

Jesus is Always in Charge

The gospel for this coming Sunday (Second Sunday after Pentecost) is 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. That is the case in this text.

The setting is Jesus and his disciples were on the move and it took them through some grainfields. They were hungry and began picking some heads of grain. The Pharisees who were following close behind jumped on this situation. They claimed that the disciples were performing work.

There was nothing wrong in the action itself, which comes under the provision of Dt 23:25. What the Pharisees were really aiming at was severely questioning Jesus’ authority. Jesus encountered the same when he was tempted by the devil at the beginning of Jesus’ ministry.

Jesus calls attention to an incident recorded in 1 Sam 21:1–6, which involved David, whom the Pharisees held in high regard. David broke a divine ceremonial stipulation of the Torah, not just a human interpretation. Fleeing from Saul. Jesus’ reason for referring to the story of David eating the holy bread (vv 25–26) comes clear: the Lord of the Sabbath—Jesus—is greater than King David. This bold claim to divinity is not lost on Jesus’ critics.

When the Pharisees accuse Jesus’ disciples of violating the Sabbath, Jesus uses the opportunity to claim divine authority and assert His messianic status. Sadly, there are people today who still level criticisms like the Pharisees of old, criticizing Jesus’ followers because they really wish to criticize the authority and status of the Lord. But neither Jesus nor His Church can be dismissed. Through these same disciples, Jesus would spread the good news of peace, rest, and comfort. We have that great comfort to know Jesus is always in charge.

Prayer: Lord, defend your people from those who hate you and would therefore do harm to your Church. Help the Church to see that the battle is yours and that you can do all things. Amen. (TLSB)