

Mark Week 8

Where are our Priorities?

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Somebody can relate to this—whether you've experienced this or not, everybody can relate to it. You go to a football game or a concert, and you know there's always those people, um, sort of towards the end, they start looking around, thinking about how they're going to get out because they want to get out early. Like, you know, I mean, some of you all do that here too. Which is fine. There's nothing wrong with it. I get it. I mean, I understand the dilemma. We've all had that dilemma.

But some of us, you know, maybe we stay, and maybe it was overtime. We stayed for overtime, or maybe we wanted to hear the encore song or whatever. And you know what's going to happen once the lights go on and everybody leaves. It's chaos. You know that. I mean, everybody's cutting in front of each other, and everybody's trying to get up the stairs or down the escalator. I mean, the fruit of the Spirit is out of the place at that point. It's man-eat-man, dog-eat-dog. It's just everybody's trying to get to their cars. You know that. I mean, we've all experienced that.

You finally get to your car, and it's great because you had to fight through crowds and everything and, you know, cross streets and all that stuff. You get in your car, and then a whole another set of obstacles is there because not only are you trying to get out, but you've got people walking in and out of cars and around stuff, and you know how it is. Everybody's trying to cram into the cars, and most of them have bumper stickers that say something about Jesus on the back of them. And, you know, they're coming in, and you're trying to get in, and your wife's telling you to calm down, and you're trying to pull in, and you have a Grace Community Church bumper sticker on the back of your car, and, you know, you're yelling, "I love you," to the person next to you and all that good stuff. And we've all experienced it.

And finally, after you fought through all that stuff, you come to that point where you're getting ready to break out of that parking lot, that chaos. Like, it's almost like a bird that just got released from a cage. And at that final moment, you're there, and there's always the dude that has the orange stick that's doing this and whatever. And you've been there because he's there, he's doing this, and you want to go this way, but this dude's pointing this way, but then there's another guy that's pointing this way, and you're going, "Which one do I follow? Who's got the authority here?" And then you just hope that whichever direction you go is the direction you were supposed to go. You know, you don't know when they start blowing a whistle at you, but then you just hunker down and keep going because you want to get home.

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But the bottom line is we've all been there where it's like, "Which way do I go?" and whatever. You know? Who's the one that's really got the right to tell me? I want you to just hold that thought because we're going to come back to that at different times in the message, and especially, um, at the end.

So, we're in a series called the Gospel of Mark, and we're going through Mark line by line. We're not rushing it. We're just going to take our time and enjoy reading this. It's not just for information. We're reading it for transformation. And I'm really asking you, when you read it, I'm asking all of us to look at it as a mirror and for it to reflect back to us—not the person next to you. If you've got a husband or wife and I say a point that you go, "You know..."—the divine elbow is not a part of this series, okay? It's for us.

And so we're in a part of this series, we're in a subunit of Mark that runs from chapter 2:1 to chapter 3:6 that most scholars who've ever studied the Gospel of Mark and have written commentaries or spoken on it realize these are conflict stories. This section that we're in, they're conflict stories because Jesus and the way he's doing what he's doing is having a conflict with the religious people. And that in and of itself should make us stop and say, "Is it possible that I could be a religious person who really believes they love God, who really believes that they're doing these things right, that honestly could be on the other end of what really it means to be a follower of Jesus?"

And that's there. It's low-hanging fruit in the Gospel of Mark. It's something we're supposed to be asking because Mark's asking all of us, "Do we really know who Jesus is? Are you sure you know who Jesus is? Make sure you understand because the religious leaders, they didn't."

And so Mark has grouped together five stories. And when we're reading the Gospels, I'm going to continue to say this because I get frustrated when people go onto YouTube and they hear somebody talk about, "Oh, the Bible's so full of contradictions and it's got all kinds of problems," and it sounds great, and many people come in and go, "I don't know, man." Part of the whole reasoning that those questions can even come up is because you're asking the Gospels to do something that the Gospels aren't doing.

They are not biographies. Now, they contain things that read oftentimes like a biography, but they're not a biography. They're not a history book. They have history in them, but that's not the reason that they were written. They're not chronologically ordered. They'll pull different things and stick them together to make a point because they're theological documents. They were written in a way that would make you and me, as a reader, have to ask questions or be told facts about who Jesus was.

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And the authors felt very comfortable pulling a story here and another there. I mean, we know Jesus cleansed the temple one time. We know that. But John has him cleansing the temple at the beginning and the end. Why does he do that? As a literary device. There's something that he's doing. And if you try to make that fit your understanding of how these books were written, you're going to butcher them because they're not written that way.

So don't listen to that garbage on YouTube that the Bible's so full of contradictions and errors and all this stuff. What they're doing is they're trying to make the Bible read a certain way. It wasn't written that way. It's a theological document.

So when he puts these stories together, they're not chronological. They don't necessarily mean they follow one another. He's grouped them together to make a point. Jesus is having an issue, and the religious people are having an issue with Jesus. And it's going to end in a heightened sense of conflict in chapter 3:6, the next story that we'll talk about next weekend where the religious leaders want to get rid of Jesus. It's a real serious moment. He's put all that together to make a point.

So, we've gone through the first three. This weekend we're going to deal with this idea of a Sabbath moment. And I've realized this the more I've studied this and put this together: these stories get a little bit more weighty, dense, and sort of have a little bit more conflict as you work through them.

This is a Sabbath moment where the disciples are eating grain that they have plucked, and it's a real scene. And we've got to get into it because a lot of us maybe don't think about this stuff very much. I mean, I don't know when the last time you were driving in your car going, "Man, Sabbath and walking through a wheat field and plucking grain." Probably never had that thought in your life.

So, we're going to have to look at this text and understand what's going on. And it's deep and it's profound. So this is one of those weekends where you're going to need to focus. I don't know if you all have dogs, but you ever wake a dog up and it's sort of groggy? They always shake themselves. It's like they're trying to wake themselves up. So just shake yourself so that we can get together here and we can look at this. Let's get to the text together here and work through this.

Mark says this: "**One Sabbath...**" And I need to pause here because he's not saying that right after the last story, there was a Sabbath. He just is saying: on one Sabbath. It could have been after the last story, but it doesn't have to be after the last story.

He says, "**On one Sabbath...**" And we've got to stop here because we, as a general rule, don't understand how

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important the Sabbath was in Judaism. We just don't understand that world—the world of Judaism and Sabbath and all that—because most of us are not Sabbatharians. And what I mean by that is we probably heard the word. Maybe a couple of you all have read some books and you try to do what you think is a Sabbath rest or whatever. But many of us go, “Well, I don't know what that means.” I mean, because for the Jewish people, it was Friday night at sundown to Saturday night at sundown was a time where you didn't do anything. I mean, you just didn't do anything, and you rested.

And, you know, if you go to Israel—hopefully we'll be able to go to Israel again one day. We were supposed to go this year, but couldn't go. But what you don't do, and we always tell everybody, is when you get to Israel, if you're in a hotel and it is the Sabbath, they have two elevators. They have a regular elevator and they have the Sabbath elevator. On the Sabbath elevator, it stops at every floor because you can't push a button because that would be work. So, you don't want to get in the Sabbath elevator if you're on floor eight because it's going to be a long time.

And so, you know, if you're ever over in Israel and you have somebody that you want to give a hard time, go, “Hey, I think you ought to take that one. You're on floor 12.” It'll get you right there. You can press all you want. It's going to do its thing. But the point is, I think that's a world that for many of us we just don't quite understand.

So let me try to bring us up to speed here on the Sabbath. To the religious leaders of Jesus's day, the Sabbath was a defining marker of allegiance to covenant loyalty. That's just what it was. The Sabbath was an identity marker of one's obedience to God's law. Guarding Sabbath was guarding the very identity of Israel. It was essential to being faithful to God. It was just one of those things that if you didn't do it, you're not in. Period. It was a big deal.

And what had happened over the years is the religious leaders, trying to guard the sanctity of the Sabbath, had made it something more than what it should have been. And they had learned to read Scripture through their own lens. And they had created certain laws and teachings on the Sabbath that were not really biblical, but they thought were biblical. It was their sort of interpretation of how they thought it should work, but it was not right.

And we're going to see this. There's going to be a conflict right here between Jesus and the Pharisees, and it's going to be one of authority. Who's got the authority? How do we know what we're supposed to do? How does this work?

And so, on this one Sabbath, “...[Jesus] was going through the **grainfields...**” I need to stop here for just a second with this

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word “grainfields.” We use the ESV here at Grace. That’s the translation I use. It’s not because it is the best of all translations. Actually, I could make a case that the best Old Testament translation is probably the New American Standard. The New King James actually is a really good translation. The Christian Standard Bible is a good translation. There’s a lot of translations that are good. I just chose the ESV a long time ago because it follows the King James, and a lot of us grew up on King James, and so it reads more naturally like that. So it doesn’t feel like we’re reading something funky. But is it the perfect translation? There’s no perfect translation.

But if you read the King James—which is a fine translation, nothing wrong with that—the King James says here in Mark 2 that Jesus was going through “cornfields.” Now, for us Americans who understand what corn is, that sets up a real distinction—a grainfield or a cornfield. That seems like a big deal.

Well, you have to understand something. In Elizabethan English in 1611, corn fields meant wheat fields or barley fields. It didn’t mean cornfield like maize. We didn’t learn about corn in Europe till like the 15th century, till we found the Indians over here and understood what corn was.

So when you’re reading that, even though it sounds like it’s corn fields, it doesn’t mean cornfields. The wording has changed over the years. It meant wheat or barley field. It meant grainfield because words change. You all know that. I mean, you know, I go to my kids and go, “Man, that car is bad.” They’re like, “What’s wrong with it, Dad?” I’m like, “No, it’s cool. It got AC.” No, no, no. It’s cool. Like, they don’t have those. The words that I grew up with are not their words.

Kids today only have one word. You know that, right? It’s “bruh.” It’s the only word they know. It’s like, I don’t know where the English language went. There’s only one word. Bruh, bruh. It’s like, you know, you’re like, “I rebuke that in the name of the Lord. I’m not your bruh.” But words change.

And so I just mention that because I’ve heard preachers—and I think they mean well, God bless them—that talk about they’re plucking corn and ears of corn, and that’s just not what’s going on. So I just bring that to your attention because I’m a kind guy. I want you to read it right.

So anyway, they’re going through the grainfields, “...and as they made **their way through [these grainfields], his disciples began to pluck heads of grain.**” It would have looked something like that. That’s what they were doing. And they were nibbling on the little pieces. Nothing was wrong with what they were doing. Not a thing. The Old Testament said that when you walk through a grain field, you can pluck some grain, even if it’s not your grain field. In fact, God said

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when you have property, you've got to leave some of the edges of your property where you haven't taken everything out in case somebody walks through your piece of property that's hungry. Maybe a stranger, maybe a foreigner walks through, they can have something to eat. Why? Because God's kind. He's kind. His kindness is what leads us to repentance. He's kind to people.

And it also is a reminder that that grain field that you had isn't really yours. It's God's. And God says, "If people walk through my grain field, if they're hungry, I want them to be able to eat something." They can't thresh it. They can't steal it from you. They can't start cutting down and doing a harvest. But if they're just picking something on the way, it's okay. So, nothing they were doing is unbiblical. Deuteronomy is very clear that what they were doing was fine.

But there's an issue because we're told here: **"The Pharisees..."**—and I don't know if you all are like me, but these dudes just appear, right? Like, you know, you're following them, they're going through the grain field, and all of a sudden there's Pharisees. Like, were they down on one knee? You're just like, were they snooping? But the point is they just always appear at the places that you never expect them to appear.

So, the Pharisees are there, and they say to Jesus specifically, **"Look..."** I mean, they're trying to draw attention. They're like, "Maybe you're not seeing this. Maybe you're not noticing that your disciples are plucking the heads of grain. Maybe you're not aware. Look, because we want to know, **"why are they doing what is not lawful on the Sabbath?"**

Now, I'm going to tell you clearly that what they were doing was lawful. There's no way in the world that it was unlawful. But the Pharisees truly believed that what they were doing was not lawful because they had learned to interpret Scripture the way they interpreted Scripture, and they felt the way they interpreted Scripture was the authority. And if you did not interpret Scripture the way they interpreted it, then you were wrong.

And that's an important thing to know because the truth of the matter is that interpretation is not the same thing as inspiration. We believe the Bible is inspired. We believe it's God-breathed. But your and my interpretation of Scripture might not actually be what the Scripture is in fact saying. We could be on the wrong side of an interpretive thing, and maybe we think we're right, and then we're condescending and nasty towards other people, and we may be completely wrong—which is why these passages are here, to sort of get us to think about these things.

I mean, you know as well as I do, if I were to say, "Tell me what you think the book of Revelation is about," my gut feeling

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would be we would have some differing opinions on that book. I would be shocked if we don't. Well, who's right? Well, some people say, "I'm so right that if you don't see it the way I do, then you don't really believe the word of God. And if you don't really believe the word of God, then you're not a Christian."

Let's not do that based on your interpretation. "Well, my interpretation is right." Well, you do understand though that there are a lot of people who are men and women of God, who love God, who get on their knees every night, who genuinely serve God and witness about Jesus and share Jesus, who don't see that book the same way you see it.

So, are they wrong? Maybe. Are you wrong? Maybe. Have you elevated an interpretation to the point where you're acting as though it is the word of God? There are many issues like that in Scripture. Plenty. Go to the creation story. Get people that will absolutely fight over that. I mean, they're ready to go to war over their view of the creation story or whatever else.

And I say that just to say we need to be careful because what we can do, if we're not paying attention, is take positions in Scripture that maybe really aren't that clear. Like, if you were to ask somebody, "Can you show me an exact chapter and verse on that?" and you go, "Well, no, but I can show you one that sort of says this, and because of that and because of this, we get this." Okay. Well, that's you. It may be right. You may be completely right, but that is probably not as clear as some of the other things that really are clear.

And what we want to do is make sure that we're not doing this—elevating our interpretation to the level of inspiration and actually running people off and messing people up because we think we are so right. The Pharisees were doing this. We would at least be humble enough to say, "Hey, is it possible I could be doing that in my own life?" Not saying you are. Not saying anybody in here is doing that. I'm just saying, "Is it possible?"

Well, Jesus then has to respond to this because what they're saying is not actually right. But he doesn't address their wrongness. He addresses it in a little bit different way. And here's what he says to them. He says to them, **"Have you never read...?"** Well, of course they have. They're Pharisees. They've read. He knows that they've read, but he asks that: "Have you never read?" He's redirecting them in their interpretation. He's redirecting them back to Scripture, and he's showing them another passage that might shine light on their particular view. He says, **"Have you never read what David did?"**

"Remember, guys, remember when David was running from Saul because Saul wanted to kill him? Remember he's running from Saul, and they're tired. They're wore out. Remember they

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come to the tabernacle at the time and go in and eat. Remember that story, guys? Jesus is saying, "Have you never read what David did? Remember the story when he was in need and he was hungry?" Wow. What Jesus is getting ready to do is tell you that people matter more than policies and rules and law. He's telling you how important people are because the Pharisees were more concerned about their laws, their policies, their procedures than people.

"Do you not remember when they were in need and they were hungry? You don't remember that story? He and those who were with him. Remember when he entered into the house of God? Remember he went into the tabernacle? He's fleeing from Saul. They're wore out. They're tired. They're in need. They're hungry. You remember that story, right? It happened in the time of Abiathar the high priest."

"The time of Abiathar the high priest." Critical scholars come along, and they say Abiathar wasn't the high priest. That's true. He wasn't. It was Ahimelech. Why does Jesus say that? Well, first of all, he says "the time of Abiathar." That expands it out. And Abiathar and Ahimelech were around at the time, and Abiathar was more well-known. He might have been doing that. I think what he's doing is rather than focusing in on Ahimelech, he's pulling it back to say during the times of Abiathar. He's trying to expand them to see maybe there's more of a way to look at something than the way that they're looking at it.

He says, "Do you remember when David was on the run? When he was hungry and he was in need and he entered into the house of God in the time of Abiathar the high priest and he ate the bread of presence?" The bread of presence was this bread that the priest would make weekly, and when the new bread came out, they could eat the old bread.

He says, "Do you remember when he was hungry and he was in need? Remember that? Remember when he ate the bread of presence? Remember that? Which is not lawful. You guys are telling me what my disciples are doing is not lawful. It is lawful. I'm not going to challenge you on that. I'm not going to try to debate that with you. I'm going to just expand your view because what David and his men did was breaking the law. Do you remember when they did that? Remember, nobody in the Old Testament said anything was wrong. Why? Because people who are made in the image and likeness of God are more important than a rule, a policy, or a law."

[Applause]

Now you're clapping. Just hold on. You might take that back. I was clapping. "Yeah, I ain't clapping now."

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But he says it was not lawful. He says, **“And [also] gave it to those who were with him.”** He goes, “Do you not remember that story? Because they broke the law.” But there are times when the law has to be superseded for people who are made in the image and likeness of God because people matter. All people, all the time, matter.

And then he says to them—and this is really getting to the point—he said to them, “Guys, the Sabbath was made for man.” You guys have it backwards. You think that somehow man was made for the Sabbath? You’ve elevated a spiritual discipline to a point of law that’s oppressive to people, that you’re abusing people with, trying to make them obey something. He goes, “I think you got it wrong.”

And it’s beautiful how Jesus, in these short statements, he uses—you’ve heard me say this word—chiastic literature. This is just a chiastic phrase: **“The Sabbath was made for man, not man for the Sabbath.”** He’s taking this thing and turning it inside out.

And then what he says next is just like—I mean, I’m telling you, the fever pitch of the religious people went through the roof when he says this. He says, “So I’ve told you all these things. The Son of Man”—which is Jesus, and we’ve talked a little bit about the Son of Man; we’ll talk more about that phrase as we go through the Gospel of Mark—“the Son of Man is Lord, even of the Sabbath. I’m over it all. And my authority is the authority that matters.”

I can tell you this is a moment. It’s going to funnel right into the next story where they’re ready to get rid of him. This is—I mean, people say, “Well, I don’t know. There’s nowhere in the Bible that Jesus ever really says that, you know, he’s like God. Was Jesus aware that he was God?” They did not like that phrase because he’s saying that their authority, which they think is in their interpretation, is not the final authority. The final authority over it all is Jesus.

And he tells us that in Matthew 28. He says, **“All authority in heaven and earth has been given to me.”**

So, what can we take? Because there’s a lot of stuff in this passage. And I’m going to let you all in on something. I have this suspicion—just a suspicion that I have because I really spent a lot of time really looking at this this week—I suspect there’s even more in here than I was able to get. I suspect, like in five years, if I’m still alive, the Lord hasn’t come back or whatever, I suspect if I read this passage again and teach this passage again, I’ll see something more. There’s a lot in here.

So, I got four things that I want to talk about. They’re profound. They’re deep. Really worth thinking about. And listen, hear me

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out, and then just let them sort of sink in, and maybe God do a little bit of work in us all.

The first question that I have—first thing that I think of when I think of how do I apply this and what do I see in here in my own life for us or whatever, is this: **Are there areas where we could be guilty of weaponizing obedience?** What do I mean by that? Well, they're doing it here because they're saying to Jesus, "Look, it's not lawful." The bottom line is that's wrong. It wasn't unlawful for what they were doing.

I wonder how many things we get bent out of shape on as Christians that are our own sort of conclusions of whatever that's a mixture of all kinds of stuff that we put together with our Christianity, things we listen to, things that we read, shows that we watch. We sort of bundle it all together and then we sort of castigate and give other people that probably are still believers that we don't want to believe are believers a hard time. Is there times maybe—because here's the reality—that the Pharisees are guilty, there's no question, of using their rightness. They're not right, but they think they're right, and they really believe they're right. This is really important to understand. They really believe they're right. They believe that's what the Bible says. They really believe that.

And is it possible that we could think things that are in the Bible that maybe aren't as clear as we think that they are or whatever, and we're beating up people and saying things about people? Because this is what they were doing. They were using their rightness to control, exclude, and judge. And I think that we have to be open to the fact that sometimes maybe we do have some distorted views of things that maybe aren't exactly right.

And the Sabbath, which was a spiritual discipline—it was just a spiritual discipline—got turned into something that was very ugly. Please remember this. They're using this stuff to see who's in and who's out and how all this works. They're taking spiritual disciplines and they're morphing them into other things and making them things that they're not because spiritual disciplines are meant to be tools that form us, not trophies that define us.

Let me put it really clear so that we're all on the same page. If our practice of Christianity creates a feeling of superiority that leads to distance from others rather than creating compassion towards them, then we need to own that we've become the very people who would have had issues with the biblical Jesus.

We need to own it because people matter. And when you or I are looking at a certain group of people with disdain or down upon them and we think that we're doing it because we're holy and righteous, we're on the wrong side of Jesus at that point because people matter. Everybody matters.

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Let me ask you this question. The law would say, for every one of us, the law would say we are justly condemned to spend eternity away from God. That's what the law says. But Jesus, who is kind, who sees the value of people, in his kindness came and reached over the law to give us grace and mercy so that we could come to know him as Lord and Savior. Thank God he did that for you and me. And he says, "Love others the way I have loved you."

Which leads me to my next point. And I'm asking this sincerely. I wonder: **Do we even have the ability anymore to see need as a valid theological category?** Because I hear Christians all the time explain away, "We're not going to do that. We're not going to do..." Really? This is a person in need. They're hungry. Jesus said, "Do you not remember when he was in need and he was hungry?" Jesus absolutely sees hunger as a real need. Period.

Here's my question—and I think we all need to take a moment, look in the mirror—where have we learned to prioritize principle over need? Policies over need? That's not Christian. It's just not. And yet we fuse it together and we bind it together with all of the stuff of the world and other stuff and put it all together and we miss the whole point.

What matters to God is people. They matter to God. Every person, even the person that you don't think is living right or the person that you think is wrong or whatever, they matter to God. And they should receive the same compassion and goodness that God gave to you and me. Doesn't mean that there's not right and wrong. Doesn't mean that there's not sin. Doesn't mean that there's not times to help people move forward. But when we meet people and they're in need, it's not about at that point trying to give them a policy, a law, or a procedure. It's meeting that need in that moment because that's what our Lord did for you and me.

It is amazing. The claps have gotten smaller. So, it's all—and listen to me. I want you to hear this. Please hear this from me. I'm not here to give anybody a hard time. It's just I have to answer one day to the Lord. And it's my job to watch over souls. It's my job to be faithful to the Word of God. And I'm telling you, I've been saying this for almost 16 years: you can't be right with God and wrong with people. You just can't. People matter.

And if we're just being honest—look in the mirror—sometimes we can be so nasty to certain groups and other stuff and then we convince ourselves that we're being right, that we're being godly. That's the scary part because that's exactly what they were doing. And Jesus goes, "Man, do you not remember when David was in need and hungry? That they ate the bread of presence that the law said they shouldn't eat? Do you not understand there are times when people are in need and hungry and afflicted that we reach out because we're the church. We're the people of the living and holy God. We are

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citizens of heaven. We march to a different drumbeat. We don't fuse ourselves with the cultures of this world. We are people that shine like lights that should stick out like sore thumbs because we feed the poor. We take care of those in need. We turn the other cheek. We even love our enemies because we are followers of Jesus and we believe he will take care of us."

Another thing I see in this passage is—I think we need a better **understanding of the foundational aspect of God's law**. I think most Christians—this is true. You wouldn't say it. Probably you wouldn't raise your hand and say amen, but I think it's true. I think most of us do this:

"Old Testament, man, it's a lot. Man, God was really having a bad thousand, two thousand years here, man. He's sort of mean. Oh, Matthew—this is getting better. All right. I don't know what to do with all this stuff back here."

And you see it a lot of times. There was a pastor in America—and I think he's probably being unfairly criticized. I don't think he meant it the way it came across—but there was the phrase said that, you know, we need to sort of unhitch from the Old Testament. You all pulled a U-Haul truck at some point. If you pull the thing, the U-Haul truck goes that way and your car goes this way. That's not the answer.

I think sometimes we need to really step back for a moment and try to understand what was really going on in God's law because Paul says the law of God is good, holy, and just. It's not terrible. It's not ugly. It's not oppressive. But we tend to look at it that way.

And this is why Jesus says, "The Sabbath was made for man." The thing is that the Sabbath is made for man is radical anthropology. It means that he has a high view of you as a human being. That you're the apple of his eye. You are the crowning achievement of God's creation as the image bearers of God.

And so the deal is that human flourishing is built into the foundational framework of God's law. We tend to see it as oppressive because maybe we don't understand some things. Like we read Leviticus and think, "What's the big deal with pork and shellfish and whatever?" We don't think of the fact that the reason those laws are there is because they didn't have proper ways to store and refrigerate stuff, and you'd get trichinosis like that and die. Those laws weren't written to just hurt people or be oppressive. They were there to help in every way at all times.

And they were addressing things at a certain time in a certain place, moving people forward because God is kind. He was trying to show them over time that he cared for them and that

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he loved them and that the things that he wanted for them were good and to teach them about the need for a savior.

The law is not this ugly thing. There's a beauty to it. It can't save us. And the reason it can't save us is because we can't keep it. But it doesn't mean that it's terrible.

It always bothers me when people read the Old Testament and they just think God's so ugly. Was he ugly when he told Jonah to go preach to the Ninevites that had killed and beaten the children of Israel, that had raped their women, killed their children? You know why Jonah didn't want to go, right? Because of that. God said, "Go preach to them." Jonah didn't want to go because he didn't want them to experience God's kindness. God was kind.

Don't read the Old Testament and miss all the moments in there where God is kind and loving. And don't read some of the judgments and not realize that that's 400 years of people that God tried to tell what to do, and the judgment that's on them is because God doesn't allow sin to go forever. It's not that he's an ugly God or a nasty God. It's just sometimes we don't know how to read the Old Testament.

The foundational aspect of God's law is for you. It's so that you will flourish. Anything God asks you to do is not a burden. It is something for you that will benefit you whether you see it or not. He knows more than you and me know.

Man, this is good preaching today, Chip. I mean, you just tell them, buddy. You tell them. They may not say it. Johnny knows, don't you, buddy? Johnny, you know. Give me a little run on the piano. Come on. Yes. I love it. This guy's great.

Anyway, that's the way I play piano in my dreams.

Anyway, so the last one: **The extraordinary authority of Christ that is being presented to us** is just here all over this passage when Jesus says, "I'm Lord even of the Sabbath." That is so profound. So profound. Think about it. Mark's told us that he forgives sins, cleanses lepers, casts out demons. He's Lord of the Sabbath. He's God over everything.

Because the question that's being asked to all of us is, do we live as if Jesus truly has all authority? Do we believe that? That's the question. When he says, "Do we go..." who's got the authority? Mark is telling us that Jesus says, "Here's just a couple of questions to think about. Just some stuff to think about."

If Jesus said to follow him and it went against a deeply held belief, would you do it?

Because those are real questions. You may say, "Chip, that's a tough question." Yeah. You know why I'm telling you that?

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Because I care about you. I care about whether we get Jesus right or not. I don't want to stand before God one day and him say, "You didn't bring up some of the tough stuff. You didn't bring up some of the challenging..." I don't want to be that guy.

And it's not because I'm trying to be snarky or anything. If you knew me well, you would know that's not in any way, shape, or form what I would ever want to do. But I'm going to be faithful here and ask the question—and it's a question you have to answer. If he said go this way and it was something that you held deeply, even maybe something that you thought was biblically true, and he said, "No, but I want you to go this way," would you follow him? Does he have all authority?

Or maybe ask this question: where have you confused faithfulness to God with loyalty to your interpretation of him? Like where do we have views about God that might not be really biblical? Like when we are on the wrong side of people, do we sometimes think that we're just being these great Christians by pounding and saying, "We're not going to do that. We got to do this. We got to be this way." Or are we faithful to God? Which would mean that we love God with all of our heart, soul, mind, and body, and we love our neighbor as ourselves.

"Who's my neighbor?" Well, it's the Samaritan. "What do you mean the Samaritan? We ain't touching them. They're terrible." No, the Samaritan shows how to do it. He's showing you how to be the neighbor. He's doing whatever. This is the point. Like we do this. "Who is my neighbor?" Everybody.

Or how about this one: can mercy ever override correctness? Or is that compromise to you?

"No, no, no, no, no. We're not going to do that for them because this is the policy. This is the procedure. We can't do this because of this. There's a reason why we're not doing this."

And you go, "Well, I know, but mercy would say we're going to reach them."

"Well, no, I'm not going to do that."

Yeah, but when David was in need and hungry, Jesus says, "Break the law. Take care of the person. Forget the policy. There's somebody hungry and in need, somebody made in the image and likeness of God. Reach them. Do whatever it takes. Be what I was to you."

But we go, "Oh no, we can't because this and that and the other. We can't do this. We can't do that. You don't understand all the problems and whatever."

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Have we allowed correctness, policies, procedures to override the very caring for the people maybe God has put in front of us? And when we do it, we consider it some sort of compromise.

I'm just asking. Just asking to be real and say, because here's the reality: I believe God wants to do way more through all of us than we have any idea. I believe he really wants us to be a church that reaches the unchurched by being intentional neighbors that really reflect Christ.

I can tell you this, the most important thing that we can get through our head is that people matter. And if you're here today and for some reason somebody like me or somebody who says they're a Christian has made you feel like you don't matter, listen to this guy here: you matter. You matter to God. You have such value and dignity.

You go, "But Chip, I've done a lot of things." So has everybody else in the room. "But you don't understand, Chip." I hear you. And it doesn't mean that we're maybe going to agree that some of those things are perfectly right, but that's beside the point at this point. What matters is that you know that you matter. Because you matter online. You matter. You matter to God because you're a human being.

Let's be those people that see every opportunity of interacting with a human being as a heaven-meets-earth moment where we can be the people God has called us to be because people matter all the time, every time.

God, I humbly ask that you would take the meager words that I've said and somehow birth in us the things that you want for us. Help us, Lord, to really sort through these deep issues. These are the reasons why the Pharisees wanted to get rid of Jesus because it really does poke at some stuff. And I'm guessing I've poked at some stuff today.

But Lord, you know that the truth of your Word is that people matter, and we need to be confronted with that and we need to look at that when we read Scripture. Lord, please meet us where we are.

As we sing this final song, I know there's going to be some people that need to beat the crowds and want to get out of here. And I get that. But there's going to be some people that are going to wait and sing the song. And I pray, God, as we sing this song, we would have a beautiful moment with you and that your Spirit would be here and you would shape us and form us for your glory. Lord, we love you and thank you in Jesus' name. Amen.