

Session 9 Jesus' Ministry (Jn. 5; Mt. 12)

I. JESUS' SECOND VISIT TO JERUSALEM (JN. 5)

- A. Jesus left Galilee, having just finished this first ministry tour of Galilee (Lk. 4:44). Jesus returned to Jerusalem for a feast, often seen as His second Passover—April AD 28 (Jn. 5:1).

¹***After this there was a feast of the Jews, and Jesus went up to Jerusalem. (Jn. 5:1)***

1. There were three feasts that the Mosaic Law required Jewish males to attend: Passover, Pentecost, Tabernacles. John connected his narrative to the Jewish feasts in Jerusalem—Passover (2:13; 6:4), Tabernacles (7:2); Dedication (10:22); and Passover (12:1).
2. This is the only feast John did not identify. On other occasions, John identified the feast since the teaching that Jesus gave there was relevant to that feast (Jn. 2:13; 6:4; 7:2; 10:22; 12:1).

Tonight is session nine. We are beginning in John 5 where Jesus has just finished His first tour of Galilee. We looked at that in Luke 4-5 last session. Now He is going back to Jerusalem for His second visit to the city of Jerusalem since He was anointed at His baptism.

*In John 5:1, “After this there was a feast of the Jews...” Jesus went up **to Jerusalem from Galilee** is the idea. Most believe it is a Passover although John does not identify this feast as a Passover, but it is the most commonly-held view.*

- B. Jesus healed a man on the Sabbath in Jerusalem (Jn. 5:2-9). This caused great hostility among the Pharisees. John intentionally developed this hostility in John 5-10.

Here He goes into Jerusalem where He is going to start a chain reaction of events, and He is going to do it on purpose. He is going to heal somebody on the Sabbath, and it is going to disturb all of the religious leadership of Jerusalem. Jesus is not going to honor the religious systems that they put in place related to the Sabbath that went above and beyond God's requirements in the Word. Sometimes religious traditions and religious culture, if you are in it long enough, seem to have the same authority as the Word of God. After years and years and years, that is what happened in Jerusalem.

- C. Jesus healed an infirm man at the Pool of Bethesda on the Sabbath (Jn. 5:2-9). On various occasions, when an angel stirred up the waters, the first person to enter this pool would be healed. Isaiah prophesied that the Messiah would heal the lame (Isa. 35:6).

²***Now there is in Jerusalem by the Sheep Gate a pool, which is called in Hebrew, Bethesda...***

³***In these lay a great multitude of sick people, blind, lame, paralyzed, waiting for the moving of the water.*** ⁴***For an angel...stirred up the water; then whoever stepped in first, after the stirring of the water, was made well...*** ⁵***A certain man was there who had an infirmity thirty-eight years.***

⁶***When Jesus saw him lying there...He said to him, “Do you want to be made well?”*** ⁷***The sick man answered Him, “Sir, I have no man to put me into the pool when the water is stirred up...”***

⁸***Jesus said to him, “Rise, take up your bed and walk.” ...*** ⁹***And immediately the man was made well, took up his bed, and walked. And that day was the Sabbath. (Jn. 5:2-9)***

Jesus healed an infirm man and the Pool of Bethesda, and the point is that He did it on the Sabbath. Verse 2, there is in Jerusalem a pool and it is called Bethesda. Verse 3: this is an unusual situation, which has created a

whole lot of interest this passage here. It says that there lay a great multitude of sick people around this pool—the blind, the lame, the paralyzed. They waited by the pool for an angel to come and stir the waters. When the angel came—just randomly, nobody knew when, they would just wait eagerly day after day—when the angel of the Lord stirred the waters, the first one in was healed.

Verse 5, a certain man was there who had an infirmity for thirty-eight years. It is interesting that in verse 6, when Jesus saw him, He asked what seems like an out-of-place question, “Do you want to be healed?”

It is like, “After thirty-eight years being infirmed, well, what do you think? Of course I do!”

Remember, Jesus does not ask any irrelevant questions.

The sick man says, “Well, yes, but here’s the reason I am not healed: I do not have anybody to put me in the water when the water gets stirred up by the angel. Other guys always jump in first.”

So, Jesus heals him. Verse 8, He says, “Rise up,” because he was infirmed, he had some kind of disability related to walking. Here comes the storm: “and take up your bed” because to take up his bed on Sabbath was to work on the Sabbath. Jesus understood that that was what the Jews decided was God’s way. It was not God’s way, but the Jews had made it that way for some long period of time. So He says it on purpose: take up your bed. It is going to create a big storm.

Immediately, verse 9, the guy is made whole. He jumps up. This is amazing! He takes up his bed. He is probably not thinking that much about it. He is walking right through the city. All the leaders that he passes, they are very upset. “This is the Sabbath! You cannot carry something on the Sabbath! That is work! You have to honor God.”

The guy must have been thinking, “Whoa, what? Guys, chill! I just got healed! It has been thirty-eight years since I have walked. I mean this is like amazing!”

1. **Do you want to be made well?:** This question is an important part of his healing. One of the first steps in receiving healing and living in wholeness is a sincere desire for it. Some people find their identity in their sickness—seeking sympathy or providing an excuse to not attempt something that they might fail at. If they are sick, they have an excuse not to attempt things.

Well, let’s look at the question, “Do you want to be made well?” Now this question is actually an important part of the healing process. I mean for some people, their answer is, “Yes, for sure,” but the sincere desire to be made well and the sincere desire to **confront the issues related to whatever makes us not well** must go together. One of the first steps in healing and the journey to wholeness is the desire to be whole and to confront the issues that are hindering our wholeness, to really confront them.

Now some people find their identity in sickness. Not so many, but there are quite a few out there. Though the percentage is not high, some find their identity in being weak and needing sympathy or they find their identity in sickness. Meaning, if they are always sick, then they never have to attempt something they are afraid they are going to fail at because “I am sick. I would do it, but I am sick, so I cannot.” Thus, they hide behind sickness so they never have to rise up and face fearful things they worry they might not succeed in doing. Now I do **not** think that for the majority of the sick people that is what is going on.

In this man’s case, it was a little more complicated as we are going to find in verse 14 that Jesus is going to identify there was sin in his life that was contributing to his sickness. Personal sin does not contribute to everybody’s sickness. That is not a principle. Though it is true in some cases, it is not true in every case. Not every sick person is in sin. Not every person living in sin gets sick. Sometimes it is related, and this time it was.

2. **Take up your bed:** Jesus told him to carry his bed, knowing it was the Sabbath (5:9). By doing this, the man ignited a controversy.
3. **Sabbath:** Breaking the Sabbath was a capital offense; it could result in being stoned to death.

Breaking the Sabbath was a capital offense. Breaking the Sabbath was not just an issue of being criticized in the Church that you did not do things right. It was a legal, criminal offense with the death penalty. You went to prison, and then you were killed. So this was a very serious issue in Jerusalem in the first century.

- a. God's intention behind the fourth commandment was that people not work on the Sabbath (Ex. 20:9). It was associated with earning a living from one's employment. Rabbinic tradition identified 39 categories of work—including carrying things.

Now they had wrong thinking to add so much more to the Sabbath law—the fourth commandment—than God intended. One of the reasons why Israel went into Babylonian captivity 500 years before Christ was because they had not obeyed the Sabbath laws. They were in captivity for seventy years in Babylon about 500 BC. Now it is 500 years later, and they have built up this culture of absolute fanaticism about never, ever dishonoring the Sabbath. They added so much to it.

God's original intention for the Sabbath—in the Ten Commandments it is the fourth commandment—is that people would not work. The real idea was mostly related to their occupation and earning a living. They were commanded to rest physically for their own well-being and also to give them time to focus on the Lord as a family. It was not just a day of vacation or a day of recreation, but it was a day to draw back to rest and also a day to make room for God in a really focused way; that was the idea. Rest your body and fill your soul. That was what the Sabbath was about in the most simplistic way.

- b. This man did not break the law, but only violated the rabbinic interpretation of it.

Their rabbinic tradition developed over 500 years of being so careful so as not to ever go into captivity again. I mean Babylon had taken thousands of them into prison camps, into work camps, and they had said, "We are going to be so zealous now!" They piled up all these extra rules. There were thirty-nine categories of work that were forbidden. One of the categories of work is that you cannot carry anything from here to there, anything. You cannot. Completely shut down. That was one of the categories, but that was not what God meant when He gave the fourth commandment.

- D. The religious leaders sought to kill Jesus (Jn. 5:16, 18). Jesus used this occasion of their opposition to His Sabbath healing to describe His relationship to His Father (5:17-30). These leaders were not moved by the healing, but only by the fact that their religious code was not being upheld.

¹⁴...Jesus said, "...Sin no more, lest a worse thing come upon you"...¹⁶The Jews...sought to kill Him, because He had done these things on the Sabbath. ¹⁷But Jesus answered them, "My Father has been working until now, and I have been working." ¹⁸Therefore the Jews sought all the more to kill Him, because...[Jesus] said that God was His Father, making Himself equal with God. (Jn. 5:10-18)

Now Jesus gets to a really specific point. In verse 14, Jesus finds the guy after the Pharisees were all stirred up and yelling at the guy, "Why are you carrying it?"

The man said, "That guy told me to, the guy who healed me. I do not even know who He is. You know I have not been around. I have never even seen Him before."

So Jesus finds him afterwards, in verse 14. He says, "Hey, specifically for you, sin no more lest a worse thing come upon you." So the clear indication was that in this man's case—again not in every case—his sickness was related to his sin. Jesus was saying, "You do not want to get into that position again because it will be worse."

So now in verse 16, the Jews are so angry at Him because He has just—in their face—defied their interpretation of the Sabbath. Who is this upstart from out of town? Because He had been to Jerusalem before and had disrupted all the tables in the temple, they are thinking, "Here is that guy again from Nazareth, that town on the other side of the tracks. He is here again! What is the deal?" They were very angry. In verse 16, they wanted to kill Him.

Then in verse 17, Jesus really changes the conversation. He shifts the conversation to a whole other view of the Sabbath. He says in verse 17, "My Father has been working until now, and I am working with Him." In other words, "The Father is working on the Sabbath right now. The Father and I are so close that I am doing His work on the Sabbath, but He is the One working on the Sabbath. He is the One you are not in agreement with."

They are thinking, "What are You talking about?" Then in verse 18, they got really upset all the more. Previously they had really wanted to kill Him because He broke the Sabbath in their eyes, but then He declared God His Father, making Himself equal to God.

So Jesus used this occasion of the Sabbath to establish a break with them, a confrontation. It is the first big one, and it happens in Jerusalem. Then we are going to see in a few moments that He is going to go up to Galilee—remember Galilee is up north—and He is going to provoke a series of Sabbath-day controversies. He is going to go to the synagogue on a Sabbath and heal a guy in front of everybody to stir up the conversation, but His first confrontation is in Jerusalem, which is proper. That is, He went to Jerusalem first and gave them a chance to understand the correct way they should view the Sabbath in His presence.

Jesus also used this occasion to describe His relationship with the Father. They did not even know He had a unique relationship with God. One of the sad things about the story is that the leaders were not moved at all by the fact that a man who had been unable to walk for thirty-eight years was now walking. I mean that is a big part of the story, but none of the leaders cared about that. This carpenter from Nazareth broke their rules. Who cares that a guy paralyzed or infirmed for thirty-eight years is walking?

1. **Lest a worse thing happen:** Jesus warned the man not to continue in sin (Jn. 5:14). This man's sickness was related to his sin. Sins if persisted in can affect our circumstances (Acts 5:1-11; 1 Cor. 11:30; 1 Jn. 5:16). This does not mean that everyone who sins will be struck with sickness. John clarified that some sickness isn't the result of someone's sin (9:3).

I have already made this point, but I will make it again, that Jesus warned him not to see his healing as an opportunity to go sin more. Some people get blessed by God and think, "Hey, I guess if God is blessing me and He knows I am doing something wrong, but He is still blessing me, it must be okay that I am doing it."

Jesus would say, "No, you have it wrong. I am blessing you because I am telling you I love you and I want you to come into agreement with Me. It is to motivate you to repent, not to confirm that your sin is okay."

Some people completely misinterpret the blessing of God when they are sinning. God is wooing them out of their sin. They are thinking, "Hey, it is working! God is blessing me; I am going to keep on in my compromise."

Again, the Bible is clear. I want you to see these verses. Specific sins persisted in not always but can affect circumstances. Check out these verses I have here (Acts 5:1-11; 1 Cor. 11:30; 1 Jn. 5:16). It is something you do not hear about much today. Most groups that really believe in healing do not regard these biblical truths. People who are not really into healing, they are really into "you get sick if you sin." The truth is, we believe in

healing **and that** the principle that specific sin can cause sickness is still a dynamic truth in the Bible. These are two truths to hold in tension, lest you become one of Job's friends, and you know Job's friends thought Job was sinning all the time when he was not. Jesus tells us in John 9, a couple chapters later, concerning one man, "He is blind, but it has nothing to do with his sin; it is so that the glory of God might be manifested in his life."

2. **My Father has been working:** Jesus understood that God was constantly at work (Jn. 5:17). Many rabbis taught that God works on the Sabbath to uphold creation. Jesus' point was that since God works on the Sabbath it validated Jesus working on the Sabbath with the Father.

Here is an important part of the Sabbath controversy as it was known and understood by rabbis: that God worked on the Sabbath. Now we know He created for six days and rested on the seventh, but to sustain the created order God works. If God quit working, the sun would go out.

So, the rabbis said, "Well, of course the Creator and sustainer of the universe works every moment of every day. Yes, God works on the Sabbath, but that is different. He sustains the universe." They understood He was always at work.

Jesus' point was "Yes, the Father is always working, and that is why I am always working."

They were thinking, "You are comparing Yourself to the God of the universe who works on the Sabbath?"

"Yes."

Oh, they were so angry when He said this!

3. **Jesus had been working:** God did not cease His work on the Sabbath, and neither did Jesus. God's work includes healing and restoring lives, not just maintaining the universe. Since Jesus worked with God, His relationship to the law of Moses was the same as God's (not the same as fallen man's). He emphasized His unique "Father-Son relationship" with God (5:18).

So He said, "If God does not cease working on the Sabbath, why should I, because I am working with Him?" It was a veiled, but not so veiled, declaration of His deity.

They got it. They said, "You are making Yourself equal to God. You are declaring that You are working because God is working, and it is one and the same."

He said, "Right." They were so upset!

- E. Jesus clarified His relationship to God as a Son fully dependent and submitted to Him (Jn. 5:19-21). Jesus does nothing of Himself or on His own initiative. He taught that the Father was greater than the Son (Jn. 14:28). The Father's love for Jesus is manifested in His continuous revealing to the Son all that He does (5:20). Jesus doing whatever the Father does is seen in Jesus having authority to give life to the dead (5:21) and to judge or evaluate everyone on the last day (5:22).

¹⁹Then Jesus...said to them, "...the Son can do nothing of Himself, but what He sees the Father do; for whatever He does, the Son also does in like manner. ²⁰For the Father loves the Son, and shows Him all things that He Himself does...²¹For as the Father raises the dead...even so the Son gives life to whom He will. ²²For the Father...has committed all judgment to the Son, ²³that all should honor the Son..." (Jn. 5:19-23)

Now Jesus wants to clarify that He does not have authority equal to the Father. The Father has greater authority. He wants to clarify that. The Bible makes it clear that Jesus in His essence is equally God. He is as much God as the Father and the Spirit. They are all equal in their deity, but they are different in Their function and Their authority within the fellowship of the Godhead.

The Father has the supreme authority. He is not more God than the Son or the Spirit, but within the fellowship of the Trinity the Father has the greater authority. So Jesus wants to clarify this. He explains, "I am not equal to God in authority. You do not really understand how this works. I am fully dependent and fully submitted to My Father, though I work with Him in all things." This was a completely new idea to the Jews, well, to the whole human race actually, not just the Jewish leaders, as nobody had heard of such an idea.

Verse 19, Jesus said, "The Son can do nothing of Himself." What He was saying is, "I am not equal to My Father in authority. I do not initiate anything. All the works that I do are His idea. He inspires Me, and I do what He is doing. I am the visible expression of what the Father wants. So if He wants that man healed on the Sabbath, I will heal on the Sabbath. If He wants the universe to be run, I participate with Him in all things."

Verse 20, He went on, "Let Me tell you,"—I mean these guys were really upset—"the Father so loves Me,"—look at this in verse 20—"He tells Me everything He is doing."

They were looking at Him, "You are a Man, a lowly carpenter from a Nazareth, and You are telling us God likes You so much He tells You everything He is doing so that You do it with Him?"

He nodded, "Yeah, that is what I am telling you." He went on again, "Let Me take it up a notch. I do not just heal on the Sabbath because My Father wants the healing to happen. It is going to go way beyond that,"—verse 21—"you know the Hebrew scriptures, that the Father raises the dead at the end of the age. I am going to raise the dead at the end of the age with My Father. Far more than raising an infirm man in Jerusalem on the Sabbath, I am going to raise all of the dead by working with My Father, by My word."

Verse 22, "The Father has entrusted all judgment to Me. Every human being that has ever walked the earth will come under My evaluation. If I think they have done right according to the Scriptures, then they have. If I think they have not done right, then they have not. If all the judgment of, the evaluation of, every human being that has ever been born is entrusted to Me, then I can interpret the Sabbath laws and how they should operate."

I mean they were so mad at Him. They were thinking, "No man has ever talked this way!" Of course, no other man has ever had the authority to talk that way.

- F. Jesus will call forth the dead (Jn. 5:24-29). Receiving spiritual life in the new birth *now* (Jn. 3:3) and resurrected physical life at His coming are aspects of His work in the dead hearing His voice.

25Most assuredly...the hour is coming, and now is, when the dead will hear the voice of the Son of God; and those who hear will live...²⁸for the hour is coming in which all who are in the graves will hear His voice²⁹and come forth—those who have done good, to the resurrection of life, and those who have done evil, to the resurrection of condemnation. (Jn. 5:25-29)

In verse 25, He takes it up a notch. He says, "Assuredly, the hour is coming." Now this is on the last day at the second coming; that is what He means. "The hour is coming." It is down the road. He says that not only is it future—2,000 years plus down the road—but the hour "now is." There is a present application to this future raising of the dead. He is talking about being born again, that a person can be raised from the dead right now, spiritually speaking, and receive new life and move from death to life.

He says, in effect, "I assure you," verse 25, "the hour is coming and actually the down payment of it is working right now." His authority over the realm of death is what He is talking about, when the dead will hear His voice. Now He says "the voice of the Son of God," but they know He is talking about Himself, and, of course, He is.

He says, "...and those that hear My voice that are dead will live." That is, "If you will hear Me now in your spiritual darkness and death, you can be born again and you can be alive right now by hearing My voice and believing Me. Then on the last day I will raise your body from the dead physically. So, you can be alive right now by hearing My voice and then brought to life on the last day."—that means the second coming of Christ when He appears; that is called the last day—"I will raise your physical body from the dead as well from the grave. I have that kind of authority, and that is why I can tell this man on the Sabbath to rise and walk—because I am going to open up all the graves one day with My voice."

Verse 28, He goes on, "Let Me be really clear, an hour is coming when everyone, all who are in the graves"—in the grave you know their body has decomposed and they are some little dust, everyone through history. Down in the sea: you know they were eaten by a fish, and then the fish died, and a thousand years later God is going to find their decomposed little DNA at the bottom of the sea. Everyone in the graves or anybody dead is the idea, verse 29—"they will come forth when I speak in that hour to all of created order. They will come forth at My word."

"Those that have done good"—He goes on in John 6:28-29 to explain that doing good means believing Him and committing to His leadership, then goodness comes out of it. He is not talking about earning salvation. Doing good means recognizing the Creator is the Savior and He has free grace available if we say yes to it and to His leadership—"I have a resurrection of life, but the people that have done evil, that have rejected My leadership"—and He is looking at those men and, they know He is talking about them if they do not change—"they are going to be raised, but it will be a resurrection of condemnation" because on the last day unbelievers get a physical body and then they go into the lake of fire with a physical body. Right now, dead unbelievers are in a holding pattern and only have a spirit. That is, they have a spirit man, but they do not have a physical body. Their body is still in the grave, just like believers in heaven. Their spirit person is there, but they do not have a physical body. On the last day believers and unbelievers get a physical body. One goes to the lake of fire, and one goes to the New Jerusalem.

G. Jesus returned to Galilee by the sea (Jn. 6:1). This probably occurred in May AD 28.

¹***After these things Jesus went over the Sea of Galilee, which is the Sea of Tiberias. (Jn. 6:1)***

Well I am cutting short His whole message in John 5. On His second visit to Jerusalem, He created a storm. On the first visit He knocked over all the tables, and He cleansed the temple. He comes back many months later, for the second one, and He heals on the Sabbath and says, "If God can work on the Sabbath, so can I, because My Father and I are one." Oh, man, it is just a storm breaking out! He is doing this strategically. He leaves town because He does not want it to come to a high pitch yet, because He wants to sow the seed of the gospel of the kingdom in every village or nearly all the villages of Israel.

Then once He has gone to all the villages and has trained His disciples, He is going to go back to Jerusalem and stir it back up again, knowing they will kill Him when He comes. All He has to do in Jerusalem is move in power and speak the truth, and they will kill Him. So John 6:1, "After these things, Jesus" now goes back up to Galilee by the sea. Capernaum is the city next to the Sea of Galilee where His home base was. Now He is going to begin His second tour of Galilee.

II. SABBATH CONTROVERSIES IN GALILEE (MT. 12:1-8; MK. 2:23-28; LK. 6:1-5)

- A. In Capernaum, Jesus gave a parable emphasizing the need to put new wine into new wineskins. This parable was given immediately *before* these next Sabbath conflicts (Mk. 2:18-22; Lk. 5:33-39). The disagreement between Jesus and the Pharisees concerning the way of righteousness and godly lifestyles was related to the principles seen in the parable of old and new wineskins.

Of this second tour, we are only going to look at it a little bit, the beginning of it. We have three accounts of the same events. We have Matthew 12, and that is the account we are going to stick with in this message. Mark 2-3 tell the same story, the same events, as Matthew 12. Luke 6 tells the same events, though each of the gospels adds a point or two. Matthew has an element or two more than the other ones, so I am mainly going to use Matthew 12 instead of Mark 2-3 or Luke 6.

You will see corresponding references in the notes. You can move between them; you can read the same stories. Again, you will find one extra little detail here and an added verse there. It is fascinating. I love to read them together and find out that other little part and say, "Oh wow, that is so good to put these two together!"

- B. The opposition against Jesus began when He forgave sins (Mt. 9:1-8) and escalated when He ate with sinners (Mt. 9:9-13). And now it exploded in context to a series of Sabbath controversies.

So, He is going right up to Galilee. First thing He is going to do is create a Sabbath controversy just like He did in Jerusalem. The story is spreading around everywhere. They did not have Facebook back then, but the story is traveling fast. I mean there is only one guy healing blind and paralyzed people and disturbing all the leadership in the city of Jerusalem—this carpenter from Nazareth. Everybody is hearing the news. It is spreading very fast.

In Matthew, the opposition began when He first forgave the sins of the paralytic. He said to the man, "Your sins are forgiven."

The religious leaders thought, "What? You cannot forgive someone's sin!"

He said, "Yeah, I can." Then it escalated when He ate with sinners and called Matthew, the tax collector, Levi. He called him and then went to his house with all the tax gatherers and sinners. Jesus said, "I love these guys." The Pharisees didn't like it.

Now it is going to explode because He is going to go beyond forgiving and hanging out with sinners. Now He is going to work on the Sabbath. Well, He is not really working. He is speaking a word with healing power, but it is going to provoke the Pharisees because He wants the issue to come to the surface as there is an important message in the issue. As long as the issue is buried and not addressed, there is a significant part of His message that is not being made clear.

- C. Mark's gospel reported events as they occurred chronologically; Matthew reported them according to themes. Matthew put miracles and teachings together without chronology as a priority.
- D. The disciples picked grain on the Sabbath, causing a strong Sabbath controversy in Galilee like that which had just happened in Jerusalem (Mt. 12:1-8; Mk. 2:23-28; Lk. 6:1-5). Jesus had three Sabbath confrontations in a row—one in Jerusalem and two in Galilee (Mt 12:1-8; 12:9-14). The ripening of the grain suggests May, so just a few weeks after Passover in Jerusalem (Jn. 5:1).

¹At 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. ²And when the Pharisees saw it, they said to Him, "Look, Your disciples are doing what is not lawful to do on the Sabbath!" ³But He said to them,

“Have you not read what David did when he was hungry...⁴he 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?...⁶I say to you that in this place there is One greater than the temple.” (Mt. 12:1-6)

Okay, here the disciples pick grain on the Sabbath. I have in the next sentence that Jesus has had three Sabbath confrontations in a row: the first one in Jerusalem, and now two of them up in Galilee. He is going to have two in a row, both of them in Matthew 12 or you can read them both in Luke 6 or Mark 2-3. Again we are going to go with the Matthew 12 because there are a few little points I want to pull out.

Matthew 12:1, “At this time Jesus went through the grain fields on the Sabbath. His disciples were hungry, so they begin to pluck heads of grain.” It says in Luke 6 that they rubbed it with their hands to husk it, to get it ready, and they ate it. The picking and rubbing it with their hands was considered reaping, so it was considered working, reaping the harvest. The Pharisees said you could not do that on the Sabbath: you cannot reap the harvest—even though calling what they were doing “harvesting” is a big stretch—as that was one of the thirty-nine categories.

1. The law allowed people to glean a few ears of grain as they passed by a field (Deut. 23:25).

Now one of the laws from Moses' day in Deuteronomy 23 is that if you were walking by somebody's cornfield you could not take any with you, but you could stop and eat your fill. It was kind of like the generosity of welfare system of the day. You could not live there, you could not camp out on their cornfield, but you could take what you needed in the corners. It was one of the laws of the land, this generosity built into the legal code. So the picking of the grain and eating it was not a problem. That was legal actually because you could only take so much in one sitting, but the problem was the fact that they did it on the Sabbath.

So verse 2, the Pharisees saw it and they said, “Look at Your disciples! They are dishonoring the Word of God. Look at them! They are reaping on the Sabbath.”

Jesus could easily have said, “Number one, that is not work. That is not really reaping. That only breaks one of your rules you added in the last couple hundred years. I appreciate your zeal to honor the Word of God, but it has gone beyond that. You have made a whole bunch of rules that play into your own hand because you are the authorities over the rules. This is not just zeal for God; it is your power base in the society as well.” Because, if you are the power brokers, you are the ones who can put somebody in jail if they break those laws.

So it was their whole power-based institution that was what going on there. Jesus was addressing that really as well. It was not that they were so zealous for God. If they were zealous for God, they would have accepted Jesus. No, He was messing with their economics, their power base, and their religious traditions that were all mixed together. They could not even separate which was about power, which was about money, and which was about religious tradition, as they were all merged together. All of them were a part of these laws. There was money involved in these, and power involved in these, that was related to the Pharisees.

2. Jesus appealed to a situation in David's life in the Scripture (1 Sam. 21:1-9). The house of God was the tabernacle that stood at Nob. David and his men ate consecrated bread that only the priests had a right to eat. Scripture did not condemn him for eating the consecrated bread because he was the Lord's anointed king who was fleeing from an evil government with its state sanctioned military directive to kill him. God permitted David to violate the ceremonial law in the face of a life and death issue. Jesus appealed to a time in David's life when Israel's evil leadership was rejecting him. The Son of David was now experiencing similar rejection.

Jesus said, as it were, "Okay, so you think My guys are breaking the Word of God, and you bring up the Word of God," verse 3, "so let's talk about the Word of God. How about the time David, when he was hungry just like My guys, went to the house of God, the tabernacle in the city of Nob, and he ate the showbread. It was not lawful for somebody to eat the showbread unless they were a priest—it was a ceremonial rule—but he ate it anyway. There was no condemnation against him. You are saying My disciples are breaking the Word of God? Well, I will use the Word of God. How come David was not condemned for eating that bread which a religious law said he could not? It was a ceremonial law, but he ate it anyway." It is a well-known story in 1 Samuel 21. They got silent.

Jesus gave them another story too, which I am not going to go into. I have some of the notes on it. Verse 6, Jesus said, "I want to tell you something, that in this place there is One greater than the temple, and One greater than the Sabbath right in front of you."

They were looking at Him out in the grain field. They are thinking, "What? Something greater than the temple?"

So let's look at this passage, and just take a few moments on it. Jesus appealed to the situation with David that I have just described. David and a group of guys went to the tabernacle in the city of Nob at that time, and they ate consecrated bread, meaning it was dedicated and only the priests could eat it under certain conditions. The Scriptures did not condemn David. Jesus is asking, "Since you are so zealous for the Word, why didn't the Scriptures condemn him? He broke the Word. I am using the Bible right now, guys." Their eyes probably got big.

He explained, "Let Me tell you why." Now He does not lay it all out here, but here is the reason. David was the anointed king of Israel. The fallen, reprobate king of Israel was using the power of the state to try to kill David. The anointed of the Lord was being pursued by a state-sanctioned military directive against him to kill him. He ran into the place, he was starving, it was an issue of life and death for him, and he asked for food. Jesus explained that whenever life and death is in the balance the ceremonial laws are secondary. He is not talking about the moral law. He is talking about the ceremonial laws. David was the Lord's anointed, not just anointed like we are all the Lord's anointed, millions of us. No, he was a singularly anointed person as the king of Israel, and there is only one at a time. He was in the line of the Messiah, a very unique position. He was being attacked by the power of the state to kill him. He was really hungry and needed food, and he was in flight.

What He is really saying was that David was being rejected by an evil leadership. His parallel was that He, the greater Son, the greater David, was being rejected by the evil leadership of Israel. It is a parallel; can't they see what was happening?

Not only that, but He is going to go on in a few moments—I am getting ahead of myself—and He is going to say, "I am the Lord of the Sabbath. I am far greater than David. I am greater than the temple. I am far greater than the temple and far greater than David. I have full authority, full authority, to interpret Sabbath laws because they came from Me; they are under My stewardship and under My authority. I am God."

This is tough for them. They are looking at this thirty-year-old young guy from Nazareth, no education, no resume, no anything going for Him, and they are thinking, "What are You talking about?" These guys are highly educated, they are all double, triple Ph. Ds, and they know the Bible back and forward, all the languages.

3. The issue to Jesus was not about understanding Sabbath laws. He made a remarkable claim that *Someone greater than the temple is present*—that the Son of Man is with His people as their Messianic King and Lord. The temple was important because it was the place of God's manifest presence (12:6). The presence of God in the person of Jesus was vastly superior.

The issue for the Pharisees was the religious law and the Sabbath application of them, the Sabbath laws and how to apply them. Jesus was saying, "That is not the issue. I am not talking about applying it strictly. I just told you David could eat the show bread because he was the anointed of the Lord and was in a life and death situation. It is only a ceremonial law." He went on, "I have something that is a shocking statement: something, someone, greater than the temple is right in front of you." Now the temple was the only place on planet earth where the manifest presence of God was. The only place on the earth was the Jerusalem temple that had it at one time—the manifest glory of God, the shekinah glory in the Holy of holies. It was the only place on planet earth and that was why it was so revered, so special, and so amazing. Jesus was saying, "I am the carrier of the presence of God far beyond that stone temple in Jerusalem. I am vastly superior." This is a most remarkable statement!

So He is taking it out of the debate about the technicalities, the debate of "What really can you carry? How far can you carry it? How much can it weigh and still carry it? Can you still have something in your pocket? If it is not very heavy, is that still work?" They debated all of that.

Jesus was saying, "You have completely the wrong conversation. I am greater than the temple. I am in front of you, your Messiah, your King, your God, and I have full authority over the Sabbath."

- E. Several months earlier Jesus told the Jewish authorities to learn that God desires mercy. Jesus was calling them to not relate to people (like Matthew) on the basis of their sin and failure (Mt. 9:13). Jesus wanted leaders to have a mindset of mercy (generosity) instead of condemning (criticizing) people who did uphold their extra religious requirements that were not in the Scripture (Mt 12:7).

¹³**But go and learn what this means: "I desire mercy and not sacrifice."** (Mt. 9:13)

⁷**But if you had known what this means, "I desire mercy and not sacrifice," you would not have condemned the guiltless.** (Mt. 12:7)

He went on to say, "If you had known what it means that I desire mercy and not sacrifice, you would not have condemned these disciples that are following Me as you have condemned them." Now it is very interesting that Jesus quotes this passage from Hosea 6:6. He is up in Galilee now, but just a few months earlier in the same area He quoted the same verse in Matthew 9. We talked about it in our last session. Look at here at Matthew 9:13. When Matthew the tax collector was called by Jesus, when Jesus said, "Come, follow Me. Come be on My team," Matthew got so excited that he had a big party and invited all the tax collectors. All the Pharisees got angry, and that is when Jesus said, "I did not come to call the righteous; I came to call sinners." Matthew added, "and Jesus said,"—look at Matthew 9:13; this is from last week, our last session— "go and learn that I desire mercy." Now Matthew wrote that about his own party at his own calling, but Mark and Luke did not put that verse in. Like I said last time, when Matthew is in heaven with those guys, I can see him asking, "Why didn't you put that in? That was my favorite sentence of the whole evening when Jesus said, 'I desire mercy, so go learn it.' I am the embodiment of a man who needs mercy."

Let's go back up to Matthew 12:7. Here it is a few months later, and Jesus is in the very same area in Galilee. He says, as it were, "If you really would have learned what I told you a few months ago!" Of course, the word had spread around everywhere concerning that verse in Hosea 6:6, "I want you to learn mercy." He was

saying, "I am a God of mercy, not a God of these rigid, manmade laws that condemn people." You see Jesus has so much energy about condemnation and condemning people because it destroys human life.

Concerning condemnation, let's talk about us for a minute, then I am going to talk about Israel. The power of condemnation is that it destroys hearts, and it destroys relationships. You could use the word, accusation, if you want. You could use the word, criticism, if you want. If you really want to get really intense, you could use the words, whispering about one another. They are all exactly the same thing. Jesus would say, "I do not want that because that spirit of condemnation, criticism—use the word you want—breaks lives, it breaks relationships, and it breaks hearts. I am a God who wants people to look at each other through the lens of mercy the way I look at them. I want them to enjoy the mercy I give them and not repel it with some religious spirit, but receive it with confidence. I want them to give it to other people, not to receive the mercy but then judge other people. I want mercy to be at the very center of My kingdom."

Remember, mercy is not a throwing away of God's ways. His mercy is extended when somebody breaks God's ways and they say to the Lord, "Lord. I failed and I want forgiveness. I want you to cover Me. I want you to give me a second chance." Mercy is not like, "You know, boys will be boys, so just let them do what they want and have mercy." That is not what mercy is. Mercy is extended to the people who are saying, "I blew it. I came up short. God, give me another chance. I am sincere, Lord." That is when mercy triumphs over judgment.

So this is as though He said, "At Matthew's party, I proclaimed this. Now it is a few months later, we are in the grain field, and you are judging again, and your judgments break the lives of the people under you." That is how judgment works socially and relationally. In Israel, it was more than social and relational, though that is how I just described it in the Church. In Israel, it was social and relational, but it was **also** legal and criminal. If you were condemned for breaking the law, I mean it was about being stoned or going to prison. So it was more than just being condemned; it was way beyond condemned. But in the kingdom of God or just in normal society, the condemnation still is real even without the legal overtones.

- F. Mark made two key statements (Mk. 2:23-28)—the Sabbath was made for man and Jesus was the Lord of the Sabbath. Jesus used the Sabbath controversies to emphasize His message that human need is more important than ceremonial laws and to clarify He had authority to interpret the law.

²⁷**And He said to them, "The Sabbath was made for man, and not man for the Sabbath.**

²⁸**Therefore the Son of Man is also Lord of the Sabbath." (Mk. 2:23-28)**

1. **The Sabbath was made for man:** God's ceremonial laws are designed to bless people. The Pharisees "condemned people"—this had serious social, legal, and economic implications.

In Mark 2, Mark was writing a parallel passage describing the exact same event in Matthew 12, and he adds these two big statements Jesus made. You could put Mark 2:27 right into Matthew 12 where we have been reading. Mark says it so clearly. The number one principle: the Sabbath was made for man, not man for the Sabbath. The Sabbath was not like murder or adultery, but it was an honoring-type institution and ordinance in the culture. God created religious ceremonies and things like the Sabbath so that man could be strengthened, that man could be rested, and that man would have time to interact with God. It was all about building man up. It was not to create all these rules to crush a man.

2. **Lord of the Sabbath:** As the Son of Man (v. 5), Jesus was vastly superior to David, and thus He could set aside a Pharisaic tradition for the welfare of His followers. We see Jesus' authority in a new way. Thus, all the commands related to the Sabbath are under Jesus' authority. As Messiah, He is the authoritative interpreter of the Law.

Number two, Jesus looked at them and said, "As the Son of Man, I am greater than the temple, I am the Lord of the Sabbath. I am the authoritative interpreter of the Sabbath because I am the One who spoke the word about the Sabbath to Moses. Because I spoke to Moses, I am before Moses. I am before Abraham. They spoke of Me. I am the One who appeared on various occasions to the patriarchs."

3. Rather than avoiding a conflict, Jesus intentionally provoked one to proclaim His message. Jesus offended the mind of these leaders to bring their evil heart intentions to the surface.
- G. Many categorize the laws that Moses gave into three groups—moral, ceremonial, and civil laws. The Bible does not definitely do this since some laws overlap in purpose. God's moral laws are timeless and universal since they are based on God's character. The Sabbath is a ceremonial law. Jesus compared the ceremonial laws like the showbread (Mt. 12:4), sacrifices (Mt. 12:5) and circumcision (Jn. 7:22) to the Sabbath command (instead of to moral laws). In doing this Jesus ranked them as more important than the Sabbath. Jesus used the example of David eating the showbread (Mt 12:4)—if David could eat the showbread, then His disciples could pick grain to eat on the Sabbath. Jesus also pointed out that the requirement to sacrifice animals and to circumcise babies was also more important than the requirement to rest on the Sabbath (Mt 12:5; Jn. 7:22).

III. JESUS HEALED A MAN WITH A WITHERED HAND ON THE SABBATH (MT. 12:9-14)

- A. Jesus used the Sabbath controversies to emphasize His message that the human need is more important than obedience to ceremonial laws and to clarify who has authority to interpret the law.

Remember, Jesus had that Sabbath controversy in Jerusalem back in John 5. Then He went up to Galilee, and in the grain field He let His disciples pick grain on the Sabbath, and He knew He was stirring up the Pharisees. He knew it. He did it because He had a message He wanted to make clear. So now right after that it is going to be the third Sabbath controversy, and He has got a few more He is going to stir up.

He does this on purpose. He was using the Sabbath controversies to emphasize a message. The message is the points I just got through making in Mark 2 that the Sabbath is made for man and Jesus is Lord of the Sabbath. Here is His message: human need is more important than ceremonial laws. We all know that, but we end up with these rules, even in our own time; we call it spiritual culture or religious culture. Every religious culture, every spiritual group has different rules that get embedded in the culture over decades that become more important than people. It is really easy for fallen human beings to do that, even for those that love God. He says that these external laws cannot be more important than the people. If they crush the people, what is the point of the law? It is meant to help the people.

The next point Jesus wants to make is that He is the authoritative interpreter of the Sabbath. That was a brand-new point. He might have said, "I want to push that point because I cannot change who I am. I am the Lord of the Sabbath. I always have been. I always will be. You are speaking to the Lord of the Sabbath. I work with My Father, and He never ceases to work. We both work together in unity on the Sabbath. I interpret the Sabbath laws. You have to relate to Me on My terms or you cannot relate to Me because I am not changing. You have to change."

Now this is a message to Israel, but this same Jesus is talking to the Church in the same way. Even in our culture today there are all kinds of truths that are being put up for debate and different issues being set aside. Jesus would say, "No, I do not change. You have to relate to Me based on who I am. I am the Lord, the head of the Church, the head of Israel, the Lord of the Sabbath, the Lord of all creation, the judge of all people. I am

that person. I am not just a theological concept that you can get together and have a little debate about and dismiss a part of Me." Just like it was in Israel, it is the same today in a generation where apostasy is growing and people are loose, very loose, with who Jesus is, almost as if they can move the boundary lines because they have not had any kind of regular, fresh encounter with Him. They lose sight of who He is, and they think it is about theological arguments and debates and political correctness and all of these things.

There is a Man who is fully Man and fully God who has all authority, Who is the judge of all, to Whom we must relate **on His terms**. He is filled with love, but love on His terms, not love defined by the culture, but love defined by the kingdom, by His realm, by His authority. So this is not just an historic lesson far away; it is for today. We are not all troubled by the Sabbath in the same way they were, but the boundary lines of who He is are being moved around by people, both those who historically have been devout in the church and those who have not been so devout.

B. Jesus healed a man on the Sabbath in a synagogue in Galilee (Mt. 12:9-14; Mk. 3:1-6; Lk. 6:6-11).

⁹Now when He had departed from there, He went into their synagogue. ¹⁰And behold, there was a man who had a withered hand. They asked Him, saying, "Is it lawful to heal on the Sabbath?"—that they might accuse Him. ¹¹Then 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? ¹²Of how much more value then is a man than a sheep? Therefore it is lawful to do good on the Sabbath." ¹³Then He said to the man, "Stretch out your hand." And he stretched it out, and it was restored ... ¹⁴The Pharisees went out and plotted against Him, how they might destroy Him. (Mt. 12:9-14)

1. Rather than avoiding a conflict, Jesus intentionally provoked one to proclaim His message. Jesus offended the mind of these leaders to bring their evil heart intentions to the surface.
2. Jesus' view of the Sabbath was known, so His enemies watched for opportunity to accuse Him legally so to charge Him criminally in the courts.

He is now going to move on to the third Sabbath controversy. The first one in Jerusalem, the second one in the grain field, and now He is in a synagogue. Matthew 12, though again you can read it in Mark 3, and you can read it in Luke 6. It is all the same story. Verse 9, He departed from there; that is the grain field. Then He went into the synagogue. Now they have got His number because He was in the grain field and they talked to Him. He goes to the congregation. They think, "Okay, You are that guy that was over there. We know all about You."

3. They made a resolute decision to kill Jesus just as the leaders in Jerusalem had done earlier. The Pharisees were not interested in Jesus' argument, but in finding an excuse to kill Him.

Verse 10, "There was a man who had a withered hand." So in the synagogue meeting they look at Him and take the initiative. They asked Him, "Can you heal on the Sabbath? Is that okay with God?" They were looking for Him to say yes so they could accuse Him. Again, it was not just to criticize Him, but actually to bring Him to the courts as a criminal with the idea of killing Him. The accusation here is way more than just social and relational; it is criminal.

4. Jesus justified healing a person on the Sabbath by appealing to a principle all agreed on—pulling an animal out of a pit on the Sabbath. "One" sheep points to a poor farmer. But if kindness can be shown to a sheep on the Sabbath, how much more to a human being!

He said, "Well, let Me answer your question with a question. What man is there among you if he has one sheep, which falls into a pit, you do not take him out of the pit?"

They answered, "Well, of course, we would take him out of the pit."

He asked, "Then how much more is the value of a human being than a sheep?"

He is even pressing the point that it is a poor man for he has only one sheep—he doesn't have a whole flock—and he loses one, would he wait for the Sabbath to be over and hopefully the sheep does not die? This is his only one; it is his whole livelihood. They say, "Well, of course, we would go down in the pit and get him."

Jesus is saying, "Can you not see the contradiction of what you are doing here? This man has a withered hand, and how good would that be for him to be freed?"

5. Mark highlighted Jesus' anger and grief at their hardness of heart (Mk. 3:5).

⁵And when He had looked around at them with anger, being grieved by the hardness of their hearts, He said to the man, "Stretch out your hand." (Mk. 3:5)

Mark adds that Jesus was angry and grieved. This was not small to Him. Not because eventually this would escalate and they would kill Him. He came in order to die for our sin. He is not trying to avoid dying. He is avoiding the problem escalating before its time because He wants time to sow the Word in every village all throughout Israel before He goes to Jerusalem to die. No, He is grieved that the spiritual leadership is more fixated on their ceremonies and their rituals that embolden and reinforce their power base in society. Undoubtedly there are economic advantages for them in it. They will bring people under judgment, not just legal judgment and destroy their lives, but also social stigma and judgment that the leaders have pronounced, saying those people are bad sinners because they are not keeping the rituals that even God is not behind! He is pointing out, "You are breaking lives! You are using your authority, your influence, wrongly."

It is not just elders in the church. It is also leaders, kingdom leaders, in the marketplace, in the school systems. Wherever we are in the kingdom, in whatever assignment we have authority, we do not want to use our authority to grind people down a little bit to let them know we are the ones in power. It happens all the time in the church. I do not mean just in the church buildings. I mean through guys and gals in the offices and in the school systems, education, military. They use their role to prove their authority, and they use the rules to do it. Jesus is saying that that is not the way we do it. Yes, we uphold certain standards, guidelines, and rules, but always with the good of people in view, not crushing them.

IV. THE SERVANT OF THE LORD (MT. 12:15–21)

- A. Jesus healed many people near the Sea of Galilee (Mt. 12:15-21; Mk. 3:7-12). Luke 6 does not record this episode in Jesus' ministry of His withdrawal from the hostility to avoid a premature arrest by the conspiring Jewish authorities before it was His time to go to the cross (Mt. 12:15-16).

¹⁵But when Jesus knew it, He withdrew from there. And great multitudes followed Him, and He healed them all...¹⁷that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by Isaiah... (Mt. 12:15-17)

1. ***He withdrew***: He withdrew to avoid a premature arrest by the Jewish authorities before it was His time to go to the cross. He withdrew instead of using His power to destroy His enemies.

Now we are back in Matthew 12. This chapter is amazing. Again, Luke 6 and Mark 3 as well, since it is all the same story. Verse 15, "When Jesus knew it"—that the controversy was mounting up. They were going to really

bring it to a head. Jesus thinks, "No, no, I still have a couple years. I am not done—"He withdrew, but a great multitude followed Him, and He healed every one of them."

2. **Great multitude:** Jews and Gentiles gathered to Jesus from seven locations (Mk. 3:7-9).

⁷But Jesus withdrew with His disciples to the sea. And a great multitude from Galilee followed Him, and from Judea⁸ and Jerusalem and Idumea and beyond the Jordan; and those from Tyre and Sidon...⁹So He told His disciples that a small boat should be kept ready for Him because of the multitude, lest they should crush Him. (Mk. 3:7-9)

Mark 3—because remember Mark 3 and Matthew 12 are the same story—describes the multitude. Look at the seven locations from which people gather. Now remember they do not have buses or trains or cars. They are coming from Tyre and Sidon and faraway places. They are Gentiles, not just Jews. These are Gentiles coming into Israel to interface with Israel's Messiah. There were so many people gathering, Mark 3:9, that Jesus said, "Get me a little boat and get ready for Me to stand in the boat, lest the people crush Me." They wanted to touch Him so badly, and there were thousands of them.

3. **Healed them all:** Jesus' nature and desire is to heal broken lives and bodies.

He was healing **all** of them; that is one of the grand statements. He healed them all. What a glorious statement about the nature and desire of Jesus to heal hearts!

- B. Isaiah's prophesied of the Messiah coming in humility and even healing Gentiles (Isa. 42:1-4).

¹⁷...that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by Isaiah the prophet, saying: ¹⁸"Behold! My Servant...My Beloved in whom My soul is well pleased...He will declare justice to the Gentiles. ¹⁹He will not quarrel nor cry out, nor will anyone hear His voice in the streets. ²⁰A bruised reed He will not break, and smoking flax He will not quench, till He sends forth justice to victory; ²¹and in His name Gentiles will trust." (Mt. 12:17-21)

While Jesus did rebuke the religious leaders for their sinful leadership over the people (Mt. 12:25-45), He did not argue to convince His enemies to receive His leadership. Now in verse 17, Matthew pointed out that when Jesus healed them all, number one, and when He withdrew from the conflict of the Pharisees, number two, and when all the Gentiles from other regions pressed in, number three, Matthew noted that all of those components are actually prophesied in Isaiah 42. He showed that actually the character and responses of this Man Jesus are in line with the Messiah as described in Isaiah 42:1-4. That is what Matthew 12:17-21 say. It is so remarkable!

I have to point out that Isaiah 42 passage about the Messiah. Here it is, verse 17, "that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by Isaiah, 'Behold! My Servant, My beloved in whom My soul is well pleased. He will declare justice to Gentiles.'" That means to the nations, not just to Israel, but to all the earth.

Remember the Gentiles were enemies of Israel and were pagans. They were worshipping demons and were idol worshippers. Gentiles? It's like, "Whoa! You do not give justice to Gentiles. You destroy them and remove them." That is what Israel thought. "Justice to Gentiles? Are you kidding? To the bad people?"

Verse 19 is a very important verse, though surprising. He said that the Messiah will not quarrel nor cry out. You will not hear His voice in the street. This was a very much overlooked description of the Messiah by Israel in that time, because they wanted a Messiah who would confront Rome, raise up a military revolution, and drive Rome out of the nation by military force and power.

Isaiah said, “No, when the Messiah comes the first time, He is not going to raise His voice and have a revolution. He is not going to do it. As a matter of fact, when He is resisted, while He is not going to back down from what He believes, He is not going to use His power to destroy His enemies.” You see, He could have looked at those Pharisees, spoken a word, and their life would have left them in one moment, their breath gone. He had the power to look at the Pharisees, “Boo!” with one word. Just like He raised the dead, He could put them in the grave, but He never did it. He drew back in patience and meekness and let them prevail.

Verse 20, He is so merciful that “a bruised reed He will not break, a smoking flax”—or a smoldering wick is what almost every other translation says—“He will not quench until He leads justice to victory. In His name the Gentiles will trust.” What it is saying here—and I will just leave the notes for you to read—Israel was looking for the wrong kind of Messiah. They were looking for the Messiah of the second coming. They were looking for the triumphant King who would overthrow and over-power all the enemies by His word. That is the Messiah at the second coming.

They were not looking for a Messiah who would be kind, humble, and friendly to Gentiles, number one. Like, are you kidding? They are enemies and they are pagans and they are evil. You do not give them justice! You give them destruction is what you do. You do not help them. You destroy them. Jesus would say, “No, that is not what I do.”

1. Jesus did not come the first time in the way that most expected Him—as a triumphant king, who used power to transform governments and the social order. He came as a humble servant.
2. Jesus came as Messiah in a way that was much more humble and friendly to Gentiles than any expected. He responded to conflict with humility and healed broken hearts more than cities.
3. **My Beloved in whom My soul is pleased:** The Father spoke these words over Jesus at His baptism (Mt.3:17) and His transfiguration (Mt. 17:5), declaring His delight in Jesus.
A voice came from heaven, saying, “This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.” (Mt. 3:17)
4. **He will declare justice:** Justice is another word for victory. Jesus is committed to establishing justice until it triumphs over all the nations. Jesus did not release judgment on His enemies at His first coming as Isaiah prophesied (Isa. 42:1-4; 61:1-2a; Lk. 4:18-19).
 - a. Three uses of the word *judgment* in Scripture—to *evaluate*; to *punish*; and to *deliver by making wrongs things right*— thus, to deliver from sin, weakness, sickness, etc.
 - b. The judges in the Old Testament brought “deliverance” to God’s people.
5. **He will not quarrel nor cry out:** Jesus did not lift His voice in the streets to stir up a political or military revolution against Rome nor to protest the injustices against Him by the scribes and Pharisees. This leadership style was very different from the popular expectation of how the Messiah would come. Israel expected Him to crush Roman opposition at that time.
¹⁹***He will not quarrel nor cry out, nor will anyone hear His voice in the streets. (Mt. 12:19)***

This statement in verse 19, "He would not raise His voice in the street," does not mean He did not preach in the street. That is not what Isaiah is saying. It is this: they wanted to make Him King in John 16. They asked Him to be their King, and He said, "No, no, no."

The zealots came asking, "Hey, would You be the King? We will follow You with arms and swords and spears." "No." He would not raise His voice to create a revolution or a movement to oppose Israel and their leadership or oppose Rome. He said, "No, I am not doing it that way. I will let Israel's leadership kill Me and I will not confront Rome because I am coming to die. I am going to live in humility and show kindness in My first coming."

- a. Isaiah prophesied that God's Servant would establish justice without using military force or violence. Jesus refused to support revolutionary groups such as the Zealots who fought Rome.
 - b. At His first coming Jesus responded to mistreatment with great patience, humility, and entrusting the mistreatment against Him into God's hands (1 Pet. 2:23).
 - c. He did not quarrel with the Pharisees or any of His enemies, but withdrew from them.
- C. **Victory by compassion:** Isaiah prophesied that "a bruised reed He will not break, and smoking flax He will not quench, till He sends forth justice to victory."

²⁰A bruised reed He will not break, and smoking flax [smoldering wick] He will not quench, till He sends forth justice to victory; ²¹and in His name Gentiles will trust." (Mt. 12:20)

1. ***A battered reed:*** A battered reed is very fragile and weak. This refers to areas of weakness and pain in our life—those areas that are at the pointing of breaking.
2. ***Smoldering wick:*** Many translations say "smoldering wick" (NAS, NIV, ESV). This speaks of areas in our life that have not come to brightness. A smoldering wick struggles to keep burning. It is flickering. The Lord declares that He will not let it go out, but will bring the fullness of His purpose in our life as we submit to Him leadership with faith and obedience.

Verse 20, now this is really personal for you and me. "A bruised reed He will not break and a smoldering wick"—I am going to use the translation that is modern usage—"He will not quench." He looks at broken lives. Think of it this way. I remember as a boy, we would play ball, and then the ball would fly into the neighbor's yard. I did this a couple times. It went in the neighbor's yard, and it broke a tomato plant. The Bickle boys did it again. So I had to go over there. I did not go to confess that I broke the tomato plant, but my ball was there so I had to sneak over there to get it. The lady would come out, "You little Bickle boy! I told you to stay out of my garden!"

The tomato plant is broken. I tried to put it up and put some tape around it, worthless.

"Get out of here!"

"I will tape it up for you, lady." I had done it a couple of times, and that was why she was annoyed at me. She needed to move her yard. She thought I needed to move my game.

Anyway, a bruised reed is like the broken tomato plant; no tape is going to fix it. Jesus says, "You are at the breaking point. You are so broken. I am not going to break you, though. I am going to restore you. That is the

tenderness I have, even towards My enemies. I am actually going to restore them if they will say yes to My leadership.”

A smoldering wick—it is the candle, right at the very end. It is like, “Ah, we need the light. No, no, do not go out!” It is flickering. “Please do not go out! Whew! Oh, no! I should not have blown on it! It just went out, that little flickering wick.” I did that a couple times as a boy.

Jesus said, “When the light is burning it so low, I will not quench it. I will go the other way. I will move by My Spirit until I bring justice.” Justice means making wrong things right. “I am going to restore until there is victory. I am going to have victory in the life of My people. I am going to have victory in the nations. My leadership is going to bring victory and justice to all the nations of the earth that will say yes to Me at My coming.” He is going to fill the earth with His glory, but He is going to work victory in our lives as well, in this age and bring it to fullness in the age to come. That is who the Messiah is, but Israel was not looking for that kind of Messiah. They were looking for a conquering King.

3. **The Gentiles will trust in Him:** His miracles touched and transformed even Gentiles—this prophecy was to prepare the Jewish people for One who be “Savior of the world” (Jn. 4:42).
4. We see Jesus embracing the cross before wearing the crown. This is way that He called His people to live in the face of injustice and mistreatment— that is, to respond with humility, patience, looking to the Lord to vindicate us in His way and timing.

Well, I am going to tell you something kind of on the subject. I am going to take two more minutes. I had the most amazing conversation the other day. I just thought of it when I thought how He is going to bring justice to victory. I just remembered this—it’s not part of this Bible study—I talked to this lady and it was the most amazing conversation I ever had with a person like this. It was the other day. She is in her eighties, and she is dying. She wanted me to call her. I have known her for thirty-five years. The other night after our solemn assembly, Monday night, I went out on the parking lot and called her on the phone.

I said, “Hey, this is Mike Bickle.”

She said, “Mike, I am shocked.”

I said, “What?”

“I am shocked.”

“What?”

“Death and dying is unbelievably wonderful.”

I said, “What?”

She said, “O my God, I have always been kind of afraid to die. But,” she said, “it is unbelievable.” Now she has known me for years. I have read different death experiences and she has, too, and we have talked about it over the years. She said, “You know how, when you get close to dying, how that veil kind of lifts a little bit between the two realms right? You know, that day or two before people die, sometimes an hour or two?” She said, “It has been like that for two weeks.”

She had not eaten for two weeks, not on any drugs or anything. She said, “I am not on any drugs, I promise you.” I know her well. She said, “Jesus, He was at the back of the room, and for ninety seconds He did not say anything, but He looked straight at me.”

I gasped, "Oh!"

She went on, "Waves of love came over me. It was unbelievable! And then He gone. So sixty, ninety seconds. The waves stayed on me." She said, "I have never felt so much love and joy, oh my goodness!" She said, "That happened about fourteen days ago, and then it happened again that night. Then I fell asleep in a nap, and an angel appeared in my dream. I woke up, and the angel was not there, but the waves hit me again." She said, "Oh my goodness, this is unbelievable! Then the next day I saw Him again, but He was on the other side of the room. He just looked at me over at the corner and smiled. He stared at me. I said, 'Jesus, say something.' Then waves of power and love hit me." She went on, "Oh my God!" She said, "Mike, I am not crazy. Some of my friends visited me and said, 'Martha, you are losing it.' I said, "No, this is how it is. Tell Mike Bickle to call me. He will believe me. I know he will."

I said, "I do believe you."

She said, "I know you do. You used to tell those stories."—because I read a bunch of death experiences and people had these. People have really bad experiences, too—She went on, "You know I was married for almost forty years"—or some big number, and I knew her husband well—"and he died a few years ago. "Well, the most wonderful thing in my life was my husband." She bragged about him for so many years. She said, "Dying is better than marriage." She said, "I am serious." She said, "I know that is weird. Oh, I am so happy! I just want people to know this. Would you tell those young people over at IHOPKC?"

I said, "Martha, I promise you I will tell them that."

So, justice, it is a full victory. That was the idea that was triggered in my mind. He will bring full justice, all the wrong things made right, and He is working in our life even now. He is not going to blow out the candle, and He is not going to break the reed. He is going to restore them.

Amen, let's stand before the Lord.

"It is better than marriage," she said, "and I had a great one."

How many of you feel just right now, "Oh, I just love Jesus!" You have that feeling right now. That is how I feel right now, telling that story. I said, "Martha, that is so beautiful!" I said, "You know I would love to go there." I said, "I do not need this information right about now! I need cement boots on to keep me grounded here. I do not need to hear these stories!" I said, "I am already drifting, and it is so beautiful to think that way."

Anyway, let's get back to the subject.

Father, here we are before You. We love Your presence!

You know there are people in this room, all of us, and the Lord is saying to you, "I am going to bring victory. I am going to bring justice to victory in your life. I am going to bring justice to victory."

You feel like you are that broken tomato plant, one area of your life or more than one area. You are that candle that is just flickering and saying, "Lord, I do not have any help. Hope is gone!"

The Lord would say, "No, it is not. You do not know Me if you think it is over."

I want to invite anybody who would like prayer tonight for any subject to come forward. I want to ask the Lord to come and touch us. We are going to worship and ask the Spirit to touch us. All over the room, just come on up now if you want to. You can stay in your chair as well, but you can come up if you want ministry.

Jesus, here we are! A bruised reed He will not break; a smoldering wick He will not put out. Oh, the beauty of this Man!

For some it is physical healing that they need tonight, to others it is emotional healing, it is spiritual healing. To others it is a financial miracle, a break-in of God. To others it is a relational restoration. He said, "I will not blow the candle out. I will restore it."

Oh, we love You, Jesus! Here we are, O beloved Servant of the Lord, the one that God loves, Jesus, the Servant. Come and bring justice to victory in our lives.