

“Called to Rest and Called to Service”

Rev. Nick Hatch

Mark 2:23-28

In our scripture today we encounter Jesus and the disciples going through the grain fields, plucking heads of wheat- on the sabbath. We don't know whose field the twelve and the Son of man were harvesting. We don't know why they were harvesting. But we do know they were being watched, in secret by the pharisees for they were working, working on the sabbath and apparently breaking important ancestral traditions and religious laws rooted in the Judaic interpretation of the Old Testament.

Cannot you hear them murmuring in secret to one another?

“Look at them! Can you believe the disrespect this so-called Lamb of God is leading his people into? Why are they doing what is not lawful on the sabbath? This man is trouble: he doesn't care about rules or customs. How offensive!”

Certainly, the pharisees were watching, for keeping the sabbath was reinforced by prophets and the Ten Commandments. The Sabbath was one of the holy customs that marked the Jews as reverent and faithful people among the pagan cultures that surrounded them.

Jesus' reply is kind of stringing, but packs a deep punch.

“The sabbath was made for humankind and not humankind for the sabbath, so the Son of Man is Lord of even the Sabbath.” This is a heavy claim: Jesus puts himself in a position of kingship, like king David, to bypass all custom and normal regulation and civil order to gather food for the hungry. This isn't an act of civil disobedience in as much as was God's kingdom breaking into the normal world. A kingdom whose does not place institutions over people. A kingdom in which all are cared for, all are fed, where Jesus the Messiah might re-culture the world into one of abundance, generosity, and genuine shepherd like care.

Today is service Sunday, where we as a church worship by using our hands, our feet, our hearts, our bodies, and our minds. Today we have a variety of activities we encourage you to join in as acts of worship, opportunities to witness God's grace breaking into our world in new ways. Today we not only engage in acts of service, but we as a church celebrate acts service, and our members who serve the community, as

faithful forms of discipleship. We recognize how important it is to witness God's love in word and deed in this building and beyond. We ask for the Holy Spirit to embolden us in our overt evangelism. And we also are reminded that it's important to place loving God's people over our institutional needs or ardent customs. Likewise, we take seriously the rhythm of sabbath and work knowing that Jesus did not come to abolish the sabbath, but challenge us to live our out calling to sabbath and service in real-time response to God's cherished world, and not just a calendar detached from those who are hungry and suffer.

The Lord of the sabbath calls our work Holy. The Lord of the sabbath calls rest Holy. And together, they comprise a lifecycle where the authority of grace becomes the arbitrator of how we live our days.

In speaking about Grace, I leave you with this thought from Dietrich Bonhoeffer,

Costly grace is the treasure hidden in the field; for the sake of it a man will go and sell all that he has. It is the pearl of great price to buy which the merchant will sell all his goods. It is the kingly rule of Christ, for whose sake a man will pluck out the eye which causes him to stumble; it is the call of Jesus Christ at which the disciple leaves his nets and follows him. – Dietrich Bonhoeffer

As your pastor I celebrate and praise God for the many ways you have served others, our community, and sought to honor the Lord of the Sabbath! Your stories are too numerous to share. But today we wanted to take a moment to celebrate one person, Wayne Lannoye, whose story inspires us all. I would like to invite the children to come forward at this time.

(Children's story is read, Wayne is invited to share his thoughts about why service is an important part of following God, and leaders of the service Sunday project are acknowledged: Eilene Hoft-March, LouAnn Graf, Nancy Brown-Koeller, Sarah Wilterdink, Julie Gamm, Wayne Lannoye and Chris Brittnacher & Fellowship team putting on lunch after!)

Let us pray:

Jesus you are Lord of the Sabbath. We praise you for the gift of service and the grace that gives us courage and strength to be your disciples. Show us when and how to serve. Show us when and how to rest and honor your glory. Bless our service-worship today. Amen.