

# Matthew 12:1

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

At that time Jesus went on the sabbath day through the corn; and his disciples were an hungred, and began to pluck the ears of corn, and to eat.

## Analysis

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Conflict arises on Sabbath: 'At that time Jesus went on the sabbath day through the corn; and his disciples were an hungred, and began to pluck the ears of corn, and to eat' (εν εκεινω τω καιρω επορευθη ο Ιησους τοις σαββασιν δια των σποριμων οι δε μαθηται αυτου επεινασαν και ηρξαντο τιλλειν σταχυας και εσθιειν). 'Sabbath' (σαββασιν) was day of rest (Exodus 20:8-11). 'Corn' (σποριμων) is grain fields. Deuteronomy 23:25 permitted plucking grain from others' fields by hand. The disciples weren't stealing but exercising legitimate provision for hunger. Pharisees objected not to taking grain but to 'work' on Sabbath. They considered plucking and rubbing grain as harvesting and threshing—Sabbath violations. This conflict reveals legalism's corruption: prioritizing tradition over mercy, external compliance over human need.

## Historical Context

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Pharisaic tradition (Mishnah) identified thirty-nine categories of Sabbath work, including reaping and threshing. Plucking grain fell under reaping; rubbing heads to remove chaff constituted threshing. These traditions transformed Sabbath from blessing to burden. Jesus consistently clashed with Pharisaic Sabbath interpretation (healing on Sabbath, allowing disciples' actions). He insisted Sabbath served humanity, not vice versa (Mark 2:27). Early church's shift from Saturday Sabbath to Sunday worship reflected Jesus' Sabbath reinterpretation and resurrection on first day.

## Related Passages

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**Revelation 20:12** — Judgment according to deeds

**Romans 2:1** — Judging others

## Study Questions

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1. How does legalism transform God's blessings into burdens?
2. What is the proper relationship between Sabbath rest and human need?
3. How can we avoid pharisaic tendencies in contemporary rule-keeping?

## Interlinear Text

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Ἐν ἐκείνῳ τῷ καιρῷ ἐπορεύθη ὁ Ἰησοῦς τοῖς  
**At** **that** G3588 **time** **went** G3588 **Jesus** G3588  
G1722 G1565 G2540 G4198 G2424

σάββασιν διὰ τῶν σπορίμων· οἱ δὲ μαθηταὶ  
**on the sabbath day** **through** G3588 **the corn** G3588 **and** **disciples**  
G4521 G1223 G4702 G1161 G3101

αὐτοῦ ἐπείνασαν καὶ ἤρξαντο τίλλειν στάχυν καὶ  
**his** **were an hungred** **and** **began** **to pluck** **the ears of corn** **and**  
G846 G3983 G2532 G756 G5089 G4719 G2532

ἐσθίειν  
**to eat**  
G2068

## Additional Cross-References

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**Deuteronomy 23:25** (Parallel theme): When thou comest into the standing corn of thy neighbour, then thou mayest pluck the ears with thine hand; but thou shalt not move a sickle unto thy neighbour's standing corn.

