

THE BOOK OF MATTHEW

JESUS IS KING



God of Mercy

Text: Matthew 12:1-14

There are two situations that arise in this passage. One confrontation happens in a grain field and one in the synagogue.

v1 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.

Jesus didn't stop the disciples who were hungry and began to pick corn and eat the food on the sabbath.

What is the sabbath?

The Sabbath is the seventh day of the week, on which the children of Israel were to rest, in remembrance that God created the universe in six days and then "rested" on the seventh day.

Exodus 20:8-11

8 Remember the sabbath day, to keep it holy.

9 Six days shalt thou labour, and do all thy work:

10 But the seventh day is the sabbath of the Lord thy God: in it thou shalt not do any work, thou, nor thy son, nor thy daughter, thy manservant, nor thy maidservant, nor thy cattle, nor thy stranger that is within thy gates:

11 For in six days the Lord made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that in them is, and rested the seventh day: wherefore the Lord blessed the sabbath day, and hallowed it.

V2 But when the Pharisees saw it, they said unto him, Behold, thy disciples do that which is not lawful to do upon the sabbath day.

Pharisees are at it again. The Pharisees constantly attacked and confronted Jesus on supposed missteps by Jesus and His followers. Here is a prime example of their love for contention and regulations.

The Pharisees would have accused the disciples of Jesus with no fewer than 4 major violations/crimes committed on the sabbath.

- Reaping - cutting the stalk
- Threshing - pulling the grain
- Winnowing - separating the wheat seed
- Preparing Food - rubbing it in your hand and popping it in your mouth

Jesus never violated God's command to observe the Sabbath or approved of His disciples violating God's Sabbath command, but He often broke man's legalistic additions to that law and He sometimes seems to have deliberately broken those human additions.

The law of Israel allowed people traveling through an area to glean enough grain for a small meal from fields in the area.

Deuteronomy 23:25

"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."

V3 But he said unto them, Have ye not read what David did, when he was an hungred, and they that were with him;

Jesus presents 4 keys for His defense.

1. David and his companions ate the shewbread which was only for the priests

1. Jesus is essentially saying if you are getting ready to condemn me over this then you had better be ready to condemn King David - which they never would have done!
2. A ritual rule was violated and there was no consequences. Why was it overlooked? They ate consecrated bread with no issues. Jesus brought attention to this. David didn't come to the priests disrespectfully and pridefully demanding the holy bread be given to them. This wasn't a power play like Uzziah and Solomon did. His troop was starving. Human need trumps rules and regulations. Jesus is showing that the boundaries and rules God has instituted were never meant to tread over the top of people. God cares about people. Ceremonial rules and rituals were secondary to human need.

2. Priests profane the sabbath and yet are blameless

1. The priests themselves break the Sabbath all the time. They worked and yet were innocent.
2. The Temple ritual always involved work – the kindling of fires, the slaughter and the preparation of animals, the lifting of them on to the altar, and a host of other things. This work was actually doubled on the Sabbath, for on the Sabbath the offerings were doubled (Numbers 28:9).
3. The Priests processed the sacrifices 7 days a week. Why were they given a free pass? Because people were coming to God. **Do you think there is a day when people can't come to God?** God doesn't send the message that "Hey I am here for you 6 days a week but come the 7th day I'm gone...I am checked out". God cares way too much for people. He wants you to come. He is never unreachable. Mercy wins out over regulation and ritual.

4. That is why Jesus says God has always desired mercy and not sacrifice.

3. **Jesus is greater than the Temple.** Since Jesus is greater than the temple, we should regard Him as so.
1. The temple was admired with love and wonder; we should admire Jesus even more.
 2. The temple was joyfully visited; we should come to Jesus with even more joy.
 3. The temple was honored as a holy place; we should honor Jesus even more so.
 4. The temple was a place of sacrifice and service; we should do even more for Jesus.
 5. The temple was a place for worship; we should worship Jesus even more.

4. **Jesus is Lord over the Sabbath.** JESUS is the fulfillment of what the Sabbath rests pointed to. There is no way to actually live out the sabbath with the connected ceremonial laws today. It was simply a picture (as were many rituals and items in the Old Testament) that pointed to the coming Messiah.

v9 And when he was departed thence, he went into their synagogue:

v10 And, behold, there was a man which had his hand withered. And they asked him, saying, Is it lawful to heal on the sabbath days? that they might accuse him.

Jesus masterfully answers the critical Pharisee.

v11 And he said unto them, What man shall there be among you, that shall have one sheep, and if it fall into a pit on the sabbath day, will he not lay hold on it, and lift it out?

v12 How much then is a man better than a sheep? Wherefore it is lawful to do well on the sabbath days.

Instead of flat out saying “Yes” to the Pharisees’ question He illustrates His answer.

Then Jesus compassionately healed the man.

v13 Then saith he to the man, Stretch forth thine hand. And he stretched it forth; and it was restored whole, like as the other.

Consider how infatuated with rules the Pharisees were. The withered hand was literally lifeless, perhaps paralyzed; the man was not in imminent danger of death, which alone justified treatment on the sabbath according to Mishnah Yoma 8:6.

Talmud (the Jewish Bible) Mishna Yoma 8:6

If a person becomes medically endangered from fasting, they may feed him even non-kosher food until his eyes clear up. If a person was bitten by a mad dog, they may not feed him the lobe of the dog’s liver (a popular but unproven remedy), though Rabbi Masya ben Charash permits it. Rabbi Masya ben Charash also said that if someone has a sore throat on Shabbos, medicine may be put in his mouth. This is because a question of danger to human life supersedes Shabbot laws.

He could just as well have been healed the next day was the Pharisee’s thinking. Instead of waiting, Jesus heals the man’s hand on the spot.

v14 Then the Pharisees went out, and held a council against him, how they might destroy him.

The Pharisee should have responded with praise, worship and repentance instead he responds in anger, bitterness and deviousness.

Conclusion:

God is a God of mercy!

The pharisees were just exposed big time. It doesn't get much clearer than this. The darkened legalistic mind does not see people only regulations and rules.

Pharisees were blinded by legalism.

The pharisees didn't see hungry disciples they saw violations. They didn't see a miracle of healing and a restored human being they saw violations. They had a darkened mind corrupted by legalism.

Mercy is not receiving what you deserve. God's mercy is motivated by His unfailing love. God delights to show mercy. God is looking for opportunities to show mercy. That is the character of our God. God delights in it. I don't always...HE does! What an amazing God we serve.

Micah 7:18

Who is a God like unto thee, that pardoneth iniquity, and passeth by the transgression of the remnant of his heritage? he retaineth not his anger for ever, because he delighteth in mercy.

God delights to show mercy and so should we.

Micah 6:8

He hath shewed thee, O man, what is good; and what doth the Lord require of thee, but to do justly, and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God?

It is hard to receive mercy until you are the recipient of it. We are the recipient of God's mercy.

Titus 3:4-5

4 But after that the kindness and love of God our Saviour toward man appeared,

*5 Not by works of righteousness which we have done, **but according to his mercy** he saved us, by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost;*

I love this passage because it reminds me that I am not a christian due to the good works that I have done nor will do. It is strictly by God's mercy that I am saved. The only thing I brought into my relationship with Jesus Christ was the sin that I needed to be forgiven of.

We should be blown away by that mercy but also givers of this mercy.

Colossians 3:13

Forbearing one another, and forgiving one another, if any man have a quarrel against any: even as Christ forgave you, so also do ye.

How are you doing? Paraphrasing C.S. Lewis "forgiveness is a beautiful concept until we are the ones who have to do the forgiving." Mercy is a beautiful concept until we are the ones who need to be merciful.

We should forgive each other and love one another. If God's church is going to grow and expand and this community is to come to Christ we will need to be a people full of mercy as we have received it.

1. What is the sabbath? Why don't we worship corporately on the sabbath today?
2. Can we legitimately follow the sabbath laws today? Punishment for not observing the Sabbath was severe. Are we commanded to observe it today?
3. What is a good definition of legalism? How were the Pharisees legalist?
4. What does the statement "God desires mercy and not sacrifice" mean?
5. What does it mean that the Son of man (Jesus) is Lord even of the sabbath day?
6. God delights to show mercy. How have you seen this in your life?