

## Matthew 12:1-21

Jesus is Lord of the Sabbath

### Section 1: 12:1-8

*At that time Jesus passed through the grain fields on the Sabbath. His disciples were hungry and began to pick and eat some heads of grain. <sup>2</sup>When the Pharisees saw this, they said to him, “See, your disciples are doing what is not lawful to do on the Sabbath.” <sup>3</sup>He said to them, “Haven’t you read what David did when he and those who were with him were hungry: <sup>4</sup>how he entered the house of God, and they ate the bread of the Presence—which is not lawful for him or for those with him to eat, but only for the priests? <sup>5</sup>Or haven’t you read in the law that on Sabbath days the priests in the temple violate the Sabbath and are innocent? <sup>6</sup>I tell you that something greater than the temple is here. <sup>7</sup>If you had known what this means, **I desire mercy and not sacrifice**, you would not have condemned the innocent. <sup>8</sup>**For the Son of Man is Lord of the Sabbath.**” (CSB)*

Jesus is always on a mission. He just doesn’t go anywhere at random. He travels with purpose. In chapter 12 we find Him traveling through a grain field on the Sabbath. The Pharisees had people everywhere waiting and watching for people to violate the sabbath. They were like a religious police force. And it’s becoming more obvious that Jesus is getting more attention than the average Israelite. We see this because the Pharisees address Jesus about the Sabbath day violation and not the disciples who are the ones that actually violated “their rules”.

What was the violation? Working on the Sabbath. Of course, you are allowed to eat on the Sabbath but you were not permitted to work in the fields. Yet the specific action taken by the disciples is condemned in the “oral law” not in the written law. The Pharisees had been adding laws to the Torah for decades. Jesus knows this and uses this opportunity to point them to the truth.

Jesus uses the story of David as a way to say that He is greater than David and the Temple. David was considered the greatest king in the history of Israel and the Temple was the place where God dwelled. For Jesus to make such a claim would be blasphemy. But remember, the book of Matthew was written with the Jewish people as the primary audience. Thus, Matthew is continually making the case that Jesus is the Messiah and the Son of God. Which climaxes with verse 8: ***For the Son of Man is Lord of the Sabbath.*** (CSB)

In the midst of teaching the Pharisees, Jesus asks them to study and research Hosea 6:6, ***I desire mercy and not sacrifice***. Chapter 6 of Hosea is a “getting to the point” type of reference. Jesus is saying that they love tradition, sacrifice and burnt offerings more than God. Basically, they had become so consumed with ritual that they had forgotten that God desires a relationship.

We all live with this temptation...to turn our faith into a ritual. The fulfillment of the Sabbath had was standing in their presence and yet they missed it. Let’s read Hosea 6:1-7:

***Come, let’s return to the Lord. For he has torn us, and he will heal us; he has wounded us, and he will bind up our wounds.** <sup>2</sup>**He will revive us after two days, and on the third day he will raise us up so we can live in his presence.** <sup>3</sup>**Let’s strive to know the Lord. His appearance is as sure as the dawn. He will come to us like the rain, like the spring showers that water the land.** <sup>4</sup>**What am I going to do with you, Ephraim? What am I going to do with you, Judah? Your love is like the morning mist and like the early dew that vanishes.** <sup>5</sup>**This is why I have used the prophets to cut them down; I have killed them with the words from my mouth. My judgment strikes like lightning.** <sup>6</sup>**For I desire faithful love and not sacrifice, the knowledge of God rather than burnt offerings.** <sup>7</sup>**But they, like Adam, have violated the covenant; there they have betrayed me.** (CSB)*

Jesus points them to Hosea because Hosea spoke of Him.

- Third day He will raise us up so we can live in His presence.

- His appearance is as sure as the dawn.
- He will come to us.

Jesus is clearly claiming to be God with this reference to Hosea 6.

### **Application**

Have you ever heard the phrase, “couldn’t see the forest for the trees”? Too often we allow our personal preferences, desires or tradition to cloud our minds so much that we miss the point of life. Which is to glorify God. How do we avoid falling into the trap of allowing our personal preferences blind us to God’s will? We rely upon the Word of God by reading, mediating, memorizing and applying it.

### **Discussion Questions**

- ❖ How intentional are you in what you do or don’t do each day? How intentional are you in glorifying God?
- ❖ When Jesus was faced with lies and hatred He responded with Scripture. Do you respond to life with Scripture? Why or why not?
- ❖ What are some things that distract you from living for God’s glory?

### **Section 2: 12:9-14**

*<sup>9</sup>Moving on from there, he entered their synagogue. <sup>10</sup>There he saw a man who had a shriveled hand, and in order to accuse him they asked him, “Is it lawful to heal on the Sabbath?” <sup>11</sup>He replied to them, “Who among you, if he had a sheep that fell into a pit on the Sabbath, wouldn’t take hold of it and lift it out? <sup>12</sup>A person is worth far more than a sheep; so it is lawful to do what is good on the Sabbath.” <sup>13</sup>Then he told the man, “Stretch out your hand.” So he stretched it out, and it was restored, as good as the other. <sup>14</sup>But the Pharisees went out and plotted against him, how they might kill him. (CSB)*

Jesus points them to Hosea 6 and then goes to “their” synagogue. Who’s synagogue? The one the Pharisees are based out of that just accused His disciples. When Jesus arrives, there’s a man with a disability and they quickly ask Him a question. Because Jesus always went to the local synagogue to teach, they knew when and where to “set the trap”. Even on the Sabbath you are permitted to pull an animal from the ditch...how much more do you care for someone made in the image of God. Luke 14:1-6:

*<sup>1</sup>One Sabbath, when he went in to eat at the house of one of the leading Pharisees, they were watching him closely. <sup>2</sup>There in front of him was a man whose body was swollen with fluid. <sup>3</sup>In response, Jesus asked the law experts and the Pharisees, “Is it lawful to heal on the Sabbath or not?” <sup>4</sup>But they kept silent. He took the man, healed him, and sent him away. <sup>5</sup>And to them, he said, “Which of you whose son or ox falls into a well, will not immediately pull him out on the Sabbath day?” <sup>6</sup>They could find no answer to these things. (CSB)*

Deuteronomy 22:4 allows one to help (work) if an animal is in trouble. When Jesus confronts the Pharisees about the specific “law” that is being violated...they stand in silence. This reveals their true heart. Their traditions and positions mattered more than their relationship with God. They loved their traditions and positions so much they began to plot to find a way to kill Jesus.

### **Application**

The world will always find a reason to reject Jesus. We can’t expect, as Christians, to always be loved and celebrated by the world. We must be able to repeat the words of Paul in Galatians 1:10:

*<sup>10</sup>For am I now trying to persuade people, or God? Or am I striving to please people? If I were still trying to please people, I would not be a servant of Christ. (CSB)*

It's difficult, but we must not get fooled into seeking the approval of the world. We are to seek to please God above all. We do this best when we do this together. God has graciously given us a faith family called the church. Together we can help one another live for God's glory. It is always easier to do right with others doing right. It is always easier to stand for truth when we stand for truth together.

### Discussion Questions

- ❖ How are you preparing today to face the enemy's traps tomorrow?
- ❖ How much time are you spending in the truth (Bible) so that you can "spot" the lie when it comes?
- ❖ How much hope does it bring you to know that you are extremely valuable to God?
- ❖ Why is it easier to stand together than alone?

### Section 3: 12:15-21

***<sup>15</sup>Jesus was aware of this and withdrew. Large crowds followed him, and he healed them all. <sup>16</sup>He warned them not to make him known, <sup>17</sup>so that what was spoken through the prophet Isaiah might be fulfilled: <sup>18</sup>Here is my servant whom I have chosen, my beloved in whom I delight; I will put my Spirit on him, and he will proclaim justice to the nations. <sup>19</sup>He will not argue or shout, and no one will hear his voice in the streets. <sup>20</sup>He will not break a bruised reed, and he will not put out a smoldering wick, until he has led justice to victory. <sup>21</sup>The nations will put their hope in his name. (CSB)***

Jesus knew they were plotting against Him, so He withdrew to continue to teach, preach and heal. This reminds us that Jesus' life wasn't taken, He freely gave it up in His timing. The Pharisees could plot all they wanted but Jesus is still in control. Jesus withdrew, not because He was trying to avoid death but because He was fulfilling Scripture: "*and He will proclaim justice to the nations.*" Because Jesus was the Messiah and the Son of God, He was continuously fulfilling Scripture. This gives us great assurance for all the promises Jesus has made to us about the Kingdom to come. The hope we have in Christ is unparalleled. So that no matter what we face in life we can repeat Romans 8:18 with confidence:

***<sup>18</sup>For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worth comparing with the glory that is going to be revealed to us. (CSB)***

### Application

Jesus' mission cannot be stopped. Too often we see the chaos of the world and can get "distracted". It's easy to think that we "need" this world to provide certain things for us to accomplish the church's mission. There is nothing that we "need" from the US government, from capitalism, from socialism, from the latest marketing trends, from the world's wisdom, etc. The church is unstoppable because Jesus is unstoppable. We don't "need" the world. We just need Jesus. We need to spend our time getting to love, know and proclaim Jesus.

### Discussion Questions

- ❖ How often do you get distracted from your mission to glorify God with your life?
- ❖ Why do we think we "need" the things of the world to accomplish the "mission" of God?
- ❖ Why is it hard to walk by faith and not put our hope in the things of this world?
- ❖ How does it bring us hope to know that Jesus is unstoppable, no matter what is going on in the world around us?