

## MEDITATION 22

Mark 2: 23-28

<sup>23</sup> One Sabbath Jesus was going through the grain fields, and as they made their way his disciples began to pluck heads of grain. <sup>24</sup> The Pharisees said to him, “Look, why are they doing what is not lawful on the Sabbath?” <sup>25</sup> And he said to them, “Have you never read what David did when he and his companions were hungry and in need of food, <sup>26</sup> how he entered the house of God when Abiathar was high priest and ate the bread of the Presence, which it is not lawful for any but the priests to eat, and he gave some to his companions?” <sup>27</sup> Then he said to them, “The Sabbath was made for humankind and not humankind for the Sabbath, <sup>28</sup> so the Son of Man is lord even of the Sabbath.”

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What is the Sabbath? It is a day of rest. But it is not just rest without a purpose. The purpose of Sabbath is to rest in God’s presence, to take time and make space to listen to God speak and speak into your life. How do you do that?... What practices help you make space to listen to God and connect with God?...

And what things distract or undermine the honouring of Sabbath?... The religious authorities in Jesus’ time had many rules to ensure Sabbath was being honoured. But Jesus has concerns about how they may seek to honour Sabbath with rules and rituals but fail to honour Sabbath in their hearts where God’s speaking needs to penetrate and work... And so, Jesus intentionally flouts some of the obvious rules such as refraining from work (plucking heads of grain is like farm work, even if it’s simply to eat). Jesus wants to challenge them and people who are judged by them, to rethink Sabbath outside external rules to the true internal meaning.

How do you observe Sabbath? Just isolating a day is fine, but it is an external rule. How do you observe Sabbath time on Sunday or throughout the week at particular times where you make inner space in your life for self-examination and inspiration?...

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Some of us in the bible study group have just read about this incident Jesus refers to (1 Samuel 21). David (who has yet to assume his rule as king in the story) and his companions, like Jesus and his disciples, are on the move. In David’s case he is in need of food and he happens to be in a holy place where bread is kept for a special purpose. The priest, in this case (Ahimelech,

father of Abiathar), makes an exception for David and his companions because of their need. May this be a lesson for the religious authorities in Jesus' day?

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The Sabbath and Sabbath observance must serve human need for nourishment of body and spirit rather than become an oppressive obstacle and burden. When people are made to feel inadequate, judged, guilty, shamed, and demoralized because they can never meet the standards set by those in authority, who does that serve? If the goal is to keep people down and control them, purpose achieved. If the goal is to raise people up and bring them into the presence of God empowered to be and become, then Sabbath has to be seen and experienced very differently.

How may time in meditation, worship, study, prayer... or time with family, a friend, caregiving, volunteering, music, reading, nature, physical activity of some kind... In fact, how may any activity become a path to raising up your personhood before God rather than grind you down or distract you endlessly? How may Sabbath serve to help you examine your soul, your life, your relationships and your commitments toward spiritual growth and flourishing?

**PRAYER:** Help me, O God... Help me get centered, grounded and nourished by your Spirit... Fill me with your love... Strengthen me with faith and hope in what you can do in and through me... Help me find your peace when it comes to accepting what is that is not ideal and yet cannot be changed in any straightforward way... Support me in making peace with my limits, but also help me not settle too easily with what can be changed or engaged with some courage and hope in myself or a situation...

May Sabbath be built into my life and may Sabbath be truly nourishing for my spirit, O God... Thank you for all those resources and means by which I am nourished and raised up in my Sabbath time... In Jesus' name I pray this... Amen.