

## The Lord of the Sabbath (2)

Mark 2:26

Sunday, September 1, 2024 at The First Congregational Church of Marshalltown, Iowa

Mark 2:26 "...how he went into the house of God in the days of Abiathar the high priest, and ate the showbread, which is not lawful to eat except for the priests and also s gave some to those who were with him.

- **Introduction**

Last June we visited this passage in which Jesus showed that the keepers of the Law were more legalistic than the God who gave the Law in the first place. Today I'd like to take another look at the passage, this time with an emphasis on the symbolism of one part. Symbols convey powerful messages, plenty of which are right in this very Sanctuary. Take for example, the Communion Table, the two candles represent God the Father and God the Holy Spirit, identical yet separate. At the right hand of the candle representing God the Father is the Bible-the written Word representing the Living Word, Jesus Christ. It all serves to remind us of the presence of God, always near but present in a special way whenever two or more are gathered in the Name of Jesus Christ. Above is a cross, a horrid agent of murder here turned into a piece of art, symbolic that Christ can make something beautiful out of the worst, most miserable of lives, but more about the symbolism later.

- **Set the Stage**

To set the stage, Jesus and His disciples are walking through a wheat field during the Sabbath and some of them began to pull off heads of grain and eat them as they walked. Members of the religious leadership confronted them, claiming that they are doing what is not lawful on the Sabbath. I don't know if they just happened to meet in the field, or whether they were waiting and watching to find some means of accusation, but Jesus questions them on their Bible knowledge. He points out in 1 Samuel 21, David and his men are on the run from King Saul when they come across the priests of the Tabernacle. David and his men are hungry and ask for food. The only bread left was the Showbread, also known as the Bread of the Presence, which was replaced daily and reserved for the priests. It was this bread that the priests gave to David and his men. Jesus pointed out that this went against the command in Leviticus, that the bread was for the priests alone, yet God did not judge them for sharing the bread. Mercy takes precedence over ceremony. Jesus then made another claim to divinity when He said that He was Lord of the Sabbath and that the Sabbath was made for people, not the other way around. Apparently there were people teaching in that day that people were literally made to observe Sabbath, but Jesus made it clear that it was meant to be a day of rest and refreshing for people. Now let's look at some of the symbolism in this event and see what we learn.

- **Main Point: The Presence makes the Purpose Clear**

The word, "showbread" also known as the "Bread of the Presence," has a lot of meaning to it. In Romans 8:28 the word for "showbread" (Lit. the bread of setting forth) is translated "purpose", referring to the purposes of God, in which we are called in Christ Jesus, but the word also represents the Presence of God. The fact that both the Presence of God and the Purpose of God is united in the same symbolism matters. It is the Presence that makes the Purpose clear. If you want to have a renewed vision of your purpose, then you need a renewed experience with the Presence of God. They are united in symbolism because they are united in reality, you can't know the purpose without the Presence.

- **Application**

**Presence-2 Cor. 3:18 and the story of the toothless Russian prisoner**

This begs the question, if the Presence of God is so important, how can I tell if I am experiencing the Presence of God? Well, there will be a deepened sense of prayer, you will find it easy to engage in prayer and welcome the opportunity to do so. Scripture will become less obscure and more insightful. You will welcome the opportunity and will get wisdom and encouragement from reading it. But the Presence of God will be noticed more by other people as they look at you than by anything that you experience or feel. 2 Corinthians 3:18 reads "But we all, with unveiled face, beholding as in a mirror the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from glory to glory, just as by the Spirit of the Lord." There is a change in people as they get closer to God. I remember a story about a Christian in a Soviet labor camp with political as well as religious prisoners and one of them challenged the Christian. "Where is your Savior now?" He said. The near toothless prisoner replied, "I see him when I pray and when I dream." "Right," said the doubter, "and what did He look like?" The Christian, broken and nearly toothless by years of hard labor and abuse, said that when He saw him in his mind's eye, Jesus looked like this," and then he smiled. When he smiled the expression of joy and gladness was so overpowering that the skeptic backed down and apologized. The Presence of God in a person often is noticed by others before the person experiencing the Presence of God notices a difference.

- **Conclusion**

In conclusion, we find in this passage a wonderful declaration of the divinity of our Lord, but also His endorsement of mercy over the rigid rule of Law that embraces the letter but not the Spirit. The purpose of our lives, of what we do and significance thereof even in the every day, is brought to light by the Presence of God. Without the Presence we perceive nothing, with the Presence we perceive everything. All that is the symbolism of a little piece of bread.