

# SERMON TRANSCRIPT

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SPEAKER

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SERIES

For All People

PART

1

TITLE

Good News For Religious People

SCRIPTURE

Mark 2:23-3:6



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The world is not the way it is supposed to be. Nations are divided. Groups contend for influence. Joy is an endless struggle. People continually seek satisfaction in religion, relationships, power, or prestige and a whole host of personal desires. We band together around ethnic, racial, political and other lines to find harmony in a world full of brokenness. How rare would it be for anything to simultaneously be good and fulfilling for every person group or nation? What could possibly be good news for everyone? We don't have to imagine, for what the angel proclaimed all those years ago is still true today. Fear not, for behold, I bring you good news of great joy that will be for all people. What was proclaimed at his birth, revealed in his life, and punctuated by his victory over death is available to us. Jesus is good news of great joy for all people.

Providence family, it's great to see you. I hope that you have had a great weekend with a friend or family or perhaps by yourself, but to give thanks to the Lord for the blessings that he has given to you. If you're a guest here with us at Providence, we're really glad that you joined us. And if you're at home, we are also glad that you have tuned in.

If you have a Bible in your hand, turn with you to Mark chapter two. If you don't have a Bible in your hand, there's lots of Bibles in the chairs near you. And if you don't have one of your own, please take that home as a gift. We want you to have it. As we transition holidays, I think it's important for me when we come to the first Sunday in Advent to encourage you to guard your heart. I think it's really important because we are about to enter a season that historically has sort of played humanity like a fiddle.

What's going to happen over the next month is, the magical is going to be dangled out in front of you and in front of me. And because people's hearts, and sometimes our own hearts are restless, it will become incredibly attractive and alluring and enticing. And the fact is that if we are not anchored to the bedrock of Christmas, we may have some great experiences with some neat people and see lights and hear music and eat foods and different things, but we'll literally miss out on all that is truly magical, all that our heart genuinely longs and needs. We'll miss out on good news, great joy for all people. Those words at the end, all people, we typically, as a people, don't think about them.

We like the words good news because we all want good news and we all like the idea of great joy because we're all hungry for joy. We're just thankful that it's for all people, but many of us don't really think about how Jesus has the moral quality, the superiority to actually be seen as good news and great joy by all of the divided peoples and groups in the world. And yet that is precisely who Jesus is. And so over the next month we are going to spend some time looking at how Jesus coming to the earth and his interactions with different kinds of people, people that are genuinely a part of every group that humanity would seek to divide among. And we're going to see how he is good news of great joy.

And this morning we begin with one that, for some of us, it'll be shocking at first to see it. And that is we want to begin with his interaction and how he's good news of great joy for religious people. And what you need to know is he's good news for religious people because he gives religious people an opportunity to repent, to be

set free from the prison of their own works and their own false beliefs. And so it's important for us because most of us, when we think religious people, we think of someone else. Many of us have put our faith and trust in Jesus Christ alone. And yet what's interesting is that even if you haven't, or even if you have, all of us, the default mode of the heart is to drift towards finding a way to save oneself. And so I want to encourage you to listen as one who has something personally at stake in who Jesus is this morning, so let me pray for us.

Father in heaven, I ask that you would give us continued gratitude for the blessings that you have given to us and not only the blessings, but for the good things that have come by your permission of our lives to go through a season of difficulty, for the things that you've done in our life. For the people that you have put in our life, for the blessings that have made life more comfortable we say thank you for all of them. And now we ask, God, that you would help us to see our own self in the story. Would you help us to imagine really where we fit in the story, would you help us to see how our heart sympathizes within the story? And so would you speak through weakness and would you help us this morning? We pray in Christ's name, amen.

Mark chapter two starting in verse 23. This is what we read. "One Sabbath, he was going through the grain fields and as they made their way, his disciples began to pluck heads of grain. The Pharisees were saying to him, 'Look, why are you doing what is not lawful on the Sabbath?' And he 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 we 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 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.'

Again, he entered the synagogue, and a man was there with a withered hand. And they watched Jesus to see whether he would heal them on the Sabbath so that they might accuse him. And he said to the man with a withered hand, 'Come here.' And 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. His hand was restored. The Pharisees went out and immediately held counsel with the Herodians against him, how to destroy him."

There are few things in all the world that seem to give religious people more concern than the Sabbath. What can you do on the day? What's the day for? What can you not do on the day? It's really an interesting thing. It starts as a gift and it becomes a burden for most people in the world. In fact, if you really look at the gospels and you look at how Jesus interacted in his most intense moments, the most contentious moments with people who saw him as an enemy, the vast majority of those interactions took place on a Sabbath.

The Sabbath originated with God. We find it early in the Bible. In Genesis chapter two verse three, it says that "God blessed the seventh day and made it holy, because on it God rested from all his work that he had done in creation." There's a theological word that's not found in the Bible, it's called anthropomorphism. You shouldn't have to care about what that word means and you don't ever have to say it, but let me tell you why it's important. Sometimes when we look at God in the Bible, we are told of things, we are told that God is

spirit and not all of a sudden you'll find a story and he talks about his hand. Well, does he have a hand or does he not have a hand? There are times in the Bible where he says that God neither sleeps or slumbers and here we are told that he rested.

So after all these days, six days of working, was he just exhausted and needed a good long nap? Is that what he means? And anthropomorphism is simply a word that describes the humility of God's heart to reveal himself with words and ideas that we as human beings can understand. We all know what it's like to work and then need rest. So God wasn't sleepy, but you notice that he modeled the intentions of his heart for the day and says that "God rested from all his work that he had done in creation." But not only did he rest, I want you to know something else that he did. He blessed the day, he hallowed the day, he consecrated the day and he made it holy. Holy means set apart, it means different. It means that this is, if you have a holy, not a holy like holes, but like a holy shirt, you only wear that to special places and circumstances.

Holiness means to be set apart. It means to be different. So what he says is this, is that he made this day to be holy, to be set apart, to be different. It was a holy day. In English, we just changed a letter and put them together and we call it a holiday, a different day than the rest of the days intended to spark our curiosity and help us to focus on something that's of importance. And God comes to us and he says, I want you to know that I rested on the seventh day and I blessed this day and I made it a holiday because I wanted you to have a holiday every week.

And then God created this people called Israel and he wanted this people to demonstrate and illustrate for all the other peoples of the world what a relationship with God looks like because they didn't know him. And so he gave several instructions. At first, there was 10 of them, 10 commandments. And one of those commandments, in Exodus chapter 20, this is what it says. "Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy." Over the years, what was given and modeled by God was a gift. We should imagine that any, first of all, anything that comes from the hand of God is a good thing. If you feel anything of strain when it comes to Sabbath, you're thinking about it or have experienced or have been taught it all wrong, because the Sabbath is a gift.

Think about how kind God is that He says every single week, I want to give you a whole day just to replenish what is diminished. He's so kind. He's so generous to us. But over the centuries, the Jewish rabbis, the teachers of the law, they didn't want to break God's commandments and they didn't want other people to break all of his commandments and so they made a bunch of rules, rules upon rules, fences upon fences in order to keep people from breaking any of the commandments, including the Sabbath. They put all of these laws into a book called the Talmud. The Talmud is a book. It's literally volumes deep. And within these volumes you can count 28 chapters of rules just about the Sabbath day. They looked at God and said, all right, he told us, remember the day, keep it holy.

People are going to want to walk on the Sabbath day. So how much walk is too much walk where it becomes work? And so they settled on a number of steps, 1,999. I'm not making this up, you can read it yourself. They

thought there's a good chance that someone's going to want to write a letter to somebody, a friend, on the Sabbath, have a little downtime, but I want to encourage that person. But then someone said, wait a minute, how many letters could somebody write on one given day on the Sabbath for those letters to then become work? So they said, one, you only get one letter on the Sabbath. They said, you know what, you might tear your clothes on the Sabbath, might have this gaping hole. And you're like, what are we going to do now? So they said, well, you have to be able to stitch it up at least enough for dignity. And so how many stitches? One, just enough to hold it together so that you could wait until the next day so that you could stitch it up properly.

Whatever your trade was, whatever your occupation was, you weren't allowed to have on your person the tool of that trade. If you were a scribe, you were not allowed to carry a pen. And more fitting, I suppose, to the stories that we just read in this society where commerce was based on agriculture, they said, no farming, no harvesting. That's why he is going to talk about grain. And then there's another one. And what happens if somebody's sick? Somebody has fallen, somebody's injured themselves and they need medicine. How much medicine is enough? And so they made a law and they said, only enough medicine to keep them alive until the next day.

Now, this is just for the Sabbath. There's 28 chapters of laws added to one. All of these were built on the back of remember the Sabbath day and keep it holy. Here's the gift. We're like, 28 chapters? And what happened was not only was this codified in the book called the Talmud, but culturally speaking, these laws became as binding upon the people as scripture itself. And so all of these laws became like barnacles on the bottom of a boat that weighed it down. And instead of making the Sabbath a blessing as it was intended to be, they made it a burden because it became a prison.

So what did Jesus do? Well, the first thing I want you to see Jesus did is he came to the earth to expose religion as a prison, to expose religion as a prison. So let's walk through it. And this is important you understand it as a prison because until you see that perhaps you are enslaved behind these bars of your own making, you won't long for freedom. And so it says that as Jesus was going through the grain fields, his disciples began to pluck grain, they rub it together and then eat the grain. This was a provision that God had given to the poor in Israel. Those who had land and fields, they weren't allowed to harvest all of it. They were supposed to leave the edges for the poor so that when they became hungry, they could walk into the field, they could pull off a stalk and they could rub off the chaff and they could eat the grain in order to keep themselves alive in order to get sustenance.

And as they did this, it says in verse 24 that the Pharisees asked the question, look, why are they doing what is not lawful on the Sabbath? And Jesus had to respond. So how did Jesus respond? The first thing he did is he appoints their attention and ours to the Bible. Now, I can only imagine the beginning of this sentence was a great insult because he basically says, have you ever read the Bible? Have you ever opened up the book? Have you ever read? And that's how he starts in verse 25 and 26. "Have you never read what David did when he was in need? He entered the house of God and he ate the bread of the Presence, which is not lawful for

any but the priest to eat.”

Now, what’s happening here? Christ draws back to a story. Now you have to remember for these people, David was like the ideal of the golden age for Israel. So he brings up one of their heroes. You remember that time when David was a fugitive, he was running for his life from Saul? He had a band of brothers and they were out and they were all famished and hungry and he was so concerned for their life, some of these guys are just going to drop out in the desert. And so they go to the house of God, and in the house of God, inside, there’s a priest. Priest comes out and he goes, Hey, do you have any bread? We’re just famished. Now, David was already anointed. Why he was a fugitive is because God had anointed him to be the next king and Saul was jealous of him and so he was chasing him down in order to kill him.

And so he’s on the run, he gets there totally hungry, everyone’s hungry and he is like, look, the only bread that we have, there’s nothing here other than the bread of the Presence, which was literally a loaf of bread that they would put inside as a living testimony of God’s provision for his people. Ceremonially, God had said the only people who can eat that bread at the end of the day are the priests. And he says, you have any bread? And he goes, well, the only bread we have is that loaf. And he goes, well, God cares more about life and he does about bread. Can we have it? He says yes. Now, Jesus leans on this story and he does so for this reason. What Jesus is saying is this. If a law, a ceremonial law given by God himself, if it could be relaxed for a higher purpose of sustaining human life, how much more the rules of man?

The second thing that he does in verse 27 is he points to God’s purposes in the Sabbath and in the law. He says, look, “The Sabbath was made for man, not man for the Sabbath.” And in other words, one was created for the other. And it’s really important to know what it is. Religious people, when it comes to the Sabbath, they look at the Sabbath and says God allows these people to be born to give obedience to this thing. And Jesus says, no, it’s the other way around. It’s that I created the Sabbath to give blessing to this, and what this is, is humanity. In other words, the Sabbath was never intended to enslave man, it was intended to bless man. And then he declares his authority to say such things. He says in verse 28 he says, “The son of man is lord even of the Sabbath.” We’ll give a little bit more attention to this later. But what he basically says is, I am the son of man promised in the book of Daniel, the promised son of God came to the earth who’s going to take on flesh in order to mediate a relationship between God and man. I am that person. The title, son of man, was given to the son of God. Jesus is saying when he says this, let me tell you why I can speak to these things, because I’m God. I created the universe. I am the one who rested on the seventh day. I am the one who blessed with my mouth the day and made it holy. And it is a gift that I give. I have jurisdiction over all things, and that jurisdiction includes the Sabbath day. What I say can be done on the day and what I do on the day is the measure of what can be done on the day.

Well, the question was do they get it? We don’t necessarily know from that story. And so Mark adds another one. We don’t know what day this next one was. Same day, next Sabbath? We’re not exactly sure, but suddenly verse one of chapter three, it says again, “He entered the synagogue and a man was there with a withered

hand.” Now, this is such a beautiful story that we know, and yet we don’t know the man’s name. Sometimes you just have to ask the question, why would they not put his name in there? He’s anonymous. But I want you to notice something is that he has all the credentials that are necessary to be a recipient of the Sabbath. First of all, he’s a man, not just male, he’s just humanity. The Sabbath, you remember, man was not made for the Sabbath. The Sabbath was made for one of these. There he is. He’s a viable recipient of what’s supposed to happen on this day. And not only that, the Sabbath was intended to provide replenishment where there was diminishment. And notice something on him is diminished, his hand is withered.

In other words, here’s a man who is withered. It happened to be a part of his body. Most of us, maybe not be part of the body that is replenished on a day of rest. Sometimes it’s our heart or spirit, whatever it is. But here’s a man who is withered and he’s a man, he’s a recipient. Notice what it says. It says, “And they watched Jesus to see whether he would heal on the Sabbath. And then he gives a purpose statement. He goes, this is why they’re watching.” They don’t care about him. They want to see this. We want to accuse him.

Now, think about what’s happening here. This is so important. Inside the prison of religion and inside this prison, it may be where you currently are living, meaning in your heart. You may imagine that I am performing morally. I’ve even come to church this morning in order to add to my credentials of God’s approval when I get to heaven. Others, we have placed our faith and trust in Jesus Christ. We recognize it’s not our doing, it’s his doing, it’s his work. And yet, that slippery slope of our heart drifts towards our performance in terms of being acceptability. And what I want you to know is this, is that one of the ways that you know when you are drifting or when you actually put a stake your life to religion, two of the things will always happen.

One is that you’ll be able to see the man and the maker. They saw the man and they watched the maker, but they don’t recognize or see in a particular kind of way in either one of them. In religion, we are so full of ourself that we become so empty. And so we look at people. I see all these people, all these people, there’s people everywhere. And I can look at some of you and if I’m religious, I’m thinking about myself and I don’t even recognize how you’re withered. And so that kind of sight never produces compassion towards people. How sad it is that they actually, these are religious leaders looking at someone who is struggling and they have no empathy, no sympathy, there’s no rejoicing after the miracle. There’s no happiness for him. He’s just a case study.

How do you view people? Nor do they look at the maker, Jesus. Think about this. This is amazing to me. If Jesus Christ has the authority to speak a hand into restoration, he also has the authority to tell us what we can do on that day. And they simply look and they’re utterly blinded by the prison of their own religion that instead of worshiping this Christ, they begin to accuse him. And so what we find is this, is that within religion, our heart becomes as withered as that man’s hand, becomes all drawn up, unable to be used. That’s just not pleasant for us or for anybody. So what does Jesus do next? It’s just beautiful. I just love this. He says, “Come here.” Think about this setting. All these religious people, all these people, upstanding. And there’s this man who’s humble and he’s got a withered hand. And Jesus looks at him and he says, “Come here.”

And as he's coming, he looks at all the people and he asks a question and he says, let me ask you something. "Is it lawful on the Sabbath to do good or to harm, to save or to kill?" Do you see the irony of what he's saying? He says, you guys are all uptight about my activity on the Sabbath and yet you are plotting a murder on the Sabbath. He looks around at them with anger when they don't respond, grieved at the hardness of their heart. And he says to them, just imagine, he just says, stretch out that hand and suddenly that which is diminished is restored. Would you celebrate on that day? That's a really important question to ask. Or would you be uptight that one of your rules was broken? Every one of us has to ask that question and there's nobody in the room is better than anyone else in the room. So ask that question.

What I want to do now is I want to give you a few applications for this point. Okay? There's only two points this morning. I want to give you a few applications, but each of these, there's some depth to them. The first thing I want to encourage you to consider doing in response to this is I want to encourage all of us to learn to recognize the roots of religion. In other words, all kinds of things that sometimes we'd simply look at the plant and we're like, oh, I wonder if that plant is healthy or not. God is constantly going into the heart and saying, let's just look at the motivations of the heart. Let's look at the roots. Around the world today, there are people all over the world and all the people in the world, the majority of the people, if they imagine that there is a God, then they also imagine that the only way to really relate to him is to be good.

Now, there's all kinds of different variations of religions, but they all have the same basis. If I perform, I'll be accepted. You think about the different kinds of religions, there's nationalistic religions where you have to be a part of the people group that God loves and fulfill and keep the code of conduct within that group. There's spiritualistic religions. We typically think of these eastern religions. And the idea there is that we work ourself through deepening levels of consciousness in order to connect with God. Then there's legalistic religions which don't necessarily have to be associated with a people group or a nation. There's just a code of conduct of morality to keep. But all of them are basically the same in that they all essentially put us on a ladder at our birth and tell us to climb. You got to climb to get to heaven. And the ladder never reaches heaven. It's what Jesus came to tell us.

And so what are some of these roots that you should look for in your own heart or maybe someone else to say, is this person in a prison? Am I? If I put myself back into a prison even today in the way that I'm thinking about these things in religion, let me give you four of them. Our performance leads to God's acceptance. If I do well enough, he's going to like me. If I perform well enough, if I'm holy enough, if I come enough, if I'm to church, if I pray enough, if I do something, if I perform well enough, he's going to accept me. Another root is, in religion, we demand the details in God's law. This is really important, details, instead of purposes. We have a relationship with Christ and he tells you to do something. You want to imagine the good purposes that he has for you.

But in religion, you don't care about the good purposes that he might have for something like the Sabbath, you simply want to know the rules. And so for example, Jesus comes and he says to love God with all of



your heart, soul, mind, and strength and love your neighbor as yourself. And the religious person says what, who's my neighbor? Exactly who is it? List them out. Let me know who it is. How many square blocks from my house constitutes neighbor? And what does love look like? What must I do to fulfill the law? We do the same thing in all manners of things. For many of the years that I have served here at Providence with singles ministry.

And so there's a lot of people who come to me and they say, look, there's this verse right here. It says, let there be not among you even a hint of sexual immorality. What is it? Where is the line? What can I do? What can I not do physically with somebody else? A religious person very rarely has the capacity to look and imagine God's purposes in the instruction. And they can't imagine. We can't imagine when we're in this prison to think of his purposes that he's telling us this because he knows that immorality is literally a pit that puts our whole life on fire.

So someone who loves Jesus, they simply look at what he says and he says, I'm just going to trust him because I know his heart. He's trying to protect something that is precious instead of restrict something that is pleasant. But a religious person, no, I want to know how many, what are the rules. That leads to the third root, and that is that we add laws to inflate our assurance. We imagine that the better we're doing, the more assured we are before God. And so we're like, okay, well he gave us one command. Remember the Sabbath, keep it holy. Let's add 28 chapters to make us feel better about ourselves. And so what you'll find is this, is that if your heart is bent on religion, you can take something that really is a gift and you can saddle it with so many restrictions that it's no longer a gift for you nor for anyone else.

And the last thing that you find is this, in religion, at least the last one I want to give, is that we find comfort only in comparison. We look around and he says, he's probably not going to take everybody so I at least need to be on the higher part of the curve. So we look at other one. Well, I'm better than that one. Probably not that one. Probably better than that one. Probably not better than ... Definitely, all right, it's the three out of five, not so bad. I'll roll with it. And what this does, depending on how you compare yourself to somebody else is it makes you one or two different kinds of Pharisees. You see, if you feel like you're doing well, we become like an arrogant Pharisee. We're like the parable that Jesus taught, he says the Pharisee looked and he says, God, I thank you that I'm not a moral disaster like that tax collector over there.

There's a lot of us who don't necessarily feel like that sense of arrogance because we look, I'm just not keeping very many of them. I'm just, I'm stumbling all over the place. And so we don't become arrogant little Pharisee, we become an anxious little Pharisee. Have I done enough? Have I said enough? I don't think I'm on the right side of the curve and it simply makes us anxious. And so let me encourage you to recognize not only the roots of religion. But second, let me encourage us to learn to recognize the forms of religion.

You don't have to care about God to be religious. Spirituality doesn't have to be in the equation. Only self-salvation has to be in the equation. And this is what verse six is all about. In verse six, it says, "The Pharisees

went out and immediately held counsel with the Herodians against him, how to destroy him.” Now, you notice there’s two different people groups here. And it’s interesting they make up two different people groups within America too. The Pharisees were the social conservatives. They embrace moralism, they resisted the onslaught of the cosmopolitan pluralism of the world and they wanted to hold fast to traditional values. We’ve got to make the rules, keep the rules.

Then there’s the Herodians. There was sympathizers of Herod who was the embodiment of the power of Rome, but also the cultural protectors of Greek thought. Rome would come in, they’d take over and they’d say, we want to establish our rulers and then we want to push our philosophy, a Greek philosophy that had all kinds of different ideas when it comes to morality. And so they represent not morality, they represent relativism, self-discovery. Jesus, you notice, he comes to both of them and both of them have a problem with Jesus. See, amoralism, we obey the rules so God will take us to heaven. That’s the Pharisees. In relativism, we determine what is right in order to create our own heaven. And that’s represented by the Herodians. In both of these, there’s an attempt to being your own savior. Both of them took great issue with Jesus and wanted him dead. And the reason is because Jesus looked at both of them and said, you must be born again.

And that leads to the last application at this point. Let me encourage all of us to humbly examine your heart. The reason this is so important that you take the time to actually examine your heart is because the default mode of your heart and mind is to draw back to, if I perform, I’ll be accepted. We do that in every social setting. You come to church. If I do it okay, maybe they’ll accept me. If you go to a life group, brand new, I don’t know any of these people, small group, you go to a social, you go to a party, you go to something and there’s there’s people around you. You’re like, if I’m social enough and kind enough and attractive enough and people like me, then I’m going to be accepted into this group. And we take that virtue and we assign it to God. We said, if I do enough, if I’m moral enough, if I perform well enough, he’s going to accept me.

Your heart and my heart, it’s like it’s on an escalator that moves towards religion. Even those of us who have already placed our faith in trust in Jesus Christ, you, by Wednesday, you can imagine he’s not very happy with me because I’ve not had a quiet time in three days. It’s a default mode of the heart. What’s interesting though is this escalator moves really slow so we never see it in ourself, but we can always see it in others. All three services, the exact same thing. When I listed all of the rules the Pharisees made about the Sabbath, there was just scoffing all over the room. One letter, silly people. And yet we cannot see it in us. And so we need to ask ourselves a few questions I think can help to examine your heart. Let me just give you three examples.

Ask yourself this. Are you accepted before the Lord? And if so, why has God accepted you? The answer to that question is terribly important and indicative of what you’re trusting. Here’s another one, is God’s word a blessing to you or a burden? For the religions person, God’s word is a burden because it’s simply a manual of everything I have to do to be accepted. For the person who loves Jesus Christ and recognizes that he gave perfect obedience to the law, and what we praise our trust in Him, He forgives us of our sin and He gives us His righteousness of all of these laws that He cares about to us. He imputes His righteousness to us. We’re

like, this is awesome.

Here's another one. To whom are you superior? What kind of immoral people do you imagine that you are better than? And if you can name that people, you're on a very slippery slope. You see, moralism says the good people are in, the bad people are out. Relativism says the open-minded people are in and the judgmental bigots are out. And the gospel of Jesus Christ says, the humble are in and the proud are out because the humble can see their need and recognize they need a savior in Jesus.

And so He came to expose religion as a prison. And the second and last thing is that He came to replace religion with Himself. In every single culture in the world, people are looking for rest, that their religion, even if it's self-imposed, cannot supply. Everywhere I've ever been and asked people who are resting in their own righteousness, have you done enough? The answer is always, I don't know. Jesus came not to reform religion, but to replace it entirely by accomplishing the needed work Himself. And first we consider what are His qualifications to do this? These qualifications are found in verse 28. He's the son of man. He is the promised one in Daniel seven. He is the one who has jurisdiction and dominion that is everlasting. He is God. He is unique in His capability of reconciling us to God. Not only is He God, as God, He is Lord, He has all authority.

You look through the Bible and every single prophet, because they recognize that they don't have the moral credibility or authority themselves, they start their message by saying, "Thus says the Lord." I can't say this on my own basis, I'm saying it on His, for Him. He gave me, I'm giving it to you. Jesus never said thus says the Lord. He says, "Truly, truly, I say unto you." I have the authority and jurisdiction over every decision of your life. Providence, I want you to know every one of us is underestimating the authority of Christ in our life. And He is also the Lord of the Sabbath. He is the Lord of rest.

In Colossians two, we learned that the day of physical rest was only a shadow of the soul rest that we can find in Jesus. The Sabbath was a good thing. You rest, you get into the shade on a really hot day of whatever it is, a shadow. It's the shade, it's comforting. It's a good thing, but it's not the source. The shadow was created by a source. And Hebrew says the source is Christ Himself. And how did He accomplish it for us? Romans five, eight says, "God shows his love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us." He didn't wait for us to perform. He performed when we were not. He died for us. He rose from the dead. And now Jesus, on the basis of His death and resurrection, invites each one of us to stop working for our own righteousness and to rest in His righteousness.

Hebrews four says that, "We who have believed enter that rest." And this is good news of great joy for all people who put their faith in Christ. And my question for you is, have you entered that rest? Do you know it? You see, where religion says perform and you'll be accepted. Jesus said, I performed so that you can be accepted. And where religion says, obey God and He will owe you. Jesus says, I paid the debt that you owed. And where religion says, keep the details of the law so you can assure yourself. Jesus says, Marvel at the de-

tailed obedience I gave to the law so that you can find your everlasting assurance in me. So let me encourage you as we close.

First of all, if you have never put your faith in Christ, let me encourage you to come to Jesus in faith. The simple instruction that Jesus gave to the man with a withered hand is the same instruction He would give to you. Come here. Come to me all you who are weary and heavy laden and I will give you rest. Today would you put your faith and trust in Jesus? Would you acknowledge your need? Would you talk to Him right now and say, I believe in your son and I believe you rose Him from the dead. I confess Him as Lord and He will give your heart rest today.

For those of us who have put our faith in Christ, let me encourage you to rest in Jesus' finished work. Even if you have put your faith in Christ, your heart has a default mode like at any given time to slip right back into an attitude that says, my assurance is based upon my performance. Let me encourage you to hold fast to the gospel that allows you to be freed from comparison, freed from the guilt of our own imperfection and freed from pinning our assurance on our own efforts because our righteousness is Jesus Christ's righteousness, which is the same yesterday, today, and forever more.

And finally, let me encourage you to help others to enjoy His rest. As we go through this month. You're going to meet a lot of people. You're going to interact with a lot of people who are very, very, very hopeful of the magical. And the reason is because they are so restless in their heart. Tell them, pray for them. Invite them to hear good news of great joy for all people. So let me pray.

Father in heaven, we bow for you and ask that you would address us where you find us, where you see us. We thank you that you see us down to the core. You see my own heart, you see my inclinations of the heart. You see my stumbling, you see my persistence to try to make rules. Would you deliver me? Would you deliver us and help us to hold fast to the rest that we have in Jesus by simply resting and trusting in His righteousness? Help us to celebrate this month like people who have been set free and help us to sing now in response, the faith that we have in your wonderful word. We pray all of this in Christ's name. Amen.

Would you stand and let's sing one last song.



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