

## Mark 2:23-28

Pentecost 2; June 3 & 4, 2018

Did you know: ...?

- That it is illegal in Wisconsin to serve margarine in Wisconsin. It has been in place since 1895 and it still stands today. It's still illegal for restaurants to serve margarine – unless the customer specifically orders it.
- Since 1994, Wisconsin law says: "The operator of a motor vehicle shall yield the right-of-way to livestock being driven over or along any highway but any person in charge of such livestock shall use reasonable care and diligence to open the roadway for vehicular traffic."
- If you own a business in Wisconsin, your store hours better be advertised in the Central Time zone, or you could be fined \$25-\$500 and jailed for 10-30 days.
- That Wisconsin law states that cheese made in Wisconsin needs to be "highly pleasing?"
- That when two trains meet, neither should proceed until the other one has? Think about that one for a moment.

I'm sure that there must be good reasons why those laws are true in Wisconsin, but I'm not sure that you will be prosecuted for them. Most people would look at these laws and think that they are rather silly. Yet, there are people who will look at the laws that God has written in the Bible and think the same thing. For example someone might say, *did you know that it says in the Bible that God commanded the children of Israel: "Do not wear clothing woven of two kinds of material." (Lev. 19:19)* Seems a rather silly rule, doesn't it? Why? But when you know that the children of Israel were surrounded by a pagan culture that would use blended material in the garments worn by pagan priests, then the law makes a little more sense.

When you look at many of God's laws to the children of Israel, it wasn't just about the rules, it was about the love that God had for his people. He loved his people. He wanted to protect them from all these false pagan things that surrounded them. He wanted them to be set apart from them. He didn't want them to look like all those other pagan nations around them. So, God set parameters for his people. In some ways, don't parents today do the same thing? You set parameters for your children. Why? Because you love them, and you want to protect them.

God did not want his people to think that they could somehow get to heaven by keeping all the rules. It's not that rules and parameters are bad. But the rules, the commands, will only get you so far. They will never get you to heaven. That's the problem when the focus of teachings and beliefs is focused just on the law. That's what the Pharisees had done during the time of Jesus. They took all the laws of the Old Testament and added 619 more to them. So, what happens when you do that? One of two things: Either you really believe that you can legislate morality, or you have to lower the bar. You will get people who are so focused on the rules, that you forget about the "why" behind it, or people who just pick and choose the "rules" they like. You will get people who think they are better than everyone else around them, or they don't really care what people think.

That's where the danger lies. That is what is happening in our text for this morning. **"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?"** The Pharisees looked at the disciple's actions as work. Even if you are picking a few heads of grain, the Pharisees would define it as harvesting and work. They missed the whole point of the Sabbath Day in the Old Testament.

The Hebrew word for Sabbath means "rest." It goes all the way back to the days of creation. Moses writes: **"By the seventh day God had finished the work he had been doing; so on the seventh day he rested from all his work. Then God blessed the seventh day and made it holy, because on it he rested from all the work of creating that he had done."** (Gen. 2:2-3) Why did God rest? God didn't need to rest. After all, he is God. If God didn't need to rest, then why did establish the Sabbath Day? Jesus answers that question in our text: **"The Sabbath was made for man, not man for the Sabbath. So the Son of Man is Lord even of the Sabbath."**

God gave the Sabbath Day to man. He wanted his people to focus on Him and His Word. He wanted his people to focus on THE REST that the Savior would bring to the world. In other words, all these rules that he gave his people pointed to Jesus. Jesus would be the one that would fulfill every single one of them. Salvation was not going to be found in keeping

the rules. Salvation was going to be found in the only one who could keep all the rules – Jesus. The only way that sin was going to be paid for would be nailing it to the cross. Human beings could never do it. The only solution to sin was Jesus. The only solution to sin can only be found in God’s love.

When we see that, it changes the whole way we think about following God’s rules. To illustrate that, Jesus would use an example from the Old Testament that the Pharisees would be familiar with. **“Have you never read what David did when he and his companions were hungry and in need? In the days of Abiathar the high priest, he entered the house of God and ate the consecrated bread, which is lawful only for priests to eat. And he also gave some to his companions.”**

David was anointed king while Saul was still alive and occupying the throne. David was the rightful ruler but Saul had power. David didn’t rebel. He knew God would work on his own time. Saul however went after David. David was warned and he had to flee without food or preparation. David fled and found the Priest who had no food but only the 12 loaves of bread consecrated for God which the priests were to eat. The consecrated bread was 12 loaves placed in God’s house once per week. It was to acknowledge that God is provider of our daily bread. They worshiped a God who loved and provided for his people. The letter of the law said that they should not eat that bread. But the priest gave that bread to David and his men, and they ate. Did the priest sin? Did David and his men sin? No. To say they couldn’t eat under those circumstances would have been legalism. *If David and his men could eat that bread, can’t my disciples pick a few heads of grain on the Sabbath to eat?* Nowhere does it say that David or the Priest sinned.

Does that mean that all the rules should be tossed out? Not at all. God didn’t give us his laws so that we could prove how good we are at following rules, or so we could say, *“Look God! We’re really good at being your disciples.”* He didn’t give us rules so that we can beat ourselves up knowing how much we fail at keeping them. God wants us to see just how much he loves us. Because of his great love for us, we have the opportunity on a daily basis to show love to him. For it is in Jesus that we find true rest. Let us give thanks to the rest we have in Jesus. Amen.