

We have just heard how the conflict with the pharisees that began with the healing of the man lowered through the roof continues. This time the argument is about Jesus and his disciples eating grain from fields that they pick on the sabbath!

This is against the law say the pharisees!

No it isn't says Jesus.

His justification and defence is a precedent in Scripture. David took bread that the Law said he couldn't. David and his men were on an important mission. So are Jesus and those with him. But the need was more important than the ceremonial/ritual law which was broken. Jesus is not sweeping aside the Scriptures, or radically re-interpreting them!

He is reminding them and us that what appears a radical reinterpretation is in fact return to a basic God-given principle.

And what basic principle had the Pharisees failed to grasp. Verse 27; "The Sabbath was made for Man, not Man for the Sabbath!

The New Living Translation puts that verse in this way: *"the sabbath was made to meet the needs of people and not people to meet the needs of the people"*.

'Given to meet the needs of people -our needs'. What needs? Ex 20: 8. *Remember to observe the Sabbath day by keeping it holy. 9 You have six days each week for your ordinary work, 10 but the seventh day is a Sabbath day of rest dedicated to the Lord your God. On that day no one in your household may do any work. This includes you...*

Rest: a day of rest. God desires and planned in the life of Israel, regular weekly rest. He wants us to rest too; to rest from all your labours. It's also 'dedicated to God' so its a time when we reflect and remember the God who delivered us.

Are those the truths you associate with you the word 'Sabbath'? Does it mean 'rest and remember' or more associated with Sunday' and/or 'Church attendance.

If it means just church attendance to us we may not have factored the 'rest' element into our understanding. Or it's given by the God who cares for us, to meet our needs.

Of course, it's not always possible to do that on a Sunday is it. Many people, many Christians, work on Sundays and we need them to! Sunday may be a busy day for

you. I know it is for me. But in talking about 'Sabbath' here Jesus is talking about the God who wants us to set aside time for rest and to reflect on him. Why? For he knows this is what we need.

Sabbath rest is neither about coming to church on a Sunday, although it is a vital and indispensable part of our corporate remembering of God's saving work, nor is it about only resting on a Sunday.

Sabbath rest is to recall the greatness of the one who has redeemed us and taking care of ourselves. It is for that reason that the commandment is given.

As an aside, in the annual report I mentioned we have a new way of ordering our whole church life so that we have schedule regular rest. The reason that we did not start the Lent Course in the first week of Lent is because it was 'sabbatical week'. Ask me if you want more info.

So - sabbath rest - it's what we need. All this is part of the the good news of Jesus Christ.

But the Pharisees don't get it and it's important we understand something about them for they are now an integral part of Mark's story.

Their main concern was to prepare Israel to be a fit people worthy of their Redeemer God, a Holy People, who, by being holy, would facilitate the coming of the promises made by God to Israel. They had observed that, as God promised, they had returned from Exile and yet, additional promises have not yet been fulfilled. Their conclusion! We are not being Holy enough!! So, come on everyone!

And to help with that 'come on everyone' they developed additional rules which they believed would help clarify exactly what all the covenant requirements were.

Yet they had become blind to Jesus and the Scriptures too.

They turned a covenant relationship of grace into a religion and come to believe that by how religious good works we'll be acceptable in God's sight. We can all too easily do this.

For example, I remember as a young Christian being frowned upon for playing soccer in the back garden, by my grandmother. 'Not the thing that is done on the sabbath Richard'.

When you head the Ten Commandments read, what did you feel? what did you hear? Did you hear them as rules you must obey or, as Jesus suggests in verse 27, that here are ways of living given by God that meet my needs?

We don't have time to look at them all so just the first two.

First though It starts by declaring an act of love.

"I am the Lord your God, who rescued you from the land of Egypt, the place of your slavery.

3 *"You must not have any other god but me.*

I am the Lord your God who rescued you. So no other gods- put nothing else before me- nothing or no one else

4 "You must not make for yourself an idol of any kind or an image of anything in the heavens or on the earth or in the sea. **5** You must not bow down to them or worship them, for I, the Lord your God, am a jealous God who will not tolerate your affection for any other gods.

We don't follow other Gods and make little wooden idols we bow down to do we? But that is not the principle here in this Scripture.

It is saying don't put your faith in someone or something else! No person, no other thing, no other way. Jesus described himself as the only way to,God. 'I am the way, the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father, except through me'. To do other wise is to say to God, do you know, we think that we have a better option than you! This thing or this person can rescue me or meet my needs better than you. No wonder our Redeemer doesn't like it.

How do these instructions meet our needs?

Following Jesus, trusting and obeying him, leads us into and teaches us the ways of God's transforming grace. We really need to learn and experience that.

He will transform our understanding of our sin. Do we see sin as simply obedience in the doing or not doing of prescribed items?

So here are ten commandments.

PowerPoint....

I am doing okay today. Oh no! I've lied. A little white line. Couldn't bear to be honest about that one so I need to confess that at during the prayer of confession.

I don't think that's sin at all! It's an expression of sin. *Sin lurks here in our hearts.*

Again, why does dealing with this stuff meet us needs? God wants to deal with this stuff.

What caused us to be unable to be honest at that moment? What was driving us? What fear was there, why was it there, where did it come from? It's that stuff that unconsciously drives our egos. For example, if you received the message as a child that being perfect, or good, or strong, was about the only way you would get any affirmation from your parents you would make that a defining element of who you needed to be to survive and get on in the world.

You would take that into all you do and all your relationships, including the one with God, who you would just assume would judge you in the same way as others, about whether you were perfect or good or strong enough. In fact, we probably believe that he would only be pleased if we were perfect, good or strong enough.

Is that how we hear the Ten Commandments? That if we don't keep them God will be down on us like a ton of bricks?

I think that's what the Pharisees thought and it led them down the wrong path. Instead of seeing Grace in the scriptures they saw a need for legalism to prove their worth to God, that they were perfect and good enough.

But hang on you might be thinking. There is this bit!

I lay the sins of the parents upon their children; the entire family is affected—even children in the third and fourth generations of those who reject me.

Not only does God come down on us like a ton of bricks, our grand-children cop it! And the NRSV uses the word 'punishing'.

'Punishing' is not a good translation of that word.

Others are not punished. Instead it's logical. If we don't deal with the causes of our sin, we'll pass on the messages we received to, if we have them, to our own children. We'll expect them to behave as we were expected and on and on through generations it goes unless we become self-aware. So God lays on them, in that he does not prevent, the consequences of our own actions, namely not following him and trusting him to deal with that which lurks in our hearts. When we, in effect, say to him, we'll not take your way for we prefer our own. So actually, its us to pass on our sin to our kids like a ton of bricks.

I remember as clear as it was yesterday the day in November 2002 that I realised I had passed my unconscious drivers onto Andy and Em. I ran through the door to them and apologised, explained what I had learnt. It lead to a great discussion and I hope, we might have broken the cycles. But I can see the best and worst of me in my children.

This is why it is important to trust and obey Jesus. Not to is to say to him, actually we have a better way of dealing with it than you can provide.

These commandments then do indeed show us how our needs are meet. Trusting God, loving him with all our heart, soul, mind and strength and loving our neighbour, as we love ourselves - good relationships with God, everyone else with care of self. We do indeed need these things.

Mark here shows us the good news.

This is why Christianity is not a religion but a revelation! No way we'd think of this is there. It sounds stupid-man-son of God- barn & a virgin- did miracles- died and rose again!! Yeah right! As Paul put it in v 18 & or epistle reading

For the message about the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God.

The son of Man is Lord even of the Sabbath.