

Lent devotions

READ:

Mark 2:18-27 ([click to open link](#))

REFLECT:

It was permissible for a traveller to eat grain from the edge of the field facing the road. But this was done on the Sabbath and the Sabbath was subject to hundreds of rules and regulations. Grabbing a little food on a day of rest being a problem with God seems ridiculous to us. But technically the disciples broke the rules and the Pharisees expected Jesus to do something about it. Instead, Jesus let the Pharisees know: People were not created to be the victim and the slave of Sabbath rules and regulations. The Sabbath exists to make people's lives better.

According to Jesus, religion is not about rules and regulations. If a person might become a Christian simply by abstaining from work and pleasure on the Sunday, and by attending church on that day, and saying prayers and reading the Bible, being a Christian would be a very simple thing. Whenever people forget that love, forgiveness, and service are the heart the Gospel and replace them by the performance of rules and regulations—religion fails. Christianity has, at all times, consisted far more in doing good, as opposed to refraining from doing bad things.

The first claim on any person is the claim of human need. If ever the performance of a person's religion stops them from helping someone who is in need, their religion is not religion at all. People matter far more than systems. People are far more important than rituals.

The best way to worship God is to help others. The best way to use sacred things is to use them for people. The Sabbath was never so sacred as when it was used to help those who needed help. The final arbiter in the use of all things is love and not law.

RESPOND:

Have you thought about Christianity as more about rules or relationships? If you have thought about Christianity primarily as a set of rules—write three words on a clean sheet of paper—"I am forgiven!" Take a moment and be grateful that you live under grace and not the law. Finally, knowing that Christianity is about love and not law: do something good for somebody today. One person. One thing. It could be big and complex. It could be simple and small. Whatever it is, do something good for somebody today.