

“Have You Never Read...?”

- I. God gave us His Word to give rest to our souls.
- II. God gave us His Word to guide our lives.

Dear Christian friends,

For the **next few months** every Sunday you will see these GREEN paraments. Green is the color of life – of **growing**. Think of the **green GRASS** – **green leaves** – the EVERGREEN TREE.

THROUGH the gospel God took us who were **“dead in sin”** and **“made us alive in Christ.”** Now God wants us to GROW in our Christian faith. Peter wrote, **“Like newborn babes, crave pure spiritual milk, so that by it you may grow up in your salvation, now that you have tasted that the Lord is good.”** Paul told the Colossian Christians, **“So then, just as you have received Christ Jesus, continue to live in Him, rooted and built up in Him.”** There’s ONLY ONE WAY for us to grow in our faith – by faithfully hearing and diligently reading our Bibles. Instead of “DESPISING” God’s Word we are to “GLADLY hear and learn it.”

In **this incident** JESUS USED God’s Word to answer His critics. Jesus asked these Pharisees, **“Have you never read?”** That question will guide our study of these verses. “HAVE YOU NEVER READ?” God gave us His Word 1) to give rest to our **souls** and 2) to guide our **lives**.

I. God gave us His Word to give rest to our souls.

To understand these verses we must understand the OT Sabbath. This incident begins INNOCENTLY enough. **“One Sabbath Jesus was going through the grain fields.”** Today we’d say, “one SATURDAY” – but for our OT brothers and sisters in the faith it wasn’t Saturday but the **“Sabbath.”** Sabbath is the Hebrew word for **“rest.”** GOD ORDERED the Israelites, **“Observe 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, neither you, nor your son or daughter, nor your male or female servant, nor your ox, your donkey or any of your animals, nor any foreigner residing in your towns.”** God also ordered them, **“Even during the plowing season and the harvest you must rest”** on the seventh day. IN EFFECT God made sure His people HAD TIME to **worship** Him. With those **OT Sabbath laws** nobody could skip church with the excuses that they were “TOO BUSY” or “DIDN’T HAVE TIME.” **Every Sabbath** the whole country was to **basically SHUT DOWN** for the day.

Now “one Sabbath” as Jesus walked through a grain field **“His disciples began to pick some heads of grain”** – rub them in their hands and eat the kernels. That was NO BIG DEAL. They were **basically having a snack**. But that’s NOT HOW the Pharisees saw it. The disciples were harvesting and threshing grain – and that was OBVIOUSLY FORBIDDEN on the Sabbath. **“The Pharisees said to Jesus, ‘Look, why are they doing what is not lawful on the Sabbath day?’”**

That’s when Jesus asked, **“Have you never read what David did when he was in need and hungry (he and his companions)? He entered the house of God in the time of Abiathar the high priest and ate the Bread of the Presence, which is not lawful for anyone to eat, except for the priests.”** In the OT tabernacle – and later in the temple – there were 12 loaves of bread called **“the Bread of the Presence”** or the **“showbread.”** It was there as a reminder that GOD PROVIDES our **“daily bread”** – that we should TRUST GOD to do that – AND that we should thank God for taking **such good care** of us. Every Sabbath those 12 loaves were replaced with **fresh** ones. God ordered that ONLY PRIESTS could eat that **sacred bread**. Yet IT HAPPENED that **one day as David was fleeing for his life** from King Saul David came to the tabernacle. He had no food with him. He and **his men were hungry**. The **“high priest Abiathar”** gave David and his men some of those sacred loaves EVEN

THOUGH that **weren't priests**. Abiathar was OBEYING the law of love and the 5th Commandment – that we “HELP AND BE A FRIEND to our neighbor in every bodily need.” And it didn't bother God one bit! **With this OT example** Jesus was pointing out that these Pharisees had GONE WAY BEYOND what **God had said** about the Sabbath. They had missed the WHOLE POINT and PURPOSE of the Sabbath.

Jesus told them, “***The Sabbath was made for man, not man for the Sabbath.***” God didn't FIRST ESTABLISH the **Sabbath laws** and then create people to **obey** them. God FIRST CREATED MAN and then He gave man the **Sabbath** – not as a BURDEN but as a BLESSING. The Sabbath was meant to SERVE man **not** ENSLAVE him. The **Sabbath** was to provide people with TIME FOR BOTH physical and spiritual rest. We can get so busy and WRAPPED UP in **everyday things** – our jobs – sports – **cutting** the grass, etc. – that we lose sight of WHAT REALLY MATTERS – our spiritual needs – rest for our souls. God gave His OT people **the Sabbath** to especially provide for their SPIRITUAL needs.

This incident makes us look at OUR ATTITUDE toward reading our Bibles – coming to church – **Christian education**, etc. Do we look forward to being in God's Word **or** do we HAVE “BETTER THINGS” to do? Do we eagerly take Jesus up on His invitation? “***Come to Me all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest. Take My yoke upon you and learn from Me ...and you will find rest for your souls.***”

With His LAW – those 10 **unchanging** commandments – God confronts us with our sin and guilt. Those commandments crush and condemn us to hell – they strip us of all **pride** and **smugness**. But God doesn't then LEAVE US HANGING. God doesn't ask, “So, what are YOU GOING TO DO about your sins?” With His GOSPEL God says, “This is what I HAVE DONE about your sins. I gave you My own Son to be your Savior. **I give you all the credit** for Jesus' perfect love and obedience. I punished My innocent Son for all your sins. My Son shed His precious blood – He gave His body into death TO PAY for all your sins in full. **For My Son's sake** I have forgiven you all your sins and I promise you eternal life in heaven when you die.” What a RELIEF! What **REST for our souls** in that gospel of God's grace!

The PURPOSE of God's Word and **worship** – the purpose of Christian education at all levels – is to strengthen our faith in Jesus and to help us grow in the BLESSED ASSURANCE of God's love, His forgiveness, faithfulness, eternal life in heaven. When we die it WON'T MATTER **one bit** if our house is **clean** – the grass is cut – if we won a tournament or made big bucks. Faith in Jesus – faith CREATED and NOURISHED by God's Word – that faith alone brings us to heaven. We aren't doing GOD ANY FAVORS when **we come** to church or **read** our Bibles. God is BLESSING US. We come to church – we have our devotions at home – to be REFRESHED and RENEWED by God's grace - not to SCORE POINTS with God.

“Have you never read?” God gave us His Word to give rest to **our souls** AND...

II. To guide our lives.

Notice what Jesus is doing here. He's teaching us to FIND THE ANSWERS to our **spiritual needs** and **questions** IN HIS WORD. It's amazing – and SAD. People will read all kinds of books ABOUT Jesus – they will watch TV shows about the Bible, the devil, the end of the world, etc. – but they WON'T READ their Bibles or come to Bible class. God tells us to GO TO HIS WORD for **our answers** not the TV! Paul told Timothy, “***All Scripture is God breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting, and for training in righteousness, so that the man of God may be ...well equipped for every good work.***”

That's why we have our grade school, WLA and our **synod** schools. They're not private schools but PAROCHIAL schools. We want our children to BE TAUGHT **God's Word** – to learn God's “***mighty acts***” and forgiving love in Jesus. So EVERY DAY they have devotions – they have Bible history or

catechism. They “READ” God’s Word and learn it. THAT is the big difference between our schools and the public schools – the DAILY USE of **God’s Word** for our children to grow in their faith and be guided in their lives. Our **Christian schools** are not meant to SHIELD our children from the evil world out there but to PREPARE them for a Christian life in a **very unchristian** world.

Jesus also shows us that the OT is **not** some DRY, BORING HISTORY of the Jews who **lived thousands** of years ago. God’s Word has SO MUCH TO SAY to us **every day**. God gave us His Word to GUIDE our lives. Take David as an example, **just as Jesus** did here. David FACING the **giant Goliath** and finding his strength not in himself but IN HIS GOD. **Take David** committing adultery with Bathsheba and learn not to BE SO PROUD and say, “I’d **never do anything** like that!” **Take David** finally repenting of his sin and FINDING HIS REST in God’s wonderful words of forgiveness.

“HAVE YOU never read?” Sure these Pharisees had read about **David eating** the showbread. But what happened? They FORGOT about it. They didn’t apply it to **their own** lives. SOUND FAMILIAR? Does that happen to you? **I know** it happens to me! God **didn’t give** us His Word just to know some HISTORICAL FACTS but for us TO APPLY to our own hearts and lives - to GUIDE us in our **Christian** lives.

As we read God’s Word there ISN’T ONE AREA of our lives that God **doesn’t speak** to us about. God – our RELATIONSHIP with God – life and **death** – it’s ALL HERE in God’s Word. Marriage – FAMILY life – WORK – neighbors – MANAGING your **time** and **money** – raising your family – morals – **values** – PRIORITIES in life – it’s ALL HERE in God’s Word. How to deal with EMOTIONAL problems – health – financial – **marital** problems – the STRESS and **worries** of life – the GOOD and BAD days, etc. – it’s all here in God’s Word. **“HAVE YOU NEVER READ?”** Sure we have! And God grant that we CONTINUE to read His Word to find rest for our souls and to guide our lives. Amen.

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