

The Gospel of Mark
Part 11
Jesus: Lord of the Sabbath

TALKINGPOINTS WALKINGPOINTS

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Talk together about the glory of God's kingdom. –Psalm 145:11
Love the Lord your God and **walk** in all his ways. –Joshua 22:5

Triangle Community Church aims to be a “transforming church”. We exist to be used by God as He transforms ordinary people into extraordinary followers of Jesus Christ. TCC believes not only that life-change is possible—but that it is to be expected. Growth is God's will for his people. But transformation does not happen by accident. It requires intentional, intelligent action. 1 Timothy 4:7 instructs you to “discipline yourself for the purpose of godliness.” Since “Talking Points, Walking Points” is intended both for individual reflection and for group discussion, questions vary in degree of vulnerability required. Generally it is best to begin group discussions with questions which involve less personal disclosure—but don't linger there. Be sure to “dive deep” too! The questions which require the greatest openness and honesty, as well as those in the section entitled “Digging Deeper in your Daily Quiet Time”, are perfect for private reflection.

Questions for Reflection or Discussion

- What from Sunday's message interested you? ...made sense to you? ...confused you?
...intrigued you? ...upset you? ...encouraged you? ...and **why**?
- Read Genesis 2:4-18. What adjectives might you use to describe the following elements of this scene?
 - ♦ The environment:
 - ♦ Adam and Eve:
 - ♦ God:

Now read Genesis 3:1-8. How do you see the following elements take place in Satan's strategy?

1. Doubts were raised (v. 1a):
2. Distortion of God's instruction (v. 1b):
3. Dialogue is encouraged (v. 1-3):
4. Denial of God's clear warning (v. 4):
5. Defamation of God's character (v. 5a):
6. Deification is falsely promised (v. 5):

Things didn't turn out well for Adam and Eve—how **should** they have responded to each of those six attacks?

- Read Matthew 11:25-30.
Why does God hide knowledge of himself (v. 25-27; cf. v. 20-24)?
What does God offer to those who are humble (v. 28-30)?
Are you experiencing God's rest?

Sermon Summary

Key Text: Mark 2:23—3:6

We are working our way through the gospel of Mark and as we do, we are drawing some conclusions about who Jesus is. When Jesus claimed to pardon sin, it really upset the religious leaders (2:5-7). In today's passage Jesus' claim is even more immense. There are two incidents, both deal with how the Sabbath should be observed. Let me give you a little context. Six days were for working, the seventh day was for resting and worshipping. It was modeled after the creation week of Genesis where God worked for six days and rested on the seventh day, called the Sabbath. **There are three important features in today's story:**

[1] Mark 3:5 says that this made Jesus very angry—why? Jesus was angered by these men's hard hearts. There are three very important words in this text that we need to consider: "anger", "grieved", and "hardness". The Greek word for "anger" is a very intense word; it refers to anger on an epic scale. "Grief" is the kind of intense emotion you feel when a loved-one dies. So we have epic-scale anger combined with incredible grief... over what? Over the hardness of hearts! The Greek word translated "hardness" connotes a mixture of hostility and blindness. Jesus was furious over their **attitude** regarding the Sabbath.

The religious leaders of Jesus' day had erected many, many regulations precisely limiting what you could, and could not do, on the Sabbath—but they missed the entire purpose of the Sabbath! The Sabbath was all about providing a day of rest and replenishment and restoration. It was meant to be a blessing, not a burden. So Jesus restored a man's hand, but according to their man-made rules, Jesus' actions were illegal! Jesus was angry with them because their legalistic rules were **thwarting** the very purpose for which the Sabbath was established—to restore and renew people! The Sabbath, and all of God's law, were made for us; we were not made for the law. The law of God is a gift. It's a blessing, not a burden! By obeying it, we thrive! It's not a chain, designed to restrain and restrict you. Its purpose is to promote human flourishing—to promote joy, happiness, contentment!

Now to learn where that wrong attitude comes from we have to go all the way back to the book of Genesis. In Genesis chapters 2–3, God placed humanity in Paradise and gave them only one law. Just one. "Don't eat from one specific tree." God gave no reason for his prohibition—it wasn't about the taste or nutrition. God didn't give them the reason for his prohibition—he wanted them to trust him. God was not calling for a particular kind of behavior—what not to eat—he was calling for a particular kind of relationship to him: a heart attitude of obedience to God. But Satan suggested that God doesn't have their best interests in mind. Satan is going after their hearts! Satan said, in effect: "The law of God is a chain, not a gift. It will squelch the deepest desires of your heart." Adam and Eve bought into this heart attitude toward God's law, and disobeyed. Now Satan's lie has penetrated every single human heart. All of us have bought into the lie that we can't trust God to act in our best interests. This is the heart attitude that prompted Jesus' epic fury!

[2] Why did the Herodians and Pharisees make an alliance against Jesus (3:6)? An alliance between Herodians and Pharisees is an extraordinary development. The Roman Empire had conquered Israel and sought to impose its pagan, Greco-Roman ideas and codes of conduct on them. As you can imagine, there was an enormous conservative reaction to this cultural imposition. The Pharisees doubled down on their religious rules, making it very clear what devoted Jews could and could not do. It was essentially a conservative overreaction to what was perceived as a creeping immorality. But the Herodians were a Jewish political party that sympathized with Rome and were quick to Greek customs and Roman law. Herodians and Pharisees were sworn enemies! So, what brought these two opposing groups together? Why did they **both** say, "This man Jesus has to go! We have to kill him." Why? Because Jesus criticized **both** groups. He said that **both** groups were lost. Those who say, "There is no right and wrong. I can do whatever I want to do" are lost, and the highly moral people, who load moral regulations on top of moral regulations, are lost. They're all lost because they're all cut off from God relationally. They both have believed Satan's lie, that God's law is a chain, not a blessing.

But how about us? Have we been impacted by Satan's lie? In our heart of hearts, are we really convinced that everything God tells us to do or not to do is for our flourishing? Do we believe that human flourishing is sometimes found on the other side of God's law? Don't we also see God's prohibitions as being too restrictive, too limiting, too crushing? How many of us obey God's law because we love him, just because he is God, and we are not? We have ulterior motives, don't we? Some of us think, "Because I have kept God's rules, he owes me! He can't let bad things happen to me. I've paid my dues." We use God's law to try to pry blessings out of his tightly-closed hands. "I scratched your back—now you scratch mine!" Both the Herodians and the Pharisees among us have believed the lie of the serpent. We don't want to be called out on anything, by anyone, and that includes Jesus. Jesus rejects that heart attitude towards the law that sees it as a chain rather than as a gift. It is that attitude that makes him so angry.

[3] What was Jesus doing when he claimed to be Lord of the Sabbath (2:28)? Jesus is not saying, "You don't have to observe the Sabbath anymore." He is claiming to be the divine interpreter of the purpose of the Sabbath. After all, he instituted it! It was his idea! Jesus reminded them that David, when he and his men were on the run from Saul and hungry, went to the tabernacle and ate consecrated bread (Leviticus 24:5-9 & 1 Samuel 21:1-6). David and his men were technically in violation of this law, just as Jesus was **technically** in violation of the Sabbath law. Jesus used this to illustrate the heart intention of Biblical law—to promote human flourishing. Human need takes precedence over ritual law. The law is a gift, not a chain. Jesus was not in violation of the spirit of the Sabbath, any more than David was in violation of the **spirit** of the laws concerning worship in the tabernacle.

When Jesus said, "The Son of Man is Lord, even of the Sabbath," he didn't just mean, "I have the power to interpret the correct application of the law." He's saying, **"I am the Sabbath."** Remember—Jesus said, "Come and find your rest **in me**" (Matthew 11:28-29). How can he do that? On the cross, when Jesus said, "It is finished," he had just finished the work of removing the curse of the law that crushes us. That is why Hebrews 4:9-10 says that "there remains a Sabbath rest for the people of God, for the one who has entered Jesus' rest has himself also rested from his works, as God did from his." Jesus accomplished this rest for us. When we begin to see this, it causes us to question the serpent's lie. Surely we can trust someone who loves us the way Jesus does. Jesus is Lord of the Sabbath; he has provided the rest that I so desperately need. Religion says, "If you obey, then God has to accept you." And so we labor in that cause, only to find ourselves feeling guilty and defeated. But the gospel says, "It is finished." God doesn't want the obedience of slaves; he desires the obedience of sons and daughters! We obey not to earn God's acceptance, but because in Christ we have already been loved and accepted. When Jesus says, "I am Lord of the Sabbath," he is replacing all religion with himself. He is saying, "I am the Bread of Life. I'm the final sacrifice. I am your Sabbath rest. You don't need any of these other things. I'm the tabernacle. I'm the temple. I am... all that you need!"

Digging Deeper in Your Daily Quiet Time

"Five Question Bible Study" (see below) is useful for studying any topic. Let's use it to explore the "Sabbath rest" we now and evermore shall have...

Monday—Read Isaiah 30:12–15

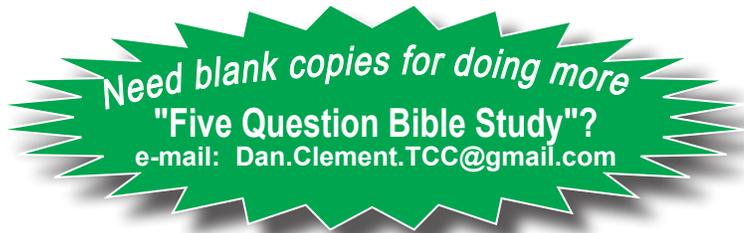
Tuesday—Read Psalm 22

Wednesday—Read Psalm 116:1-9

Thursday—Read Psalm 116:12-19

Friday—Read Hebrews 3:7–11& 4:1-13

Saturday—Read Revelation 14:6-13



Five Question Bible Study

Bible Text: _____

Date: _____



What idea particularly strikes me from this text? [Note in which verse(s) it is found.]



What question does this text raise in my mind—and how would **this text** answer it?



What about Jesus Christ—his character and/or his redemption—relates to this text?



What action must I take as a result of this text? Be concrete and specific.



With whom will I share what I learned from this text? [and what was their response?]