

GOSPEL PEARLS

Prayers and renunciations

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At that time Jesus went through the grainfields on the Sabbath. His disciples were hungry, and they began to pluck heads of grain and to eat. But when the Pharisees saw it, they said to him, "Look, your disciples are doing what is not lawful to do on the Sabbath." He said to them, "Have you not read what David did when he was hungry, and those who were with him: how he entered the house of God and ate the bread of the Presence, which it was not lawful for him to eat nor for those who were with him, but only for the priests? Or have you not read in the Law how on the Sabbath the priests in the temple profane the Sabbath and are

guiltless? I tell you, something greater than the temple is here. And if you had known what this means, 'I desire mercy, and not sacrifice,' you would not have condemned the guiltless. For the Son of Man is lord of the Sabbath." (Matthew 12: 1-8)

Prayers and renunciations have no meaning in themselves. They are not used to acquire merit in the eyes of God. Prayers and fasting can, however, increase our love of God and search for spiritual joy. In our daily prayers, may we ask for the strength to follow Jesus, to carry our daily cross and deny ourselves, our desires, our instincts.