

**Mark 2:23-28**

June 7, 2015 – PENTECOST 2, Confirmation Sunday

## Worship the Lord of the Sabbath

† **Criticism will come. (vv.23-24)**

† **Jesus is your rest. (vv.25-28)**

Dear children of the heavenly Father, especially you, dear Michaela:

One of my treasured childhood memories is family devotions. Each day, either morning or evening, Dad had us get out our Bibles and hymnals. We seven kids took turns choosing our favorite hymns which still ring in my heart today. It was also fun choosing the book of the Bible which the family would read for the next few weeks. Of course, my brothers and I always liked the action scenes in Joshua, Judges, Samuel and Kings. I grew up wondering how anyone could think the Bible was boring. And I grew up convinced that the Bible is God's Word and every Word of God is true.

Love for God's Word is one thing I work hard to teach in Catechism classes for our 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> graders, as well as adults in Bible Information Class (BIC). It's not enough to learn facts. But once we see how God's Word applies to our personal, every day lives, we grow to love it as our dearest treasure.

My dear Michaela, in your case I was too late – in a good way! Your parents taught you from early on to love God's Word, not only by the things they said but by the good example they set at home and in regular Bible Class attendance. I was only half kidding when I offered to flunk you in order to keep you in Catechism next year. But we both know you will always be studying God's Word, not because you have to, but because you want to. We share that joy to **Worship the Lord of the Sabbath**.

† **Criticism will come. (vv.23-24)**

In theory you've already been taught that **Criticism will come**. You've seen first hand how Christians are constantly maligned not just by the media, but in our society. The shock is when you experience **Criticism** from Christ's people. Only God knows who has faith in their hearts. But sometimes in weakness true Christians can be so stuck on their own opinions that they resist God's truth no matter how clearly He has stated it in His holy Word, the Bible. You may love them dearly, but find they have nothing for you but a cold shoulder and their back turned. It will happen. And it hurts.

When it does, you should know you're in good company with Jesus Himself. A few verses after our text it says that Jesus *“looked around at them in anger and, deeply distressed at their stubborn hearts, said to the man, ‘Stretch out your hand.’ He stretched it out, and his hand was completely restored.”* (Mark 3:5 NIV84) Who were these people criticizing Jesus for healing a man's hand? How could they get so angry at Jesus that they joined with hated enemies to plot His death? (3:6)

We know them as *Pharisees*, the most religious people around. One Jewish historian says there were about 6,000 *Pharisees* in Israel at the time. Each one was convinced he could keep God's law and earn God's favor better than anyone else. Since Jesus taught otherwise, they hated everything Jesus said and did. He healed a paralyzed man let down through the roof into a crowded house, so they were upset. But what really got them angry was how Jesus said to the paralytic, *“Son, your sins are forgiven.”* Everyone else was amazed and praised God, but not the *Pharisees*. They were too self-righteous.

Jesus called Levi- Matthew to be His disciple and went to an evangelism party with Matthew's friends; the *Pharisees* objected. The *Pharisees* fasted; Jesus' disciples did not. And when they were walking through the grain fields, the *Pharisees* considered it a terrible sin that those disciples of Jesus

picked some grain and ate it – on the Sabbath Day! The Jewish elders made up extra rules, then demanded obedience to them. They forgot God’s law for their own. Sounds like Minnesota where immorality is celebrated, but don’t you dare try to buy alcohol on Sunday. Someone decided that’s bad. Doesn’t matter what the Bible says to them. Convenience is more important to them than unborn babies. Many insist it’s okay to help the elderly die; that’s “mercy” to them. Who dares criticize their judgment?

See why we need the Ten Commandments to show us God’s will? The Holy Spirit breaks our proud Pharisaical hearts and convicts us of breaking all God’s commands. Why make more laws when we can’t even keep the ones God gave? Like that little daughter of mine with marker on her face, we look in the mirror of God’s law and realize something dreadful. No matter how much people criticize us, under God’s law we are far worse. **Criticism will come**, but it’s nothing close to the damnation we deserve.

### † **Jesus is your rest. (vv.25-28)**

Sweet, sweet Jesus! He is our blessed rest! Jesus is the tower to which we can run, the fortress of our souls, the one heart that will receive us even when we’re “guilty as sin.”

Look how Jesus answers the self-righteous Pharisees with their own Bible. He often asks people, especially the religious leaders, why they miss things in their Bible reading? Aren’t they studying God’s Word? Aren’t they paying attention? Or do they only read books about the Bible instead of reading the Bible itself? *The Pharisees said to him, “Look, why are [your disciples] doing what is not lawful on the Sabbath day?”* <sup>25</sup>*He replied to them, “Have you never read what David did when he was in need and hungry – he and those who were with him?”* <sup>26</sup>*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 anyone to eat, except for the priests. And he gave some to those who were with him.”* We heard in family devotions about David running away from jealous King Saul. David broke God’s law by eating bread reserved for the priests. Yet neither Abiathar the priest nor David were condemned by God for this.

What the Pharisees missed and what highly religious people today can’t see is the true purpose of the law. It keeps telling us what to do, but the law cannot undo what we’ve already done or give us the power to do right. If everywhere outside was a barnyard, we’d never notice the smell. Sin seems normal because everyone does it. But everyone dies. And *“the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.”* (Romans 6:23 NIV84)

Two things Jesus says here to help us. And this is what motivates your Confirmation vows today: *“The Sabbath was made for man, not man for the Sabbath.”* <sup>28</sup>*So the Son of Man is the Lord even of the Sabbath.”* God commanded His people of Israel to worship on Saturday. Physical rest and soul rest in assembly hearing God’s Word. The **Sabbath** pointed ahead to the true rest that Jesus gives us. It’s in your Confirmation verse where Jesus says, *“Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest.”* (Matthew 11:28 NIV84) **Jesus is your rest – rest for your soul.**

When I was in 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> grade, I wanted to be a smoke jumper. I’m still not sure why I thought jumping out of a plane into a burning forest would be fun. My Granddad steered me other directions. But one thing I remember from Future Foresters of America was about starting a backfire. More recently, I learned that a backfire may be the only way to survive a prairie fire. Do a controlled burn all around you, then stand in the middle of that burned out area. The fire will burn right past you.

**Worship the Lord of the Sabbath**, because Jesus is our backfire. All God’s wrath at our sin came crashing down on Jesus, searing His soul on the cross. Now that He is risen indeed, we can run to Him and be safe. God’s anger is past. The springtime of His love has come. Our souls rest easy with Jesus. Who would want to miss a single opportunity to learn more? Love needs no command to **Worship the Lord**. We love Him because He loved us first. Confirmed in Him we stand. Amen.