



## **Matthew 12:1–8**

12 At that time Jesus went through the grainfields on the Sabbath. His disciples were hungry and began to pick some heads of grain and eat them. 2 When the Pharisees saw this, they said to him, “Look! Your disciples are doing what is unlawful on the Sabbath.” 3 He answered, “Haven’t you read what David did when he and his companions were hungry? 4 He entered the house of

God, and he and his companions ate the consecrated bread—which was not lawful for them to do, but only for the priests. 5 Or haven't you read in the Law that the priests on Sabbath duty in the temple desecrate the Sabbath and yet are innocent? 6 I tell you that something greater than the temple is here. 7 If you had known what these words mean, 'I desire mercy, not sacrifice,' you would not have condemned the innocent. 8 For the Son of Man is Lord of the Sabbath."

## **Reflection**

(Today's talk is given by Justin Moffatt)

This appears to be a little conflict, but it

has major implications for life. Why little?

In Sydney in 2016, you'll regularly get people rolling their eyes and saying that Christians (and indeed all religions) argue about useless and irrelevant things, like how many angels there are on the head of a pin, and the like. And here is an example of such apparent pettiness in the first century. After all, Jesus' disciples are hungry, and they are doing a thing that is permitted in the Torah: they pick and eat corn.

What's the problem with that? The problem is that they are picking and eating on the Sabbath – on the prescribed Jewish Day of Rest. So the Pharisees begin to prosecute the 'innocent', as Jesus calls them. They confront Jesus: 'Look! Your disciples

are doing what is unlawful on the Sabbath.’

Now, it looks so small to us. It looks and feels like religious rules, like legalism, like pettiness, like arguing about the size and quantity of angels on the head of a pin. But it is actually important! And it unlocks some huge things about rest. And it unlocks an even bigger thing about Jesus.

What does it unlock about rest? Just before this little conflict with major implications, Jesus has just said (yesterday’s ‘Day With Jesus’):

28 Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest. 29 Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will

find rest for your souls.

Rest in the Bible is not merely putting your feet up. It's not 'doing nothing'. Rest is not going on holiday, or merely sleeping in, as good as these things are. We think it is, but it isn't. We think it is, but that's why we are never rested.

In the Bible, rest is when you live the way God meant you to live, with God and under God. The Day of Rest points to the true rest: to love and live in God; to eat; to taste the fruits of what you have done in God's world; to live, and to love and to serve the vulnerable (that's for tomorrow passage.) It's to tell yourself some things: you are not defined by your busyness; you are not defined by your work; you are not a robot; you are not the 'means of production'. You

are a human; you are made in the image of God, who rested himself on the 7th Day. Do what he does. Take the time.

Rest is when you are living the way God designed you to live. Like a fish in water; like a dog in a park; like a train on railway racks; like a bird in the sky. We are designed to love God; to fear God; to worship God; to adore God; to trust God. And to love a life of sacrificial love in him. That is true rest. (More on this tomorrow.)

But to narrow rest down to whether you can pick corn or not between sun-up and sun-down on Saturday is silly. And Jesus points that out to the Pharisees in verse 31. 'Look. You've read the Bible. You know about David in 1 Samuel 21. David and his companions were hungry, and he entered

the house of God, and they ate the ‘consecrated bread’, which wasn’t ‘lawful’ for them to eat. They did it because it gave them life, as they were establishing the kingdom. They did it because they were hungry, and they ate. You Pharisees: you ought to have praised God that my disciples were eating today.’ That’s because verse 7, mercy trumps sacrifice, as Hosea pointed out, which is a way of saying: God wants love to be shown, as opposed to mere Torah observance, with all its amended rules which burdens people. He wants you to have a present and a future as God intended – forgiven, cleansed, following Jesus, heading for a future rest, taking the time and space now to live, love, serve and trust God. To eat.

So you see why this is important, not small;

why it is significant, not petty. I find my rest in God! And I'll express it each week in a practical way. Not just to build a margin of space in my life, but to remind me of God. This is why many of us make church a fixed priority each week; not for habit's sake, but for our souls.

Bill Gates once said: "Just in terms of allocation of time resources, religion is not very efficient. There's a lot more I could be doing on a Sunday morning." We aren't our diaries. We are humans who live and eat.

## **Think**

So have a think about your life. Can you take a day off each week? Do it! And plan it – and be intentional about it. Eat on it.



Can you take holidays? Not too long, not too short. Can you take breaks during the day? Go for a walk. Perhaps with people you love. Visit places of joy to you: a museum or going to a sporting match.

The Sydney Morning Herald recently asked: 'When did the holiday season become so full of effort?' We have a difficulty. The internet means I can work anywhere; the telephone means I can be contacted anywhere; the TV means I can take an easy mind-numbing route. All the more reason to unplug.

As we said at the beginning, this passage is important for a second reason. It is important, for it unlocks something BIG about Jesus. These things we do to 'get a break', they point higher. They point to

God, in whom we rest. They point deeper. They point to the deeper rest that comes with Jesus.

Jesus is master of the Rest, verse 8,

For the Son of Man is Lord of the Sabbath.

Which is why Jesus says in verse 5,

Or haven't you read in the Law that the priests on Sabbath duty in the temple desecrate the Sabbath and yet are innocent?

In other words Jewish priests 'work' on the Sabbath in the temple without doing anything wrong. But then the important line:

6 I tell you that something greater than the temple is here.

‘I’m here.’ Now you can see why this is so important. Jesus is the place you meet God. Jesus is Lord. Jesus is Master of Rest. He is the one who rested. And unburdens me as I come to him. For he is the one by whom and for whom the universe was created. And the one who gives rest.

## **Pray**

Take the time today to pray. Create the space (the margins) to reflect and pray to Jesus. And plan your day off this week: not in self indulgence, nor in restrictive legal terms, but in love of others, and life in God.