal and refreshment by resting.

My point is this: If you want to observe Sunday as a day of rest to the exclusion of all other worldly pursuits or activities, that’s fine. But you have no biblical right to expect others to do the same and therefore no biblical right to pass judgment on them if they don’t (see Romans 14:5).

In conclusion, then, the one thing I want you to understand is that for the Christian, for the person who is trusting in the work of Jesus Christ rather than in his own efforts, for those resting by faith in Jesus, **every day is the Sabbath!** Every day is a celebration of the fact that we don’t have to do any spiritual or physical works to gain acceptance with God. We are accepted by him through faith in the works of Jesus Christ. If you are a child of God, born again, trusting and believing in Jesus for your acceptance with God rather than in your own works and efforts, you are experiencing the true meaning of Sabbath twenty-four hours a day, seven days a week.

I observe the Sabbath every moment of every day to the degree that I rest in the work of Christ for me. Thus, **for the Christian, Jesus is our Sabbath rest!**