



**Lent reflection for February 24, 2024**

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### **A reading from Mark 2:23-3:6**

One Sabbath he was going through the grain fields, and as they made their way his disciples began to pluck heads of grain. The Pharisees said to him, "Look, why are they doing what is not lawful on the Sabbath?" And he said to them, "Have you never read what David did when he and his companions were hungry and in need of food, how he entered the house of God when Abiathar was high priest and ate the bread of the Presence, which it is not lawful for any but the priests to eat, and he gave some to his companions?" Then he said to them, "The Sabbath was made for humankind and not humankind for the Sabbath, so the Son of Man is lord even of the Sabbath."

Again he entered the synagogue, and a man was there who had a withered hand. They were watching him to see whether he would cure him on the Sabbath, so that they might accuse him. And he said to the man who had the withered hand, "Come forward." Then he said to them, "Is it lawful to do good or to do harm on the Sabbath, to save life or to kill?" But they were silent. He looked around at them with anger; he was grieved at their hardness of heart and said to the man, "Stretch out your hand." He stretched it out, and his hand was restored. The Pharisees went out and immediately conspired with the Herodians against him, how to destroy him.

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### **Today's Reflection is by Lisa Melodia**

The word "Sabbath" means "to cease, end, or rest." The Sabbath has renewed meaning for me lately. I returned to work in January after staying at home this past year and a half with my two children. As my week and that of my family's has become more rigidly structured by work, school, and child care schedules, the power of Sunday has become more deeply felt in our lives. It is our time to cease activity, to rest our body and spirit at the end of the week. In reading this passage, I was grateful for how Jesus explains to us the purpose of the Sabbath and what our relationship to it should be. The Sabbath is God's gift to us. While reflecting on these words, I tried to imagine a world without a day for rest and the opportunity to connect with God and our faith and it

seemed completely unimaginable to me. Sabbath sustains us and as Jesus argues with the Pharisees, it was made for us, not the other way around.

When Jesus enters the synagogue and is confronted by the man with the withered hand, he poses the question to the Pharisees again of what the purpose of the Sabbath is. He gives them the opportunity to soften their hearts. Refusing to answer him, Jesus chooses love and restores the man. Here in the second part of this passage, I was profoundly struck by Jesus' compassion and humanity. It completely reaffirmed for me that all Jesus is constantly repeating to us with his stories and his actions is that love is supreme to all things. Love cannot be hemmed in by rules and institutions, customs or traditions. Love does not operate like that. It does not function like that. Love is so big, huge, it cannot be submissive to arbitrary laws and perfunctory actions. Even more remarkable, Jesus shows his compassion for the Pharisees and their failures. He grieved for them and "their hardness of heart." These, the very men who will conspire to destroy him.

As I enter this Lenten season, I'll be reflecting on how I show and give love. Do I give space in my life for acts of kindness and compassion that fall outside of my routines and schedules?



Lisa lives in Windsor Terrace with her husband, Loyal, and two children, Isaac & Frankie. She's been a part of Holy Apostles' community since 2019.