

LORD OF THE SABBATH

CMBC March 10, 2013

Matthew 12:1 – 21

So much of the Scripture passages we have looked at over the past years, they have addressed the issue of legalism – centering on rules in our relationship with God instead of a heart yielded to God. And here it is again. I guess God knows that we need to come back to this again and again. I struggled with this message this week. Can we bear to hear it again? And how do we say it in a different way? Here it is in a discussion on the Sabbath.

I was giving help to a couple whose marriage was in serious trouble. The husband grew up in a home where he had never seen genuine love between a husband and wife. He just didn't have a clue.

How do you explain love to a person who has never seen it? He and I talked about some of the practical ways a husband can show love to his wife. His response was to go home and start working through the list. Soon he was back in my office, thoroughly frustrated. His wife totally blew up at him. The problem was that she could sense that he was just working through a "to-do-list" and there was none of that tender outpouring of a loving heart. I think he really wanted to, but the "to-do-list" was getting in the way of letting his heart speak.

That is what Jesus' encounter with the Pharisees is all about in this exchange with them about the Sabbath.

1. THE SABBATH AND WORSHIPPING GOD

Israel took the Sabbath seriously

Exodus 20:8 – 11 "Remember the Sabbath day by keeping it holy. [9] Six days you shall labor and do all your work, [10] but the seventh day is a Sabbath to the LORD your God. On it you shall not do any work, neither you, nor your son or daughter, nor your manservant or maidservant, nor your animals, nor the alien within your gates. [11] For in six days the LORD made the heavens and the earth, the sea, and all that is in them, but he rested on the seventh day. Therefore the LORD blessed the Sabbath day and made it holy.

How do you keep it holy?

- a. Focusing on what is work
 - i. The Pharisees focused on what was work.

- ii. They worked out all the details of what was work, to the finest detail.
- iii. And they considered that what Jesus' disciples had done, in rubbing out the barely kernels, that was work.
- iv. Keeping the Sabbath holy was to avoid what was considered work.

b. Focusing on what is worship

- i. God intended the focus to be on what is worship.
 - 1. **Exodus 20:10** but the seventh day is a **Sabbath to the LORD your God.**
 - 2. **Vs. 11** the **LORD** blessed the Sabbath day and made it holy
- ii. God had rested on the seventh day of creation as a day when all was completed to accomplish his purpose
 - 1. To settle once and for all that He alone was God and there is no other
 - 2. Our Sabbath is a holy day in which, as we rest from our work, we are declaring that God alone is God. We worship Him.
- iii. Jesus example of David obviously had a powerful impact on the Pharisees. They were without response.
 - 1. The bread of the tabernacle was the Passover bread.
 - 2. It was there in the tabernacle/temple to remind the people of God's Sovereignty in delivering them out of Egypt
 - 3. When David came to the tabernacle he was running from King Saul (this was the time of Jonathan's help)
 - 4. David came to the tabernacle after days of hiding and God provided, with another
- iv. Jesus' other example was the work of the priests in the temple on the Sabbath
 - 1. It was work – hard work
 - 2. But it was part of worship
- v. So Jesus was declaring, keeping the Sabbath holy was not about not working but rather about a heart joyfully submitting and worshipping the One Lord God.
- vi. So Jesus said to them **Vs.7** If you had known what these words mean, 'I desire mercy, not sacrifice,'
- vii. He was quoting **Hosea6:6** For I desire mercy, not sacrifice, and acknowledgment of God rather than burnt offerings.

2. THE SABBATH AND GOD'S MINISTRY

- i. The Pharisees, without realizing it, gave Jesus a lot of opportunity to teach about the kingdom of God.
 - ii. Here again, in the synagogue they challenged Jesus authority over the Sabbath.
 - iii. What amazes me about their blindness is that they knew Jesus CAN heal, so they ask, "Is it lawful to HEAL on the Sabbath?"
- b. Focusing on our own worthiness
- i. They focused on how they could measure their ability to keep the Sabbath holy – by their rules of work.
 1. The need of the crippled man didn't matter.
 2. The focus was on themselves and their worthiness in having kept the commandments.
 3. "There! I kept all the rules of the Sabbath."
 - ii. But HERE is the main focus of the commandments, "Hear oh Israel; the Lord our God, the Lord is one. Love the Lord you God with all your heart, with all your soul and with all your strength, AND love your neighbour as yourself."
- c. Focusing on God's power to change lives
- i. The God that is worshipped on the Sabbath is the God who has the power to change lives, the power over life, the power to heal a life, because he is the Creator God, the only God.
 - ii. And he calls his people to be agents of that power of change into the world that is lost and sick.
 - iii. We worship Him. Are one with Him. Are united in Him.
- d. Would it be lawful to heal on the Sabbath?
- Matthew 12:11** He said to them, "If any of you has a sheep and it falls into a pit on the Sabbath, will you not take hold of it and lift it out?"
- i. The owner of a fallen sheep was allowed to rescue his sheep.
 - ii. The owner of men and women, the Creator, not only could rescue fallen, sick people, but that is what He came to do.

3. JESUS THE LORD OF THE SABBATH

So Jesus declares, [6] I tell you that one greater than the temple is here. [8] For the Son of Man is Lord of the Sabbath."

- a. The Sabbath is acknowledging who Jesus is

Listen to what Jesus is saying:

- i. What is greater than the temple?
 1. Only God can be greater.
 2. And Jesus declares that he is God.
 3. The temple with all of its rules was the place of worship.
 4. But even the temple wasn't the focus. God is. Jesus is.

- ii. Who is it that established the Sabbath, is Lord of the Sabbath?
 1. It was God. The Sabbath is his.
Exodus 20:11 "Therefore the LORD blessed the Sabbath day and made it holy."
 2. And Jesus declares that He is the One.
"For the Son of Man is Lord of the Sabbath."
 3. And therefore He is the focus of the Sabbath.
 4. The rules for observing the Sabbath are only the means of bringing our hearts to embrace and worship the Almighty God who has reached out to rescue us from our curse.
 5. In the same way that the husband in our earlier story, could never substitute a "to-do-list" for a heart that embraced his wife way beyond any list that we could impose.

- b. Acknowledging God's purposes
 - i. The supreme work of the Sabbath is God's work in our lives, and God's work through us in the lives of others.

 - ii. It goes deeper into every part of life – eating, rescuing livestock, living every moment of our lives
 1. Not just keeping the laws
 2. Not just saying sorry, but humbly repenting and submitting
 3. Not just saying I forgive, but setting that person free into the hand and work of God.
 4. Not just coming to church, but honestly seeking God, being open before Him, worshipping and adoring Him, the only true God.
 5. Not just keeping the letter of the law, but earnestly looking to God to change our lives by his power and for His glory.

 - iii. He is the Lord God that meets all of our needs and the joy of this Sabbath day is the spirit out of which we live every day.