

“The Lord of the Sabbath”

Matthew 12v1-21

Scripture Ref: Leviticus 26:27-35; Ezekiel 4:1-6; 2 Chron 36:15-21; Gen 2:1-3; Ex 20:8-11; Hosea 6:6; Mark 7:18-23; Heb 4:1-12; Ps 95:8-11; Col 2:16-17

- 1. Jesus shook things up –**
 - a. He hung around with sinners, He fed the hungry, He healed people, He cast out demons!**
 - b. He taught like no one else, helping people see the true meaning of the law**
 - c. He didn’t defer to the Religious leaders in the way that they had become accustomed to – as righteous aristocrats!**
- 2. Last week we ended with Jesus statement “Come to Me, all you who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.”**
 - a. And I’m sure that the religious leaders thought “we don’t need your rest, we have our rest - the Sabbath, given to us by God Himself”**
 - b. But in reality, the Sabbath had become anything but a day of rest**
 - c. Instead, the scribes had encumbered the Sabbath with so many rules and regulations that the Sabbath had become more of a day of legal maneuvering!**
- 3. Some examples**
 - a. The rabbis who wrote the Talmud established 39 categories of work that cannot be performed on the Sabbath according to the Hebrew Bible.**
 - b. These include cooking, washing clothes, constructing, repairing, writing, making a fire, cutting, fishing, and so on.**
 - c. They also added activities that could lead to violating the Sabbath**
 - i. Taking medicine - could lead to “grinding” a substance, that would be classified as “work”**
 - a) If a man were injured, you could apply a tourniquet, but not administer any medicine.**
 - ii. You couldn’t pick up a writing instrument, that could lead to writing a letter, and two letters would be considered writing!**
 - iii. One should not climb a tree on the Sabbath to avoid breaking a twig and violating the rule not to cut.**
 - a) You couldn’t ride a horse, because you might be tempted to break off a branch to whip the horse!**

- d. Nowadays Orthodox Jews will set timers so they don't turn on a light, they have special elevators that go up and down automatically on Sabbath.
- 4. Now, I can't in good conscience go too hard on the Israelites for their obsessive observance of the Sabbath...why?
 - a. God told the children of Israel that if they did not keep the Sabbaths (day and letting the land rest every seventh year) and Jubilees (which included forgiving all debt!)
 - b. ... that they would be taken out of their land so the land could enjoy its sabbath rest. Leviticus 26:27-35.
 - c. The children of Israel neglected the sabbaticals and Jubilees for 430 years from about 650 BC to 586 BC. During this time the land missed 70 Sabbath years.
 - i. In about 590BC the Lord gave Ezekiel a prophecy to warn the Israelites.
 - ii. Ezekiel lay on his right side for 390 days for the 390 years of iniquity of the children of Israel.
 - iii. Then he lay on his left side for 40 days for the 40 years of the iniquity of the people of Judah. The total years of iniquity were 430 years Ezekiel 4:1-6.
 - d. Thus in 586BC, Jerusalem was invaded by Nebuchadnezzar (just as God warned), burned and ruined, many people were killed, God's beautiful temple was destroyed,
 - e. ...and the children of Israel were taken into captivity to Babylon for 70 years. Jeremiah 25:8-12.
 - f. Then the land was allowed to lay desolate for 70 years to enjoy her Sabbath rest. (how do I know this? 2 Chron 36)

2 Chron 36:15-21

And the LORD God of their fathers sent warnings to them by His messengers, rising up early and sending them, because He had compassion on His people and on His dwelling place. 16 But they mocked the messengers of God, despised His words, and scoffed at His prophets, until the wrath of the LORD arose against His people, till there was no remedy.

17 Therefore He brought against them the king of the Chaldeans, who killed their young men with the sword in the house of their sanctuary, and had no compassion on young man or virgin, on the aged or the weak; He gave them all into his hand. 18 And all the articles from the house of God, great and small, the treasures of the house of the LORD, and the treasures of the king and of his leaders, all these he took to Babylon. 19 Then they burned the house of God, broke down the wall of Jerusalem, burned all its palaces with fire, and destroyed all its precious possessions.

20 And those who escaped from the sword he carried away to Babylon, where they became servants to him and his sons until the rule of the kingdom of Persia, 21 to fulfill the word of the LORD by the mouth of Jeremiah, until the land had enjoyed her Sabbaths. As long as she lay desolate she kept Sabbath, to fulfill seventy years.

5. **So you can see the extreme place that the Jewish people, in their sincere effort to please God, had gone with these rules and regulations concerning the Sabbath!**
6. **Now there are two things we are going to look at today:**
 - a. **What was Jesus response to the religious rulers in their accusations towards Him about the Sabbath**
 - b. **What does the Sabbath mean to you and I, the gentile church?**
 - c. **...but first a little background on the origin of the Sabbath**

7. The Sabbath is based on God's rest after creation:

Gen 2:1-3

Thus the heavens and the earth, and all the host of them, were finished. 2 And on the seventh day God ended His work which He had done, and He rested on the seventh day from all His work which He had done. 3 Then God blessed the seventh day and sanctified it, because in it He rested from all His work which God had created and made.

8. It was given to the Israelites several thousand years later, in the Desert, as part of the Ten Commandments:

Ex 20:8-11

8 "Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy. 9 Six days you shall labor and do all your work, 10 but the seventh day is the Sabbath of the LORD your God. In it you shall do no work: you, nor your son, nor your daughter, nor your male servant, nor your female servant, nor your cattle, nor your stranger who is within your gates. 11 For in six days the LORD made the heavens and the earth, the sea, and all that is in them, and rested the seventh day. Therefore the LORD blessed the Sabbath day and hallowed it.

- a. **As you can see, it was given for the Israelites as a day of rest, and the Jews were to keep it "holy" – in other words to maintain the integrity of the day.**
9. **Now we pick up at the beginning of a new time period, it seems that the disciples and Jesus have finished traveling and preaching, and are now back together...**

12:1 At that time Jesus went through the grainfields on the Sabbath. And His disciples were hungry, and began to pluck heads of grain and to eat. 2 And when

the Pharisees saw it, they said to Him, "Look, Your disciples are doing what is not lawful to do on the Sabbath!"

- 10. If you can imagine this, Jesus and His disciples are walking down what would have been a path – very few roads then, just paths that lead through fields.**
- a. And there is wheat growing along both sides of the path, these guys are hungry, and so they start grabbing some of the grain and eating it.**
 - b. No – they weren't stealing! In Deuteronomy 23 God gave a provision to travelers (there weren't any "fast food" places along the road!), that a person traveling could take whatever grew by the road (otherwise you would have people dropping dead from starvation on a long hike)**
 - c. The issue was that they were "harvesting" on the Sabbath (I personally wonder how they could have been out there observing them, it probably put them more than 3000 feet from the synagogue, another rule of the Sabbath!)**
- 11. Jesus responds with a three-pronged answer...**

King David:

3 But He said to them, "Have you not read what David did when he was hungry, he and those who were with him: 4 how he entered the house of God and ate the showbread which was not lawful for him to eat, nor for those who were with him, but only for the priests?"

- 12. "Don't you know the scriptures?" Don't you know the account of 1 Samuel 21, where David was running from Saul, and the Priests gave he and his men some of the showbread from the temple?**
- a. The showbread was only to be eaten by the priests, and to give it to David was violating God's law concerning – (gasp!) the Temple!**

The Priests:

5 Or have you not read in the law that on the Sabbath the priests in the temple profane the Sabbath, and are blameless?"

- 13. "Don't you know what you yourselves do?" On the Sabbath, the priests work harder than any other day of the week! Preparing and offering sacrifices – and, uh, excuse me, but that is definitely work!**

The Prophet Hosea:

6 Yet I say to you that in this place there is One greater than the temple. 7 But if you had known what this means, 'I desire mercy and not sacrifice,' you would not have condemned the guiltless. (Hosea 6:6)

- 14. “Don’t you know what the Prophet Hosea said? He said “I desire mercy and not sacrifice.”**
- a. Jesus told them “if you knew what this means, you wouldn’t be standing here giving us a hard time about something that is perfectly legal!”**
- 15. And I have to say, no statement of Christ is without significance:**
- a. Jesus named King David – Jesus is the true King that will sit on the throne of David forever**
 - b. He named the Priests – Jesus is our High Priest!**
 - c. He named the Prophet – Jesus is the greatest of prophets!**
- 16. Then – if that weren’t enough to get them riled up, Jesus says:**

8 For the Son of Man is Lord even of the Sabbath."

- 17. Jesus is basically saying “I am the Lord, and I am over the Sabbath!”**
- a. I’m sure at that point their heads were about to explode!**
 - b. Now, this response would have burned these guys up – “who does this guy think he is, preaching at US? We are the religious experts!”**

Healing on the Sabbath

9 Now when He had departed from there, He went into their synagogue. 10 And behold, there was a man who had a withered hand. And they asked Him, saying, "Is it lawful to heal on the Sabbath?" -- that they might accuse Him.

11 Then He said to them, "What man is there among you who has one sheep, and if it falls into a pit on the Sabbath, will not lay hold of it and lift it out? 12 Of how much more value then is a man than a sheep? Therefore it is lawful to do good on the Sabbath." 13 Then He said to the man, "Stretch out your hand." And he stretched it out, and it was restored as whole as the other.

- 18. Jesus responded by quoting their own Talmud back to them, which made an allowance for lifting and animal out of a pit on the Sabbath**
- a. The point being – “If you would help an animal that was suffering, how could you not help a man, created in the image of God, who is suffering on that same day? Of course you would!”**
- 19. It brings us back to the quote from Hosea – “I desire mercy and not sacrifice”**
- a. In other words – God didn’t give His law so we could all become “perfect law keepers”**
 - b. God doesn’t want His people to be robotic law-keepers, preoccupied with keeping every rule and tradition, forever coming up with new ways to “keep God’s law.”**

- c. In other words - Mercy is more important than law, and people are more important than rules!
 - d. Don't misunderstand – God loves, and expects, obedience, but God's purpose is in having a RELATIONSHIP.
 - e. Gods desires to have your heart over your sacrifice.
20. Now having said this, it's important to understand that heart and sacrifice are not mutually exclusive.
- a. You can't say "I gave my heart to God, so it doesn't matter what I do, God knows my heart."
 - b. Yes it DOES matter what you do, because what you do reveals where your heart is.
 - c. In Mark 7:18-23 Jesus tells us that it's not what goes *into a man* that defiles him, but *what comes out*, because what comes out reveals whats in the heart!

Mark 7:18-23

Do you not perceive that whatever enters a man from outside cannot defile him, 19 because it does not enter his heart but his stomach, and is eliminated, thus purifying all foods?" 20 And He said, "What comes out of a man, that defiles a man. 21 For from within, out of the heart of men, proceed evil thoughts, adulteries, fornications, murders, 22 thefts, covetousness, wickedness, deceit, lewdness, an evil eye, blasphemy, pride, foolishness. 23 All these evil things come from within and defile a man."

- d. In other words we have the whole "sin" thing backwards
 - i. Its not "I cant sin because I'm a Christian"
 - ii. Its "man, God has changed my heart so that I don't desire the same things"
 - e. When our heart belongs to God, there will be obedience, and there will also be mercy!
21. And getting back to the Sabbath, the intent was to have a day that the Israelites would rest, spend time with family, rejoice in the Lord, in other words - relationship!
- a. NOT to have a bunch of rules about the Sabbath, and then declare how righteous we are because we followed all of the rules!
22. But here is where it gets cool – back to verse 8:

8 For the Son of Man is Lord even of the Sabbath."

23. When Jesus declares Himself to be Lord the Sabbath, He is saying much more than just "hey, I'm the Lord, so I can let these guys eat on the Sabbath if I want to"

- a. He is telling us that they Sabbath is in fact about Him!
- b. That He in fact is our Sabbath – our rest.
- c. When we enter into Christ, we enter into His rest.
- d. Check out what Hebrews tells us:

Heb 4:1-12

The Promise of Rest

4:1 Therefore, since a promise remains of entering His rest, let us fear lest any of you seem to have come short of it. 2 For indeed the gospel was preached to us as well as to them; but the word which they heard did not profit them, not being mixed with faith in those who heard it. 3 For we who have believed do enter that rest, as He has said:

"So I swore in My wrath, 'They shall not enter My rest,'" (Ps 95:11)

although the works were finished from the foundation of the world. 4 For He has spoken in a certain place of the seventh day in this way: "And God rested on the seventh day from all His works"; 5 and again in this place: "They shall not enter My rest."

6 Since therefore it remains that some must enter it, and those to whom it was first preached did not enter because of disobedience, 7 again He designates a certain day, saying in David, "Today," after such a long time, as it has been said:

"Today, if you will hear His voice, Do not harden your hearts." (Ps 95:8)

8 For if Joshua had given them rest, then He would not afterward have spoken of another day. 9 There remains therefore a rest for the people of God. 10 For he who has entered His rest has himself also ceased from his works as God did from His.

11 Let us therefore be diligent to enter that rest, lest anyone fall according to the same example of disobedience.

24. In other words – The promise was for the Israelites to enter the promised land – their rest.

- a. But they didn't believe God, and God didn't allow the first generation into the promised land.
- b. But even the second generation, that did go into the land under Joshua, were not really in the "rest" God spoke of,
- c. ...because God spoke of another, future, rest, that involved not only the Jews but the gentiles as well.
- d. The gospel that was preached to them, of the coming Messiah, was also preached to us – the coming of Jesus.

- e. **So let us therefore be diligent to enter into that rest that God has for us!**

25. Remember what He said – “come to me all who labor and are heavy laden” - Jesus is rest for us. We've entered into our rest.

- a. **Spiritually when we receive the gospel – eternally when we are in heaven.**
- b. **So don't let anyone judge you, like the Pharisees tried to do, regarding the Sabbath:**

Col 2:16-17

16 So let no one judge you in food or in drink, or regarding a festival or a new moon or sabbaths, 17 which are a shadow of things to come, but the substance is of Christ.

- c. **For Jesus is the Sabbath to the believer.**

26. Now – you might have thought that I was going to tell you what we should, or shouldn't, do on the Sabbath

- a. **What day it should be – should I cut the grass, can I write some bills, what it my job calls me in**
- b. **But now, maybe you don't need me to tell you those things, because that would sound like – well like the religious leaders of Jesus day!**

Jesus Pulls Away

14 Then the Pharisees went out and plotted against Him, how they might destroy Him. 15 But when Jesus knew it, He withdrew from there. And great multitudes followed Him, and He healed them all. 16 Yet He warned them not to make Him known, 17 that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by Isaiah the prophet, saying:

18 "Behold! My Servant whom I have chosen,
My Beloved in whom My soul is well pleased!
I will put My Spirit upon Him,
And He will declare justice to the Gentiles.
19 He will not quarrel nor cry out,
Nor will anyone hear His voice in the streets.
20 A bruised reed He will not break,
And smoking flax He will not quench,
Till He sends forth justice to victory;
21 And in His name Gentiles will trust."
NKJV

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Matthew 12:1-21

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