



A BETTER WORD

THE GOSPEL OF MARK

A Study Through the Life of King Jesus | with Pastor Nick Gatzke

The Lord of the Sabbath

Mark 2:23–3:6

THE BIG IDEA

Everyone wants to be king of some hill. But Jesus is Lord even of the Sabbath, and your true spiritual identity is found in surrendering to him as king.

SERMON SUMMARY

Sabbath was one of two practices that made the Jews Jewish, and by Jesus' day the definition of "work" had swollen far past anything Moses wrote. So when the disciples plucked heads of grain, the Pharisees heard a betrayal of national identity. Jesus answered by reaching back a thousand years to David, who in desperate need ate the bread of the Presence that only priests could eat. Then Jesus declares that the law was given to serve the needs of God's people and point them to him — never to deepen their need.

Jesus says the thing that changes everything: the Sabbath was made for man, not man for the Sabbath, and the Son of Man is Lord even of the Sabbath. To demonstrate his authority, Jesus calls forward a man with a withered hand and asks whether it is lawful to do good or harm, to save life or to kill. His opponents say nothing. Their pursuit of purity had made them indifferent to real need, and Jesus is both angry and grieved. He heals the man — and they leave to plot his death.

DIGGING DEEPER

1. Sabbath and circumcision were the two markers that set Israel apart from every other nation. Given that, what were the Pharisees really accusing the disciples of in verse 24? Why was this about far more than a handful of grain?
2. Jesus points to David eating the bread of the Presence in 1 Samuel 21. Read that account. Why does he offer it not merely as an example but as precedent? What does it reveal about how the law was meant to function?
3. "The Sabbath was made for man, not man for the Sabbath. So the Son of Man is Lord even of the Sabbath" (vv. 27–28). Compare this to Exodus 20:8–11. What claim is Jesus making about himself, and who alone could rightly make it?
4. In the synagogue Jesus asks whether it is lawful to do good or to do harm, and the room goes silent (3:4). He reads that silence as hardness of heart. Where have you seen a desire for purity quietly turn into indifference toward people?
5. What piece of your identity are you tempted to believe puts you in greatest favor with God — a theological position, a political conviction, a denominational label, your giving, or

your service? Those can all be good things. But what changes when Jesus, not that marker, is the core of who you are?

LIVING IT OUT

Everyone wants to be king of the hill, and when the hills run out we build more. That instinct follows us into faith: we take good, secondary things and quietly promote them to the center, then measure ourselves and everyone else by them. Jesus will not ride along in the passenger seat of a life like that. He is Lord of the Sabbath, Lord of the law, and Lord of your life.

Heart Check: If someone asked what makes you right with God, what would come out of your mouth first — and would it be Jesus? Where has your version of faithfulness left you indifferent to a need sitting right in front of you?

This Week: Identify one need you are able to meet and have been walking past — a neighbor, a coworker, someone in your church — and meet it, even if it costs you a rule you like keeping. Then hand Jesus the keys in one concrete area: your calendar, your wallet, or your words.

REFLECTION & PRAYER

“The Sabbath was made for man, not man for the Sabbath. So the Son of Man is Lord even of the Sabbath.”

— **Mark 2:27–28**

Confess the secondary thing you have promoted to the primary. Then ask God for a deep and profound surrender to the king — because he is worthy of it.

Your Prayer:

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