

## Matthew Ch 12 vs. 1-14

I'd like to invite you this morning to turn in your bibles to the book of Matt ch 12. Ch 11 finishes off with the topic of rest. And we find Jesus giving an evangelical call to give true rest. Rest for the weary soul. We see in ch 11-12 the nation of Israel rejecting their King (remember Matt presents Jesus as the King) and as I said last week He's revealed His person in the 1<sup>st</sup> 4 ch, He revealed His principals in ch 5-7, and in ch 8-9 He reveals His power. In ch 10 He sends out the 12 before Him and in ch 11 He follows up preaching in their cities (those being Jewish cities), and now the nation is faced with a choice; do we receive our King or do we reject our King, and of course they rejected Jesus.

So last week we saw Him denouncing those cities who rejected Him; those cities in which He had done most of His miraculous deeds. Pronouncing judgment upon them. Why? Because they did not repent, they didn't turn from their sin unto their savior, their Messiah, but rather they rejected Him. and So He rejected them, what's the lesson there?

To come into an awareness of who Jesus is, to see all the lives that He's touched and changed and not repent of your sin and get right with God but rather to harden your heart and reject Jesus Christ ultimately culminates in judgment upon your life. So Jesus turned, having been rejected by His own (remember He had told His disciples to go to the lost sheep of the tribe of Israel) now they've rejected Him and so now the call goes out to who? Vs. 28 All who labor and are heavy laden, the call goes out to any one and everyone who's laboring and heavy laden under the burden and oppression of sin to come unto Him and find rest. Literally it says and I will rest you. Jesus and Jesus alone can give true rest. And again as I said last Sunday and many here can no doubt testify of the fact that there is no rest found at the bottom of a bottle. You can't find rest at the end of a joint or at the top of the corporate ladder or in sexual relationships or substance abuse or anything else. In fact those things just add more weight to the burden you're already carrying.

Many times we look to our spouse to meet those needs of our hurting heart and when they can't fill the emptiness like we thought that they should we get rid of them and find someone else that we think can. and Then when they don't live up to our expectations we get rid of them and so divorce rates are astronomical. Listen to what Oswald Chambers had to say on this topic; *"if we love someone, but do not love God, we demand total perfection and righteousness from that person, and when we do not get it we become cruel and vindictive; yet we are demanding of a human being something which he or she cannot possibly give. There is only one Being who can completely satisfy to the absolute depth of the hurting human heart, and that is the Lord Jesus Christ. Our Lord is so obviously uncompromising with regard to every human relationship because He knows that every relationship that is not based on faithfulness to Himself will end in disaster."* Jesus said come to Me and I will give you rest, nothing else will satisfy the need of your soul, only coming to Jesus.

He said that His yoke is what, easy and His burden is light. Now we don't want to miss the fact that Matt places these 1<sup>st</sup> couple of events in ch 12 with in the context of Jesus offering rest, because the 1<sup>st</sup> 2 events recorded in this 12<sup>th</sup> ch deal with what? The Sabbath, that being the Jewish day of rest, but in reality by the time that Jesus came onto the scene; the Sabbath had become anything but a day of rest.

Why, because the scribes and Pharisees had so completely misinterpreted the law that they had totally disallowed the law for the purposes that God had intended it. They had interpreted the law on the physical level, as to where God intended it to expose the wickedness of the heart. That's why Jesus corrected their misinterpretation back in ch 5 when He said, "*You have heard that it was said to those of old, 'You shall not commit adultery.' But I say to you that whoever looks at a woman to lust for her has already committed adultery with her in his heart.*" Why because it wasn't just the outward actions that the law was intended to speak to, but it was more for the inward attitudes of the heart that provoked that action. The law was meant to deal with you in your heart before your actions ever spilled out into the physical.

The bible says that "*when desire has conceived, it gives birth to sin; and sin, when it is full-grown, brings forth death.*" In other words sin begins here, in the mind and it permeates its way down into our hearts and in our attitudes, and from the attitudes come the actions. And God isn't interested in us (through our incredible will power) curbing our outward actions that are wrong. He's interested in our heart and our inner attitudes that serve as a springboard, to bring about those actions. And since the scribes and Pharisees misinterpreted the law and was applying it strictly to the physical, then when in the law it said, "*the seventh day is the Sabbath of the LORD your God. In it you shall do no work.*"

They weren't content with leaving it at that they had to determine with in themselves what exactly constituted work, and then that's what they taught the people, was pleasing to God, and to violate *their interpretation* of the law was to break the law of God. And so by the time they were done determining what exactly constituted work, there were so many tedious and meticulous rules that to keep the Sabbath (which was supposed to be a day set aside for rest) became an incredible burden because you never knew if you were breaking it. I mean it was almost to the point of wondering if breathing was a violation of the Sabbath because the muscles in your chest had to work to pull air into your lungs. For example it was forbidden to carry a burden on the Sabbath. But what constitutes a burden? According to their interpretation, anything weighing over the amount of 2 dried figs. So if you wore false teeth you couldn't wear them on the Sabbath or you were guilty of bearing a burden. If you had a wooden leg, you had to take it off on the Sabbath because it constituted bearing a burden.

You couldn't take a bath on the Sabbath because if water should spill out of your tub onto the floor, that area of the floor has technically been washed, which is work. You couldn't experience intimacy with your wife on the Sabbath. Any meal you might want had to be prepared the day before because cooking was against the law on the Sabbath. and The list just went on and on, I read somewhere that the Talmud devoted 24 ch. to instructions for keeping the Sabbath. So what was intended to be a day of rest, was for many a day of stress and anxiety and tension; to put it another way, it was burdensome. And as you study the scriptures you learn that even the Sabbath was really just a shadow that pointed to Christ, the perpetual rest that's to be found in Him.

Paul the apostle recognized that fact and so he wrote in Col 2:16,17 *"So let no one judge you in food or in drink, or regarding a festival or a new moon or Sabbaths, Which are a shadow of things to come, but the substance is of Christ."* In other words the rest that your soul is looking for is not found in any of those things; it's found only in Christ and don't let anyone tell you different.

Jesus is our rest, our Sabbath, our sabbat, so when Jesus said I will give you rest; those were fighting words for the religious leaders, He just crossed the line and spoke out (in their eyes) against their holy day, which as far as they were concerned was all the rest (if you can call it that) that they needed. So now Matt has set the stage for ch 12; the issue? The Sabbath..

Vs1-2

Now you may ask, what in the world were these Pharisees doing out in the grainfields in the 1<sup>st</sup> place? I had the same question and my answer is that I have no idea other than the fact that they've got Jesus under the microscope looking for anything that they can find to accuse Him of doing wrong. But there is a couple of things we want to take notice of here #1 back up in vs1 it says that His disciples were hungry. And this word hungry in the Greek isn't like wow; I haven't had lunch so I'm going to snack on some wheat grain to hold me over till dinner. This is the word peiano (pi nah'o) and it intimates, or suggests as the Strongs puts it to famish. Thayers Greek Lexicon says; to suffer want; to be needy, to crave ardently (or intensively) to seek with earnest desire. This word peiano finds it's roots in the word penes (pen'ace) which means poor.

In other words these guys hadn't eaten for while because they had no money to buy food, and they were desperately hungry. (Jeff what's your point?) Remember when Jesus was talking to that one would be disciple and He said, *"Foxes have holes and birds of the air have nests, but the Son of Man has nowhere to lay His head."* The point being that there is a cost to following Jesus that has to be counted and part of that cost is that there's no guarantee of material wealth. Even though that thought goes against a major doctrine of heresy that's out there today, that's the fact.

Right now these disciples that were following Jesus are enduring the ramifications of that. Jesus never guaranteed them 3 square meals a day, and following Jesus is no guarantee that you'll never suffer want, there are hardships that can come in your discipleship from Jesus. And no amount of faith is going to change that, Jesus was right there with them and yet He allowed them to go hungry for awhile. and Even though you may struggle at times it doesn't mean that you've strayed from the path that Jesus is taking you down on the contrary it may indicate that you're right where He wants you to be. Paul wrote to the Corinthians in 1 Cor 4:11 *"To the present hour we both hunger and thirst, and we are poorly clothed, and beaten, and homeless."*

Interestingly enough the word hunger Paul used was the same word we find here and yet he was being used radically by God. So just because you may be experiencing hard times that doesn't automatically mean you've somehow strayed from Jesus. Now if there's sin in your life that needs dealt with then repent and get right with God. But if you're just following the Lord and suddenly you find yourself in want or a chain of bad events befall you, don't automatically assume that you've somehow blown it and so Jesus isn't watching you're back.

He may be desiring to use that to teach you something, many times God uses affliction as a chastening to bring about correction in our lives, because whom the Lord loves (the bible says) He chastens. David wrote in Ps 119:67 *"Before I was afflicted I went astray, But now I keep Your word."* There's nothing like some good old fashion suffering to our attention. It could be to teach others something in and through *your* circumstances; such was the case here. He had a lesson to teach these Pharisees, even though they won't receive it He wanted to expose their hypocritical standards for what they were. And even though we don't read of Jesus engaging in this act we do notice that it's Him that they question because as their Teacher, they hold Him accountable for their actions and for condoning what they were doing. So they say to Him (repeat vs 2 look..) And let's not confuse the issue here, they aren't upset because they're plucking wheat from a strangers field as though they were stealing because the law made provisions for this. Deut 23:25 *"When you come into your neighbor's standing grain, you may pluck the heads with your hand, but you shall not use a sickle on your neighbor's standing grain."* So that wasn't their problem, their problem was in the fact that they plucked the heads of wheat, because that they considered work. They considered plucking the head a form of harvesting, or reaping, rubbing your hands together to separate the wheat from the chaff was threshing, and to blow the chaff out of your hand was winnowing, and that whole process they considered preparing a meal. So according to their interpretation of Sabbath rest, these disciples of Jesus were blowing it big.

## Vs3-4

Now this was a major slap in the face type of rebuke for these guys, because these guys considered themselves very scholarly when it came to their knowledge of scripture. And here Jesus is basically saying don't you guys ever read your bibles? And He takes them back to 1 Sam ch 21 when David was fleeing from Saul and went to the priest to seek out food for him and his men and all the priest had was the showbread from the tabernacle which was unlawful for anyone but the priests to eat. So if you want to be technical David broke the law and yet was still blameless. Jesus and His disciples hadn't broke the law, (only the rabbinical interpretation of it) and were being held guilty.

Jesus is trying to show these guys the Spirit of the law and to get their eyes off of the letter of the Law. He's trying to show them that Love overrules Law, that love overrules legalism, that relationship overrules ritual. That the fulfillment of the law the way God had originally intended it was in love. And regardless of what day it is human need always takes priority; and that it's impossible to break the law of God by meeting human need. You don't honor God by neglecting those whom He's created in His image. And I find this an interesting illustration that Jesus used because at the time David and his men hungered as Jesus is referring to here was when he was being rejected as king over Israel while fleeing from Saul. And now Jesus, the Son of David, is being rejected as King of Israel and His men hunger and they are now accused of breaking the law in order that they might eat. So some interesting parallels there.

## Vs5

Another slap here calling there own ignorance to their attention. And here He's referring to Num. ch 28 vs 9-10, the priests work load literally doubled on the Sabbath because they had to offer more sacrifices on the Sabbath than any other day of the week, on there day of rest they worked more and yet they were blameless. Jesus is making an air tight case here, if you guys knew your history you'd remember what happened with David, if you know the law that you pride yourselves on, you'd know that the priests actually worked twice as hared on the Sabbath.

## Vs6

This is a claim by Jesus as to His authority and His deity. In the eyes of the Jew the only thing that could've been greater than the temple in which they worshipped was God whom they were worshipping. and So if the priest can desecrate the Sabbath in the temple and be blameless than surely One who is greater than the temple can sanction His disciples to do it.

Vs7

So Jesus has appealed to their ignorance, the fact that they didn't know the law, and now that they didn't understand the Scriptures, He's tearing them up one side and down the other. Now this is the 2<sup>nd</sup> time Jesus has quoted Hos 6:6 to the Pharisees the 1<sup>st</sup> time was in Matt ch 9:13. James put it like this "*Mercy triumphs over judgment.*" In other words none of Gods laws were put in order to cause the needless suffering of people. God wants loving relationships not legalistic ritualism. The Pharisees sacrificed to obey their Sabbath laws to the neglect of human need and yet God desires mercy over sacrifice. So as usual Jesus shut them up because there was nothing they could say; God's word was His defense and it's absolutely pointless to argue against God's word.

Now we do want to take a moment here to take note of the 3 areas of defense that Jesus called on here to put to shame His opponents. Paul wrote to Titus saying, "*in all things showing yourself to be a pattern of good works; in doctrine showing integrity, reverence, incorruptibility, sound speech that cannot be condemned, that one who is an opponent may be ashamed, having nothing evil to say of you.*" And though they spoke plenty of evil about Jesus none of it was justified, it was all to cover their own pride. But 1<sup>st</sup> of all He points to David, a king whom they honored, 2<sup>nd</sup> of all He points to the priests; who worked on the Sabbath, and 3<sup>rdly</sup> He points to a prophet who said that God loves mercy or desires mercy more than sacrifice. 1 A king, 2 a priest, 3 and a prophet of which He himself is all 3. He is the King of kings, our great High Priest, and no doubt the Holy Prophet of God, the Anointed One, the Messiah. And now He caps it all off with this statement.

Vs8

Mark 2:27 tells us that before Jesus said this He said, "The Sabbath was made for man, and not man for the Sabbath." In other words the Sabbath was instituted to be of benefit for man not detriment. And besides as I said earlier it all was only pointing to Jesus anyway, it's all about Him He's the Lord of lords, that includes the Sabbath day. I'd encourage you that when you read the scriptures don't get all caught up in the regulations and rituals and technicalities. They were all just shadows that were fulfilled in Christ, look for Him. In the volume of the book it's written of Him, even the Sabbath.

Vs9

Luke's gospel tell us that this was another Sabbath, this didn't happen immediately following the wheat field experience. But notice the distinction here, He went not into "the" synagogue, but into "their" synagogue, they definitely weren't of the same mind or same heart and so there's a contrast, or a distinction made here.

## Vs10

Here we see those favorite words of Matt here again “and behold” or and look, remember Matt uses these words as a pointer to grab our attention so that we won’t miss what’s getting ready to happen. Matt says look or check this out, don’t miss this because it’s significant. Matt doesn’t tell us who “they” are but Luke tells us they were the scribes and Pharisees as we might assume. And the attention has obviously been placed upon this man with a withered hand that just so happens to be in the same synagogue that Jesus was in and it just so Happens to be the Sabbath. and Wouldn’t you know that according to the rabbinical interpretation of the law to heal on the Sabbath was a form of work.

Most commentators feel as though the Pharisees planted this man there because they knew Jesus couldn’t see a person in need and do nothing about it. And I wouldn’t doubt that 1 bit, and by the way they pose this question it’s clear that they aren’t in genuine search for understanding, they’re trying to set Him up, they’ve taken the initiative to fire the 1<sup>st</sup> shot. It tells us plainly that they asked Him that they might accuse Him. Accuse Him of violating the law as they interpreted it. Because as I said to heal was against their interpretation of the law, so if you were bleeding profusely I could apply a bandage to save your life, but I could put no ointment on it to aid in the healing process. But as I said it’s interesting that they seemed to know that Jesus could never face human blight with out doing something about it, they knew that Jesus would have compassion on this man regardless of what day of the week it was. And instead of being critical of Him because of that, they should’ve learned from His example. They also never questioned Jesus’ ability to do the miraculous, you have to be 2,000 yrs later sitting in a library somewhere earning your masters degree or something before you question His miraculous abilities. But as usual in their attempt to entrap Him it backfired into entrapping themselves.

## Vs11

You see there were loopholes in their interpretations, of course they would get their sheep out of the ditch or the pit.

## Vs12

In other words it’s much more important to help someone who’s been created in the image of God that’s in need, than it is to help an animal in need. (Finish vs) He’s saying you guys had bettered reconsider your priorities and your interpretations, because you’re saying it’s against the law to do good, now does that sound like it represents the heart of God. And so if it’s in your power to help and you don’t it’s the same as doing harm, no matter what day of the week it is.

Vs13

I love it, Jesus gives a command the guy does what he's told and Jesus does the work. This man could've said I can't stretch out my hand it's paralyzed, I have no strength in my hand. But he didn't do that he followed through with what the Lord said and was healed. Not with a touch but with a word, there is power in the word of God. God's commandments are God's enablings. God will never tell you to do something but that He doesn't enable you to do it. You can't do it in and of your own strength just as this man could've never with out Jesus' enabling. But we can do all things through Christ Jesus who (what) strengthens us.

Vs14

I find a strange twist of irony in the fact that the same guys who were so vehemently opposed to healing and the promoting of the welfare of life, had no problems plotting a murder on that same day. But even in that in there desire to destroy Jesus all they did was further the purposes of God to bring about the remission of sin through the shedding of His blood for all who will believe. God is able to take what Satan means for evil and turn it to His glory.

Apart from the death of Jesus Christ there could be no life for you and me and if you're here this morning and haven't experienced age abiding life, everlasting life through faith in Jesus Christ before we take communion this morning I want to give you the opportunity to enter in to true rest, to experience not a religious ritual but a loving relationship with the One True Living God.