

Read: Mark 2:23-28

Lord of the Sabbath

Mark 2:23-24,27-28

One Sabbath Jesus was going through the grainfields, and as his disciples walked along, they began to pick some heads of grain. The Pharisees said to him, "Look, why are they doing what is unlawful on the Sabbath?"

Then he said to them, "The Sabbath was made for man, not man for the Sabbath. So the Son of Man is Lord even of the Sabbath."

In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

A man was seen digging holes in the dirt with a shovel, then filling the holes with the same dirt. Someone asked him what he was doing. He replied, "I'm planting trees. The guy in charge of bringing the trees to plant didn't show up, but I'm still going to do my job so I don't get in trouble."

The man's digging and filling of holes was pointless because in the end, no trees were planted. He thought his actions would please his boss and would prevent him from getting into trouble, but in the end his boss was probably upset that he wasted time!

A group called the Pharisees were just like the man digging and filling holes. They thought the reason God gave laws like the Sabbath (which was a day of rest to focus on God and his Word) was to make God happy and make up for when they were bad. They told on Jesus' disciples. "They broke the rule for picking grain on the Sabbath!" they exclaimed.

Here's how Jesus answered them: "The Sabbath was made for man, not man for the Sabbath." In other words, "You're missing the point!" God made the Sabbath law to encourage his people to find true rest in him, his promises, and his Word. Jesus said, "I am Lord even of the Sabbath." In other words, Jesus makes God happy because he is the Lord who is also the Savior! He simply invites us to find rest, approval, and love in him.

Are you trying to make God happy or earn someone's approval and love by following rules? Here's a way to check: how do you act when no one's looking? If you obey the rules *only* when someone is watching, you just might be caught in the trap of trying to earn approval.

Here's a better way: let your heart rest in God's promises. Be happy in the fact that God is already happy with and loves you because of Jesus. All that matters is Jesus. He is Lord of the Sabbath. Get close to him. Rest in his care. Then, follow the rules simply out of joy and thanks for having a Savior like him!

The questions below are to help families discuss this devotion. The questions are divided by age group as suggestions, but anyone could reflect on any of the questions as they desire.

Questions for the Younger Children

- Who was angry at Jesus and his disciples for picking grain on the Sabbath?
- Who loves you so much and approves of you because of his life, death, and resurrection?

Questions for Elementary Age Children

- What does *Sabbath* mean? Why did God want people to observe the Sabbath?
- Do we follow God's rules to earn his approval or simply to show thanks for all of his love?

Questions for Middle School and Above

- Why is it easy to fall into the trap of trying to earn God's or someone else's love and approval?
- Explain what Jesus meant by saying he is Lord of the Sabbath. How does the fact that he is Lord of the Sabbath bring you comfort?

Closing Prayer:

Dear Jesus, thank you for being Lord of the Sabbath and giving me love and approval because of your life, death, and resurrection! Forgive me for trying to earn your approval or someone else's. Fill my heart with confidence in your love and then watch me serve you with joy! Amen.

Hymn: CW 401:1,5 – Your Works, Not Mine, O Christ

Your works, not mine, O Christ, Speak gladness to this heart.
They tell me all is done; They bid my fear depart.
To whom but you, who can alone for sin atone, Lord, shall I flee?

Your righteousness, O Christ, Alone can cover me;
No other righteousness Can set a sinner free
To whom but you, who can alone for sin atone, Lord, shall I flee?