

What's in a Day?

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[0 : 00] Okay, now let's for a few minutes turn back to the scripture that we read together in the Bible in the New Testament, the Gospel of Mark. And if you remember, Mark's a short gospel.

It's very concise. It's very focused, mainly focusing on the claims and the person of Jesus and also on what it means to be a disciple of Jesus.

And we're coming to a really interesting little highlight of the first section which ends at chapter 3 verse 6, which has been focusing on some of the opposition there has been to Jesus.

So the big question that underpins this section might not be immediately obvious having read it, but really what underpins this whole section is who's the boss?

Who's the boss? It's all about power and it's all about authority and who is worthy to claim that power and authority.

[1 : 10] And it's quite interesting in some ways from coming out of the week that we've been in last week, in many ways is at the heart of last week's irrational rage against Kate Forbes in particular by the political and by the media establishment because the foundation of her life claims a higher authority than they have over her.

And interestingly, as believers, as Christians, I say I owe my life to Jesus. I owe everything I am to Jesus.

And Jesus calls me to love Him, to love my neighbor and to love my enemy. In some ways it's in the world in which we live, it's the most pluralistic philosophy there is.

And we are called as believers to live that way in our lives. Intolerance, bigotry, vilification all went one way this week in the public square and it wasn't from Kate Forbes and it wasn't from the free church.

Now this section here deals with that theme and from chapter 2 to chapter 3 verse 6, we have this growing clash between Jesus, the common people, Jesus the common people against the establishment, both religious and political.

[2 : 53] And we've seen that over the last few weeks. The biggie was a couple of weeks ago when Jesus claimed not only to be able to heal people but as a result to also be able to forgive their sins, a claim that made Him God and which the Pharisees recognized.

But then He went on to show His love for inverted commas, sinners, people that were outcasts and rejected by the society in which He lived. He then last week we saw His attitude to fasting and what it meant and put it in its biblical context.

And now we come to this Sabbath, to another area where Jesus contradicts the teaching of His day and brings deeper truth into what is symbolized in the Sabbath.

Now to the modern mind to ourselves that seems like an unlikely battleground for power and authority, the arguments that He brings into this area.

But it clearly is significant and important because at the end of the section that we read, if you'll notice, and we've looked at it before in terms of the kind of highlight of this section, we're reminded that the Pharisees went out and immediately held counsel with the Herodians against Him how to destroy Him.

[4 : 10] So it was obviously a big issue. The Pharisees symbolized the religious power and authority of their day and the Herodians symbolized and stood for the political power of their day.

They served Herod who was kind of the puppet Jewish king under the Roman Empire. But Herod was in partnership with the Roman authorities and for expediency for power, that was the case and the Herodians recognized that.

So both the religious powers of the day and the political powers contrived to a very unlikely way. An alliance came together in order to arrange to work out how they could get rid of Jesus, how they

could destroy Him because He was a threat to their power and to their authority.

And the question really remains the same today with regard to power and authority and who is worthy. Because here Jesus claims, in verse 28, He claims to be the Lord of the Sabbath, Son of Man is even Lord of the Sabbath.

And He's making a very authoritative claim there. He is recognizing that He is the one who has authority to understand and to explain the purpose of the Sabbath.

[5 : 43] And He showed that by healing on the Sabbath, by not only forgiving as we saw earlier, but also healing. He takes great authority in these, this whole section.

And He also reveals Himself again in this verse as the Savior. We saw a couple of weeks ago this title, this, I called it maybe a bit of reverently, a nickname, but it kind of is in many ways the name that Jesus used only for Himself.

No one else used it, the Son of Man. And we recognize that Jesus used that title because it reminded Him of why He was here. It's often, most often used in connection with the crucifixion, with why He came both to die and to be resurrected.

But it's that whole connotation of being the one who stands with us in our world of need and suffering to die for us, to do for us to live in a way that we couldn't live, to do something we couldn't do, to make ourselves right with God.

He has done that by living the life we couldn't, and by dying the death we deserve, and bringing life out of death as we come to Him in need. So His claims are great around this section of teaching on the Sabbath.

[7 : 03] So the title of this sermon is, What is, What is in a Day? And we're going to look at that just for a few moments this morning and see if we can unpack what Jesus is speaking about.

Because He's dealing with the Sabbath day, and the Sabbath day goes back to creation. It also goes back particularly to the Ten Commandments and to the commandment of observing the Sabbath day.

What we see in that commandment that was given to God's Old Testament people, that the genesis behind that was God's seventh day rest after six days of creation.

And it goes back to that day because that day is a significant and important day for us because when God ceased His creation work, He rested.

He rested in fellowship and friendship with the creation that He had made, and with humanity that He had made in His own image.

[8 : 04] There's this great rest of fellowship and of holy enjoyment with humanity that He was privileged to undertake on our behalf.

And so that Sabbath rest goes back to a relational rest between God and His people, holy rest, a perfect rest of joy and commitment.

But we know that humanity rejected God's loving authority. They wanted it all. They wanted not just God's rest, they wanted God's position, God's power, God's authority.

They wanted to take the place of God and leave God out of their lives. And in so doing, we recognize that they turned their backs on the living God and on the God of life, and so death entered into the world and toil and trouble and difficulty and thorns and thistles as they were ejected from this rest, from this covenant relationship with the living God.

So when God in the commandments to His redeemed people gave them this commandment, He was reminding them of something both that they had lost but was regained in relationship with them as His covenant people, as they kept His day.

[9 : 28] So the day that was given in a command was a day that the Old Testament people were to be reminded of their physical weakness, that life was a battle, that their bodies were fragile, that there was thorns and thistles, that there was mental and physical strains, work was tough, there was tensions.

And so this day was given to them in the Old Testament context as a day of mercy, a day of rest from their work. They had been taken from slavery where they had no rest, where they had no days and they were given this day of physical rest.

It was also a day to remind them of their spiritual need before the God because the rest was a symbol that they had no way of working their way back into God's fellowship and God's friendship. They had no way to escape from the slavery, not just in Egypt but also of their slavery to sin and they needed God's salvation and God to work on their behalf in order to enter into His rest again.

It was a day that reminded them that they didn't need to do anything other than recognize their need for God. And the sacrifices of the Old Testament all pointed towards the coming Messiah who would usher in that unspeakably great rest, who would redeem a broken and a lost world.

[10 : 54] It spoke of a better world ahead and of His unspeakable love. But it was a deadly serious day because to break that covenant day in their context was to hasten the day of death that they were already under the shadow of as an evidence of their guilt, the idolatry and that self-determination and the attractiveness of trusting the nations around them was deadly if they turned their backs on the living God and on His grace and on His hope.

But by the time of the New Testament, the Pharisees had taken that day and they'd kind of turned it on its head and made it not a day about God so much, although they argued differently, but a day about them and about their control and their power over the people.

They added to what God had said with 39 different legislative rules about what they couldn't do on the Sabbath, which is actually what Jesus broke by what He was doing with the disciples.

It was their interpretations, it was their laws that He was breaking. They therefore became the enforcers. They were the ones who accused Jesus of being lawbreakers.

They were the ones who had the control and the power. You shouldn't travel, you shouldn't be reaping on the Sabbath, you shouldn't allow your disciples to do that because they had taken the power and the authority away from God and they were acting in moral pride and self-righteousness and saying, we're the ones who are the those who control this command and who decide how it should be outworked.

[12 : 38] It was the exact opposite of its intention. And that's the context that we come to this passage into. And we see then the passage that Jesus makes two very important claims.

This is not a petty squabble. Remember it's about ultimate power and authority. And he says first of all that, well, turning it round and said in verse 28, really, he says that he is the Son of Man and he's Lord even of the Sabbath.

So he's making this great claim again to being the one who's master, who is authoritative, who is power over this day and over the interpretation of this day.

And he uses the example of David in the Old Testament and his fellow soldiers who broke, allegedly broke the command, not the Sabbath command, the different command, but he's saying something here about authority.

He's reminding those around him that in the context, he's the greater Son of David. He is the King who is bringing in his kingdom, which David's kingdom was a forerunner and pointing to.

[13 : 48] And he's saying both of both David and himself are on an urgent mission and are rightful heirs of the kingdom and rightful heirs of those under God's favour who are those who interpret God's laws against us in the context of authority.

It's in the context of who is Lord and who is in charge and who is the boss. So another claim of divinity. And what we go on to recognize when Jesus claims to be Lord of the Sabbath, what he's really saying is that he, the Sabbath rest is fulfilled in him.

He is the way back to rest in God's company, to fellowship with God and to know God's favour and life to the full. He's the way back to the forgiveness and the wholeness and the future that was lost in the very beginning when Adam and Eve were ejected from God's rest.

Even on the cross, we recognize that he is the one who opened the way back into fellowship and friendship with God. He paid the price in full, defeated the power of death and rose again.

And that resurrection, just like the healing of this individual with a paralysed arm, is what seals his power and his authority and his amazing love and divine justice.

[15 : 23] And so often what we see is Jesus actually choosing to heal on the Sabbath in the gospels. He chooses to do it on the Lord's, or what we call the Lord's day, I'll come back to that, on the Old Testament Sabbath because he's making a claim as to what the Sabbath is, much greater than what the Pharisees thought as a self-righteous day that if you ticked all the boxes, you'd be right with God.

He's saying, no, it points forward to something far greater. He was provoking them and challenging them about their views because he was claiming authority that was not rightfully theirs.

And in doing so, he associates and calls those who recognize their helplessness, who recognize their need, who recognize their spiritual paralysis and who come to him for healing.

Now it's very interesting in the account, the same account that Matthew gives of Jesus breaking the Sabbath according to the Pharisees rules.

It's in Matthew chapter 12, but of course in the original, there's no chapter break. And the last verse of chapter 11, I think puts it into its right context because in chapter 11, verse 28, Jesus says, come to me, all you who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.

[16:53] It's the same claim that he's making. Take my yoke upon you, learn of me, for I'm gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls.

For my yoke is easy and my burden is light. At that time, Jesus went through the cornfields on the Sabbath. So we see that the context of Jesus provoking the Pharisees by what he did on the Sabbath was pointing to the fact that our true rest, our soul rest, is what it symbolizes and what he came to bring to us.

He's the rest giver. When we come to him, we're coming home. And isn't that a great kind of context of rest?

We often think of that, you know, maybe especially when we're not well. You know, where do we want to be if we're not well? Where does Corey want to be when he's not well? I'm sure he doesn't, although in a way, Jackson's is home, I know.

But his home is where Heather and the children are. And I'm sure if he's really wants to be home in his own bed, because that's when we're ill or when we're lonely or when things are difficult, we just want to go home.

[18:07] And that's really the whole, that's the good news of the gospel, is that in Christ we come home to our God. We come home to his rest. We come home to his fellowship, to what he originally created us to do and to enjoy and to just relaxing and luxuriating his rest and his companionship.

And of course, we see that claim of Jesus to be the fulfillment of the Sabbath in Hebrews chapter four, which speaks a lot about the Sabbath rest theologically.

And in verse nine and 10, it says, So there therefore remains a Sabbath rest for the people of God, for whoever has entered God's rest has also rested from the works he as God did from his.

And there's this recognition that we enter Jesus as our Savior and Lord and the rest that he gives us. And we recognize that there's no amount of sweating and hard work can enable us to be right with God.

We simply accept the gift that he's given us and we rest in Jesus Christ. So he said that he is Lord of the Sabbath and he went on to say that the Sabbath was made for man.

[19:26] Now we've seen that in the Old Testament context. We've seen that the command that was given to the Old Testament covenant people of God on the seventh day was specifically to remind them it was a covenant of mercy.

It was to give them physical rest from the labors and the struggles and the battles of living in the world in which they lived. And it was part of wider festival days and weeks and years that they had. If they had fulfilled these Old Testament opportunities God give them, they would have had a great time. Even at the Sabbath year where everything was to rest and recover.

But also of course for them symbolically spoke of spiritual rest, of salvation that was pointed to in the sacrificial of a Savior to come, of forgiveness, of hope, of relational rest with God, of something better.

They looked forward to that. So what of today as we close? What of today, this is the Old Testament Sabbath on the seventh day that Jesus comes and fulfills in His death and resurrection so that we can enter God's rest.

[20:48] What does it mean for today? Well we do remind ourselves that the Old Testament Sabbath as it was on the seventh day is fulfilled in Christ. He is Lord.

What it pointed forward to is found in Him, the mercy, the rest, the holiness of that day as we come to Christ.

We rest in Him. We are made holy because of Him. And at one level our whole life becomes a Sabbath as believers because we are made holy in His company and we are to live holy lives, not just one day a week but every day.

Or give yourselves as living sacrifices, holy and acceptable to God which is your spiritual act of worship, not just in a public thing like this but all the time our lives are to be worshiped and therefore in a sense the command is broadened much more so that in Christ through the Holy Spirit by lives of obedience we are holy and separate and we rest in Him.

But the New Testament teaching is also clear about this day that the Sabbath principle remains. The day is different. It moves from the last day of the week where it was kind of as it were at the end of the week and everything is about looking forward to the first day of the week, the priority and the preeminence of what happened on the first day of the week when Jesus was raised from the dead, the ushering in of His kingdom.

[22 : 24] That was a massive change. That was a monumental change in the history of the world, the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ and theologically and spiritually also a massive change so that we see in the New Testament no reference to obeying the Sabbath as in the Old Testament moral law.

But we do see that the New Testament church continued with the principle of meeting together of worshiping and of seeking rest and holiness.

So in a couple of places in Acts 27, 1 Corinthians 16, 2, it just speaks almost by the way of the New Testament church gathering on the first day of the week.

The resurrection morning, the day that changed everything in the world in which we live. And of course in Revelation 1 verse 10 it gives reference to the Lord's day, the first day of the week when John received his vision from God, a revelatory vision from God.

So there's this clear recognition that the people of God still take that Sabbath principle and apply it on the first day of the week. And that's important for us because it's a gift of God's mercy in the weekly cycle, isn't it?

[23 : 45] Even in seven, principle remains the same, the day has changed. The physical rest that God offers us, that he says is good for us.

He says it's important for us to break the demands of work, the toil and the sweat and the physical rest mentally as well as physically is God's gift to us.

It's a grace benefit for us. It enables us to change our perspective and get out of the rat race. If we're in that, there was a read an instant quote from an American comedian and actress Lily Tomlin who said, trouble with the rat race is even if you win, you're still a rat.

And I think there's a kind of reality about that. It just changes our perspective and it reminds us that we need rest and we need to not be embroiled and subsumed by the philosophy and thinking of the world in which we live.

And God's given us this day of merciful rest which has great benefits for us physically, mentally and spiritually. And a time to reset spiritually as well.

[24 : 54] Obviously not just physical rest but of spiritual focus. So we've always wanted the Lord's Day here to be a highlight spiritually for people coming together, under God, worshiping together, hearing from Him through His word, being reset, being given a new perspective, being challenged to His priority, His authority and Lordship over our lives which is what this passage is all about.

The sacrament that we share, the need that we reflect, the time that we give, the sacred space which is so undervalued today without earphones and without music, without noise, without distraction in God's company, in public worship.

We recognize that the Lord's Day gives us that perspective and ought to be a day of rest and worship with the future looking element for us as well into the eternal rest that we enjoy which is a relational rest with the living God in the new heavens and the new earth.

So there's all of these things dovetail into our understanding of the Sabbath principle as we live it in the 21st century, many years after this Old Testament command.

But can I close by just challenging us as well today to be aware of, to be aware, not be aware or be aware as well, be aware of legalism.

[26 : 26] We have to watch that we don't also turn this day on its head and make it a religious legalistic day about rules and regulations where we're looking at other people and seeing if they're breaking the day or they're not using it in the right way which changes the whole focus from Jesus and His authority and Lordship to us being the ones who make the judgments and us being the ones who maybe try and make ourselves right with God by acting in a certain way on the Lord's day and we tick off the number of services we go to or the number of chapters we read or the number of things we do or we don't do on the Lord's day or even in any other day of the week.

But particularly can I say about the Lord's day, it should never be a miserable day. It was never intended to be a miserable day ever to be a miserable rotten, bland, slavish day, it was never meant to be that and I say that especially to parents for their children, that it is a day for our children to love

and to enjoy, never a day that they grow up thinking is miserable and to be avoided at all costs. A day like this can feed a graceless legalism that does lead to misery and leads to judgment and leads to self-righteousness.

Now that was unfairly attributed to John Calvin by the proclaimers, that great Scottish musical duo who have brought out our new album recently and one of their songs is called Sundays by John Calvin.

One of the lines is, I can hear them, I can see them, all those half remembered things like the Sundays by John Calvin when he tied up all the swings.

[28 : 17] And that is not rightly attributed but there's a lot of truth in it. If you look at the quote on the bulletin sheet, you'll maybe see what John Calvin thought of that legalistic way of thinking.

It certainly wasn't what sometimes he is attributed to think but it was never meant to be that kind of day. It was always meant to be a day of joy, a day of blessing, a day of rest, a day of being together, a day of community, a day of feeding and rejoicing in Christ and in His work.

So two responses remain for us to Christ's authority that is brought up through this passage on the Sabbath. Do we accept His authority, His authoritative invitation to be healed?

Because that's really what He's doing and what the healing of the man with the paralyzed arm on the Sabbath when He does it. He says, I'm Lord of the Sabbath, I will heal on this day and I will do good.

And He gets angry with their frustrating legalistic and selfish power-based interpretation.

[29 : 37] And so should we. Do we accept His authority, the invitation to be healed? To come to Jesus Christ as Creator, as Lord and as Savior.

Is He worthy, is His justice and is His love worthy of our submission? Is it? Is He someone that's worth listening to?

Is the rest that He offers, the belonging, the forgiveness and the wholeness, is it real? Is it make-believe? Do we worship on this resurrection morning because it's fanciful or because that is exactly what happened that gives Him the authority to make the claims that He did?

Is He worthy? Does He yield just power? Is His love so overwhelming that it trumps all the loves that this world can offer?

Even with all the difficulties and challenges that brings into our understanding of life today? Do we accept that or do we choose to reject Him and His love and His justice and His loving authority?

[30 : 49] Like the Pharisees and the Herodians, it's hard to believe, isn't it? Having seen what He had done in healing this poor man, that that was what tipped them over the edge to start thinking about His death and His destruction and His murder.

They suppressed, they ignored, they raged against His authority and against His loving power.

And they rejected His salvation. And ultimately, their rejection, it was through their rejection and through their crucifixion of the Savior that the Savior Himself showed His greatest and most powerful love.

We have to think about the authorities and the powers that there are and what we submit to in our lives. Autonomy, secularism, self-righteous religion, the state, political ideology, all of which promise much, I'm sure, but are vacuous and empty ultimately.

Jesus Christ, He's certainly worth your deepest consideration if you're not a Christian. And if you are a Christian today, as many as I know you are, then today's a great day.

[32 : 19] And it's a great day to refocus and to rechannel ourselves towards His great love and His great power and authority to give us hope and a future and an eternal rest as well as rest in Him now.

Amen. Let's pray. Father God, we thank You for who You are, for Your Word, for Your work, for Your salvation. We thank You that as we unpack it, even if I haven't unpacked it well, it makes sense.

And there is a continuity and a clarity and a development of thought from all that You did before You came to all You've done since You came. So Lord, we pray that these Lord's days will be great days.

I pray especially for our children, the children that are here in the hall downstairs and all our children, that they would grow up loving this day, that it wouldn't be a day that's connected with rules and regulations that are oppressive in any way, but it would be a great community day, a great family day, a great day when we take time with them and when we love them greatly.

And may it be the same for us as individuals, we think of things like the Kinect meal which give us such an opportunity in this way. So help us God, we pray in Jesus' name.
[33 : 38] Amen.