

## Jesus Wow! Series Part 13

### Jesus, Lord of The Sabbath

Mark 2:23 – 3:6

Pastor Andrew Neville 5/7/20

#### Sermon Summary

Pastor Andrew's opening anecdote occurred when, as a young Christian, he was savagely beaten (spiritually) by a woman of the Jehovah Witness persuasion. At that time Andrew had no answer for her avalanche of knowledge that Jesus was **not** God. It was during a reading of today's passage that a light suddenly shone into his disquieted soul some many months later.

So far in the gospel of Mark, we have looked at three incidents in Jesus' ministry that were controversial; today we will look at two more. In each case, Jesus' divinity is questioned – then displayed in his answers. To the Pharisees, Jesus appeared to be dismissive of the Law in its application.

The Pharisees were out to trap Jesus – He wasn't the Messiah they wanted. The two stories in today's sermon have issues that were a no-go to The Pharisees – working and healing on the Sabbath. The Sabbath was a big deal to the Jews. The many rules for observing the Sabbath had been laid down over centuries and had their basis in Exodus 20:8-11:

*“Remember the Sabbath day by keeping it holy. Six days you shall labour and do all your work, but the 7<sup>th</sup> day is a Sabbath to the Lord your God. On it you shall not do any work, neither you nor your son or daughter, nor your manservant or maidservant, nor your animals, nor the alien within your gates. For in 6 days The Lord made the heavens and the earth, the sea, and all that is in them, but He rested on the 7<sup>th</sup> day. Therefore, the Lord blessed the Sabbath day and made it holy.”*

The Sabbath was modelled by God in his creation in 6 days and rest on the 7<sup>th</sup> and was for the good of humans. Humans cannot work non-stop. Rest is an essential part of our physical make-up. The Sabbath was an essential cog in the clockwork of ancient Jewish society. To break it was a shameful act. The Jews lived in fear of the command written in Exodus 31:15. *“For 6 days, work is to be done, but the 7<sup>th</sup> day is a Sabbath of rest, holy to the Lord. Whoever does any work on the Sabbath day must be put to death.”* It is no wonder the people wanted to be sure of what was work and what was not!

But the whole impact of the Sabbath laws was God's way of confronting greed, avarice, and harsh working conditions that might be imposed on workers by unscrupulous owners.

So, our Pharisees are out to catch Jesus breaking the Law – especially those pertaining to the Sabbath. The likelihood of rich pickings was greater on that day! Today's reading records two Sabbath transgressions of significance: working and healing.

Mark 2:23-24 records Jesus and his disciples walking through a grain field, picking some heads of grain (and presumably eating them). The Pharisees ask Jesus why He permits that. Jesus now turns the question back to these educated men by asking them whether they have read the scriptures! He then quotes the passage about David and his men recorded in 1 Samuel 21:6. It was lawful for priests to eat consecrated bread, and, in this instance, God allows David to eat the bread. He was an exception. However, for the Pharisees and their rigid interpretation of the Law, there were **no exceptions**.

Over the centuries, the Pharisees had added many prohibitions to the law of not working on the Sabbath: For example, you could not stitch, you could not write, you could neither light a fire nor put one out. They were persnickety, nit-picking busybodies, these religious policemen. But Jesus, in one stroke, reminded them of the meaning of the original law: *"The Sabbath was made for man, not man for the Sabbath,"* then powerfully added, ***"So, the Son of Man is Lord even of the Sabbath"*** Mark 2:27-28.

In that statement, Jesus is declaring that He **is** the Lord. It is here that Pastor Andrew had his spiritual illumination. Jesus was declaring Himself God.

Moving on to Mark 3:1-6. It's another Sabbath, and the Pharisees are again watching Jesus at work. In this example, Jesus literally baits the Pharisees – he knows why they are present – so he spots a man with a withered hand and has him come forward and show that hand to the assembly. He then asks generally, but specifically for the pharisaically minded, *"Which is lawful on the Sabbath: to do good or evil, to save life or to kill?"* (Mark 3:4). The Pharisees would not answer because they had evil motives. They cared more about rules and tradition than truly loving people.

Micah 6:8 records that God wants justice and care and humility in the world. How could the Pharisees get it so wrong? Jesus was deeply distressed at the stubbornness of the Pharisees, so, to show them love and kindness at work, He had the man stretch out his arm, and his hand was immediately healed. And how did the Pharisees respond? *"Then the Pharisees went out and began to plot with the Herodians how they might kill Jesus"* (Mark 3:6).

### **If we believe Jesus is Lord, how now should we live?**

1 Peter 2:9 records: *"But you are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people belonging to God, that you may declare the praises of Him who called you out of darkness into his wonderful light."*

Thus, we are exhorted to show the goodness of God to others. The whole duty of a Christian is to show the world how great God is – and that Jesus is this God.

Our own Sabbath is now Sunday because that was the day Jesus rose from the dead. If we work 7 days a week without a break, we are not only breaking God's law, but we will also break ourselves. So, don't be a workaholic; we need the rest God has prescribed.

## Discussion Questions

1. Have you ever had a discussion with a Jehovah's Witness? How did it go?
2. Have you ever been in a church where the partaking of Holy Communion was restricted? What were the guidelines and how did you feel about them?
3. **Read Mark 2: 23-28.** What do you understand by "The Sabbath was made for man, not man for the Sabbath"? Have you ever been in a Christian community with Sabbath restrictions?
4. **Read Mark 3:1-6.** The Pharisees have just seen a miracle. Why do they go out and plot to kill Jesus?
5. **Read Exodus 31:15.** Would this passage justify the Pharisees' behaviour?
6. Why were the Pharisees so stubborn about adherence to the Law? Can you think of examples that compare to Muslim Imams today?
7. If we believe that Jesus is Lord, how now should we live? Should it make any difference as to how we use our Sundays?

## Prayer Points

1. The locust plague in East Africa of biblical scale (an estimated 25 million East Africans will suffer from food shortages later this year). Pray for people of the region and especially Christians who are often discriminated against when it comes to receiving aid.
2. Resurgence in Coronavirus cases globally.
3. As the 'Hells Angels' gang moves into Silverdale, pray for Jesus to meaningfully impact the Gang culture in New Zealand with his mercy and love. Pray for opportunities to witness and share the Gospel.
4. Northcross church: the upcoming Women of Worth event (July 20), and the 5 week pre-marriage course starting July 20th