

Sermons

New Testament

Matthew

12:1-14

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Date written: August 19, 1950

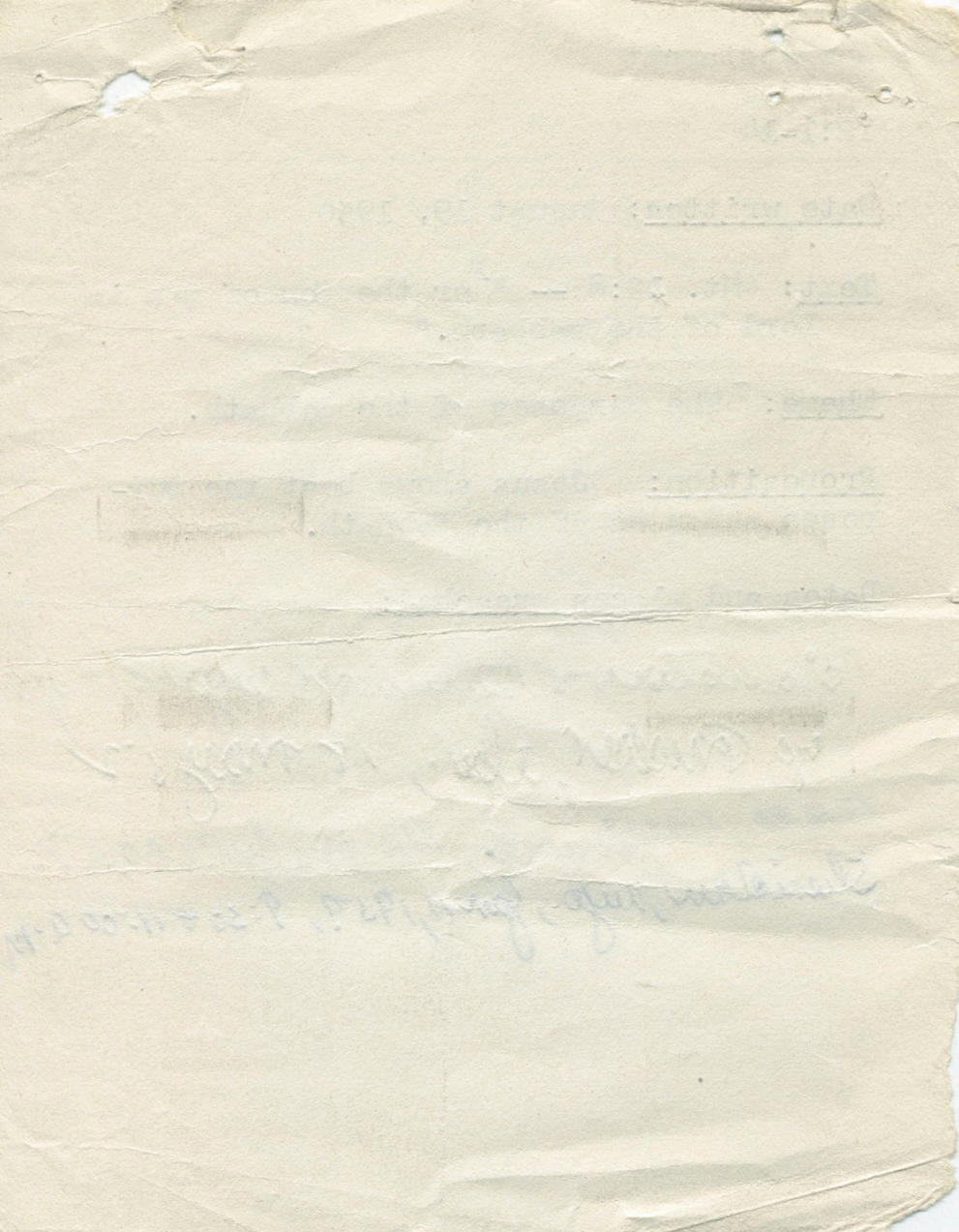
Text: Mt. 12:8 -- "For the Son of man is Lord of the sabbath."

Theme: The purposes of the Sabbath.

Proposition: Jesus shows best the purposes and uses of the Sabbath.

Dates and places preached:

Cranshaw & Kemmerer, Wyo. 8/20/50  
to Prickett, Ala., 18 May 52  
Greene, California, 11 a.m., June 20, 57.  
Sheridan, Wyo., Jan 11, 1959, 9:30 & 11:00 a.m.





### Introduction:

1. An interesting study is that of how the observance of the sabbath began. Actually, very little can be determined definitely about its earliest beginnings. There was some sort of observance of every seventh day even before Moses. In the Bible's first five books, known as the Pentateuch, attention is given the Sabbath, but in much of the rest of the Old Testament, as in Psalms, Proverbs, Isaiah, and other books, no mention is made of the sabbath. Where it is mentioned in the Old Testament, three distinct ideas or reasons for its observance are mentioned. They are (1) to copy or be in the image of God who after 6 days of creative effort took the 7th. day for rest; (2) to have a day of rest; and (3) for worship of God.

2. The first mention of the sabbath in the New Testament has Jesus going into the synagogue to worship on that day. Other references in the first four gospels deal primarily with Jesus' attitude toward the





sabbath as he ~~gave~~ them in answer to the Pharisees' accusations against him of sabbath-breaking. References to the day in the rest of the New Testament show the shift from the 7th. day of the week to the first, in honor of Jesus' resurrection on the first, and the more usual naming in the New Testament is "the Lord's Day."

3. As church or Sunday School members, or as persons interested in the Christian way of life, we are interested in knowing just what the Lord's Day, the one day in 7, should mean to us. We find it meaning and being used for varying things around us. "It's the only day we have," we hear or say, so it is used for picnicing, visiting, fishing, painting or papering, yard mowing, reading, letter writing, and many other uses, as well as for rest and worship. What is its purpose? How should this purpose affect us in daily living? The passage of Scripture which we are using today gives us as good a summary as can be







found anywhere, and it is authoritative for the christian or prospective christian because it is a summary by Jesus. However, this passage doesn't completely cover the teachings of Jesus about the sabbath, so we may refer to other portions of the record of his actual teachings or doings.

I. The sabbath is a day in which bodily need may be and should be met.

1. Once a group of strict formalistic Jews were being persecuted in Europe and were reduced to circumstances in which they had to exist by eating grass. On the sabbath they would not think of using their hands in work by pulling grass, and so took the muchmore laborious way of getting down on hands and knees to crop the grass with their teeth!

The objections which the Pharisees had to the disciples plucking grain, rubbing the husks off in their hands and eating it on the sabbath seemed as ridiculous to







Jesus as these grass-eating Jews seem to us. He overcame their objections by pointing to one of their heroes, David. Look at David, he told them. He and his followers once broke into the temple and ate the bread of the altar on a Sabbath. Specifically Jesus is saying that it is all right to work on the sabbath to satisfy hunger, providing that hunger can be satisfied in no other immediate way.

2. Jesus then turned to another area of human life, the need to show love and mercy, even on the sabbath -- or perhaps especially on the sabbath. He asked "what man of you, if he has one sheep and it falls into a pit on the sabbath, will not lay hold of it and lift it out? Of how much more value is a man than a sheep? So it is lawful to do good on the sabbath."

3. In illustration of this teaching Jesus almost immediately healed a man with a withered hand. Specifically he demonstrated that healing, even on the sabbath, is all







right.

4. In mk. 2:27 he summed it all up by saying "the sabbath was made for man, and not man for the sabbath." Satisfying hunger, doing good, healing, are all for man, positive acts for his good. However, these things can be done on other days too, and unless there is more to the sabbath than this, why observe it as a special day at all? Why not use it for sports, odd jobs, etc.? ~~Which~~ These things need to be done. That brings us to other reasons for a special one day in seven.

## II. The special purposes of the sabbath.

Since in ordinary usage we use the term "Sunday," instead of "sabbath," we will do so much of the time here.

1. Sunday as a day of rest is important. Persons who put in 7 days a week of continuous work, week after week, lose bodily and mental health and happiness. Persons who use Sunday for fatiguing sports and odd jobs find themselves tired at the







beginning of a new week's work. Human experience proves the need for rest, and a day off, one day of rest in seven, has proven the most workable plan. Although we have no specific incident of Jesus emphasizing the sabbath as a day of rest, generally he upheld Old Testament law. Also, Sunday as a day of rest is in keeping with his teachings that the sabbath is made for man. To use Sunday just any old way is to make it just as any old day and eventually to bring its abolition as a day off from work. Of course, some have to work that body need of themselves and others might be met, but most don't, and those who do can usually take turns with others, or at least take some day in the week for rest. Sunday as a day of rest is important. Rest, of course, as renewal of vigor, can be secured through change of activity, as well as by inactivity and repose. Thus we have picnics and other recreation on Sunday. But this aspect can quickly be abused so that fatigue, not rest, results.







2. Sunday can and should be used in the sense of Jesus for doing good. Individual acts of good can of course be done on other days too. Sunday offers the opportunity for people to get together for the planning and doing of good. The planning of missions, making contribution to worthy causes such as TB research, cancer and polio funds, orphanages, old age homes, hospitals, Bible distribution, Christian education funds, are all legitimate doing of good which can best be planned and done in groups and on Sunday, and best be done through the church. Certainly it is selfish to use Sunday purely for ones personal advantage or pleasure when it is the only day in which large groups of christians can gather together for purposes of good.

3. Both of the preceding special uses of Sunday are easily thought of as being for man. The third special use we would mention is that of worship. When Jesus said in the words of our text, "For the Son of man is lord of the sabbath," he identified







himself not only with man's physical needs and the meeting of them on the sabbath, but also with man's spiritual needs. ~~As~~ As lord of the sabbath he should receive special attention on that day, and that special attention we give in corporate or group worship. By worship we mean honor, respect, religious reverence and homage. By being religious we mean acting ~~and~~ and serving God. When we worship we show honor and respect and a determination to act for and to serve God. As christians we do this through the earthly revelation of God who is Christ. An important thing about worship is that in it we not only show gratitude, honor, respect, and a determination to serve, but in it we find help for ourselves. In worship, entered into with a true attitude of respect, honor, etc., we find comfort, release from tension, guidance and strength for the coming day. We find these from the only source from which they come, God through Christ. In corporate worship in church we find these things for ourselves, but also we help and are helped by others who are there. We are doing good.







So worship, though not thought of as such sometimes, actually is a process by which we, too, are helped. The sabbath is for man, through these special ways of observing it.

Conclusion:

The purpose of the sabbath ~~is~~ to provide a day for meeting bodily need, for doing good, for rest, ~~for~~ group doing of good, and for worship. It is a day which is most profitable if kept specifically for these uses, and not dissipated for our own selfish interests and pleasures. These are the uses of the sabbath which Jesus taught and practiced. Jesus shows best the purposes and uses of the sabbath. In letting it serve these purposes we find it serves us. It comes to mean so much that with Jesus, or rather of him, we come gratefully to say, "for the Son of man is lord of the sabbath." May we determine here and now to make proper use of Sunday from this day on.



