

Borrowing Time!

- **Keep Sunday Special** campaign a few years back, against legislation changes to make shopping easier on a Sunday:
 - man Christians mobilised, wrote letters to MPs, predicted dire consequences
 - and yet we've learned to live with the changes
 - possibly even allowed them to change what we do on a Sunday, what is acceptable...
- Contrast with the world of my gran's generation:
- Quite strict Baptist background; strong framework for life; Sunday was definitely a special day, a Sabbath, a day when work was not on.
 - but life wasn't easy; we complain about the busyness of life now, but it was still busy then, with so much needing done by hand!
 - worse, the expectation was that you'd have your housework done in time for Sunday so not only were you not working then, but the house was clean!!
 - with four kids and a husband in the shipyards, which were on a busy war-footing, my gran sometimes ran out of time on a Saturday night...
 - *so she and God had a little agreement!!*
 - she used to "borrow" some time from Sunday... she'd work through into early Sunday morning, but "pay back that time" from Monday, or whenever!
- I don't know exactly how that worked out - I never knew my mum's mum, second hand stories...
 - *but what is clear is that Sunday & not working on the Lord's day was important!*
- How much our world has changed since then!!
 - we can shop, work, phone the bank call centre, do nearly everything on a Sunday we can do during the rest of the week.
 - how should we assess that change? how do we keep the commandment?
 - *"Remember the Sabbath day by keeping it holy. Six days you shall labor and do all your work, but the seventh day is a Sabbath to the LORD your God. On it you shall not do any work, neither you, nor your son or daughter, nor your manservant or maidservant, nor your animals, nor the alien within your gates. For in six days the LORD made the heavens and the earth, the sea, and all that is in them, but he rested on the seventh day. Therefore the LORD blessed the Sabbath day and made it holy. (Exodus 20:8-11)*

What was the Problem?

- Jesus encountered this very issue many times during his ministry.
 - we have two little incidents that come to the crux of the matter in the passage Liz read for us earlier.

In the fields...

- Out in the fields - probably just going from where staying to/from synagogue, or maybe to see friends afterwards...
 - not going out of their way to get into trouble (though what were the Pharisees doing there?!)
 - picked some grain (reaping), husked it (winnowing), ate it.
- Pharisees were being picky - they'd taken the law we read earlier and extended it and extended it until picking a stalk of wheat was work!
 - what a repressive environment to live in!
 - disciples were probably unaware of how far the Pharisaic legal training had gone, unaware of what interpretation would be placed on their simple actions.

In the synagogue...

- In the synagogue, things were slightly different:
 - everyone would know Pharisees thought healing was work;
 - this has all the feel of a set-up!
- But Jesus doesn't shirk from the challenge:

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- gets the man to stand up, admitting his need for help (shame) - and heals him!

What was Jesus' Response?

- What was at the heart of Jesus' response in these two incidents?
- On what basis was he acting?
- Three statements get to the heart of the matter: v.2:27, v.2:28 and v.3:4:
 - (2:27) *Then he said to them, "The Sabbath was made for man, not man for the Sabbath."*
 - (2:28) *So the Son of Man is Lord even of the Sabbath."*
 - (3:4) *Then Jesus asked them, "Which is lawful on the Sabbath: to do good or to do evil, to save life or to kill?" But they remained silent.*
- Look at each in turn:

Sabbath for man, not man for the Sabbath (v.2:27)

- First says: what was the intention of God's institution of the Sabbath?
 - always a good question to ask - why is this here? what was the original purpose? is that purpose being fulfilled?
- Purpose was for good, to give rest, space to worship, space for blessing, space for holiness to break into our weekly rhythm.
 - it wasn't meant to be a burden, but a joy!
 - the "don't work" was intended to be for our good, not our ill!
 - *decimalisation of the week tried in communist countries (China? USSR?) - didn't work - had to go back to seven day cycle: God knows how he made us!*
- So in particular situations: in fields, in synagogue, are your petty regulations preventing the day being one of restoration and blessing?

Son of Man is Lord of the Sabbath (v.2:28)

- Jesus claiming Lordship as creator of the Sabbath, and so right to interpret its laws, to point out the intention, to overturn the legalism.

What is lawful on the Sabbath? Good or Evil? (v.3:4)

- Throughout the OT Law the intention always was to bring the rule of God to bear on all of life, to bring his good to pass...
- Jesus asks here whether the interpretation of the law was allowing that to happen:
 - for the Pharisees saw rules, not people; saw walls, not opportunity for compassion and the freedom Jesus' healing would bring for the man in the synagogue.

How might We Respond?

- We are at other end of Sabbath spectrum:
 - 24 hour shopping; call-centres open; working on Sunday; etc, etc.
 - old family routines of visiting relatives or Sunday afternoon walks have largely disappeared, or are less part of the rhythm of life generally
- How might we respond?
 - by applying Jesus' principles to our situation!
 - to the issues of today's Sunday...
 - *shopping... work... use of time... housework...*

Sabbath for man, not man for the Sabbath (v.2:27)

- do we get sufficient rest, sufficient space for worship, sufficient space for relationship?

Son of Man is Lord of the Sabbath (v.2:28)

- he is still Lord, his law still has relevance - space for worship!

What is lawful on the Sabbath? Good or Evil? (v.3:4)

- do we so order our lives that Sunday becomes a day of opportunity to do good?
- do we make a point of visiting or phoning to bring life?
- do we use the opportunity to build good experiences into the lives of our

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children, for instance?

- And asking questions about our corporate life together:
 - services at 11am & 6pm, etc;
 - is it good for people, or a burden?
 - is it in obedience to the Lord's command to worship him, to meet together?
 - does it give us opportunity to do good?
- How about a 3pm service, only? **WHY?** or **WHY NOT?**
- An area for reflection, for quiet response:
 - *quiet prayer to finish - consider routine of your life - what one thing might you change, or strengthen the place of, to apply Jesus' Sabbath principles to your life?*