

## **February 7**

**Scriptures:** Read Matthew 12

**Key Verse:** “For the Son of Man is Lord even of the Sabbath” (Matthew 12:8)

### **Overview**

This is the first of what are known as the Sabbath controversies in the gospels. On this occasion, Jesus’ disciples were picking some heads of grain and eating them as they walked through some grain fields on the Sabbath day. The Pharisees, who were always looking for a chance to accuse Jesus of unlawful behavior, pointed out that the disciples were doing what is unlawful on the Sabbath. Jesus responded by referring to an historical event when David entered the house of the Lord with his companions and ate the consecrated bread which was lawful only for the priests to do. He establishes the fact that the Sabbath is something which should serve man rather than man serving the Sabbath. He then informs these men that He is the Lord of the Sabbath, and offends them even more.

Later that day, Jesus happened to run into a man who had a paralyzed, shriveled hand. Again, the Pharisees were there looking for a reason to accuse Him, and so they asked Jesus if it was lawful to heal on the Sabbath. He replied, “If you have a sheep who falls into the pit on a Sabbath, won’t you take hold of it and lift it out? Well, a man is much more valuable than a sheep. Therefore, it is lawful to do good on the Sabbath.”

So, in terms of these Sabbath controversies, Jesus established two things. First of all, He is Lord of the Sabbath, which gives Him the authority to declare what is lawful and what is not; and secondly, what is lawful is to do what is good and, of course, doing good is something which can involve work. Jesus says, “if it’s good, do it.” Now, it was good to heal a man, so He healed him. “Stretch out your hand,” He said, and it was completely restored. The Pharisees couldn’t handle this, and they went out to plot how they might kill Jesus.

In terms of the twentieth century, it is good for us to remember that any institution we may have and hold dear is good only to the extent that it serves us. When it comes to the point where we’re serving it, then like the Pharisees, we may have made more of the institution than Jesus Himself would ever make of it.

### **Prayer**

Lord, may we seek to do good, even at the risk of going against the grain of societal norms and institutions. You are Lord of all!