



# THE GOSPEL ACCORDING TO MARK

Week 9: Rest of Religion

Read Mark 2:23-3:6

In this passage Jesus gets angry. His anger is not directed at the moral decay or rebellion of the people, but rather at the self-justifying, religious people.

## 1. Rest Is Supposed To Be A Gift From God - Religion Ruins That Gift

Sabbath rest was put in place by God at creation. It was meant to enforce a time of rest for all of creation. The Pharisees took the gift of rest and added to it a whole set of rules, removing the blessing and joy from the gift. So often we behave like the Pharisees and add rules to the gifts God has given us, losing the joy and blessing in the process.

Warning signs that we are becoming joyless legalists:

- We care more about appearance than reality
- We love rules/regulations/parameters/boundaries that are not given to us in the Bible
- We have long gaps between repentance and joy
- We are slow to extend grace and mercy towards others

❖ Q: Why do you think rest is so important? (Why would God insist on rest for his creation?)

❖ Q: Do you *enjoy* times of rest or do you feel guilty and keep thinking about all the things you 'should' be doing instead?

❖ Q: Do you identify with some of the warning signs that you may be becoming or already are a joyless legalist? Which ones describe you?

## 2. Rest Is Only Truly Found In The Reality Of Christ

Jesus says that he is Lord of the Sabbath. He is the one that the scriptures all point to, the place where his people will find rest from their enemies. Our weekly rhythm of rest is a foretaste of the real rest he can bring to our lives. How do we find rest in believing in Jesus?

- His Lordship over all things gives us rest from our compromised existence
- His love and acceptance of sinners gives us rest from continual striving for acceptance
- His finished work on the cross gives us rest from the effort we expend trying to justify ourselves

❖ Q: What does Jesus mean when he says that he is Lord of the Sabbath?

❖ Q: In what areas of your life are you utterly exhausted because you are trying to attain through your own strength something that only Jesus can really give? (love & acceptance,

❖ Q: Why is the finished work on the cross good news for us now (and not just for when we die)? What kind of rest does that give us?

## 3. We Remind Ourselves Of The Ultimate Reality Of Rest By Practicing Regular Rhythms Of Rest

Jesus fulfilled the law perfectly but he didn't abolish it. It still has great significance for us today. We need to be careful that we do not become legalists like the Pharisees or go to the other side of the spectrum and not rest in the way God intended us to.

The key to resting well:

- Six days shall you labour - we need to work and we need to work hard.
- One day in seven you shall rest – we need a regular routine of rest, and trust God with the results of our weekly work.
- We are to keep the Sabbath holy – this does not mean restricting certain activities but rather being set apart for the purposes of God. That may mean disconnecting from things that rob your rest, but it also may mean doing things to stir your affections for God. We need to enjoy the gift of rest and the gift of time with God.

❖ Q: Did the idea of Sabbath (resting each week) disappear when Jesus came and brought in the New Covenant of grace? Explain.

❖ Q: If you are someone that does not rest regularly, what is it that motivates you to over-work?

❖ Q: When you do rest, do you trust God with the work you have done that week?

❖ Q: What things could you add to your rest time that would stir your affections for God? Have you ever done this before and did it bring you joy? What unnecessary things could you remove from your week so that you find time to rest well?