

*<sup>23</sup>One Sabbath Jesus was going through the grain fields, and as his disciples walked along, they began to pick some heads of grain. <sup>24</sup>The Pharisees said to him, "Look, why are they doing what is unlawful on the Sabbath?" <sup>25</sup>He answered, "Have you never read what David did when he and his companions were hungry and in need? <sup>26</sup>In the days of Abiathar the high priest, he entered the house of God and ate the consecrated bread, which is lawful only for priests to eat. And he also gave some to his companions." <sup>27</sup>Then he said to them, "The Sabbath was made for man, not man for the Sabbath. <sup>28</sup>So the Son of Man is Lord even of the Sabbath."*

Brothers and Sisters in Christ Jesus our Lord,

From our children's devotion today, we have come to recognize that even fairy tale super heroes (such as the Hulk or Superman) have their limitations as far as power and strength are concerned. So also this is found to be true even in the cases of non fiction and real-life leaders, throughout history. Those who are rulers: whether it is a mayor, governor, president, prime minister, or a king and queen, their domain and power is confined. Their control has boundaries. As a family when we travel, we often times have to make a conscious effort to explain to our children the boundaries of the place we are currently driving through. They might ask us; "What state are we in now?" "What city are we in?" "Are we in the country or in the city now?" In other words they are asking us "What are the boundaries of the place we are now in?" Every place consists of limited control and specific boundaries. Sometimes we really mess up our kids when we get into different surroundings and say the old familiar saying "We aren't in Kansas anymore." Then they ask us "We were in Kansas?" Obviously they get very excited about where we're going and where we've been. It reminds them and reminds us that everywhere we are has boundaries.

We come to that understanding because God created us with boundaries. God created us with only 24 hours in a day. He made us with a certain capacity as far as our brains are concerned, and as far as our physical strength is concerned. God is above and beyond all of that. It is indeed perplexing and difficult for us to comprehend this truth as we sought last Sunday, on Trinity Sunday. Then we came to realize that there are many things about God that we will never understand. And we are content with that because he is God and we are not. Yet, today we ask the very specific question; "**What is the domain, what is the territory of our Savior's Lordship?**" Indeed, Lordship means he is the master and we are the servants.

- **1. First we come to realize his rule includes every day.** Our text makes that clear. It is everyday, even the Sabbath day. The closing words of today's text tells us Jesus is "Lord even of the Sabbath".
- **2. Secondly his rule touches every heart,** meaning every human being.

Our text introduces us to a group of individuals that confronted Jesus and challenged Jesus as far as his authority was concerned. Who does he think he is that he should let his Disciples harvest grain? They were actually taking a snack as they were walking through the field. The so-called religious leaders weren't even confronting them on the fact that they might be stealing grain. That is because, in that day and in that country, it had been understood that at the edges of the field there were certain rows for public domain. This

was for the benefit of those that were journeying and traveling through. They didn't have a drive-thru to pull up to and get some food. So the farmer's would leave sections of their field available to people to grab a snack. On this Sabbath day, the seventh day of the week the disciples took some for themselves without sinning indeed. Jesus would not walk along with his disciples and allow them to sin. Jesus is the one who established the law as we were reminded with Trinity Sunday that Jesus was there at the creation of the world, and Jesus was also there at the giving of the Ten Commandments. The Third Commandment is "Remember the Sabbath day my keeping it holy." It was the Pharisees who added onto God's law. They said God, you didn't do quite enough. You need to have some more details. In fact they had hundreds of rules and regulations that pertained to the seventh day, listing precisely what they could do and what they could not do: how many steps they could take, how much they could eat and how much work they could do.

Jesus reminds them that individuals were not born into this world so that they could live for the Sabbath, or to serve the Sabbath. But to remind them that God created the Sabbath to benefit people. We also come to realize that this fact is true of all of God's law. God intended that all of his laws exist in order to benefit us. When you think of rules and regulations you might have a handbook for driving your car, or rules and regulations for fishing. Those rules and regulations may confine us and limit what we can do but they bless us as well. They are a benefit to us. As a result, the roads are made safer by having drivers who know the rules of the road. And for those who fish among the lakes and rivers of Minnesota, we become aware of the take limit on fish along with other rules. As a result individuals are not depriving others of enjoying the fishing waters. The rules and regulations are for the good of all. God's moral law, the Ten Commandments are to benefit all people of all time. And it is for that reason that we have grown up learning The Ten Commandments. Even today, the spirit of the Third Commandment is still to be honored by us. Time must be set aside for rest and reflection upon God's grace and mercy. It does not need to be Saturday, for that was a rule of the Old Testament that was not repeated in the New Testament. In the current New Testament time, Jesus does not command us (after he has already completed the law) to keep the third commandment literally. He tells us this in Colossians chapter 2. There, we are directly told to no longer keep the Third Commandment with its rigid restrictions. "Therefore do not let anyone judge you by what you eat or drink or regard to a religious festival, a new moon celebration, or a Sabbath day, these are a shadow of the things that were to come, the reality however, is found in Christ, serving as a shadow." This is the only commandment that has that change or alteration. Its application for all believers still remains in effect. It still benefits us. Not only that we take time to get rest for our bodies, but also take time to serve our souls with the Word of God.

Now about the Pharisees who liked to add new laws. There are still individuals who like to do that, yes even today. Actually, we all have the inclination to do this. We want to add some more laws to God's moral law. We want to do that because it makes us feel good when we keep our own laws. When we set the bar and standard, and then if we meet that standard it makes us feel good. Especially if we see someone else not measuring up to that standard, it makes us feel better and holier than them. God forbids that, that is to be

Pharisaic. No one ever has to teach anyone of us how to be a Pharisee. We learn how to do that all by ourselves. As Pharisees we may establish laws and rules without any reference to God's word as the standard. As parents we may succumb to that when we tell our children what to do, and not to do, by simply telling them, "Because I said so." Or we tell them, "That's the way it was when I grew up." Those may be true facts but the reason the children are to obey us is because we parents are representatives of God. We are an extension of God's authority to remind them that as they obey us they are obeying God. We can further remind our children that they have the freedom to disobey only if they are told to do something contrary to God's word.

We do have to make this clear to our young people and to members of a congregation regarding the rules that we have established which are not in the word of God. There may be curfews at home. And as far as the church is concerned that could be the constitution. These leaders are there because they are representatives of God. God's leadership is chosen and appointed by him. Those parents of their children are the ones God selected. No other parents can step in, because God entrusted those children to those parents. No other set of parents can make that claim about someone else's children. With regard to the leadership of the church further scriptural reference can be made in 1 Corinthians chapter 14. "Everything should be done in a fitting and orderly way" (1 Corinthians 14:40). This is God's remedy to chaos. For this sake, we will have ceremonial law within this church. Examples abound. The very liturgy used this morning is such an example. God does not prescribe which hymns we should use, which English translations we should use, or which musical instruments should be used to accompany our hymn singing. These have the intent and purpose of feeding God's people, nurturing God's people and serving God's people in the spirit of love. This Christian love is the bottom line.

The law of love trumps the law of ceremony. This is clearly portrayed and communicated by Christ in our text. For Jesus makes it very clear that his disciples were not sinning. For man was not made for the Sabbath, but the Sabbath for man. And Jesus is even Lord of the Sabbath. Give that statement within our text some serious thought! Jesus tells us, "The Son of Man is Lord even of the Sabbath" (Mark 2:28). That single word "even" has special significance. As we already heard in our Old Testament reading this morning, the Sabbath was rightly considered the Lord's Day. While the Israelites were commanded to dedicate one tenth of their earnings as their minimum offering to God each year, so they were required to also dedicate one seventh of their time as an offering to God. One day, Saturday, was that day for rest and reflection upon God's mercy and grace. This day belonged to the Lord God. Indeed, every day is a day created by God. But the Sabbath day bore greater significance. And now Jesus boldly says, he is the Lord of that day. He is equal to the Lord God himself. He is the Lord our God.

Our Savior's domain is truly boundless and limitless. This profound truth and reality leads us to put our time into our Savior's hands.

- Our time with the Lord is more than just this 60-minute span in God's house.
- Our time with the Lord is indeed 24 hours a day.
- Our time with the Lord is an eternity because of his grace.

This is what the inspired Psalmist tells us in Psalm 121. “The LORD will keep you from all harm—he will watch over your life; the LORD will watch over your coming and going both now and forevermore.”

- Therefore, we have every assurance that all of our time is in his hands.
- We have that rest and assurance that our very lives are in his hands.
- We also know with full confidence that all territory, all domain, is in his hands.

Within his loving control and governance, “We know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose” (Romans 8:28).

In conclusion, we know and experience on a daily basis God’s perfect love. His love does not just show us how to love. It empowers us to love, knowing that the law of love still trumps the law of ceremony. His love still flows from our loving and forgiving Savior so that we still have a boundless supply of care, concern, compassion and salvation. We are fully and properly motivated to show this same kind of love in our lives. We even make sure that the rules that we have in our homes and in our church are guided by this rule and principle of love. What we say and do will fall into place with our goal:

- to lead people to Jesus Christ
- to not create any barrier to Christ
- to reach out to the lost
- to regain the straying.

It is not an overstatement to say that all we think, say and do is to be governed by an attitude of love. Our text holds out the bad example of the Pharisees, which we are not to copy. They seemingly exercised very little love and compassion in their treatment of Jesus’ disciples.

Jesus’ boundless supply of love is ours to share, even as we leave God’s house of worship today. We are privileged to share this love indiscriminately with all people. We can share with them a Lord who is not just the Lord of every day, but even of the Sabbath. Consider this example: In the grocery stores you may at times find tables of free samples. There may be a lady assigned the task of sharing these samples of some food or product with anyone and everyone that walks by. This kind of distribution of samples is not directed at a certain group or class of people, it is for all to try. It is for anyone who happens to be walking by. So also in much the same way we must share indiscriminately that same love and forgiveness that our God has spilled over into our laps. This gift of love is not ours to hold and to hoard for ourselves. It is ours to share. The wonderful thing about his love to us is that it does not and will not run out. While the ladies sharing food samples may run out of samples, we never run low on God’s boundless love and mercy.

Praise God today and always, as he remains boundless in his rule and reign. His Lordship governs every day and every person with the absolute and full assurance that in Christ we are loved, we are saved, we are delivered and we have a purpose. Our purpose is to share that love, to show that love, and not to create a man-made law that would in any way get in the way of that love. Our rules and conduct will then lead people and draw people to

an appreciation of his love, his forgiveness and his gift of life everlasting.

AMEN.