

“Some Good News for Your Busyness” Mark 2:23-28 Shane Hatfield 9/13/20

It is my privilege to bring God’s word to you this evening. We’re going to be in the book of Mark chapter 2, we’re going to start in verse 23. If you have a Bible you can open it up and turn there or you can follow along on the PowerPoint behind us. Thank you all of those who are joining online, for those of you out there, we really appreciate it and we look forward to you joining us in person as soon as you’re able. The title of this evening’s sermon is “Some Good News about our Busyness.” We are going through a series in Mark at RUF and I’m calling it “Some Good News” because there’s enough bad news in the world, all the time, but especially in 2020 that I thought it would really encourage us if we really just sank in and meditated on the good news of the gospel. The book of Mark describes the good news of the person and work of Jesus and I sort of summarize it like this: the good news is that Jesus Christ is God’s good King who has come to bring God’s good kingdom to earth to rescue sinners and sufferers like us. Jesus is God’s good King who has brought God’s good kingdom to earth to rescue sinners and sufferers like us. So, each week we explore different aspects of that kingdom and how Jesus rescues us and tonight we’ll look at our busyness. One of the things that I like to do for my younger listeners out there, and it looks like it’s mostly my kids tonight, is I kind of give my littler listeners three things that they can kind of look for in the sermon. So tonight, what you’re going to listen for is a reference to 101 Dalmatians, a story about a loving daddy and then what are some of Jesus’ final words on the cross. Okay? So, 101 Dalmatians, a loving daddy, and Jesus’ final words on the cross. Let’s pray that God would help us meditate on His word during this time. Please bow your heads and pray.

Father in heaven, we thank You for the opportunity to come and worship together. What a privilege it is to gather with You and with Your people. You are Yahweh; You are the great I AM; You are the high and holy one, the majestic Lord of creation and yet you have graciously and mercifully called us to be with You. Thank You. We come to You tonight as people who are weary and heavy laden, people with busy hearts who are sick and tired. We come to You anxious about our past, our present and our future. Some of us come depressed, some of us come lonely, some of us come sick, some of us come joyful. No matter how we come, we all need to be with You and hear from You, so we pray now that You would come and that You would speak to us from Your word and that You would give us Your good news. We pray this in Jesus’ name, Amen.

So I’ve been watching you guys online each week and I know that during this time you’ve had people come up and share their testimonies of what God has done in their lives over the last few months, so I thought that I would start out by sharing what God has taught me over the last six months because it correlates to what we’re going to talk about this morning. Over the last six months, God has taught me that I am a busy-aholic. I am addicted to busyness. From the moment I wake up in the morning until I lay my head down at night, I have this long to-do list and my mission throughout the day is just to get to as much of that stuff as possible and then whatever I get done, then I start the next day right there and I try to get through more of it. And what’s crazy is the list never ends! You never get to the bottom of the list. Do I have any more to-do list people out there? Yeah, you never get to the bottom of it, do you? It just keeps growing and growing and growing. I once saw a meme that sort of describes my busyness, okay? Maybe you’ve seen this before, but it’s a picture of Cruella Devil from 101 Dalmatians and I think it’s from the scene where she’s like trying to track them down, and she’s in her car and she’s gripping the steering wheel like this. Her eyes are sort of big; they’re crazy; they’re bloodshot.

Her black and white hair is blowing in the wind. She's got this big fur coat on, she just looks menacing like she's on a mission, and the caption says this: "Me trying to excel in my career, maintain a social life, drink enough water, exercise, text everyone back, stay sane, survive and be happy." And I would add: be a good husband, a good father, a good campus minister, and about a dozen other things to that list.

Well, whenever life shut down in the spring, my schedule, which is normally filled with parties and Bible studies and worship services and service projects and meetings with students, not to mention youth sports and family events, it all got stripped away. It just emptied. And it was at that point that I was forced to come to grips with my addiction, because my busyness was not there anymore. And when I didn't have my drug, I began to go through withdrawals. I was frustrated and angry and depressed; I was anxious. I was a real joy to be around the house, you can imagine. Everything that I used to justify myself was taken away. And it didn't change until I was finally able to return to Sunday morning worship and it was there on Sunday morning, gathered with the body of Christ, hearing the gospel, that I remembered that I am not defined by what I do but by what God has done. I saw that God is at work even when I am not at work. I was able to rest and worship. My depression broke and my body and soul were restored and renewed and revitalized again. The Sabbath became a blessing to me and not a curse. How did your soul respond to the forced rest that we've had over the last six months? Were you anxious and depressed like me? Or were you giddy and excited like my wife, who just relished the moments to be at home together as a family?

Either way, I think what our hearts were telling us in that moment is that we were busy and tired. As a culture, we are all crazy busy. We fill our schedules with extra hours at work, constant social events, endless youth sports, hours and hours of social media and entertainment and everything else and our busyness leaves us frustrated and tired, trapped, anxious and sometimes depressed. I think it's obvious why Eugene Peterson calls busyness an illness of the spirit, because busyness leaves us sick. Well this evening, as we meditate on this passage about the Sabbath what I want you to see is that the gospel gives our busy hearts rest through the Sabbath. Through the Sabbath, we come in and we rest, and we worship Jesus and it's in those moments of resting and worshipping in Jesus that our hearts are calmed and quieted and restored. So, I hope that's the good news you hear this evening.

We're going to look at three things: The Sabbath and the Pharisees, the Sabbath and Jesus, and the Sabbath and us. So, let's start with Mark 2:23 with the Sabbath and the Pharisees. 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?"

Now the key word for understanding this story is an understanding of the word Sabbath. The word Sabbath means to cease, desist or stop. On the Sabbath, the Jews were supposed to cease from all of their work and worship the Lord. The fourth commandment in the Old Testament describes this law, it's from Exodus 20:8-11:

⁸ "Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy. ⁹ Six days you shall labor, and do all your work, ¹⁰ 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, your male servant, or your female servant, or your livestock, or the sojourner who is within your gates. ¹¹ For in six days the LORD made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that is in them, and rested on the seventh day. Therefore the LORD blessed the Sabbath day and made it holy."

Sabbath-keeping became an important mark of the Jewish culture. It separated them from other countries, from other nations. From sunset on Friday until sunset on Saturday, all work was prohibited and this was strictly enforced. Now the Pharisees were a sect of Jews that tried to observe God's law so strictly that they made more and more laws on top of God's law to try to keep them from breaking God's laws. For the Sabbath they made a list of 39 different categories of work that could not be done on the Sabbath. The list included plowing, hunting, butchering, loosing knots, what happened if you needed to tie the knot on your pants? I don't know, I'm kind of worried about that. Sewing, and writing more than one letter. According to them, Jesus broke two laws: he walked more than 1,999 paces and He reaped by plucking grain. So, this brings this rebuke from the Pharisees. Well, what's wrong with the Pharisees? It seems like they're doing a pretty good job of trying to keep the law, right?

Here's the problem. By adding all these extra laws, the Pharisees robbed the Sabbath of its original purpose. God intended the Sabbath to bless humanity and restore its well-being. Jesus and the disciples needed to eat. It was a necessity for them to eat. By denying them a basic necessity, they turned the Sabbath into a curse and not a blessing. They turned the Sabbath into a fast rather than a feast. In the Old Testament, a lot of the Sabbaths you see, they were celebrations. They were times that God's people would come together and celebrate all the great things that God had done for them. That was going on, on the surface, but what was the real problem with the Pharisees? It was not with their actions; it was with their hearts. The Pharisees were legalists and legalists replace God's will with their will. They replace God's law with their law. They set up their own religion based on performance, fear, and comparison, not on grace, gratitude and service. In their heart, a Pharisee says, "I am what I do, and I never do enough." So, they constantly add more and more laws to try to justify themselves.

So, what does this have to do with us and our busyness? On the surface, it might seem like we're exact opposites, right? Because the Pharisees have all these laws that they try to keep on the Sabbath to justify themselves, they are what we call legalists. Well, with us and our culture, we really don't have any laws that prohibit us from doing things on the Sabbath, do we? We would be what theologians would call an antinomian culture, or a no law culture, right? We could just, in general, our society just says 'Hey, go do what you want, you do you on the Sabbath.' Do whatever you want to do, right? Well, the problem with both those approaches is they both are different forms of a performance-based religion. Our busyness is driven by a desire to earn love and acceptance. Our busyness is an attempt to prove that we're enough. In our busyness, we say, "If I just do X, Y, and Z, then I'll be good enough. Then I'll be pretty enough. Then I'll be loved enough." If I'm busy, then I'll be good enough. What we do becomes who we are, like the Pharisees created their own religion around Sabbath-keeping, we've created our own performance-based religion around busyness and it's exhausting.

And I think there are two basic types of people in their busyness. There are busy achievers; the busy achievers are focused on climbing up the corporate ladder or building their resume. They're focused on getting their kids into the best schools, onto the best teams and doing the best activities. They're into extra hours cleaning, extra hours at the gym, and extra hours at the office. They're busy achievers. Then we have what I would say are busy belongers. Someone who is busy searching for belonging, wanting to be loved and accepted by a group of people and so they have endless coffee dates or parties or endless social media posts. They use their cars, their money, their houses to try to create this appearance that will allow them to belong with other people. They work anxiously and tirelessly to compete for friendships. Whether you're a

Pharisee or a busy believer or a busy achiever, we all have one goal in mind and that is to justify ourselves based on our performance.

This idea reminds me of a movie: "Chariots of Fire." "Chariots of Fire" was a 1981 movie loosely based on historical events around two runners, Eric Liddell and Harold Abrams. They competed at the 1924 Olympics. Eric Liddell was a Scottish Christian who ran for God's glory and Harold Abrams was an English Jew who ran to overcome persecution. And the day before the big race, Harold Abrams is laying on the training bed and he is thinking about the big race coming up and he says this, "I am forever in pursuit and I don't even know what I'm chasing and now in one hour's time I will be out there again. I will raise my eyes and look down that corridor, four feet wide, with ten lonely seconds to justify my existence, but will I?" What is he doing? He is trying to justify his existence through his performance in his work. How many of us could say the same thing about our work, about our relationships, about our parenting, about our homes? But that is the heart of a Pharisee. And that is the heart that is busy and tired and what Jesus wants to do is rescue the Sabbath from our Pharisee hearts so we can have rest.

The second thing we're going to look at is Jesus and the Sabbath. Look back at the text, verse 25,

"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.""

So what Jesus is doing here, is He is doing three things to correct the Pharisees. The first thing He is doing is comparing Himself to David. So, He brings up this story from the Old Testament about David who was this great king of Israel that at certain times in his life was on the run. At this point in his life, he was on the run from King Saul, and he and his men were hungry and they needed something to eat on the Sabbath, so what did they do? They went to the temple. When they came to the temple, they found that there was bread there, they had bread on the Sabbath for the priests; it was called the showbread. So, David and his men came in and they asked for something to eat and the priests discussed it and they decided that it was acceptable to go ahead and give David and his men some of the showbread. Now, theologians call this a Messianic echo. Because David wasn't supposed to have the bread, but what it's doing is it's pointing forward to a day when a greater David would come and that greater David will be both a king and a priest. So, it would be acceptable for him to eat the bread on the Sabbath and that greater David is Jesus. Jesus is saying, 'I am David's Son.' He had come to be the King and the Priest.

The second thing Jesus does to correct the Pharisees is He says, 'I am the Lord of the Sabbath and I know the true purpose of the Sabbath.' He does that when He says that the Son of Man is Lord of the Sabbath. It's as if Jesus is saying, 'Who is the Lord of the Sabbath? Is it you, Pharisees? No, it's me, the Son of Man. I'm the Lord of the Sabbath. I'm the Lord who created the earth in six days and rested on the seventh day. I am the God who commanded you to rest on Mount Sinai and I am the one who tells you what to do on the Sabbath, not you.' The Sabbath is here to serve you and give you rest, that's why He says the Sabbath was made for man, not man for the Sabbath. Man is not a slave to the Sabbath. The Sabbath is a servant of man through which God can restore his well-being and give him rest. Since Jesus is the Lord of the Sabbath, He determines the purpose and the practice of the Sabbath, not the Pharisees and here's what Jesus is saying, the Sabbath is made to give life, not to take it. The Sabbath was meant to do

ministry, not to prohibit ministry. The Sabbath was made to do good, not to withhold good. Jesus doesn't dismiss the Sabbath, the way an antinomian would, or someone who is irreligious or just wanted to throw out the law, and He doesn't set up the Sabbath as a religious system we use to rescue ourselves, no! Jesus says the Sabbath is a gracious gift that God has given for our good. He wants us to taste and see that the Sabbath is good.

At the age of fourteen, Mary Carr was a little girl and she was miserable. Her performance-driven heart had led her into a very sad state where she tried to hurt herself. But she was unsuccessful, and her parents just thought she was sick, so they took care of her, they nourished her back to health. They thought she had food poisoning and at one point her dad said to her, "Does your stomach feel well enough to eat again?" And she said, "Yeah." And he said, "Well what would you like, what would you really love to eat?" And she said, "I would love to have a plum." But plums weren't in season at that time, so she went to bed. Well that night while she was asleep her daddy loved her so much that he got in the car and he drove all the way from Texas to Arkansas, bought a whole bushel of plums and brought them back, and that morning when she got up there was a whole bushel of plums waiting for her at the house. And this is what she says about that moment, "But it's when you sink your teeth into the plum that you make a promise. The skin is still warm from riding in the sun in daddy's truck and the nectar runs down your chin and you snap out of it or are snapped out of it. Never again do you lay a hand against yourself, not so much as there are plums to eat and somebody who cares enough to haul them to you. That's how you require the resolution for survival, that the coming years are about to demand. You don't earn it, it's given." What did Mary Carr taste in that moment when she ate that plum? She tasted grace. She tasted the unconditional love and acceptance of her father.

That's what your Father wants you to experience on the Sabbath. He wants you to realize that you are loved and accepted and cherished, not based on what you do, but based on who you are and you're His dearly beloved children. Jesus is trying to rescue the Sabbath so that we can receive it as a gift of grace for our busy hearts. So how do we receive it? How do we come here with busy, Pharisaical hearts and receive the rest that Jesus offers us? Well, let's look at the next text. Mark 3:1-6, Jesus gives us a beautiful picture of how to receive it.

"¹ Again he entered the synagogue, and a man was there with a withered hand. ² And they watched Jesus, to see whether he would heal him on the Sabbath, so that they might accuse him. ³ And he said to the man with the withered hand, "Come here." ⁴ 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. ⁵ 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, and his hand was restored. ⁶ The Pharisees went out and immediately held counsel with the Herodians against him, how to destroy him."

We receive the Sabbath as a gift by coming to Jesus on the Sabbath. Now, an interesting thing about the book of Mark, the book of Mark is a very action-oriented gospel. There's not a lot of the teachings of Jesus in the book of Mark. There's a lot of fast paced stories about what Jesus does and when you look at the way faith is described in the book of Mark, you see that for Mark, faith is an action and that action is coming to Jesus. Now we know, based on the whole Bible that there's a content to our faith and there's certainly a feeling of faith, but what Mark wants you to see is that those who have true faith in Jesus come to Him. And I want you to just see the beauty in this passage, that Jesus sees a man who has a withered hand on the Sabbath, and what does He say to Him? He says, "Come here," and he comes here. And what does He do when he comes? He restores him. On the Sabbath, God invites us, weary, sick and sore sinners to come to Him so that He can restore us. So, we come to Jesus. Now, we can certainly come to

Jesus every day through our own private prayer and worship and fellowship, but God still calls us to set aside one day in seven to stop working, to gather with the body of Christ and to rest and worship Jesus.

During the Old Testament times, that day was on Saturday, but since the resurrection most Christians have celebrated the Sabbath on Sunday because that's the day that Jesus rose from the grave. So, on that day we gather with the body of Christ to worship Jesus, to rest, to do works of mercy and necessity and works of goodness and to celebrate that our heavenly Father loves us, and He wants to restore us. He doesn't want us to be busy, anxious, depressed, weary people. He wants to restore our souls the way Jesus restored that man's hand. So, through the Sabbath, God gives us one day in seven to stop trying to work out our own salvation and come rest in Jesus for our salvation. When we rest and worship on the Sabbath, we proclaim that the Lord is God and not our work. We proclaim that Jesus is our Savior, not our work. We proclaim that the most important thing about us is not what we do, but what God has done for us through Jesus. We proclaim that we're enough because Jesus is enough, just like we sang in the song earlier.

On the Sabbath, Pharisees, busy achievers, busy belongers, the Harold Abrams of the world like you and I, we come together and we stop looking at our work to save us and we look at the cross. And what do we see on the cross? What did Jesus say? What were some of His last words? "It is finished." And then He gave up His spirit. Until you hear Jesus say, "It is finished" to you, you will never be able to say, 'It is finished' to your work. But when you hear Jesus saying "It is finished" on the cross, then you can say 'It is finished' and stop trying to save yourself through your own works. Then you can close your book, you can close your laptop, you can turn off your phone, you can turn off the television, and you can breathe deeply. The action of faith is coming to Jesus. The posture of faith is taking a deep breath and resting. And it's when you do that that you move from weariness and fatigue into celebration. It's when you experience the goodness and the pleasure of your heavenly Father.

I said there were two runners in "Chariots of Fire;" there was Harold Abrams and there was Eric Liddell. Eric Liddell was a devout Christian, he was a great runner, but he also wanted to be a missionary and early on in the movie "Chariots of Fire," Liddell's sister comes to him and she's trying to persuade him to come to China to be a missionary, and he says, "Sister, I know that God made me for a purpose, I know that he made me to go to China, but he also made me fast and when I run I feel His pleasure." It was that sense of God's pleasure that allowed Eric Liddell to not run His gold medal race on the Sabbath, to rest, and then to run another race which he subsequently run. But it wasn't about winning, it was about experiencing the pleasure of his heavenly Father. As we rest and worship Jesus on the Sabbath, we experience the pleasure of the heavenly Father, and then the rest of the week we can work not to earn our salvation but because our heavenly Father loves to see us work. That's the good news of the gospel. That's the invitation for busy hearts like ours. So, let's pray that God, by His spirit, would help us to rest in Jesus. Please pray with me.

Father in heaven, we thank You so much that You are not a God who is a taskmaster, who is cruel and malevolent and unkind. You are a good and gracious God that loves us, that is gracious to us, and that wants to rescue us from trying to save ourselves, and so we come to You this morning and we confess that we try to save ourselves every day through our work, through our clothes, through our social media accounts, through our kids, through school. We need You to save us from ourselves. Help us to rest in Jesus. Help us to see that He has paid for our sins on the cross, that it is finished, that we are forgiven, that we're loved and accepted, so that we can

do our work with joy and then we can put it down and worship Jesus. Thank You, Lord, for this good gift. We pray that this good news would soften our hearts, that it would change us, and that we would be able to share this good news with others. We pray this in Jesus' name, Amen.