

Matthew 12 vv.1-8

Mark 2 vv.23-28

Luke 6 vv.1-5

Are you pleased that there is a Sunday?

That is an awkward question, isn't it. Many dare not, or do not want to answer it. Why not? ... Oh, there are some of you (and I don't know how many), who have a secret dislike of Sunday. They are only too pleased when Sunday is over and gone. Oh no, you would not dare to put it quite like that, not at all, but the thought may all too often be in your heart. I have heard children saying to each other "Sundays are the most boring days of all".

But now I will ask you another question. Would God have instituted the day of rest to annoy you? Could that be the intention of the Sunday? No, of course not. ... God has given us the day of rest for our own good. Do you really believe that?

You know already that the Bible often refers to the Sabbath. Formerly in the land of Canaan the Sabbath fell upon a Saturday. Our day of rest is on a Sunday. But the purpose of the day remains the same.

God Himself instituted the day of rest. In six days God created the heaven and the earth, the sea and all that in them is and on the seventh day God rested; from all His work. Thenceforward man was to do the same. Have you read carefully what is written. We are permitted to rest. It is therefore a blessing, something for our benefit. That is why God has given us the day of rest. Then we may rest from our daily labours. If there were no day of rest, we would never have any respite, we would have to work the whole time. But God in His kindness has thus provided one day of rest each week. On that day the doors of God's house are opened. Then we can listen peacefully in Church to God's message which is proclaimed by His servants.

This day is God's day. God has instituted it for His worship.

Yet through sin we no longer want to obey the Lord. Just see what happens in our land. On Sunday we can and must go to Church. We then have ample time so to do.

Thousands of people do not want this, no they go cycling or walking. They use Sunday for their own pleasure.

Do you do that too? Do you also break the Lord's Day?

This part is certainly a little difficult, boys and girls, but it is written so that you will never forget that Sunday is a BLESSING for us. But, why have I written all this? ... Just listen.

One fine, quiet Sabbath day a few people are walking along a road in the land of Canaan, in Galilee. On the left and the right hand sides of the road the fields are full of corn. It is already ripening. Very soon the farmers will begin to mow, and gather it in.

Who are these people? ... They are the Lord Jesus with His disciples, together with some other Jews.

Soon some of the disciples pluck a few ears of corn and rub them between their hands, then blow away the chaff and eat up the moist grains. They had become hungry and that is why they took some of those wheat grains.

But just look! Among the people who are walking with Jesus, are also a few Pharisees. They notice what has happened and they show signs of disapproval. Jesus has also seen what His disciples did, but He says nothing about it, and just walks on. The Pharisees are upset about this. If Jesus is going to say nothing about it, they certainly will do so.

They say crossly "Behold, thy disciples do that which is not lawful to do upon the Sabbath day.

So the Lord Jesus is being told off by these Pharisees. They want Jesus to forbid His disciples to do this. But why? Was it then not allowed? Where is it forbidden in the laws which God gave to Israel in former days?

Boys and girls, it is nowhere forbidden, but the Pharisees had added to those laws a lot of their own commandments. They said "Plucking ears of corn like that is really harvesting, and rubbing them in the hands is really threshing". Of course you can see that this is nonsense.

Certainly a farmer must not do harvesting or threshing on the Lord's Day of course not! But what the disciples were doing was surely not harvesting or threshing? ...

The Lord Jesus answers calmly: "Have ye not read what David did when he was hungry?" And then he recalls to them part of David's history. When David once had to flee before Saul, he ate of the shewbread. The shewbread

was really for the priests. It was sanctified bread. Yet the high priest had then given the day-old bread to David as food for himself and his hungry men. Why? Was that allowed? ... Yes!, for it was a case of necessity. There was no other food and David and his men had to be helped. That is why the high priest gave the shewbread to David.

By this the Lord Jesus meant that under certain circumstances things could take place and be permitted which would not normally take place. And so it was here. His disciples were hungry. Probably they had not eaten all day and so they were quite in order to pluck a few ears of corn and eat the wheat grains. Furthermore this was far from "harvesting" and "threshing".

The Pharisees do not know what to answer and they remain silent. In their hearts however they are furious with the Lord Jesus, and they walk on disgruntled and with eyes full of hatred.

The Pharisees were to a large extent to blame that the Jews disliked the Sabbath, because with all their invented laws they made life on such a day almost unbearable. And that is not what the Sabbath is intended to be. The Lord Jesus had not come to do away with the Sabbath; He had not come to desecrate the Sabbath, but He took no notice of the inventions of the Scribes and Pharisees.

Matthew 12 vv.9-14.

Mark 3 vv.1-6.

Luke 6 vv.6-11.

The Lord Jesus made it His usual custom to go into the Synagogues on the Sabbath days and there to preach to the people. He had done this in Nazareth. He did it in Capernaum, yes, He did it each Sabbath day.

On one occasion Jesus has again gone to the Synagogue on the Sabbath. Many people have come together to hear Him, for the Prophet of Nazareth can preach well. The Jewish people love to hear Him.

There are also some Pharisees in the Synagogue. They are angry. Angry? ... Why? ... Oh, they cannot bear the fact that the people are so pleased to listen to the Lord Jesus. They are jealous. The Jewish people must not listen to Jesus, but only to them. Oh, if only they could stop it. They hoped that the Lord Jesus would only do something wrong. Then they could accuse Him. They they could warn the people about Him.

That is why they have come to the Synagogue. No, they ask not if God will bless the preaching to their hearts; they ask not if the Lord will call them by grace. They come with hatred in their hearts. Oh, if they only dared, they were certainly willing to murder the Lord Jesus.

How do you go to church or chapel on Sundays? With reluctance? Because father and mother say you must go? ... Or do you sometimes ask the Lord if He will bless to you what the minister says?

We can imagine those Pharisees sitting there with mocking, spying eyes, they look at the Lord Jesus.

All sorts of people are sitting in the Synagogue. Rich and poor, young and old.

But just look over there. Oh, there sits a poor disabled man. He has a withered hand. How difficult for him. He can hardly do any work, for he cannot make use of his right hand. *He had to do everything with one arm.*

The Pharisees also see this man sitting there and they think "Now we will just see if Jesus will dare to make this man better on the Sabbath day. Oh, if He dares to do that, then ... well then And all sorts of evil thoughts arise in their hearts.

Suddenly Jesus says to the afflicted man: "Rise up, and stand forth in the midst".

The man obeys, probably in great amazement. He does not realise why he has to do this!

It has become breathlessly quiet. The people look on inquisitively. What is going to happen? ...

Jesus then looks sternly at the angry Pharisees and asks: "Is it lawful to do good on the Sabbath days, or to do evil? To save life, or to kill?" He awaits their answer in silence. The Lord knows their hearts, and that is why He asks this question.

What answer would you give to that question? I can hear some of you saying: "Of course we may do good to someone on Sunday". But the Pharisees give no answer. They are silent.

Then Jesus asks them what they would do if a sheep were to fall into a ditch on a Sabbath day. Would they let it drown? No, surely not? They would lift the poor beast out wouldn't they? They would help that beast

and save it from drowning. He says: "How much then is a man better than a sheep? Wherefore it is lawful to do well on the Sabbath day".

But again, all is quiet. The Pharisees give no answer. They feel that Jesus is right, but they will not admit it. Oh no, they keep silence. They look angry and annoyed.

The Lord Jesus is grieved to see the wickedness of the Pharisees, but at the same time He becomes angry. He looks at the Pharisees with indignation as if to say: "You ought to be ashamed of yourselves!"

Here then, in the Synagogue Jesus is both grieved and angered to see the hardness of the Pharisees' hearts.

Suddenly, He says to the man, who is still standing there: "Stretch forth thy hand."

The man does it, and ... his withered hand is restored whole. Oh how happy that man was. From now on he can work with both hands.

But just look. The Pharisees are white with fury. They get up quickly and walk outside, trembling with rage. Why? Just because Jesus has healed the man. According to them that was not lawful on the Sabbath day. How foolish they were, weren't they?

Outside the Synagogue they stand talking together. What are they discussing? Just listen. Oh, now we know. They want to kill the Lord Jesus. They want to murder Him. Isn't it terrible. How is it possible?

If the Lord Jesus had done something evil, well then perhaps we could understand it, though murder can never be justified. But Jesus has done a good work. Yet they plot to murder Him. This does not happen, however, for the Lord Jesus withdraws Himself. He leaves the Synagogue.

Many people go with Him and the Pharisees watch Him go with hatred and fury in their eyes.