

The Rest

Disclaimer: this is an automatically generated machine transcription - there may be small errors or mistranscriptions. Please refer to the original audio if you are in any doubt.

Date: 21 March 2021

Preacher: Walt Alexander

[0 : 00] The following message is given by Walt Alexander, lead pastor of Trinity Grace Church in Athens, Tennessee.! For more information about Trinity Grace, please visit us at TrinityGraceAthens.com.

! Mark chapter 2, look there with me in verse 23. One Sabbath, He, that is Jesus, was going through the grain fields, and as they, Him and His disciples, made their way, His disciples began to pluck heads of grain.

And the Pharisees were saying to Him, Look, why are they doing what is not lawful on the Sabbath? And Jesus said to them, Have you never read what David did when he was in need and was hungry, he and those who were with him, how he entered the house of God?

In the time of Abathar, the high priest, and ate the bread of the presence, which is not lawful for any, but the priest to eat, and also gave it to those who were with him.

And 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.

[1 : 24] Chapter 3, verse 1, again, he entered the synagogue, and a man was there with a withered hand. And they watched Jesus to see whether He would heal him on the Sabbath, so that they might accuse Him.

And He said to them, And He said to the man with the withered hand, Come here. He said to them, Is it lawful on the Sabbath to do good or to do harm?

To save life or to kill? But they were silent. And He looked around at them with anger, grieved at their hardness of heart, and said to the man, Stretch out your hand.

He stretched it out, and His hand was restored. Verse 6, The Pharisees went out, And immediately held counsel with Herodians against Him.

How to destroy Him. Grass withers, the flowers fade, but the Word of God stands forever.

[2 : 48] Bides forever. Privileged to open it. The most powerful word in the English language may be no.

No. Such an incredibly little word, and yet an incredibly powerful word. Nonetheless, there's perhaps no other time this little word was uttered more powerfully in U.S. history than by Rosa Parks in 1955.

Rosa Parks was an African American who grew up under the Jim Crow laws of segregation in the South between whites and blacks, separate schools, separate restaurants, separate restrooms, separate water fountains, and separate seating sections.

Almost like reading part of the law in the Old Testament, and how separate it all was. At this point of her life, in 1955, she was a married woman working as a seamstress each day, and on December 1st, 1955, she got on a city bus and for some reason decided that day was the day she would refuse to go to the back of the bus and stand with the colored folks.

She sat down where only the white people can sit. Ms. Parks recalls, years later, when the bus driver saw me, and I quote, sitting, he asked if I was going to stand up, and I said, no, I am not.

[4 : 32] Contrary to what we might think about Rosa Parks, even what I thought, historically, Ms. Parks was not a radical. She wasn't a revolutionary. She was not even an especially assertive person.

Ms. Parks was tired of giving in, she said, and I quote, people always say that I didn't give up my seat because I was tired, you know, tired from the day's work, but that isn't true.

I was not tired physically and no more tired than I usually was at the end of a working day. I was not old, although some people have an image of me as being old then. I was 42.

No, the only tired I was was tired of giving in. So when the bus driver ordered her out of her seat, she said, I felt determination cover my body like a quilt on a winter night.

That's vivid. She was tired, tired of being treated like second class citizen, being denied because of the color of her skin and on this day her tiredness stiffened into determined refusal to move.

[5 : 34] Ms. Parks, we know the story, was taken downtown. And arrested, but that little word uttered in Montgomery, Alabama, reverberated through the world and helped bring about and bring down the laws of segregation throughout the South.

Over the past several weeks, we've traced mounting opposition against Jesus Christ. After Jesus healed many and cast out many demons in Galilee, the scribes and the Pharisees have begun to question him and confront him.

These questions, as I've pointed out repeatedly, they began quietly or even internally, actually internally and quietly, but then they moved publicly. And so far, Jesus has played along. Jesus has listened.

Like all the good counselors tell you to do, Jesus has answered their questions. Jesus has defended what he thinks, writes, but in so many ways, these verses, Jesus says no more. These verses, in many ways, are like a line in the sand.

Jesus throws down the gauntlet, if you will. It might not have occurred that way when we first read it, but hopefully it will. Jesus looks at the Pharisees in their eyes and the religion they represent and simply says no.

[6 : 57] No, I have not come to follow your rules. You're going to have to find another man. I have come to rescue and restore broken sinners. And the word where we're going this morning is no. Jesus did not come to follow the rules of religion, but to rescue and restore broken sinners.

Jesus did not come to follow the rules of religion, but to rescue and restore broken sinners. Now, we're going to basically work this through verse by verse under three headings.

The first one is the accusation of the Pharisees. The accusation of the Pharisees. Now, you probably notice that these passages, it's two controversies that Jesus has with the religious leaders, the scribes or the Pharisees about the Sabbath.

Now, you notice that both of these events take place on the Sabbath. Look in 23. One Sabbath. They're walking through the fields. In 3.1, again, he entered the synagogue. In 3.2, heal him on the Sabbath.

So both of these controversies take place on the Sabbath and they revolve around what is and what is not lawful on the Sabbath, which is repeated here as well in 2.24 and 3.4.

[8 : 10] And if you're anything like me, you read these Sabbath controversies and you're like, what is going on? Why does this matter? I mean, Jesus, you're making a... Is this much to do without nothing?

And this is where we've got to come... We've got to enter into a Jewish mindset in a lot of ways. The Sabbath was not just a day of the week. It was the most important day of the week. And the Sabbath, it's rooted in creation.

You know, God created everything with the Word. In six days, He worked. And on the seventh day, He rested. He created man on the sixth day. So He called man into that rest. He underlined it, commanded it again in the fourth commandment in the law of Moses.

He said, six days you should work, but on the seventh day, you should take Sabbath, which literally means not work. Cease working. Stop. So they were commanded to set apart the day for worship and rest.

But they began to ask, what does it mean to not work? What is work? What is not work? I mean, it's a great question. All the other commandments are very straightforward.

[9 : 18] If you notice this, if you go back to Exodus 20 or Deuteronomy 5, all the commandments are very straightforward. They're very simple. But the Sabbath has, it's a paragraph.

All the other ones are kind of a sentence. It's a paragraph. And, you know, they're like, do not murder. You know, you're not asking a follow-up question. What do you mean by that? You know, do not steal.

Do not lie. Do not covet. But the Sabbath is not that way. What one person considers work, another may not. What one person considers not work, another may not.

You know, one person might consider running 15 miles not work because they get that runner's high. And another is like, that would be not just work, it would be misery.

And so they're totally opposed to that. Or house renovations or something like that. It's a live question for us. And so throughout Jewish history, teachers and leaders offered guidance on what was work and what was not work on the Sabbath.

[10 : 14] In the Mishnah and some of these oral rules that they had, there were 39 types of work that were not allowed on the Sabbath. It included many things that we'd expect, but many things that we would not expect.

But the overall takeaway is that you should not do anything that is not absolutely necessary on the Sabbath. So you can only do what's absolutely necessary. On the Sabbath, so they laid down rules for every imaginable scenario.

If your son broke his arm, wrap it up, but do not set it until tomorrow. Sorry, boss.

You know, don't lay on it tonight. You know, if your roof caves in, prop it up, but do not fix it. So you can, you can eliminate the leak coming in.

So you can throw the tarp over the top, but do not throw shingles over it. These rules were often referred to as fence rules or hedge rules.

[11 : 20] The idea was keep the Sabbath holy was not clear enough. And so they, they set fence rules, hedge rules to, they said, if I stay inside this hedge, inside this fence, inside this pasture, I will stay inside the commandment of the Lord.

Does that make sense? So there's this fence and so I don't want to cross this fence and so I don't fix the roof because that might be considered work and I might be breaking the Sabbath. Well, one of these rules had to do with reaping.

Now, it's probably pretty transparent that you, if you're not supposed to work on the Sabbath, then you shouldn't go harvest the fields. But, but their rules prohibited any type of reaping.

Literally, it says that removing all or part of a plant from its source of growth is reaping. But when they see Jesus walking through the grain fields, his disciples are plucking off heads of grain.

Look in verse 23, one Sabbath, he was going through the grain fields as they made their way, his disciples began to pluck heads of grain. They began to remove, pluck off the grain from its source.

[12 : 33] Now, one more technical note and then we're going to move on from a lot of this stuff. Deuteronomy 23, 25 does say that you can pluck your neighbor's grain but you cannot bring a sickle to it.

So, the idea is you can fill your mouth a little bit but you can't bring in the combines. You know, you can't begin to harvest his field. And those were made for poor people.

That was some of the law's provision. It's a wonderful law. You can't actually pick up what falls on the ground. If you drop it, it's for someone else. I mean, that's incredible, isn't it? And so, that law is there.

So, what Jesus was doing was not against the law. It was permitted according to the law but it was not permitted according to the rules of the Pharisees. They believed plucking grain was reaping and reaping was not allowed according to their rules on the Sabbath.

And so, look in verse 24. They say, look! Probably Peter with a head of grain hanging out of his mouth. Look! Why are they doing what is not lawful on the Sabbath?

[13 : 40] Now, before we take up Jesus' response, I want to say a few things about rules and religion. Rules become a problem when we fail to distinguish between the rules of men and the rules of God.

There is a command, keep the Sabbath. And there are other commands that they added to it to help them keep the Sabbath, but when Jesus comes, He gives no regard for those.

Now, adding rules let me just see if I can slide that guy in a little bit more.

Hopefully, I'll do it. Adding rules like they did is not necessarily wrong. all of us will make rules when trying to obey God.

All of us will put up personal fences like them to keep us in the path of obedience. If you're endeavoring to meditate on the law day and night, you may make a rule for yourself to not touch your phone until a certain hour.

[14 : 56] Good for you! I have that rule. I don't always... I did check the scores of some games. I feel like every time I've talked about that. I have to confess. I didn't obey it today.

Yesterday, I did. And Friday, so stop looking at me. But you may have a rule that says, okay, this is a rule.

I want to meditate on the law of the Lord day and night. This is a rule. Or if you're seeking to respect your body, you may swear off sugars and processed food and bathe in essential oils.

Good for you! Way to go! If you're seeking to be filled with the Spirit and not drunk with wine, you may limit yourself to one or more drinks or you may renounce alcohol altogether.

Wonderful! Praise the Lord! In each of those scenarios, you're building a fence. You're saying, I must stay inside this fence or else I might disobey God.

[15 : 53] All that is well and good unless you fail to distinguish between your fence and God's command. Adding the rule is not necessarily wrong, but failing to distinguish between your rules and the rules of God between the biblical principle and your specific practice will lead to legalism.

And that's what Jesus is after with these guys. Legalism, as you know, is attempting to gain acceptance by God through obedience to God. Now, hopefully all of us want to obey God, but the motivation to obey God is very important to Jesus Christ.

Because of the gospel, we don't obey God in order to be accepted by Him. We obey God because we have been accepted by Him. And so there's a little tension with these guys because he thinks and he knows that they base their acceptance upon what they're doing.

So religion says, I obey, therefore I'm accepted, but Jesus says, I'm accepted, therefore I obey. But for us, so that's big picture, big L legalism, Jerry Bridges says there's another danger we will call Christian legalism.

He says, this form of legalism insists on conformity to man-made religious rules and requirements which are often unspoken but are nevertheless real, very real.

[17 : 24] this is what he's confronting with the Pharisees. This form of legalism is when we add our man-made rules to the rules of God and insist on them without pointing out the difference between them.

It will lead us to condemn things that are not against the law like donuts. You don't believe me? I got lectured by a lady one time because she said I was promoting gluttony because churches always do serve donuts.

It's probably not a great habit, you know, but the broccoli would not be eaten. I'm sorry. But I got lectured because it was promoting gluttony or looking at your phone too early.

Don't be grieved for looking at your phone. Be grieved for not meditating on the law of the Lord or drinking a glass of wine or something like that. It will lead us to sort of lead us to be convicted of things we shouldn't be convicted about.

It will lead us to require things that are not commanded in the law of other people like attendance to all church gatherings. Well, why weren't you there last night? Didn't you know we're a church? You know, we're only certain movies.

[18 : 27] Every pastor knows not to talk about movies, but, you know, we're wearing only certain clothing. It gets pretty ugly. Jonathan Edwards, he was thrown out of his church one time, but he was almost thrown out another time because his congregation concluded that his wife had conceived on a Sunday.

And that is not allowed on the Sabbath. I don't know how they did the math. It divides churches.

One group emerges as the black and white line drawers. And another group emerges as the ones who keep stumbling outside the line. Listen to what Jerry Bridges says.

Very helpful. He says, there's a class of people who have come to be known as controllers. These are the people who are not willing to let you live your life before God as you believe He is leading you.

They have all the issues buttoned down and have cast iron opinions about all of them. These people only know black and white. There are no gray areas to them.

[19 : 34] They insist you live your Christian life according to their rules and their opinions. If you insist on being free to live as God wants you to live, they will try to intimidate you and manipulate you one way or another.

Their primary weapons are guilt trips, rejection, or gospel. And Jerry Bridges is just this kind, well, the late Jerry Bridges, a very kind, sensitive, gentle man, but he says, these people must be resistant.

He wouldn't say it like that, but that's why Jesus goes to bat. these people were controllers.

They were bullies. Chapter 23 of Matthew is one long woe against them. Jesus does not speak harshly to the people that color outside the lines and screw up their lives.

He speaks harshly to those who think they haven't. He has no room for them. Look in verse 3-5. He says, He's grieved at their hardness of heart.

[20 : 36] I think that's probably a very self-conscious reference to Isaiah 29-33, which we have for you. Because these people draw near to me with their mouth, honor me with their lips, while their hearts are far from me, and their fear of me is a commandment taught by men.

So we must watch out that we not add rules to the rule of God. We must be very careful to distinguish between biblical principle and our practice.

End aside. Point two, the defense of Jesus. After they confront Jesus about His disciples plucking grain on the Sabbath, Jesus responds brilliantly.

I guess you would always say that about Jesus, but He responds brilliantly. Look at verse 25. He says, Have you never read what David did when he was in need and was hungry, even those who were with him, how he entered the house of God in the time of Abiathar, the high priest, and ate the bread of the presence, which is not lawful for any but the priest to eat, and gave it to those who were with him.

Now there's a semi-big problem with this text that I'm going to hit briefly. Jesus references all of this happening within the time of Abiathar, the high priest. But if you go back and read 1 Samuel 21, it was Ahimelech who was a high priest that gave the bread to David.

[22 : 03] Bart Ehrman, a scholar I've mentioned before, said this very problem when he was an undergrad led him to discover that there's lots of problems with the Bible and so he abandoned the Bible altogether and wrote lots of books against the Bible.

But a simple solution seems to be right at hand. Abiathar was Ahimelech's son and he was the next high priest and he was the high priest for much longer and he was a much greater high priest.

So it seems that this is not necessarily referencing exactly the time of who was the high priest but in an overarching way who was in the time of this high priest.

If you ask when Isaiah Thomas played basketball in the NBA, you may say it was in the time of Magic and Larry. And then the next in the time would be Michael and then perhaps Kobe.

But there's an idea. There's overarching in the time of. And so that's exactly the way the ESV renders it. If you look down there with me, it was in the time of. Abiathar, the high priest.

[23 : 09] I don't know if that's helpful, but I think that's the way to understand that. But why does Jesus remind them of this scene? Why does he remind them of when Ahimelech gave David bread?

Does Jesus want to pass? The high priest gave David a pass while he was on a journey running from Saul.

He was the Lord's anointed but was not yet put in place as king. And he was hungry. Is Jesus saying, hey, we're on a journey too.

We want some bread. Or grain. I don't think so. I think what he's saying is in the same way that Ahimelech saw that the greater need was to help David than to obey the law, so Jesus wants the Pharisees to realize that the needs of others are greater than obeying the law.

Let me explain. What I think he wants to say is that mercy is better than sacrifice. Love is better than obedience. In fact, in Matthew 12, when Jesus... I can't...

[24 : 17] Maybe it's not 12, but when Matthew, when he tells this story, he references Hosea, I desire mercy, not sacrifice. I think what he's trying to say is that there's a weightier matter here.

The weightier matters of the law are justice, mercy, and faithfulness. I think what he's saying is if you choose between following your rules and helping others, help others. But if in focusing on obeying your rules, you're missing the point, you're missing the greater thing and you misunderstand the Sabbath.

I mean, you might have the same thing if you had a boss, maybe you're a receptionist and the boss said, never get up from this seat from 9 to 5. You know, something like that, you know? Or maybe this afternoon I'm going out.

I need you to stay right here. But if an elderly lady walked in front of your office complex and fell down and you went out there and helped her up, he would not lecture you because you saw the greater matter.

Does that help? I think that's what he's going on. Jesus is trying to say there's a greater matter here. And so Jesus says in verse 27, look there with me, he says, the Sabbath was made for man, not man for the Sabbath. Now, I've been reading my Bible for 19 years and that's always a statement.

[25 : 25] I'm like, what in the world are you talking about? You know, but I think what he's trying to say is, he is trying to say the Sabbath was made for man to be a blessing to him, to give him rest and time to worship, to help him, to bring joy to his life.

Man was not made for the Sabbath. The Sabbath was not meant to be a straitjacket. It was not meant to be a burden. It was not meant to load down. It was not meant to be a total drag on their lives.

It was meant to be a joy, a blessing, a release of burden. Look at the way Robert Graves says it. When you get this wrong, it's a disaster. He said, I do not love the Sabbath, the soap suds and the starch, the troops of solemn people who to salvation march.

You know? And that's the way Sundays can be that way. If you take the Sabbath that way, it's not meant to be that way. The Sabbath was made for man, not man for the Sabbath. It's meant to be a blessing.

And in a wonderful way, that little catchy, quibby phrase, Jesus says, He squashes all their rules and leaves the Sabbath command standing.

[26 : 36] So in that single word, He squashes all their rules because they made the Sabbath a straight jacket and He leaves the Sabbath command standing.

So, He's saying, don't let the rules burden you, but by all means, keep the Sabbath. Now, time doesn't permit it, but I wouldn't, and I don't think it's the intent of this passage, but I would encourage you to take a Sabbath to Shabbat.

We've been joking about that because I read a book on the Sabbath and He said Shabbat like a hundred times, which is the Hebrew word behind it. So, sometimes we take a day off, I say, honey, is that Shabbat or not? You know, I don't even know that Shabbating is a thing or it's a gerund, you know, is that Shabbat worthy?

You know, or whatever, you've got to figure out. You know, we lock our phones up for a full 24 hours. Try doing that and you start nicking out, you know, feel like you're losing your mind, you know, but it's so helpful.

You realize, people don't need me as much as I think they do. I don't need people in a connective sort of way as much as I think I do.

[27 : 46] So, so do it, Sabbath. But Jesus makes another point here too. The priest gave David a pass because he was the Lord's anointed. He was the future king, he was the highest authority in all of Israel.

He was God's beloved. And so what he needs comes above what is technically lawful. And Jesus is saying, how much more should you give whatever I need to my disciples regardless of what your rules say?

I am David's greater son. I am the Messiah himself. Jesus uncovered in this little scene, you know, and we get caught up in the wrapping of it, but he uncovers the root of the whole clash with the Pharisees.

So it's been mounting since the beginning of chapter 2 and it's mounted up to this point, but at the root of the whole clash is not rules, but who rules? It's not laws, but who decides the laws?

William Willimon said, the clash with authority is not over rules, but over who rules? And that's what Jesus is getting at. And that's why he says in the next sentence, in 28 he says, so the Son of Man is Lord, even of the Sabbath.

[29 : 03] Now, the Greek is very emphatic here. It says, Lord is the Son of Man and of the Sabbath. He is Kyrios.

He is the Lord. David, I mean, Jesus is saying, I'm not just a higher authority than the priest. I'm not just a higher authority than anyone else in Israel. I'm the highest authority of all.

I am the Lord. He's arresting. I mean, who talks like this? Whose self-consciousness is like this? This is Jesus Christ. He's saying, I am not a good teacher that you should kind of keep around as a rabbi in this area.

I'm not, some person's going to fall in line with your religious things. I am the Lord and you must receive me as the Lord or throw me out. It reminds me of what C.S. Lewis said.

You can't say Jesus is a good teacher when you understand what He says. Either He's God or He's insane. He forces a decision. He's forced, this is why it's a line in the sand, He's forcing a decision with these guys.

[30 : 10] C.S. Lewis said, I'm not here, I'm trying here to prevent anyone saying the really foolish thing that people often say about Jesus. I'm ready to accept Jesus as a great moral teacher but I don't accept His claim to be God.

That is the one thing we must not say. A man who's merely a man and said the sorts of things that Jesus said would not be a great moral teacher. He would be, either be a lunatic on the level of the man who says he's a poached egg or else he would be the devil of hell.

You must make a choice. Either this man was and is a son of God or else a madman or something worse. To gain what Jesus Christ comes to purchase, you must kneel down and hand over the keys of your life.

Jesus said again and again, whoever exalts himself will be humbled. that will probably result in humbling in this life but ultimately Jesus is referencing the humbling that will endure for eternity in hell.

But whoever humbles himself will be exalted. There's no option of a no choice.

[31 : 41] But all these controversies are coming together here. Jesus says, I'm the one who brings the forgiveness of sins now. As he made clear to the paralytic, I'm the one who welcomes sinners to the final feast now.

As he made clear to the tax collectors and sinners. And he's saying, I am the one who invites sinners to rest now. I am the Lord of the Sabbath. I'm the one who created all things with the word and rested on the seventh day. I'm the one who created the Sabbath to bless and build up.

I am the one who brings rest now from the forgiveness of sins and will bring about the final rest of the new heavens and the new earth. I am the Lord. Now, I think we can look at this scene.

Point three, the drama of with the man with the withered hand. I wrestled quite a bit with why these two scenes were put together and why I chose to preach them together.

Felt committed on the latter. It seems to me that these are together. This healing is next to the controversy of over the Sabbath.

[33 : 00] Now, clearly they weren't like the same day. One Sunday did it one. Maybe the next week. I don't know. But it seems to dramatically show the effect of what the Pharisees believe about the Sabbath and what Jesus does.

So it's a drama, I think. It's a demonstration. It's a dramatization of what they believe and what he believes about the Sabbath in real time with a real man right there.

And it's incredible. Look in verse 1. He says, again, he entered the synagogue. This is most likely the one in Capernaum. And a man was there with a withered hand. Presumably, this man was paralyzed.

According to the rules of the Pharisees, this man's deformity did not require immediate help. He may have been paralyzed from birth. So, he would not have been helped on the Sabbath by the Pharisees.

And this man likely entered the synagogue without any plans of being helped. Verse 2. And they watched Jesus the Pharisees to see whether he would heal him on the Sabbath so that they might accuse him.

[34 : 13] Did you see that? They watch him not so they can learn from him, but to see whether he would heal so that they could accuse. They are the rules police. They are the law dogs.

He has been pushing up against the law. And so, they watch everyone to make sure he stays in line. So, they might accuse him.

They plan to bring a charge against Jesus Christ. Verse 3. Look down there with me. He said to the man with the withered hand. So, Jesus is in there. This vivid scene.

Jesus says to the man with the withered hand, come here. This is the only healing in Mark that Jesus initiates. Every other healing. Someone else comes to him and asks to be healed, but not this man.

Jesus initiates this encounter. Jesus points him out, asks him to step out of the crowd and into the front. Face to face with Jesus Christ.

[35 : 13] And with the man standing in front of him aware of the eyes of the Pharisees and the brokenness, the witheredness of this man's hand, Jesus asks, look in verse 4, he says, is it lawful on the Sabbath to do good or to do harm?

To save life or to kill? You can cut the tension with a knife and Jesus is addressing all the people in the room right there. The first question, the first part, questions how the man with the withered hand should be treated.

Is it lawful to do good or to do harm? What should we do with this man? The second question, part of the question, addresses how the Son of Man should be treated.

Should we save life or kill? Jesus knows he's addressing, he's profiling his audience. The first part points the finger at the man with the withered hand. Do you see him?

The second part points the finger at them. Almost like he said to Jesus, do what you gotta do. Look in verse 3, I mean 4, B.

[36 : 20] Is it lawful on the Sabbath to do good or to do harm? Save life or to kill? But they were silent. The accusers were silent. The loud mouths were silent. The law dogs were silent.

All their rules had painted them into a corner when opportunity arose to help and to heal. They can't get from out behind their rules. They can't get from out behind their rules. They can't get from out behind their rules. 5, And he looked around at them with anger.

Jesus is not meek and mild. Jesus cannot stand in the presence of evil without being emotionally affected. Grieved at their hardness of heart.

Their preoccupation with rules of the Sabbath. Their failure to love and help and serve others. Their legalism is very apparent. Jesus is angry. Jesus is grieved at their hardness of heart.

They don't fear God. They fear the commandment of men. Their own commandments. 5, B, He looks around at them.

[37 : 30] Several times in Mark's Gospel, actually like five times in Mark's Gospel, there's this scene where Jesus dramatically looks around. What's He doing? He's calling attention to what He's about to do. He's about to do something dramatic.

So He says to the man, stretch out your hand. Now right here, Jesus does not stretch out His hand as He did with the leper and many others.

Surely any other day Jesus would have touched this man's hand. But not on the Sabbath. Jesus refuses to do anything that they might consider work. So He refuses to touch Him.

He says, stretch out your hand. I love it. I mean, there's a world behind these words. I mean, I wonder what this man thought. What do you want me to stretch out my hand for? I mean, isn't it obvious that I cannot stretch out my hand?

That's what it means to have a withered hand. It cannot stretch out. Are you just like them? You just want to look at me? You just want to stare at me but not touch?

[38 : 32] You want to watch me but not help? Is that what you want to do? If you want me to stretch out my hand, then I will. But at the all-powerful command of the Lord, Jesus Christ, the Son of Man, the Lord, He reaches out, He stretches out His hand and as He does, His hand stretches for the first time.

His hand is healed for the first time. Dramatically, all the eyes see, He comes to do good. Jesus is not like these men.

He does not stare at Him. He does not look at Him. He restores Him. He does not look at Him. Interestingly, Mark says His hand was restored.

Up to this point, every time He describes the healing, He says healed. This word is later used in Mark to talk about God restoring all things to Israel and restoring all things to the Lord.

Jesus is the Lord of the Sabbath and the rest, Jesus promises, rushes in at this moment. His hand, once shriveled up but now restored, points forward to and is a taste of the final rest Jesus promises for all those who trust in Him.

[40 : 03] I think that word is very careful. He restores it because Jesus has come to bring in a world in which sickness and sin, death and disease are wiped out forever. That's the true meaning of the Sabbath.

It's not caught up in all these little silly rules. It's not caught up in making sure people stay inside the lines or something like that. It's caught up in the One who's come to bring rest from the forgiveness of sins, rest from this world, rest from the sorrow, rest from sickness that we can't control.

Did this man sin? Is that why he has a shriveled hand? No, no, but it's just this world that's crooked that Jesus has come to correct and straighten out and stretch out finally and fully at the end but right now He interrupts and intervenes.

But the Pharisees will have nothing of it. This passage ends in a very foreboding way. They're through with their questions. They're through with their investigation.

They make plans to destroy Him. Look in verse 6. The Pharisees went out and immediately held counsel with the Herodians against Him. How to destroy Him? If we were to find ourselves in this passage, that's where we would find ourselves.

[41 : 24] The ones who chased Him up to Calvary. So what is this?

He didn't come to make people follow the religious rules. He turned over tables and came to rescue and restore broken sinners forever.

This is not a religion. This is something else. In one sermon, Dick Lucas once preached, he recounted an imaginary conversation between an early Christian and her neighbor in Rome.

The neighbor says, Ah, I hear you're religious. Great. Religion is a good thing. Where is your temple or your holy place? We don't have a temple, said the Christian.

Jesus is our temple. No temple, but where do your priests work and do their stuff, do their ritual? Christian responds, We don't have priests to mediate the presence of God.

[42 : 34] Jesus is our priest. Wait, no priest? But where... I don't know how we're getting at it. But where do you offer your sacrifices to acquire the favor of your God?

He says, We don't need sacrifices. Jesus is our sacrifice. What kind of religion is this? But the Romans, there's no religion at all. That's what Jesus came to do.

He came to call the people. Not to create a religion with a bunch of rules. But the people that follow Him and pour out their lives for Him. Let us pray. Father in heaven, we thank you for your mercy towards us in Jesus Christ and we humble ourselves before you.

Lord, we want to hear what you have to say to us from these words. And we pray that anything that would be helpful would be remembered. Anything that's not would be forgotten.

That we would enter into the promised rest that Jesus has purchased for us. that we would live our lives from a state of approval.

[43 : 46] Not of grasping. That we would live in the good of all that you died to purchase. So we thank you and we praise you and we pray that you would help us now as we sing.

In Jesus' name. Amen. Amen. You've been listening to a message given by Walt Alexander, lead pastor of Trinity Grace Church in Athens, Tennessee. For more information about Trinity Grace, please visit us at TrinityGraceAthens.com.