

Rev. Dustin Daniels | River Bible Church
Matthew 12:9-14 | Jesus Christ: Lord of Mercy
Sunday December 17, 2023

WELCOME:

- Please turn your Bibles to Matthew 12.
- Bibles in the back—our gift to you.
- Notes are in the foyer. Take them home with you.

REVIEW:

Last week we learned how Jesus is “Lord of the Sabbath Day.”

That’s an unusual phrase—something we don’t hear every day.

The Sabbath Day is a gift from God—it is a day of rest.

By God’s grace and mercy, He commands His people to take a day off.

Rest comes in at number four on God’s Top Ten—the Ten Commandments.

We learned that God is so serious about rest that breaking this command in the OT came with capital punishment.

But, death sentence or not, the Israelites ignored God.

And we turned to the OT and the prophets to learn a bit of history so we don’t make the same mistake today.

Key points from last Sunday include:

LW KEYPOINT 1:

Vagueness is always a problem for legalists.

God is not really specific on what is defined as work or rest.

And many of us today, like the Scribes and Pharisees, would rather God tell us precisely what to do and what not to do on the Sabbath Day.

The problem is that we abandon the relationship God desires from us by following all these rules.

Not only that, but everyone's day of rest doesn't look the same.

LW KEYPOINT 2:

Compassion always trumps ritual.

We learned how God is a merciful God.

He doesn't want rules—He wants a relationship.

Here's why—God's rules and commands were intended to do one thing—to show us how holy God is and how sinful we are.

God's rules reveal and demonstrate our desperate need for the Lord Jesus Christ as a Savior.

And then I concluded last week by asking you how important rest is to you.

Many of us don't like to rest because we would have to slow down. Think

I talked to one of my mentors about the Sabbath Day and told him the changes I'm making in my schedule because of God's work in my heart.

He mentioned that the Sabbath Day rest is similar to tithing.

He said that just as we have to trust God with committing ten percent of our income to the local church—and by doing so we trust God can do *infinitely more than we might ask or think* with our measly little ten percent—than we ever could.

So it is with the Sabbath Day of rest—that if we commit one day a week to not work but rest, that God will do above and beyond all that we ask or even think with our time.

Since last Sunday, have you changed your schedule to rest?

Have you made some modifications for the New Year?

Have you examined your priorities?

Are your priorities God's priorities?

LW KEYPOINT 3:

Jesus Christ is our Sabbath.

It is in Jesus the Christ where we find rest.

Just as we find our joy, peace and comfort.

INTRODUCTION:

Last week, we saw Jesus as the *Lord of the Sabbath*.

Today, we see Him as the *Lord of Mercy* on the Sabbath Day.

In other words, Matthew, our Gospel writer, proves Jesus' claim from last week when he told the Pharisees—

Matthew 12:6—*I tell you that something greater than the temple is here.*

Matthew 12:8—*For the Son of Man is Lord of the Sabbath."*

How does Jesus prove that He is indeed Lord/Ruler/Master/Creator?

What does this mean for you today? Let's find out!

Please stand for the reading and honoring of God's Word.

SCRIPTURE:

Matthew 12:9— Moving on from there, he entered their synagogue.

Matthew 12:10— 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?"

Matthew 12:11— 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?"

Matthew 12:12— A person is worth far more than a sheep; so it is lawful to do what is good on the Sabbath."

Matthew 12:13— Then he told the man, "Stretch out your hand." So he stretched it out, and it was restored, as good as the other.

Matthew 12:14— But the Pharisees went out and plotted against him, how they might kill him.

These are the very words from the authoritative, inerrant, inspired, and infallible Word of Almighty God.

PRAY:

Lord, hear my prayer;

listen to my cries for mercy. (Psalm 86:6)



EXEGESIS:

Matthew 12:9— *Moving on from there, (Jesus) entered their synagogue.*

Matthew gives a subtle hint of the tension that is forming between the corporate religious establishment and Himself—their synagogue.

If this passage were a movie today, we start to hear some troubling background music begin to play.

It's no longer God's synagogue. It's "theirs."

Matthew informs us that the Jewish synagogues have become a man-made institution with man-made rules.

We see the same thing today, don't we?

It's an absolute tragedy when a church is no longer a church.

It is repulsive to God, despicable to its members, and nauseating to the community when the local church is not the true church of Jesus the Christ— but a club.

A religious club is where our sinful consciences are eased by taking Scripture out of its context and twisting/distorting it say whatever the preacher wants it to say.

You know a church is no longer a church when the Word of God is no longer read and expounded—instead you get a Sunday morning pep talk or a Ted talk on how to make your better/easier/more comfortable.

A church is no longer a church when the preacher preaches on "series" rather on the books of the Bible—Dr. Martyn Llyod Jones called these men "Pulpiteers."

A church is no longer a church when sin, death and hell are no longer in preachers vocabulary.

A church is no longer a church when social issues of the day trump the Great Commission.

A church is no longer a church when membership or church discipline are not priorities.

A religious club is where Jesus is no longer honored, loved, exalted, and worshiped, regardless of what's its attendees say.

Make no doubt about it—It's an abomination when Jesus simply turns into a mascot.

And yet, look at this—Jesus doesn't give up on the Pharisees.—

+ **Matthew 12:9**— *he entered their synagogue.*

This is Jesus' habit—He continues to travel from town to town and village to village to teach and preach the Gospel in their synagogues.

+ **Matthew 12:10(a)**— *There he saw a man who had a shriveled hand,*

This poor man had a deformed hand.

The picture here is that it's useless—it's withered, shriveled, and paralyzed.

This man's hand is 'lifeless.'

+ **Matthew 12:10(b)**— *and in order to accuse him (Jesus) they asked him, "Is it lawful to heal on the Sabbath?"*

+ **Mark 3:2**— *In order to accuse him, they were watching him closely ...*

+ **Luke 6:7**— *The scribes and Pharisees were watching him closely... so that they could find a charge against him.*

All three Gospels paint a grim and graphic picture—these men spying on Jesus *out of the corner of their eyes*.

There is one word for what these men are doing: sinister.

They are not there to worship God or encourage others—they're sitting in the synagogue out of pure wickedness, scrutinizing every word and deed of Jesus.

→ give, fellowship, serve

The same thing happens today throughout our country every weekend—I saw that first hand when I worked at Alliance Defending Freedom.

Certain groups of people go into churches that they don't like to spy on them.

The Pharisees are doing the same here—conducting a formal investigation of this rogue Rabbi.

Their investigation is political.

Think about Jesus' resume so far:

- He's a blasphemer because He claims to be God (Mark 2:7)
- He's a friend of sinners (Mark 2:16)
- He's rebellious to all their religious customs (Mark 2:18)
- He's a Sabbath breaker (Mark 2:24)

In other words, Jesus can't do anything right in the eyes of these so-called religious men.

It's entirely possible that the Pharisees paid this man to sit in the synagogue that day to trap Him..

disabled

Pharisee's Ask

+ **Matthew 12:10 (b)**— "Is it lawful to heal on the Sabbath?"

So the Pharisees are coming right at Jesus with this question—they are going for his throat.

And in doing so, they are admitting that Jesus can heal.

They are confessing that Jesus has miraculous powers—while they don't.

It's interesting that the Scribes and Pharisees never denied Jesus' miracles—because they'd seen Jesus heal with their own two eyes.

It is fairly comical to hear people today—two thousand years removed from the actual events—deny these miracles as if they were there.

Regardless, because the religious leaders know that Jesus can heal, they want to see if He will heal on the Sabbath Day—which in turn would be against their man-made rules.

The Pharisees are testing Jesus because the man's hand was not a life-or-death issue.

Their silly little rule said that if Jesus wanted to heal this man, Jesus was obligated to wait until Sundown when the Sabbath Day was over.


So the Pharisees want, at best, to bring a legal charge against Jesus by claiming that He's working on the Sabbath Day which equals the death penalty.

Or, at least slander His reputation.

+ Luke 6:8(a)—*But (Jesus) knew their thoughts...*

So Jesus knows this is a trap and immediately starts to play offense.

Jesus is not going to be intimidated by religious thugs.

 **Luke 6:8(b)**—and told the man with the shriveled hand, “Get up and stand here.”

Now how uncomfortable is this moment for this disabled man?


The Pharisees may have paid this man to do this—but regardless, he is still embarrassed to stand in front of the congregation for everyone to see his disability.

Why would Jesus ask this man to stand in front of everyone? Sympathy!

Look at him! He’s unable to work and feed his family! Do you not feel sorry for this man?!

It’s hard for us today to make a living with a bad hand—can you imagine how much harder it was in the first century?

At this point, the Lord Jesus starts to ask a series of questions.

 **Matthew 12:11**— “Who among you,

Jesus uses the same phrase, “*Who among you ...*” on several other occasions.

When He asks this question He’s inviting people to think—and to consider things that are absurd.

Jesus asks—*Who among you...*

- *Can add an hour of life by worrying* (Matt. 6:27)?
- *Will give his child a stone or a snake for food* (Matt. 7:9–10; Luke 11:11–12)?

No one does these things— no one fails to rescue an animal that’s in pain or danger either.

Every Pharisee in that synagogue would rescue his sheep regardless of what day it was...

Jesus' point is that the Pharisees treated people with less respect than they treated their animals.

But it's like Jesus got no response after telling the congregation to look at this man.

Jesus didn't get sympathy from the people so He asks another question—

Mark 3:4— "Is it lawful to do good on the Sabbath or to do evil, to save life or to kill?" But they were silent.

What's wrong with you guys? (And moves into a short parable).

Matthew 12:11— "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?"

Matthew 12:12(a)— A person is worth far more than a sheep;

Any sane person would save a drowning child before a drowning sheep.

So to answer your question...Jesus says...

Matthew 12:12(b)— it is lawful to do what is good on the Sabbath."

Still no response—

The Pharisees refuse to answer Jesus.

Think about this—what could they possibly say that wouldn't embarrass themselves?

If they admitted that it was lawful to do good and save a life on the Sabbath, they couldn't accuse Jesus of breaking their man-made rules.

But, if they claimed that it was lawful to do evil and kill people, then they would have indicted themselves.

So they only had one choice—to keep silent.

+ **Mark 3:5**— After looking around at them with anger, he was grieved at the hardness of their hearts...

Jesus is angry with a holy indignation.

You and I get angry when we don't get our own way—and that's called sin.

Jesus gets angry at the injustice that's being done to this man—that's called righteousness.

Jesus' anger doesn't have to do with Himself.

Jesus' anger is other's focused.

In other words, Jesus asks—*How dare you sit there in good health and not help this man!*

The sinfulness of sin grieved Jesus' heart.

The Pharisees' hard hearts cause Jesus sorrow.

So Jesus not only feels sorry for the disabled man, He feels sorrow for the Pharisees because they are so blinded from the truth.

They are so wrapped up in their own rules and traditions that they can't understand the truth even if they wanted to.

Here's a passage that the Pharisees are supposed to know and live by:

Micah 6:6—What should I bring before the Lord when I come to bow before God on high?
Should I come before him with burnt offerings, with year-old calves?

Micah 6:7— Would the Lord be pleased with thousands of rams or with ten thousand streams of oil?
Should I give my firstborn for my transgression, the offspring of my body for my own sin?

The prophet Micah is sarcastic and asking rhetorical questions.

In other words, what can I do to make God happy—what do I need to give Him?

Micah 6:8— Mankind, he has told each of you what is good and what it is the Lord requires of you:
to act justly, (fairly/impartially.)
to love faithfulness,
and to walk humbly with your God.

God doesn't want your stuff—the stuff He gave you—He wants your heart.

Why don't the Pharisee's know this? Because of their bad theology.

We all live out of our theology, whether it's good or bad.

Luke 6:10 NLT— ^{Jesus} He looked around at them one by one...

How awkward is this moment?

Jesus looked at each self-righteous religious Pharisee, staring a hole through their souls, waiting for them to repent.

Talking about hearing a pin drop—what are the other folks doing?

I'm guessing they are holding their breath! (Best church service ever!)

What's the disabled man thinking?

- *Why is nobody answering?*
- *Doesn't anyone care?*
- *Doesn't anyone want me to get well?*
- *I can't believe no one is standing up for me!"*

There's lots going on in this moment and Jesus needs to act right now.

If Jesus waited just a few hours until the Sabbath was over, that would have conveyed the wrong message to the congregation—that the Scribes and Pharisees were right.

So Jesus is tired of waiting.

Matthew 12:13(a)— *Then he told the man, "Stretch out your hand."*

The music in the background intensifies.

This man, ashamed and embarrassed, looks at Jesus, like I can't—

And then Jesus nods and smiles with the most loving and compassionate face this man has ever seen—

And the moment he tries—BAM! It's healed.

Matthew 12:13(b)—*So he stretched it out, and it was restored, as good as the other.*

The cure, like Jesus' other miracles was instantaneous.

There was no need for him to follow up with Dr. Luke.

There was no need for physical therapy.

Pause: Do we know anything about this man's faith?

God is sovereign—He chooses to have compassion on people.

At this point, this man's faith was not important—why?

Because the purpose of Jesus' miracles were to prove what He taught and preached was true. = God | Messianic Savior

What do you think the congregation did?

What do you think this man did?

What did the Pharisees do?

They hit the floor, begged for mercy, repented of their sins and worshipped the Lord Jesus.

Matthew 12:14— But the Pharisees went out and plotted against him, how they might kill him.

Notice how God's gift of mercy | made the sinful Pharisee's hearts even harder.

So their anger escalates and they double down.

Here, we see one of the biggest problems that still exists in our Churches today—unqualified and immature men leading the local church.

Time changes nothing.

Luke 6:11—They, however, were filled with rage and started discussing with one another what they might do to Jesus.

Why were the Pharisees so angry—filled with rage?

Rage: fury and foolishness.

Have you ever noticed that anger makes us stupid?

And that's what sin does—it makes us all stupid!

The Pharisees are so enslaved to their own man-made religion—they can't see straight.

They were as religious as religious people get.

These men are filled with religious rage.

Yes, the Pharisees are angry because Jesus is not conforming to their traditions and is intentionally breaking their rules—no doubt.

But the real reason these religious men are filled with religious rage is because Jesus is holy/different/set apart—and they are not.

And these men prove they are not holy because they go from bad to worse:

Mark 3:6—Immediately the Pharisees went out and started plotting with the Herodians against him, how they might kill him.

Angry men can't make rational or logical decisions.

The picture here is that these men already had their mind made up—Jesus deserved to die.

All they need to do now is figure out how.

If these men were godly men and men of God's Word, they would search the Scriptures to see if what Jesus was doing was right.

But they are not godly men—they are evil men.

And evil men do evil things—worldly things.

They don't go to God. They go to the Herodians.

Do you know who the Herodians are—King Herod.

These so-called religious men continue to turn away from God and turn to the politicians!

Here's the irony—the Pharisees hated the Herodians.

The Pharisees viewed the Herodians as traitors to Israel—just like tax collectors.

The Herodians couldn't have been more different than the Pharisees.

Usually, they were enemies.

However, the Pharisees and Herodians took time out from hating one another to hate Jesus.

The Pharisees hated Jesus because he was holy.

The Herodians hated Jesus because Jesus was becoming so popular that He was now a threat to Rome. (John 6:15; 19:12).

Church and state will always cooperate to get rid of anyone who is truly righteous and influential.

Here's the sad comedy of the situation—

The Pharisees are so blinded by trying to keep the Sabbath Day holy —the fourth commandment—that they are scheming and planning to break the sixth commandment—murder. *Why? - God's mercy*

Wow, that makes perfect sense.

But that's what sin does—sin is irrational and illogical.

The prophet Jeremiah once said, "***Men make their own gods***" (Jer. 16:20).

When religious people, like the Pharisees, make a god, it tends to look just like them.

Sadly, their love of themselves and their man-made rules will keep them away from the truth of the Gospel.

 **PREACH:**

When we talk about Jesus being the “Lord of Mercy” what do we mean? And how do we apply this to our lives today?

From a human perspective, mercy is simply having concern for someone or compassion on someone—and doing something about it.

From God’s perspective, mercy is the foundation of His forgiveness through Christ Jesus the Lord.


Mercy is a complex concept —so much so that multiple Hebrew and Greek words are used to express it.

We have to use English synonyms like *compassion, lovingkindness, favor, and steadfast love.*


In God’s mercy, He shows sinners pity. *-God knows we are made of dust.*

Mercy is God *withholding what we deserve*—justice for our sins.

We see God’s mercy throughout Scripture.

 **Nehemiah 9:31 NLT**—*But in your great mercy, you did not destroy them completely or abandon them forever. What a gracious and merciful God you are!*

The ultimate expression of God’s mercy comes through the Lord Jesus Christ.

 **Ephesians 2:4**—*But God, who is rich in mercy, because of his great love that he had for us,*

 **Ephesians 2:5**—*made us alive with Christ even though we were dead in trespasses.*

And Jesus continually demonstrated His compassion and mercy by teaching the Gospel and healing those who were hurting and sick.

If you have heard and responded to God's call of mercy—and your life is a living testimony of God's mercy—Praise God!

Questions:

- Are you now a good steward of God's mercy?
- Do you give mercy away in the same way that God has give it to you?
- Do you let compassion, care and mercy flow through you to others?
- If not, why?
- Are you not a compassionate person?

Today's passage revealed many things—and one thing to note is that some of the most religious people are the most hard hearted, angry, and merciless people you will ever meet. Why?

Because they're religious—and not saved.

Please know that the Lord Jesus is not only the Lord of Mercy, but He is also the Lord of Justice.

God has given His Son as an act of mercy—but if you don't believe, if you don't confess your sins, and come under the blood of Christ Jesus—then please know you won't get mercy—you'll get God's justice in a very real place called hell.

God's mercy flowing through His people proves that you're His child.

I pray that you would give it away this way.

 **LORD'S SUPPER:**

BENEDICTION

And may the Lord make your love for one another and for all people grow and overflow, just as our love for you overflows. ¹³ May he, as a result, make your hearts strong, blameless, and holy as you stand before God our Father when our Lord Jesus comes again with all his holy people. Amen. (1 Thess. 3:12-13 NLT)

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