

What part of your Bible instruction, whether as a youth in Catechism Class, or as an adult in a Starting Point Class, did you enjoy the most? Was it the lesson on Creation? Baptism? How we got the Bible? The Lord’s Supper? Personally, I really enjoy teaching the lesson that explains why Jesus had to become human and still remain God to be our Savior and rescue us from sin and hell. It beautifully reveals the good news of God’s wisdom, love and grace.

The lesson on the Ten Commandments, God Law isn’t a favorite of many Bible students. Probably because our sinful nature doesn’t like to be told what we can and cannot do. And yet, in today’s lesson from Mark, we’ll see that God’s laws are not about his control and our restrictions. God didn’t give us his commands to show us who’s boss. He gave his laws for our benefit. That’s especially true when it comes to the Sabbath, where Jesus wants you to know the Sabbath was intended for your benefit, so you can **“Enjoy Your Sabbath Rest.”**

*“Sabbath”* is the Hebrew OT word for *“rest.”* After creating the universe in 6 days, God rested on the 7th day and used that word to refer to Saturday, the 7th day of the week. The 3rd Commandment in Exodus 20 details that for us: **“Remember the Sabbath Day by keeping it holy. Six days you shall work, but the seventh day is a Sabbath to the Lord your God. On it you shall not do any work. 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.”**

Today’s OT reading from Deuteronomy 5 is almost identical to Exodus 20, except for ... instead of relating the *“rest”* back to creation, God related the *“rest”* back to their deliverance from Egyptian slavery.

Throughout the OT, God pictured the Sabbath as something very special just between himself and his people: **“You must observe the Sabbaths. This will be a sign between me and you for the**

**generations to come, so that you may know that I am the Lord, who sets you apart as holy.”**

The Sabbath Day would provide physical rest for the body. But more importantly, it would provide spiritual rest for the soul through public worship. That’s when and where God would remind his people he created them, delivered them and set them apart as his people.

Why all this Sabbath background? Mark’s Gospel took place on the Sabbath as Jesus and his disciples were walking through a grain field. The Pharisees were right on their heels, spying on Jesus. They were hoping to find something, anything that would expose him as the fraud they thought he was. And, sure enough, Jesus’ disciples stripped grain from some stalks and ate the kernels. To the Pharisees this was illegal: **“Why are your disciples doing what is unlawful on the Sabbath?”**

The Pharisees weren’t accusing Jesus’ disciples of stealing. God did allow his people to go into a field and pick grain if they were hungry. What the Pharisees were accusing Jesus’ disciples of was breaking the Sabbath by working. In their eyes, the disciples were *“harvesting”* the grain as they picked it and *“milling”* it by rolling it in their hands before they ate it. Since it was Jesus’ disciples who were working on the Sabbath, they blamed Jesus for not stopping them.

The problem is those Pharisees were missing the point of the commandments. They were more concerned about obeying the laws than the people for whom those laws were written. Yes, God gives us his laws to be obeyed, but the reason he does so is to make life better for us. That’s what Jesus meant when he said: **“The Sabbath was made for man, not man for the Sabbath.”** God made man on day 6. He made the Sabbath on day 7. The Sabbath was to serve man, not the other way around. God wants us to **“Enjoy Our Sabbath Rest.”**

To show the Pharisees this wasn’t anything new, that the law of love supersedes all other laws, Jesus

directed them to what they knew best – a story from the OT: **“Have you never read what David did when he and his companions were hungry and in need. In the days of Abiathar the high priest, he entered the house of God and ate the consecrated bread, which is lawful only for priests to eat. And he also gave some to his companions.”**

Israel’s first king, Saul, had posted “Wanted: Dead or Alive” for David and his men. They were running for their lives and starving, so showed up at Abiathar’s backdoor, begging for anything to eat. He only had the bread in the Tabernacle which was reserved for priests.

It might seem that Abiathar had broken the law by giving the bread reserved for the priests to David and his men, but God did not condemn Abiathar or David for their actions. The law of love, concern for David and his men, superseded all other laws.

Again, it might seem that the Pharisees had a point, but God did not condemn Jesus’ disciples for their actions. The law of love, concern for Jesus’ disciples, superseded all other laws.

What about the 3rd Commandment for us today? Why don’t we rest on the Sabbath (Saturday) like the OT believers were commanded to do? The purpose of this command was to point people to the coming of Jesus and the “rest” he would bring for sinners through the forgiveness of sins. Jesus came. Jesus brought “rest” from sins when he died on the cross and rose back to life.

In that sense, the 3rd Commandment has served its purpose. There’s no need to keep the 3rd Commandment as it pertains to what we do or don’t do on the Sabbath Day like we heard in our Second Lesson from Colossians: **The Sabbath day is a shadow of the things that were to come; the reality, however, is found in Christ.**

To OT believers God’s command was: **“Worship on the Sabbath.”** To us, NT Christians, God’s invitation is: **“Worship – Enjoy Your Sabbath Rest!”** The idea behind the 3rd Commandment is still valid for us. But instead of it being a command, think of it as a permanent invitation a

rich uncle extends to join him for a banquet on Thursday evening or Sunday morning. You go, not because you have to, but because you to benefit from the Word and Sacrament offered and the company of other Christians.

Week after week, you get rested and refreshed by hearing the good news of Jesus. Worship is not about what we do, it’s about what God has done and is still doing for us. It is your Savior Jesus who gives you rest .... your guilty conscience – silenced .... your God – near by .... your death – as escape hatch to heaven, not a door to damnation.

God says there is still a need for us to come and worship on a regular basis: **Do not giving up meeting together, as some are in the habit of doing, but encourage one another.** He doesn’t tell us when that should be. He tells us that we are to meet for worship regularly

So you see, there’s more to the 3rd Commandment than not working. I’m going to pick our three of God’s laws so you can see that God gave them to benefit us, not to burden us and make our lives difficult.

- In the 5th Commandment God forbids murder because he wants to protect the gift of life ... our own and others ... so we can learn about him and then share him with others.
- In the 6th Commandment God forbids adultery because he wants peace and love and togetherness for families. And we have seen, unfortunately, when our marriages fail, our families and our society fails and crumbles, too.
- In the 8th Commandment God forbids lying and gossiping because he wants to protect reputations ... our own and others, so our word will mean something and we can be trusted.

Yes, God gave his laws for our benefit. That’s especially true when it comes to the Sabbath, where Jesus wants you to know the Sabbath was intended for your benefit, so you can **“Enjoy Your Sabbath Rest,”** just like you are doing right now.