

they plucked, as the comparison with David's conduct seems to imply, they would not go far until their hunger was satisfied. Lindsay understands Luke to mean that the grain overhung the narrow pathway, and the disciples required to open a passage for themselves. As they did so they plucked the grain. But there seems to have been quite a crowd along with Christ and his disciples. The road must have been something more than a footpath obliterated by luxuriant grain. **To pluck the ears of corn**—Luke tells us that they were hungry. This is implied in the comparison with David and his followers. To do this was permitted in the law (Deut. 23: 25). "So I have often seen my muleteers, as we passed along the wheat fields, pluck off the ears, rub them in their hands, and eat the grains, unroasted, just as the apostles are said to have done." (The Land and the Book.)

**24. The pharisees**—They were very particular about trifles, and cared more about the observance of their own rigid rules than the cultivation of a kindly, charitable and truly religious spirit (Matt. 23: 23). **That which is not lawful**—The "traditions of the elders" had decided that to pluck grain and to separate the chaff by rubbing it in the hand, was equivalent to reaping and threshing, and these were plainly unlawful on the day of rest. One or two other instances of this overstraining of the law may be given: "In walking outside of a walled town not even a handkerchief could be carried in the pocket, for that would be a burden. Shoes worn must be without nails, since these are not necessary, and would require some additional exertion. No flower can be plucked or fruit picked"—with many others too puerile to merit our notice. The pharisees thought it was better for the disciples to remain hungry for a few hours than to violate a rabbinical precept.

**25.**—See 1 Sam. 21: 6. Christ lays the stress of his argument upon the hunger which compelled David to take the shew-bread. "All laws of positive institution, deriving their obligation solely from the fact that they are commanded, and not from their own essential moral character, must be accommodated to circumstances from their very nature, and must yield to the necessity of obeying higher laws." (Lindsay.) Here the higher law is that of self-preservation.

**26. The house of God**—the tabernacle at Nob. **Abiathar**—The difficulty here is that Ahimelech, the father of Abiathar, was the person who gave David the shew-bread. No explanation is entirely satisfactory, but the most reasonable seems to be that Abiathar was associated with his father, as afterwards with Zadok, and as high priest in the reign of David, was a more famous man than he, so the period is marked by his name. The old Persian version of this gospel has "Ahimelech." (Lindsay.) **The shew-bread**—This was twelve loaves of unleavened bread which stood on a table in the outer apartment, or Holy place. The name literally means "Bread of the Pres-

ence," because it was placed before the Lord as the emblem of all that sustains life, and a token of the covenant between God and his people. See Lev. 24: 8, and compare John 6: 32-35, 48-51. It was renewed every Sabbath day, and the loaves removed were to be eaten by the priests only, and in the Holy place. The reply of Christ is substantially this: "There are occasions on which it is not wrong to do work on the Sabbath day. My disciples were hungry and they are right to do whatever is necessary to satisfy their hunger. David ate the shew-bread, when no other could be procured, because he and his men were famished, and the high priest himself gave it to him." To get this bread David told a lie, which our Lord of course does not commend. The point that he makes is, the strictest Pharisee would not venture to condemn either David or the high priest under the circumstances. If hunger justifies them, it justifies my disciples. Matthew (12: 5) tells us that Jesus pointed out also that the priests in the temple did the work necessary for sacrifices, such as killing and preparing the victims, etc., and were blameless, and added, "But I say unto you that in this place is one greater than the temple." The disciples were hungry in the service of the Lord of the temple. He does not shrink from claiming the deference due to his Messiahship. And further, he shews that the Pharisees overlooked a higher law than that of the Sabbath, namely, "I will have mercy and not sacrifice" (Hos. 6: 6). He quoted this on another occasion when their unsympathetic censoriousness condemned his associating with publicans and sinners (Matt. 9: 13). "The pharisees saw nothing in the law but a burdensome mass of precepts, all to be interpreted and carried out in an outward, literal and perfunctory way" (Dwight), whereas its whole purpose was to lift the burdens from the hearts of men and fill them with the mercy and love which comes from fellowship with God. "What God longs for on the part of men is not the outward observance, the sacrifice in the letter but the inward outpouring of love—that which the sacrifice symbolized, the giving up of self in the self-devotion of love. This must underlie every outward sacrifice and service to give it value; and when the question arises between the form and the spirit, then the form must yield to the life, as the meaner to the more precious." (Trench.) What is forbidden and what is required in the fourth commandment?

**27. The Sabbath was made for man**—"That is: man was not created for the purpose of honoring the Sabbath; but as soon as created, the Sabbath was made to promote the best welfare of man, and, therefore, to his best welfare it must ever be held subordinate." (Stone.) God instituted the Sabbath that man might have rest to his toiling body and careworn mind. That he might have leisure to draw near to Him in worship and refresh his spiritual nature. That he might, at least one day in seven, try to do good and get good. The Sabbath was meant to be man's servant,