

Notes for Next Sunday

Second Sunday after Pentecost

The Point of this Week's Readings

Old Testament (Deuteronomy 5:12-15). God has willed that in the observances of the Sabbath there be a memorial of the article of creation ... that the people may be instructed by this teaching device to pray to God and to await His blessings, and that thus faith be strengthened.

Epistle (2 Corinthians 4:5-12). To justify his calling the Gospel which he preached the proclamation of the divine glory, the apostle now writes: For not ourselves preach we, but Christ Jesus the Lord, and ourselves your servants for the sake of Jesus. If Paul had been preaching himself, his own wisdom, if he had been seeking honor and glory for himself, it would have been wicked presumption on his part to condemn those that refused to accept his teaching as being on the way to perdition. But his one thought, his one object, was to set forth Christ Jesus before his hearers as the Lord, to whom they owed the obedience of faith by reason of His redemption. And far from asserting any authority, power, or lordship over them, he stated, on the contrary, that he considered himself and his fellow-teachers the servants of the congregations, not absolute slaves bound to do their will as they dictated, but servants for the sake of Jesus, ministers of Christ, stewards of the mysteries of God.

Gospel (Mark 2:23-28). Mark reports that Jesus was often followed by the Pharisees as he traveled throughout Galilee (Mark 2:1–3:30). Unfortunately, their purpose was not to join Jesus' "followers," but to trap him with questions or catch him violating the Torah.

For more in-depth commentary on each reading, read the notes found after each text below.

OLD TESTAMENT – Deuteronomy 5:12-15

12 “Observe the Sabbath day, to keep it holy, as the LORD your God commanded you. 13 Six days you shall labor and do all your work, 14 but the seventh day is a Sabbath to the LORD your God. On it you shall not do any work, you or your son or your daughter or your male servant or your female servant, or your ox or your donkey or any of your livestock, or the sojourner who is within your gates, that your male servant and your female servant may rest as well as you. 15 You shall remember that you were a slave in the land of Egypt, and the LORD your God brought you out from there with a mighty hand and an outstretched arm. Therefore the LORD your God commanded you to keep the Sabbath day.

5:15 *you were a slave.* Moses adds a reminder of how the Israelites are to treat their slaves on the Sabbath; both male and female slaves are given rest on each Sabbath, just as the Israelites. Chemnitz: “This manifestly pertains to the people of Israel ... [who] were put in a place of rest in the land of Canaan” (*LTh* 2:389). (TLSB)

EPISTLE – 2 Corinthians 4:5-12

5 For what we proclaim is not ourselves, but Jesus Christ as Lord, with ourselves as your servants for Jesus' sake. 6 For God, who said, “Let light shine out of darkness,” has shone in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ. 7 But we have this treasure in jars of clay, to show that the surpassing power belongs to God and not to us. 8 We are afflicted in every way, but not crushed; perplexed, but not driven to despair; 9 persecuted, but not forsaken; struck down, but not destroyed; 10 always carrying in the body the death of Jesus, so that the life of Jesus may also be manifested in our bodies. 11 For we who live are always being given over to death for Jesus' sake, so that the life of Jesus also may be manifested in our mortal flesh. 12 So death is at work in us, but life in you.

4:7 *this treasure in jars of clay.* It was customary to conceal treasure in clay jars, which had little value or beauty and did not attract attention to themselves and their precious contents. Here they represent Paul's human frailty and unworthiness. (CSB)

the surpassing power is from God and not from us. The idea that the absolute insufficiency of man reveals the total sufficiency of God pervades this letter. (CSB)

4:12 Believers are not exempt from pain and suffering. When earthen vessels are broken, they even more clearly reveal the treasure of God's power and grace within. (TLSB)

GOSPEL – Mark 2:23-28

23 One Sabbath he was going through the grainfields, and as they made their way, his disciples began to pluck heads of grain. 24 And the Pharisees were saying to him, "Look, why are they doing what is not lawful on the Sabbath?" 25 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: 26 how he entered the house of God, in the time of Abiathar the high priest, and ate the bread of the Presence, which it is not lawful for any but the priests to eat, and also gave it to those who were with him?" 27 And he said to them, "The Sabbath was made for man, not man for the Sabbath. 28 So the Son of Man is lord even of the Sabbath."

The oral law of the Pharisees was more detailed and often stricter than God's Torah, but even so, it is not clear that the disciples' behavior would have violated it. Of the 39 main categories of work forbidden on the Sabbath in the Mishnah (the later Jewish codification of the oral law, largely reflecting the theology of the Pharisaic branch of Judaism), the third is reaping. Four of the Pharisees' rules dictate against reaping, threshing, winnowing, and preparing a meal on the Sabbath day. But the disciples' actions hardly constitute reaping the harvest or preparing a meal (which usually involved butchering an animal, cooking, etc.). Nevertheless, the Pharisees accuse the disciples of being lawbreakers. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 7, Part 3)

Jesus assumes responsibility for what his disciples were doing, even though the text does not say Jesus picked any grain. Among the scribes it was assumed that a teacher was responsible for the behavior of his disciples. But Jesus doesn't descend to their level of legalism. He does not argue the point, either on the basis of Torah or the Pharisees' oral additions. He has a greater purpose: to proclaim the Gospel of the Son of Man, who is Lord of the Sabbath. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 7, Part 3)

2:27-28 Jesus drives home his point by saying that even the Sabbath is subservient to the greater divine purpose of grace. fact, today's OT Lesson affirms that the purpose of the Sabbath is to remind God's people of his grace in delivering them. Now Jesus has come to accomplish the final deliverance of God's people, so "the Son of Man is Lord even of the Sabbath." Jesus brings in full the blessings of grace, peace, and rest which Israel received only in part through the institution of the Sabbath and the deliverance from Egypt. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 7, Part 3)