

Bring Your Friends to Jesus | Mark 2:23-3:6

Today we continue our study in Mark 2 and our emphasis of Bringing your friends to Jesus.

So far in this chapter we have seen 3 great reasons to bring your friends to Jesus.

- 1) Bring your friends to Jesus- Only He can forgive
- 2) Bring your friends to Jesus- He befriends sinners.
- 3) Bring your friends to Jesus- He's better than any religion

The 1st came from **vs. 1-12** where Jesus forgives a Paralytic

The 2nd came from **vs. 13-17** where Jesus befriends a tax collector

The 3rd came from **vs. 18-22** where Jesus reveals the false religion of the Pharisees through fasting.

Today I want to bring you to a 4th and final reason in vs. 2:23- 3:6

Bring your friends to Jesus: Only He provides rest

At first glance, you may be tempted to think two things about these stories:

1) That these passages are irrelevant for modern man.

- We have a story about some guys walking through a field, plucking grain, and then a man with a withered hand in a synagogue.
- Maybe you're thinking, "I came on the wrong Sunday." Or, "This is so unimportant... I could care less."

2) That these Pharisees really overacted!

Jesus heals a guy's hand and you want to kill him? That seems a bit much.

- "Hey what did you do today?" "I healed a guy." "Let's kill him."
- I can see why you would think these things, but you need to realize a few things....

1st: What's at stake here is actually a matter of eternal importance.

- The larger issue here is really about how one may be made right before a holy God.

The world is divided into 3 categories: Religious, Irreligious, and Christians.

Each of these have a view on how to approach God:

1. Irreligious: I'll ignore this God.
2. Religious: I'll perform before this God.
3. Christians: I'll be presented in Jesus Christ to this God.

Each position is full of motives:

Irreligion is motivated by pride

- "I don't need a God...essentially saying, I'll save myself"

Religion is motivated by fear, guilt, and shame.

- "I need to work for this God... essentially saying, I'll save myself"

The Gospel is motivated by grace.

- "Jesus did all the work. He saves me."

There is only one way to God- Through Jesus Christ.

Point: Never reduce your relationship with this Christ to a bunch of rules.

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2nd: Understand the importance about the Sabbath, and why the Pharisees were so angered that Jesus and his boys were breaking it.

What was the Sabbath?

1. It was a distinctive mark and sign of Israel.

- **Info:** In an agrarian society, pausing from your work one day in seven was a way of doing two things loud and clear.

A) It set you apart from the surrounding nations. It made you an attention getting. It put a spotlight on them.

B) It declared who your allegiance was to. if you're working is directly determinative of your eating, and you stop working—then whoever you stop working for must be pretty important!



They were literally saying: **"God, I desire you more than food."**

2. It was meant to be a good, freeing thing.

- **Info:** You remember the children of Israel were a nation of slaves, and that meant that they had lived in forced servitude. They lived in forced servitude in Egypt for over 400 years. That's 400 years without a day off.

At Mount Sinai, God said to them, 'I am giving you 7.5 weeks of mandatory vacation every year. You may not work one day out of every 7.'

3. The Pharisees ^{made} up a bunch of rules on how to practice it.

4. To violate these rules meant death. (Ex 31:14)

that sets the stage for the text

but now let me set the stage for our context today

How Should Christians Understand the Sabbath?

It gets confusing.

Technically, the Jewish Sabbath Day started at Saturday night and ended Sunday night. (*They reckoned time differently.*)



^{topic}
I'll flesh this out with what time allows from our passage---- but if you're looking for further reading, I would recommend *Four Views on the Sabbath* edited by Christopher Donato. (On our website in reading resources.)

- The book has four men who hold to different views on the sabbath, they all present their views and receive pushback from each other.

website / reading resources / Theology section

Let me briefly summarize my position.

- I don't call Sunday the "Christian Sabbath." ... Like you will find in the Westminster Confession.
- Info: It wasn't until the 8th century that you see someone identifying Sunday as such (Blomberg, 312).
 - The Christian Sabbath was not even a thing for the early church fathers.
 - Presbyterian, B.B. Warfield said:
 - "Christ took the Sabbath into the grave with him and brought the Lord's Day out of the grave ... on resurrection morn."

I can track with Warfield on this...

The 1st Century Christians worshiped on Sunday as a time to celebrate Jesus' resurrection and the dawning of a new creation, but they didn't perceive this to be a new Sabbath.

- It was something different.

I part ways with a lot of Presbyterian and Reformed brothers, on this point.

The Sabbath is fulfilled in Christ (like Circumcision).

- The Jews were distinguished by Sabbath keeping and circumcision
- we're distinguished by faith in Christ and a becoming a new creation
- **Gal 6:15** "For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision availeth anything, nor uncircumcision, but a new creature."

We have something better than a day; we have a Christ – everyday.

- Christ is our Sabbath.
- The True and Better Sabbath.
- The full and final Sabbath.

Application: Some of you are missing a deep rest. No matter how MUCH time you take off. You never feel rested in your spirit.

- In Jesus, there's a rest that goes deeper than your muscles. It's not a bone-deep rest it's a soul-deep rest.
- Through Christ, I'm living in an unending sabbath.

Everywhere I turn there's rest. His work on the cross has brought eternal rest.

- In this rest, we flourish without effort. This is the true sabbath.

In **Colossians 2 and Gal 4**, Paul seems to lay aside all the Sabbath ceremonies (and Feasts as well), as shadows of the substance.

16 Therefore let no one pass judgment on you in questions of food and drink, or with regard to a festival or a new moon or a Sabbath. **17** These are a shadow of the things to come, but the substance belongs to Christ. (Col 2:16-17)

Point: We trust in one whom the Sabbath points.

- We rest Monday and Tuesday and Wednesday and every day b/c we have met Christ.
- We have a hero of the sabbath.

Having said that, I do believe in the **principle of rest**, which is woven into the fabric of creation.

God himself rested on the seventh day of creation.

- He did not rest b/c he was tired. He rested as an example to take a day.
- Even the fact that we operate on a 7-day a week calendar is unique.
 - I don't know if you noticed but 7 doesn't go into 365 evenly. That's why we have all these leap years.

* God rested on the seventh day not because He needed to rest, but because we needed to rest.

I **CONTEND** that the **original Sabbath command wasn't about worship...it was about work.**

- **In other words:** the Sabbath was more about which day you rested not which day you worshipped. Every day was meant for worshipping.

There's no law for us insisting that we rest on Saturday or Sunday.

You may choose to rest and worship on the same day. That's fine. I DON'T!

- **This is not my day off...it's one of my most stressful days of the week.** (Although I'm trying to change that) *headaches in the past*
- **Monday is my day of rest.**

"To Sabbath" means "to rest" – but there's freedom on when and how you rest

- **Some types of rest for some people might look like work to others.**
 - **Illustration:** Ashlea's Dad would "rest" by going on some crazy activity with the family. My ~~family~~ ^{Dad} would rest by cooking out and falling asleep watching the golf channel.



So, you have freedom on when and how to rest -- **What you don't have freedom to do is to neglect worshiping with God's people.**

For the Pharisees, the issue had to do with how they were practicing the Sabbath.

- In basic, they had put a bunch of rules around it.
- **They missed the intent of the Sabbath (as a time of renewal and refreshment), and made it a day of slavish fear, instead of rest.**

In **Mark 2:23-3:6** Jesus didn't abide by their oral tradition.

- He not only taught them a thing or two about the Sabbath, but laid the foundation for systemic change in their understanding of it, that is, **that the Sabbath was pointing to Himself.**

With all of that said, Let's look at our text:

Mark 2:23 "And it came to pass, that he went through the corn fields on the sabbath day; and his disciples began, as they went, to pluck the ears of corn."

Info: This was a common occurrence in that day, the disciples are rubbing the grain in their hands and breaking them down and eating them.

- **Example:** You could view it like peanuts or even popcorn.
 - They couldn't smother it in butter, so they just popped it in their mouths.

And then you have the Pharisees jumping out of the bushes saying,

Mark 2:24 "..., Behold, why do they on the sabbath day that which is not lawful?."

- **At this point you have to be thinking, what are the pharisees doing in the cord field... there never in the cord fields... (You can just see them hiding in the bushes waiting for them to eat their popcorn)**
- **They jumped out and said, "You broke the Sabbath!"**

They actually were not! **They were breaking the traditions surrounding the Sabbath.**

- This particular act was considered winnowing, threshing, or reaping ...all of which were illegal according to their tradition.
 - They could not cook on the sabbath...
 - light a fire on the sabbath.

- They couldn't tie a knot on the Sabbath, but they could loosen a knot b/c that was considered freeing.

More rules surrounded the Sabbath than any other commandment.

If you were a good Pharisee, there was not a moment of your life that you did not question whether what you were doing was violating the Sabbath.

In fact, by Jesus' time there was an entire book of rabbinic teaching on what they were not to do— **Mishnah**

Jesus completely rejected the authority of the Mishnah.

- In the Gospels, we see that Jesus did not break any of the Sabbath commands...
- but he DID NOT hesitate to break the traditions and customs that had been built up around the Sabbath.

John MacArthur says it well about the Mishnah laws: He says,

“Actually, the Pharisees’ charge was itself sinful since they were holding their tradition on a par with God’s Word.” (MacArthur)

How does Jesus respond?

Mark 2:25 “And he said unto them, Have ye never read what David did, when he had need, and was an hungred, he, and they that were with him?”

- In other words, he says, “Haven’t you ever read 1 Samuel 21?”

Samuel 12 tells about when David was running from Saul.

- David and his band of soldiers were starving, and in desperation they enter into the house of God and ask Ahimelech, 'Do you have any food that you can give us?'
- Typical male response, "no, (I think I have some pizza and dear jerky...that's about it...) (Been nice to have real food with Ashlea back in town.)
- Ahimelech says, "All I have is holy bread (12 loaves baked and placed in the tabernacle each Sabbath)."

Priest were only to eat this - Not David (But never condemned)

And then Jesus ends his Sabbath lesson with this wonderful statement:

Mark 2:26-27 "The sabbath was made for man, and not man for the sabbath: Therefore the Son of man is Lord also of the sabbath?"

Man was NOT made for Sabbath rules.

- The Sabbath was meant to be a time of blessing
- They had made the Sabbath a burden.
- Avoid this!

Pastor was approached about golfing on Sunday
- can you walk briskly
- can you walk like this?

Transition: Last week we looked at Mark 3:1-6

This story centers around Jesus healing a man's hand on the sabbath.

Did he have Paralysis, was he injured, or did he have arthritis?

- We don't know.

- The Pharisees said it was okay to heal someone if they were in danger of dying on the Sabbath,
- but if they were not in danger of dying on the Sabbath you couldn't heal them.
- **Now again, there's no passage like this anywhere in the Old Testament.**

But they drove that post into the ground and put a fence on it!

- This is one of the great downfalls of Roman Catholics.
 - They equate tradition on the same level as Scripture.

The Reformation was all about taking the Bible and opening it up for yourself. Tradition must **BOW** to the **Word**.

Warren Wiersbe said, “we must constantly beware lest tradition take the place of truth. It does us good to examine our church traditions in the light of God’s Word and to be courageous enough to make changes” (p. 71).

Nothing will make you so fruitless/mechanical/ angry/ fearful of making a mistake as playing tradition over God’s Word.

Point: Are you a text- driven or tradition-driven Christian? The difference is crucial.

3 Closing Applications

1) You don't have to be a legalist to miss out on God's rest.

- I've been hitting a lot on the legalist today, but you can be in just as bad of shape of the other side of the fence.

Over 150 years ago, J.C. Ryle said, "Our Sundays and how we use them is one of the most sure signs of our spiritual condition."

Do your children see you determined to meet corporately for worship?
No matter what ball games are on or what family is in town.

It is not legalistic to be committed to a corporate body– It's New Testament.

2) You're not God. You need rest.

Christ has freed us from the technicalities of the Sabbath law. BUT We should still observe the principle of the Sabbath.

Learn to Rest in the Lord's Grace

- You need physical rests
- You ALSO need seasonal rest after prolonged seasons of labor...
 - Illustration: Keller's wife called him to the house. He had told her that when they started the church he was going to run hard for a two years to get it off the ground and then he would slow down. Well 5 years past, and he was still running hard. He came home and she said, "you are going to hard andyou had to for a while, but you can slow down now."

- She would take a china plate and smash it when she said hard. Your going to HARD–SMASH. you’re GOING TO HARD – SMASH.
 - He slowed down and told her “you were right, but your anger was sin. Why were you so angry?”
 - She said I wasn’t angry. He said, “you remember smashing those china plates.”
 - She said, “oh... I just used those to make my point. I only smashed the ones that I did not have matching cups for.”
 - She said, “Calculated breaks. You need calculated breaks as well.”

Some of you need to learn to rest. The world can go on without you!

The fact that you need sleep is God’s way of reminding you that world is not going to collapse if you do not tend to it.

- Sleep is a parable that God is God and we are mere men.
- Sleep is like a broken record that comes around with the same message every day: You are not sovereign. You are not sovereign.

Trust the one who never sleeps. *He doesn’t sleep because he’s up worrying, but b/c he is in control.*

- **Only when we have a good rhythm of work and rest, will we really flourish, and experience vitality.**
 - o The call to rest isn’t a call to be lazy.
 - o No, work hard ... rest hard.

3) There is a rest awaiting us.

We are awaiting an eternal Sabbath, which will be given to those who have trusted in Christ.

The bible says in Heb 4:9, “So then, there remains a Sabbath rest for the people of God”

- The reason why you long for rest is because it begins to fulfill a deep longing in your soul...for a place of eternal rest.

If you're crippled...you will not be crippled.

If you're in pain... you won't be in pain.

As I already said, the real issue of this passage is:

How can you Be right with God? By earning or by resting?

- There is only one way that it can be “well with your soul” – by resting in the finished work of Jesus Christ.
- Because He said, “it is finished,” we can rest. Forever.

Matthew 11:28-29 “Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls.”

Bring your friends to Jesus: He is the Sabbath that our hearts long for.