

**CALVARY BIBLE-  
PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH  
(PANDAN)**

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**DHW Bible Class**

**LESSON 9**

**THE LIFE OF CHRIST**

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**INTRODUCTION**

The proper observance of the Lord's Day remains a confusing issue to some Christians. Students, housewives, nurses, managers, businessmen and retirees want to know in simple and clear terms how they can keep Sunday holy unto the Lord without carrying a burden of guilt and fear. Many Christians also shy away from serving God because they feel that they are not sufficiently qualified to serve. This lesson covers these two pertinent concerns and hopefully will help to clear any doubts.

**UNDERSTANDING**

***Plucking of Grain on the Sabbath.***

*Matthew 12:1-8; Mark 2:23-28;  
Luke 6:1-5.*

On a sabbath day, Jesus went through the fields of ripened corn with His disciples. The disciples were hungry so they plucked the corn, rubbed them with their hands and ate them as they went along. Some Pharisees saw what the disciples did and complained to Jesus -- that what His disciples had done constituted "work" and was against the Sabbath Law. In other words, the disciples had broken the Fourth Commandment. The Fourth Commandment given in the Pentateuch was brief and there were no exhaustive details about what the people could or could not do on the sabbath day.<sup>1</sup> Through the years, the Jewish leaders had made laws and rules to define "work" which should not be carried out on the sabbath. In the days of Jesus' time, they had formulated no less than thirty-nine specific activities which were unlawful for the people to do on the sabbath.<sup>2</sup> Maybe the Pharisees were zealous about obeying God's commandments but their interpretation and application of the law were flawed.

Jesus defended the actions of His disciples. He cited two examples from the Old Testament. The first example concerned David who was fleeing from King Saul. He came

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<sup>1</sup> Exodus 16:23-30, 20:8-11, 23:12, 31:12-17, 24:1-3; Leviticus 23:3; Numbers 15:32-36; Deuteronomy 5:12-15.

<sup>2</sup> Emil Schurer, *A History of the Jewish People*, Second Division, Vol. II pp.96-105. Refer for a fuller discussion of the subject.

to Nob and asked the priest for something to eat because he was hungry. There was nothing the priest could offer him except the twelve loaves of unleavened shewbread that were placed on the table in the Temple. These loaves were replaced with fresh ones every week. But the loaves of shewbread were hallowed bread and only the priests were allowed to eat them. However, the priest gave the bread to David and also his companions to eat. It was not wrong for the priest to give the hallowed bread to David, and neither was David guilty of breaking the law in eating the bread. David had an urgent need because he was hungry, and it was merciful on the part of the priest to offer him the bread. He too was blameless. This happened on the Sabbath day.

The second example concerned the priests who worked in the temple -- preparing the sacrifices and caring for the people on the Sabbath. The priests were not guilty of breaking the sabbath law as their work was necessary for the worship of God.

Jesus' third point of defence was a direct quotation from the prophet Hosea (6:6a): "*For I desired mercy, and not sacrifice.*" If they had known the meaning of Hosea's word, they would not have condemned His innocent disciples. God desires that mercy and kindness be shown to men rather than mechanical observance of men's traditions and rules. It is the spirit of the letter that is important.

Jesus' next point of argument was that "the sabbath was made

for man, and not man for the sabbath." God made man and He instituted the Sabbath for man to rest from his work and to refocus his perspective of life by serving and worshipping God. Works of mercy and necessity may be done to the praise and glory of God. God did not make man to be subjected to the Sabbath and suffer pain, sorrow and fear as a result.

Jesus' fifth and last point of defence was based on His authority—"the Son of man is Lord also of the sabbath." Jesus as *the* representative of man and *the* representative of God has power and authority not only over all creation, the fish in the sea, the fowl in the air and every living thing that moves upon the earth but *also over the* interpretation and proper application of the Fourth Commandment. The Pharisees and scribes who were the religious leaders of the people had erred in their understanding of God's original intent of the Sabbath for men and their hair-splitting mechanical legalism concerning the keeping of the Sabbath.

### ***Healing of Handicapped man on the Sabbath.***

*Luke 6:6-11; Matthew 12:9-14; Mark 3:1-6.*

The Pharisees were relentless in trying to trap Jesus so that they could charge Him for breaching God's commandments and get rid of Him. On another sabbath day, there was a man who had a withered (shrunk and disabled) right hand in the synagogue. The Jewish leaders asked Jesus whether it was lawful to heal on the sabbath

day. On the surface, their question seemed straightforward and legitimate but they harboured evil intentions. They did not ask the question in order to be enlightened but to find fault with Jesus. Jesus knew their evil thoughts and addressing the man with the withered hand directly, He commanded him to rise up in full view of the Jewish leaders. Then Jesus spoke to the Jewish leaders, "Is it lawful on the sabbath days to do good, or to do evil? To save life, or to destroy life?" They kept silent. Jesus proceeded to argue from their own rabbinical teaching and practice. The rabbis had taught that if a beast fell into a pit on the Sabbath, its owner should find out if it was injured. If not, he should provide food and facilities for sleeping and let it remain until the end of the Sabbath. If it was seriously injured, he ought to take it out and kill it.<sup>3</sup> Jesus then pointed out that surely a man was more precious than a sheep. Jesus was angry and grieved at the hardness of the hearts of the Jewish leaders. They had no desire to learn from Him. They had only hatred for Him and a passion to destroy Him. Then turning to the man, Jesus commanded him to stretch out his hand and he was healed completely. Jesus did not even touch the man because if He had done so, the Pharisees would have an occasion to accuse Him of working on the Sabbath. Upon seeing what happened, the Pharisees went off. They were filled with insane rage and

straight away they colluded with the Herodians to destroy Jesus. This was a strange coalition. The Pharisees were strict orthodox and nationalistic Jews. They despised the Herodians (seen as compromisers of the Jewish faith), who were probably the influential Jews, friends and supporters of Herod Antipas, the ruler of Galilee, a puppet of the Roman government. However, they were prepared to bury their differences and pursue their common objective to destroy Jesus.

We see once again that man cannot hide their secret evil thoughts from Jesus. Jesus knew their wicked thoughts because He is God. Jesus taught them the God-approved way of observing the Sabbath. He summarized all the arguments into one overriding principle of doing good or evil on the sabbath day. The phrase "to do good" means "to do holy or goodly things." There is nothing unlawful in engaging in godly activities on the sabbath day if that bring praise and glory to God.

***Widespread Fame of Jesus.***  
*Matthew 12:15-21; Mark 3:7-12.*

Jesus knew their secret plan to kill Him. He departed from that place and continued His preaching and teaching by the sea of Galilee. Jesus' fame spread far and wide. Great multitudes came from Galilee, Judaea, Jerusalem and from regions beyond Palestine, as far away as Tyre and Sidon. These people came because they had heard that Jesus had the power to heal all kinds of diseases and sickness and also to cast out

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<sup>3</sup> J.W. Shepard, *The Christ of the Gospels*, p. 165.

demons. The prophecy of Isaiah quoted by Matthew was fulfilled in Jesus. Isaiah prophesied (1) the coming of the Messiah as a Servant of God, (2) God's anointing of Him, (3) His ministry to the Jews as well as to the Gentiles, and (4) the trust the Gentiles had in Him.

***Naming of the Twelve.***  
*Luke 6:12-16; Matthew 10:2-4;*  
*Mark 3:13-19.*

Jesus went into the mountain to pray. He prayed the whole night. When it was day, He gathered His many disciples, and ordained twelve as "apostles" to carry on His mission (Jesus had been in the ministry for almost two years --considering the two Passovers that He attended). The word "disciples" is a general term for Jesus' followers. A disciple is one who learns from his master and follows him. An apostle is one who is sent with a message. He is commissioned to represent his sender.

Jesus gave a job description of the apostles. They should be with Him so that He could teach them and prepare them for the work ahead -- to preach the message of the kingdom of God, to heal sicknesses and to cast out demons. The power given to them to heal the sick and to cast out demons was to authenticate their calling as the genuine agent of Jesus.

The names of the Twelve Apostles were: Simon who was also named Peter and his brother Andrew, James the son of Zebedee and his brother John. Jesus surnamed them "Boanerges" which means "the sons of thunder" (probably they

were outspoken); Philip and Bartholomew, Matthew, the publican, and Thomas, James the son of Alphaeus, and Simon called Zealots, and Lebbaeus whose surname was Thaddaeus or Judas, the brother of James, and finally Judas Iscariot who betrayed Jesus. There are four lists of the Twelve Apostles given in the New Testament. (Matthew 10:2-4; Mark 3:14-19; Luke 6:13-16; and Acts 1:13). Each list is divided into three groups of four each. The names are the same in all the four groups. Peter and Andrew, James and John, are mentioned first in each of the four lists. Judas Iscariot with the caption that he betrayed Jesus is always mentioned last except in Acts list because he had committed suicide and was no more.

There are some interesting features about these twelve men. First they were ordinary men. There was nothing spectacular and great about them. Paul did mention in his first letter to the Corinthians (1:26-29) that "*for ye see your calling, brethren, how that not many wise men after the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble are called, but God hath chosen the foolish things of the world to confound the wise; and God hath chosen the weak things of the world to confound the things which are might; and base things of the world, and things which are despised, hath God chosen, yea, and things which are not, to bring to nought things that are: that no flesh should glory in His presence.*" These descriptions paint an interesting picture of the twelve apostles. Their willingness to

follow Jesus and forsake all else was the hallmark of their character, a common denominator.

Another observable feature is the fact that they were diversified in personality and occupation. Peter, Andrew, James and John were fishermen. PETER was bold, impulsive, resourceful, alert and sensitive. ANDREW was more of a personal worker. He first introduced his brother Peter to Jesus. He was the one who led the little lad who had five loaves and two fishes to Jesus to feed the five thousand. JAMES was a practical and energetic man, zealous for his Lord Jesus. He was a man who could be trusted. His brother JOHN was zealous like him. He was affectionate and sympathetic. He was the one who learned more deeply about Jesus' teachings and spirit. He wrote the gospel that bears His name. No wonder he was called the "disciple whom Jesus loved." PHILIP, whose name comes first in the second group, was a practical and prudent man. He was a slow learner in spiritual understanding. When Jesus wished to feed the five thousand, he made a calculation of the probable cost. BARTHOLOMEW who was also known as Nathanael was a man free from guile. He was a little sceptical although he studied the Scriptures. MATTHEW was a publican and he wrote the gospel which bears his name. Being a businessman and a tax collector, he was methodical, educated, and had the natural gift of organization. THOMAS doubted the resurrection of Jesus. He

would not believe unless he saw concrete evidence of Jesus' resurrection. So he is nicknamed "Doubting Thomas". He got to verify the irrefutable evidences and his experiences were recorded for our benefit. JAMES the son of Alphaeus (called James the Less) and his brother, Judas Thaddaeus also known as Lebbaeus, both had little written about them. SIMON the Zealot belonged to the religious militant party which was nationalistic and was openly opposed to the Roman government. He was a courageous man. JUDAS ISCARIOT, the one who betrayed Jesus, lacked spiritual discernment. His weaknesses were his greed and his ambition. After his betrayal, he hanged himself.

All these twelve apostles of Jesus provide an interesting and lively group of disciples. One can imagine how many lively and vigorous debates and discussions they would have among themselves. Did not Jesus admonish them not to lord over one another like the leaders of the world (Matthew 20:25-27)? These Twelve Apostles constitute the foundation of the church of which Jesus is the Cornerstone.

#### **SUMMARY**

The Pharisees and the scribes, who saw Jesus' disciples plucking corn, rubbing and eating them on the sabbath day, accused them for breaking the Sabbath. On another sabbath day, Jesus healed a man with a withered right hand. Jesus defended these actions. He

corrected the false ideas and traditions of the Pharisees and taught them that it was lawful to do good on the Sabbath. The Pharisees were not convinced. They were outraged and colluded with the Herodians to destroy Jesus. Jesus continued to preach, teach and heal by the sea of Galilee. His fame spread far and wide and the sick and demon-possessed were healed by Him. Before choosing the Twelve Apostles, Jesus went up to a mountain to pray the whole night through. The next morning He called His disciples together and ordained the Twelve as Apostles. He commissioned them to preach, and gave them the power to heal and to cast out demons.

#### **PRACTICAL VALUE**

Jesus' teaching on the observance of the Fourth Commandment instructs us on how to keep the Lord's Day holy. First, we must worship and serve God. Second, we should attend to works of mercy and works of necessity.

When people hold different views concerning the Christian faith, conflicts are expected. It is therefore essential to know the Word of Truth and understand the Scriptures so that we will not be swayed by false doctrines and man's traditions. In this way, we can be a channel of blessing to others that they might also see the light.

The fact that Jesus chose ordinary common people to be His special disciples to do the great work of saving souls is an encouragement to us. No one is

disqualified to serve Jesus on the basis of his personality, family background, social status or financial standing. The most important qualification is one's WILLINGNESS rather than one's ability. If we are willing to serve and follow Him, He will empower us with the necessary ability to do His work.

Christians should worship and serve God on the Lord's Day and make it a point never to miss it. This is pleasing to the Lord. Let us serve our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ with all our heart.  
AMEN

**DHW Bible Class**

**LESSON 9**

**THE LIFE OF CHRIST**

**DAILY READING & DISCUSSION QUESTIONS**

**Daily Readings**

**MONDAY:** Matthew 12:1-8; *Mark* 2:23-28; Luke 6:1-5.

**TUESDAY:** Luke 6:6-11; *Matthew* 12:9-14; Mark 3:1-6.

**WEDNESDAY:** Matthew 12:15-21; *Mark* 3:7-12.

**THURSDAY:** Luke 6:12-16; *Matthew* 10:2-4; Mark 3:13-19.

**FRIDAY:** Acts 1:15-26; 1 Corinthians 11:1; 2 Timothy 2:1-2; 4:1-2.

**Discussion Questions**

**1. What was the Pharisees' view about keeping the Sabbath? What was wrong with their view?**

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**2. How did Jesus defend His disciples against the accusation of the Jewish leaders?**

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**3. What does Jesus mean by His statement: "The sabbath was made for man, and not man for the sabbath?"**

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**4. What "evil" activities did Jesus strongly imply that the Jewish leaders were guilty of?**

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**5. Why was Jesus so angry and distressed with the Pharisees and scribes?**

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**6. What was the Pharisees' attitude towards Jesus after He healed the man with the withered right hand? What did they plan to do to Jesus?**

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**7. Many people, Jews and Gentiles as far as Tyre and Sidon came to Jesus. Why did they come?**

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**8. Is knowledge about Jesus and His teachings sufficient to save and change a person?**

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**9. What was the basis on which Jesus chose the Twelve? What is the significance of the title given to them?**

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**10. How were the Twelve Apostles different from one another?**

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**11. What are the chief characteristics of a disciple of Jesus?**

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**12. In what way did Jesus' teachings differ from the philosophy that the end justifies the means?**

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