

THE CHRISTIAN VIEW OF RECREATION

Lesson Scripture: Jeremiah 31:12-13; Zechariah 8:5; Matthew 11:16-19; Mark 2:18-28; 6:30-32; John 2:1-11

Focus Scripture: Mark 2:18-28

Key Verses: (Jesus) said to (the Pharisees), "The Sabbath was made for humankind and not humankind for the Sabbath, so the Son of Man is lord even of the Sabbath." Mark 2:27-28

MARK 2:18-28 (NRSV UE)

18 Now John's disciples and the Pharisees were fasting, and people came and said to him, "Why do John's disciples and the disciples of the Pharisees fast, but your disciples do not fast?"

19 Jesus said to them, "The wedding attendants cannot fast while the bridegroom is with them, can they? As long as they have the bridegroom with them, they cannot fast.

20 The days will come when the bridegroom is taken away from them, and then they will fast on that day.

21 No one sews a piece of unshrunk cloth on an old cloak; otherwise, the patch pulls away from it, the new from the old, and a worse tear is made.

22 Similarly, no one puts new wine into old wineskins; otherwise, the wine will burst the skins, and the wine is lost, and so are the skins, but one puts new wine into fresh wineskins."

23 One Sabbath he was going through the grain fields, and as they made their way his disciples began to pluck heads of grain.

24 The Pharisees said 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 and his companions were hungry and in need of food,

26 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?"

MARK 2:18-28 (KJV)

18 And the disciples of John and of the Pharisees used to fast: and they come and say unto him, Why do the disciples of John and of the Pharisees fast, but thy disciples fast not?

19 And Jesus said unto them, Can the children of the bridechamber fast, while the bridegroom is with them? as long as they have the bridegroom with them, they cannot fast.

20 But the days will come, when the bridegroom shall be taken away from them, and then shall they fast in those days.

21 No man also seweth a piece of new cloth on an old garment: else the new piece that filled it up taketh away from the old, and the rent is made worse.

22 And no man putteth new wine into old bottles: else the new wine doth burst the bottles, and the wine is spilled, and the bottles will be marred: but new wine must be put into new bottles.

23 And it came to pass, that he went through the corn fields on the sabbath day; and his disciples began, as they went, to pluck the ears of corn.

24 And the Pharisees said unto him, Behold, why do they on the sabbath day that which is not lawful?

25 And he said unto them, Have ye never read what David did, when he had need, and was an hungred, he, and they that were with him?

26 How he went into the house of God in the days of Abiathar the high priest, and did eat the shewbread, which is not lawful to eat but for the priests, and gave also to them which were with him?

27 Then he said to them, “The Sabbath was made for humankind and not humankind for the Sabbath,

28 so the Son of Man is lord even of the Sabbath.”

27 And he said unto them, The sabbath was made for man, and not man for the sabbath:

28 Therefore the Son of man is Lord also of the sabbath.

KEY TERMS

- **Paradigm Shift** – A profound change that occurs when traditional methods of thinking or doing things are replaced by new, markedly different ways of understanding and acting.
- **Pentecost** – A Christian holy day that celebrates the descent of the Holy Spirit upon Jesus’ disciples after his resurrection and ascension into heaven. Pentecost, which means “fiftieth” in Greek, is observed on the 50th day after Easter.

INTRODUCTION

Change can be challenging, especially when it involves letting go of long-held beliefs. This was true for the Scribes and Phari-

sees in Jesus’ time. As respected experts in the Torah and Mosaic law, they struggled with Jesus’ message, which challenged their views on righteousness, relationships, and eternal life. As a result, they often tried to discredit him.

Today is Pentecost Sunday, a perfect time to reflect on Jesus’ teachings about fasting and

the Sabbath! While exploring these topics, Jesus demonstrates his expectations for rest and work. It’s important to note that God included both fasting and the Sabbath in the Ten Com-

mandments, not as optional suggestions (Exodus 20:8-11). As we begin, take a moment to consider: Where has the Gospel challenged your beliefs or traditions? How have you responded to difficult moments of spiritual growth? Are you open today to seeing God’s plans in a new way?

TELLING THE BIBLE STORY

The Pharisees and Scribes either misunderstood or outright rejected Jesus’ mission. Early in Mark’s Gospel, they openly criticized him as he ministered to the poor and marginalized. Before today’s

passage, they accused him of blasphemy for healing a paralyzed man and forgiving his sins. Jesus responded by affirming his authority as the Son of Man, both to heal and to forgive (Mark 2:3-11). Later, when Jesus ate at the home of Levi, a tax collector in Capernaum, some questioned why he dined with tax collectors and sin-

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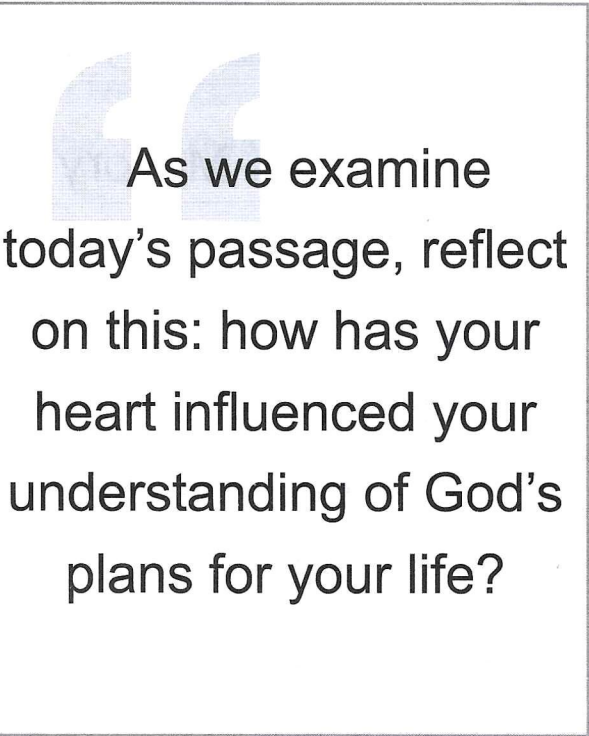
ners. Jesus clearly explained that, as a doctor cares for the sick, he came not for the righteous but for sinners (vs. 15-17).

These moments reveal that Jesus’ challenges went beyond traditions; they struck at the heart’s spiritual condition. As we examine today’s passage, reflect on this: how has your heart influenced your understanding of God’s plans for your life?

Questions About Fasting – Mark 2:18-22

When asked why his disciples didn’t fast like those of John or the Pharisees (v. 18b), Jesus responded by comparing himself to a bridegroom, a reason for joy, not mourning. Fasting was typically associated with repentance or deep spiritual reflection, but Jesus offered a new perspective: true spirituality isn’t about external rituals but about the heart and re-

lationship with him. Notably, Jesus didn’t reject fasting; he explained that it should depend on the seasons in our lives. As Ecclesiastes states, “There is a time and a season for everything” (3:1). However, with Jesus, the bridegroom, present, the timing didn’t match traditional fasting practices. To clarify, Jesus used a parable about patching garments and wineskins. He was highlighting the tension between the Gospel and old religious customs. Embracing the good news requires a renewed heart, a fresh outlook, and openness to change.



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Jesus Is Lord of the Sabbath – Acts 2:23-28

As Jesus and the disciples walk through grain-fields on the Sabbath, they pick some heads of grain. From the Pharisees’ perspective, the disciples’ actions break Sabbath laws. So, they demand an explanation! First, Jesus recalls a time when King David ate consecrated bread (1 Samuel 21), showing how necessity and mercy can sometimes outweigh strict adherence to law and tradition. He then states that “the Sabbath was

made for humankind, not humankind for the Sabbath”; and furthermore, “the Son of Man is lord even of the Sabbath” (vs. 27-28). Since he is Lord over everything we do, Jesus is also Lord of the Sabbath. Yet, he does not diminish or dismiss the importance of the Sabbath; instead, Jesus redefines its purpose, to prioritize rest, mercy, and acts that promote life rather than merely following legalistic rules.

SANKOFA

The idea of “paradigm shifts” (see **Key Words**) helps connect Jesus’ challenges to religious traditions with the evolution of African American history celebrations in the United States. This shift began in 1915 with historian Dr. Carter G. Woodson, who believed racism and inequality were rooted in the neglect of black history. He founded what is now the Association for the Study of African American Life and History, and he is known as the “Father of Black History.”

Dr. Woodson established Negro History Week in 1926, selecting February 12th and 14th to honor Abraham Lincoln and Frederick Douglass. His efforts sparked a growing movement, especially during the 1960s civil rights era. In 1970, Kent State University became the first higher education institution to observe Black History Month. By 1976, during the U.S. Bicentennial, President Gerald Ford officially designated it as a national celebration. President Bill Clinton later reinforced this with proclamations in 1996 and 2000.

The recognition and celebration of black history mark a significant shift in perspective. Many people have contributed to this movement. As a result, black Americans' understanding of their history has led to deeper insights into personal rights and agency, as well as the history and progress of the fight for justice. At the same time, many others have benefited, as increased understanding among neighbors and appreciation for one another have helped strengthen America's character through ongoing progress in awareness, appreciation, and unity.

Tamika D. Mallory is a contemporary activist who embodies the legacy of many pioneers recognized for driving paradigm shifts toward equal justice, fairness, and dignity for marginalized and vulnerable populations.

throughout history, she finds ways to challenge established systems of injustice, promoting acceptance, inclusiveness, and compassion for everyone. Ms. Mallory was born on September 4, 1980. From a young age, she has been engaged in community service aimed at improving the lives of the poor and vulnerable.

Ms. Mallory's parents were founding members of Reverend Al Sharpton's National Action Network (NAN). At 11, she began volunteering with NAN, and in 2009, she became the organization's youngest executive director. She's

recognized for numerous achievements, including her leadership in gun violence prevention, civic engagement, her role as co-chair of the 2017 Women's March on Washington, and her reputation as a powerful speaker. "State of Emergency" is one of her most well-known speeches, delivered in 2020 during the George Floyd protests, which she later turned into a book. She continues to excel today as an author, consultant, and speaker for a variety of audiences, including Fortune 500 organizations (<https://www.nul.org>).

CASE STUDY

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LIFE APPLICATION

Since childhood, many of us have absorbed messages that overemphasize work, often at the expense of rest. But Jesus invites us into a new way of life, one that embraces the natural rhythm of life God created: cycles of work, rest, and re-

newal for a healthy body, mind, and spirit. Scripture reveals that work is an integral part of God’s design. Jesus said, “My Father is still working, and I am working also” (John 5:17), and we are called to work as if “for the Lord” (Colossians 3:23). Yet God Godself rested after six days of creation, blessing and making the seventh day holy (Exodus 20:11).

The Sabbath, originally commanded in the Old Testament, was fulfilled through Christ. Jesus declared himself “Lord of the Sabbath” (Matthew 12:8; Mark 2:28), showing its true purpose: rest and spiritual renewal. As Paul reminds us in Colossians 2:16-17 and Romans 14:5-6, no specific day is required. Whether we choose Sunday, Saturday, or another day, what matters to God is that we honor the true meaning of the Sabbath: to rest in God, trust in him, and spend time with him while renewing our spirits.

Questions:

1. On a scale of one to ten, with ten being the highest and one the lowest, how would you

rate your tendency to rest, relax, and renew yourself spiritually?

2. How can you apply this lesson to help yourself and others see God’s purpose for resting and working?
3. How do you think Sabbath rest among your church members might help foster peaceful and harmonious relationships?

CLOSING DEVOTIONS

Closing Song: “Learning to Lean,” *AME Hymnal* #362

Closing Prayer: Dear Lord, your Word promises that if we acknowledge you in all our ways, you will direct our paths. We present ourselves this morning, ready and willing to obey. Your Word also tells us that our bodies are not our own; we have been bought with a price, and we are to glorify you in our bodies. Please help us to appreciate that you want us to rest as well as to work. Please be patient with us as we learn to live holistic lives, guided by you. In the precious name of Jesus, our Savior, Christ, we pray. Amen.

HOME DAILY BIBLE READINGS

May 25-31

Monday	Psalm 95 (Let Us Sing to the Lord)
Tuesday	Psalm 122 (Gladness in the House of the Lord)
Wednesday	Romans 12:1-8 (Members of the Body of Christ)
Thursday	Nehemiah 8:9-12 (A Holy Day of Rejoicing)
Friday	Matthew 18:15-20 (Restoring Healthy Relationships)
Saturday	Acts 4:32-37 (Fellowship Through Common Property)
Sunday	Hebrews 10:19-25 (Inspiring Love and Good Deeds)