

Then Jesus said to them, "The Son of Man is Lord of the Sabbath." **v5** A stunning conversation stopper. A theological time bomb. An escalation in the growing tension between Jesus and the Pharisees. A taste of the new wine Jesus came to bring. Jesus' words a claim of supremacy over a divine institution. The Sabbath. An institution literally set in stone by God. In the Ten Commandments given to Moses on Mount Sinai. Only God has supremacy over his law. Jesus claiming equality with God. Just as he did forgiving the sins of the paralysed man. As Dr Luke records in the previous chapter. Rest on the Sabbath a key part of God's command. *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, neither you, nor your son or daughter, nor your male or female servant, nor your animals, nor any foreigner residing in your towns.* **Exodus 20:8-10** Our focus today not on the broader biblical teaching on the Sabbath. But on Sabbath observance as the context for revelation of the character of the Messiah. Some background. The Pharisees defined work in their legal code to ensure complete observance. A list of 39 categories of work. Reaping, threshing, winnowing, preparing food on the list. The observance police. The Pharisees. Watching, watching, watching. Making sure no one worked on the Sabbath, according to their definition. Jesus a suspect law breaker. Under close watch. Let's listen to what unfolded. (read passage) Activities room in the Rectory. Well stocked with children's toys, books. Bean bags for teenagers. Jigsaws for David. My jigsaw table the most important furniture in the room. Putting pieces in their rightful place, completing the picture a source of satisfaction. Dr Luke and the other gospel writers display the skills of a master jigsaw junky. Putting pieces in appropriate places to complete the authentic picture of Jesus. Today's passage an example. Two different incidents on two different Sabbaths put together by Luke building the authentic picture of Jesus. Complementing the parts of the picture already in place. Luke joins two incidents and places them straight after the events surrounding the call of Levi. To highlight opposition to the Messiah. To reveal the priority of mercy. Jesus, the merciful Messiah. Already revealed as Jesus drives out demons, heals the sick, calls the unwanted, eats with tax collectors and sinners. Front and centre in this reading. *One Sabbath Jesus was going through the grainfields, and his disciples began to pick some heads of grain, rub them in their hands and eat the kernels.* **v1** Jesus allows multiple breaches of Sabbath

observance to meet human need. He breaches the legal code again. On another Sabbath, in the synagogue, by healing a man. *He looked around at them all, and then said to the man, "Stretch out your hand."* He did so, and his hand was completely restored. **v10** The Pharisees angry, seeking to accuse Jesus. They catch him out. In a way they believe smashes his credibility. The merciful Messiah offends the Pharisees. His response to their objections emphasizes mercy by referring to their Scriptures. Our Old Testament. To a famous incident where starving David on the run from King Saul, ate consecrated bread from the house of God. *Jesus answered them, "Have you never read what David did when he and his companions were hungry? He entered the house of God, and taking the consecrated bread, he ate what is lawful only for priests to eat. And he also gave some to his companions."* **v3-4** Reading the whole story in **1 Samuel 21**, the priest in the house of God willingly gave David the bread. An act of mercy. Mirroring the heart of the God he served. No such mercy from the Pharisees. Photographic memory of their man-made legal code. Forgot their Bible. In the second Sabbath incident, Jesus poses a devastating question exposing the Pharisees lack of mercy. *Then Jesus said to them, "I ask you, which is lawful on the Sabbath: to do good or to do evil, to save life or to destroy it?"* **v9** No middle ground here. Choice of doing good and saving lives. Even on the Sabbath. Or choosing evil and bringing destruction. The Pharisees chose evil because they did not do good. No mercy toward the man with the withered hand. Contemptuous of Jesus act of mercy. Mercy, the very heart of God. God's priority. Proclaiming the word of the Lord to the Israelites, the prophet Hosea says, *For I desire mercy, not sacrifice, and acknowledgment of God rather than burnt offerings.* **Hosea 6:6** God's mercy involves response to human need: material and spiritual. The latter about acknowledging God. Knowing him personally. Both displayed by the merciful Messiah. Levi, who we met in last week's passage, understood the breadth of God's mercy. In Matthew's gospel, which he wrote, what is written in **Luke 5:30-32** has Hosea's words included. *When the Pharisees saw this, they asked his disciples, "Why does your teacher eat with tax collectors and sinners?" On hearing this, Jesus said, "It is not the healthy who need a doctor, but the sick. But go and learn what this means: 'I desire mercy, not sacrifice. For I have not come to call the righteous, but sinners.'*" The Pharisees meticulously committed to religious observance. Blind to biblical mercy. Brothers and sisters, what about you? Would you describe yourself as merciful? Biblically merciful. Practically providing for the needs of others. Calling people to

repentance. **1 John 3:17** a confronting verse, *'If anyone has material possessions and sees a brother or sister in need but has no pity on them, how can the love of God be in that person?'* Are you a mercy person? Be clear, sisters and brothers, mercy and compassion in your life does not make you a Christian. But true faith produces a merciful heart. If you believe you are a person of true faith, show it by your mercy. Mercy is costly, inconvenient, raises tension, brings suffering. Mercy is not popular. There's no votes in mercy. Living mercy challenges the self-centredness of our world. Ask God for the strength and resolve to be a mercy person despite the cost. Following their Saviour, the merciful Messiah, Christians have been and are at the forefront in acts of mercy. Instrumental in social change. From the abolition of slavery, the fight against modern economic, physical and sexual slavery to rebuilding homes and lives lost in natural disasters. Brothers and sisters, what will be the acts of mercy flowing into our communities from Northern Beaches Anglicans? What is mercy going to look like in your life personally? Ask God to open your eyes to those around you who need the mercy of Jesus. Experienced through your acts of practical mercy and sharing of Jesus grace. Consider what charities you support. Are they committed to the fulness of God's mercy? If not, what is stopping you from changing your giving priorities to Christian agencies? To those actively committed to providing material care and sharing the gospel. That is the principle shaping our parish decisions about mission giving. giving priorities of the parish. As we allow the merciful Messiah to grow mercy in us, remember his words, *'Blessed are the merciful for they will be shown mercy.'*