

**He answered, “Haven’t you read what David did when he and his companions were hungry? Or haven’t you read in the Law that on the Sabbath the priests in the temple desecrate the day and yet are innocent?”**

Dear friends in Christ,

You’re hungry. Really hungry. As you walk along the road, you see a field of grain. A handful of those heads of grain would be great to get you by for a little bit. You consider stopping to grab some...but it’s the Sabbath Day and you can’t do any work on the Lord’s Day. *“But I’m really hungry and I still have a ways to go,”* you think. *“But God says it’s wrong,”* is your next conflicting thought. *“Even if I’m hungry, I can’t break this law of God and sin.”*

If that’s how you imagine the inner struggle you would have had if you had walked along with the Jesus and his disciples that day back in 29 A.D. or so, then you have something in common with...the Pharisees! As much as we don’t like to admit it, we may see ourselves in those religious leaders to whom Jesus asked the simple question,

### **HAVEN’T YOU READ?**

- 1. God has answers for your questions**
- 2. We are without excuse if we haven’t read**
- 3. We have forgiveness for not paying attention to God**

The Pharisees really had no idea what they were talking about this time. Their exclamation **“Look! Your disciples are doing what is unlawful on the Sabbath.”** reveals their shock at what they saw. They were truly horrified that Jesus would let his disciples pick grain to eat on the Sabbath Day! They were so caught up in their way of thinking that they did not even know anymore what God actually said about the Sabbath Day. Now, don’t get me wrong, they were certainly pleased with this opportunity to confront Jesus and try to prove that he was not the pure Son of God that he said he was. They had seen him and heard him for two years already, so they knew him well, but they did not believe him to be the Messiah. Their statement was really a question. **“Look! Your disciples are doing what is unlawful on the Sabbath.”** The unspoken question was, *“Why are you letting them do that?!”* With their statement that was really a question, the Pharisees were making an accusation against Jesus.

Those men were concerned with the disciples’ breaking of the rabbinical laws regarding the Sabbath Day—the ones about how a believer should behave and what should not be done. In fact, they had 39 general laws just about how a person could break the Sabbath’s “no work” command! Those things are not listed in the Old Testament Scriptures. There’s no mention of this kind of list in Moses’ recording of God’s law, which those Pharisees knew backward and forward. And that was the problem! Jesus goes right to the heart of the matter with his question—**“HAVEN’T YOU READ?”** which he asks twice with two Scriptural examples.

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The Pharisees were without excuse. Jesus asked “HAVEN’T YOU READ?” Had they never read about David and his men? Had they never read about the priests serving in the temple? It’s kind of funny—Jesus asked, but he knew the answer. His question stuck it to them a bit! The word Jesus used for “read” meant “to read something” but in the sense of “to know, to recognize.” And it was the word used referring to public reading. Was there a double-sting, a double condemnation in his question? Certainly they had read the Scriptures and certainly *they* had read the Scriptures publicly! Certainly they knew those historical accounts and how God felt about them! They should have known that David and company were not in the wrong for eating the priests’ consecrated bread when they were beyond hungry! They should have known that the priests weren’t wrong for working on the Sabbath—God had, in fact, ordered them to do so, to offer sacrifices and to serve in the temple!

As Jesus used Scripture to interpret Scripture, it became obvious that there were times when it would be wrong *not* to violate the letter of some of the ceremonial laws. AND this law that his disciples supposedly broke *was not even in* God’s laws given to Moses! This picking of a few heads of grain to eat was among the laws penned by the rabbis—man-made rules for godly living. The disciples were wrong in the eyes of those Pharisees, but not wrong according to God! Those Pharisees were without excuse and Jesus’ question, “HAVEN’T YOU READ?” makes that clear.

The same is true for us—we also are without excuse if we have not read or have allowed man-made rules to overshadow God’s will as explained in the Bible. Perhaps we are guilty of doing religious reading but not exactly Bible reading. We certainly ask questions. We ask things like,

*“Does God really mean that Jesus’ body and blood are in the Lord’s Supper—like, for real?”*

*“The Bible doesn’t come right out and say that women cannot serve as pastors, does it?”*

*“God says love everyone, right? Then why don’t we accept all faiths and all lifestyles?”*

*“I don’t see why I shouldn’t support or participate in worship and religious work of churches that don’t believe the same things we do. They’re Christians and that’s all that’s important, right?”*

*“I know God says not to judge other people...doesn’t he?”*

If we are ignorant of what God says or actually accusing God with our not-so-innocent challenges, perhaps we’re no better than those condemned Pharisees! And perhaps this sheds some light on why that is so: about three months ago, a Barna research poll was taken of Americans. Listen to this—88% of Americans own a Bible; 80% say it is sacred. Here this morning with all the people who will be at Grace, perhaps we’re real

close to 100% owning a Bible and real close to 100% who consider the Bible to be sacred. We may even hit 100%. But there is one more stat—61% of Americans wish they read the Bible more. So...people have God's Word and realize it is holy, but well over half wish they read more. They're not happy with the amount of reading they do in God's Word. Is it any wonder most people really don't know what God's Word says? I wonder about us. Do we wish we read more also? Is that 61% true of us? Is it maybe even higher among us? Jesus asks you and me also—"HAVEN'T YOU READ?"

You're sitting there unable to explain things that God says. You question some things his Word teaches—and with a bit of attitude sometimes. You've adopted other rules and philosophies that are not in God's Word but you accept and apply them and want to impose them on others as gospel truth. You have difficulty making applications of God's will to your life. And Jesus says to you like he said to the Pharisees, "HAVEN'T YOU READ?"

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You and I cannot sit here and cheer Jesus on as his question condemns the religious leaders because his question condemns us too! The fact is, we haven't read well enough or often enough. We've had bad attitudes toward the Bible and asked our own questions with improper motives.

Today is a day to repent of those things—to admit that we haven't read in the way that pleases God. And if our hearts admit our faults and we rely on the sacrifice of the perfect Jesus, full and free forgiveness is ours. You notice how Jesus did perfectly what we don't. Where we sin regarding God's Word, Jesus perfectly knew it, perfectly allowed Scripture to interpret Scripture, and perfectly applied Scripture to this life-situation. THAT'S what makes him our Savior whose blood was worthy to pay for sin!

Those religious leaders, instead of listening to Jesus and repenting, went away from this question of Jesus and plotted how they might kill him (Matthew 12:14). Forgiveness was there for them too, but they rejected it as they rejected Jesus. I pray that you don't. Jesus asked a question so that they could realize their error and repent, so that they could come to a true understanding of God's will and how to apply it to life. He wants the same for you and me.

When it comes to reading God's Word and applying it, you have lots of opportunities to become wise as God wants you to be. Your pastors have mentioned them often, we've mentioned them recently, and I'll mention them again today because Jesus is asking you a specific question: "HAVEN'T YOU READ?"

There is no need to blame God, accuse God, to not know what he wants, because he has given you the answers. They're in a book of books right here. And since you have the wonderful, spirit-lifting news that you are forgiven totally for all your sins, including misuse and neglect of his Word, I would imagine that you want to do better, that you want to please God by becoming well-acquainted with him and his Word.

And so here is the familiar list of ways you, in love for Jesus' forgiveness and with a heart filled with thanksgiving to God, can do that:

Stop skipping church. You made it today; make it every Sunday. Why wouldn't you? If hearing and learning God's Word is important for you this is a great chance! You can go to Bible Class or Sunday School AND hear Bible readings and a sermon and solid hymns that teach Scripture—all in worship.

If you've lost your Bible—or you've never had one—ask for one. I'll give it to you so that 100% of us can have a Bible and 100% of us can consider it sacred and we can read it more.

You might consider putting your Bible out on the kitchen table or the living room table to remind you to read some every day, whether in the morning or evening or at lunchtime. We've done that in our house so that this summer we don't forget to read the Summer Gospel and Psalm reading program that Pastor Rieke put together. You can grab a copy of that over in the fellowship hall if you'd like.

Go to [www.wels.net](http://www.wels.net) and click on Spiritual Help. There you can sign up for a short email devotion to come to your inbox every single morning.

Pick up a Meditations devotion booklet at the door. Maybe you can read those brief devotions with the kids after dinner like we do.

God has lovingly provided us with all these ways and more so that we won't be faced with the question from Jesus —“HAVEN'T YOU READ?” But it's not a matter of trying to stay on Jesus' good side; it's something a repentant Christian does. In love for Jesus, we WANT to have him speak to us! And that only happens as we hear and read his Word.

May God bless us then as we start fresh in our reading of the Bible, because that reading leads to understanding, which is what we'll talk about next week as Jesus asks us another question. Amen.

**Now the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will keep your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus. Amen.**