

The Pharisees went out and plotted how they might kill Jesus

- The plot has just thickened dramatically... Now there is a plan to kill Jesus. **Why?**

So far in His public ministry we have seen Jesus:

- Preach the Good News of the kingdom
- Heal the sick
- Calm the storm
- Cleanse the leper
- Free the demonized
- Make the paralyzed walk
- Raise a girl from the dead
- Open the eyes of the blind
 - **And also:**
 - Hang out with tax collectors and sinners
 - Claim that He is to be more loved than our own fathers and mothers
 - Claim that to lose one's life for His sake was to actually find one's life
 - Pronounced judgment on towns that did not recognize His identity and miracles
 - Claim that God the Father is only revealed through Him
 - **And:**
 - Invited all who were weary and burdened to come to Him—and that He alone could give them true rest

It was clear to anyone observing these things that there was **a new sheriff in town**

- And the old sheriffs didn't like it

The old sheriffs were the Pharisees

- They were the sheriffs (so to speak) because Israel was a predominantly religious culture, and they were the dominant religious leaders of the day
- They were the ones who were **most serious about religion and observing God's Law** (explain)
 - And they were responsible in part for telling Israel what it meant to observe God's Law
- They held a large amount of religious authority and sway—**but they were nothing like Jesus!**
 - **They did not like Jesus**
 - **1. Doubted His identity**
 - **2. Threatened by Him (crowds/influence/miraculous power/teaching/claims of deity)**
 - So they **plotted how they might kill Jesus**

The straw that broke the camel's back is here in the text:

- Jesus' view of the **Sabbath** and His claim to be the **Lord of the Sabbath**

The Sabbath during this time, was just about the biggest deal in Judaism

- Still is... (Stories from Israel: sun down, family, stores closed, etc)

Sabbath:

- **Exodus 20:8-11**, NIV
- The Sabbath was a good thing, given by God to His people for their good
- The idea was to **rest from your work and remember your God**

As Christians we do not necessarily observe the Sabbath in the same way

- In the NT we do not see the early Christians (all Jewish) observing the Sabbath (reversal)
 - Certain observances of the Law pointed to—were fulfilled in—Jesus (sacrifices, etc)
 - **Colossians 2:16-17**, NIV

- The NT tells us that the Sabbath also realizes its full meaning (its **reality**) in Jesus
 - Speaking of Jesus and His work for us: **Hebrews 4:9-11a**, NIV
 - **The idea of work(s) here is brought into works of the Law** (as way of relating to God)
 - We have been freed from that, now **we can rest in Jesus** (**He is our Sabbath rest**)
- Sabbath as spiritual practice...

But in NT times, the Sabbath was (as I said) kind of the biggest deal in practicing Judaism

- Sabbath set Israel apart from all other peoples (cnt. temple, sacrifices, circumcision, sacred texts)
- **Keeping the Sabbath holy** was a primary focus of the practice of Judaism
- All God ever said about it (instructionally) was:
Remember the Sabbath day by keeping it holy. Six days you shall labor and do all your work, but the seventh day is a sabbath to the LORD your God. On it you shall not do any work... (Exodus 20:8-10a)
- Fairly simple... but it got complicated quickly
 - Questions surrounding **"how do we keep the Sabbath holy?"**
 - What constitutes work? Can we prepare food? Can we carry items? Can we drive? Can we eat grain from the field? Can we do good to someone in need? **special sponge**

According to the **Pharisees**, what the disciples were doing (**verse 1**) constituted **work**—plucking wheat from its stem was **reaping**, rubbing the wheat heads between one's palms was **threshing**, and blowing away the chaff is **winnowing**¹

- What the disciples were doing was actually Lawful in general (**Deuteronomy 23:24-25**)
- The question was: **Was it lawful on the Sabbath?** (They thought not) (**verse 2**)

Now, Jesus is going to use the opportunity to address the fact that **the Pharisees had become misguided**

- They wanted to faithfully serve God (perhaps)
- But in their efforts to do so, they had **missed what mattered most to God**

Jesus uses two OT stories to reveal this to them:

- **Verses 3-4**
 - **1 Samuel 21:1-6** and **Leviticus 24:9** (Ahimelek the priest at Nob)
 - **So, it wasn't always just about strict adherence to the rules** (**greater needs to be met**)
- **Verse 5**
 - E.g. Priests were allowed/needed/okayed by God to work on the Sabbath (**Numbers 28:9-10**)
 - **So, it wasn't always just about being careful not to work** (**greater works to be done**)

Sabbath observance was **not ultimate**—there were at times **greater needs** to be met and **greater work** to be done

So, if it wasn't always just about strict adherence to the rules and careful refraining from work—what was it about? What was ultimate?

- **Verses 6-8**
- 3 things Jesus reveals here in answering that question:
 - 1. **Something greater than the temple is here**: Speaking of His Kingdom
 - 2. **The Son of Man is the Lord of the Sabbath**: Speaking of His deity
 - 3. **I desire mercy, not sacrifice**: Speaking of what mattered most (Cf. **verses 9-12**)
 - **Hosea 6:1-6**, NLT

Though they may have desired to honor God, the Pharisees had missed what the Sabbath was really about:

- If it was a day for honoring God then doing good was the right thing to do
- Meeting people's needs was a good Sabbath observance (**greater needs – greater works**)

Jesus reveals that they were **missing what matters most**: (1) Himself (2) His Kingdom (3) others

¹ John Walvoord & Roy B. Zuck, *The Bible Knowledge Commentary: New Testament Edition*, (Colorado Springs: Chariot Victor Publishing, 1983), 45.

How might we think about these things for our own lives? How do we not miss what matters most?

- 1. Be careful not to make our Christian spirituality about lesser things
 - Mere external observances (practiced in such a way that they miss the point)
 - **Romans 14:17-20a**, NASB

- 2. Be intentional about what matters most
 - **Greatest commandments** (love God and neighbor)
 - So, if Jesus is our Sabbath... and we should do good and show mercy on the Sabbath... to follow Jesus (to rest in Him—**Matt 11:28-30**) is to engage in good works
 - **Ephesians 2:8-10**, NASB

- 3. Don't allow anything to obscure the fact that Jesus is ultimate
 - Distractions of life (hurts, people, storms)
 - **Hebrews 4:9-11a** and **14-16**, NIV