

MATTHEW 12:1-9

THE HIJACKING OF A SIMPLE, PRACTICAL FAITH

In chapter 11 we saw that there were increasing numbers of people that were rejecting the Gospel. Many of the people just weren't able to wrap their minds around the simplicity of the message. Even though they witnessed the miracles and heard the greatest teaching ever, they had a spiritual block. For their rejection, they were harshly chastised. Jesus even went so far as to pronounce judgment on them.

We can ignore something so simple or we can accept it and then take it for granted. Many in the church world today do the latter. As the crowds rejected the Gospel more and more, the Pharisees seemed to step up their attacks on Jesus. There were many following Jesus, but there were many more that preferred the status quo. Religion had a powerful hold on the Jews. They had become comfortable with the ritual, even though it was harder on them than the relationship, which Jesus was seeking with each one of them. Rituals can be run through so that we can mark them off our to-do lists. Relationships have to be cultivated. They take time and effort. You have to listen and learn. In fact you can equate ministry with a relationship. Any time you just go through the motions you're not ministering to others or to God.

The issue that comes up in chapter 12 is that of what was lawful to do on the Sabbath.

Doubt and opposition have been gradually building towards Jesus message and ministry. The status quo was being threatened. Certain people and their ideas were being rendered obsolete. In fact, you might say there was some downsizing happening. Jesus was making it so that anyone could approach Him and receive eternal life. The bureaucracy of the Temple was being bypassed.

Think of how much simpler our lives could be if some of the bureaucracy we deal with on a daily basis could be eliminated. It would truly amount to a

simplified life. And this was what Jesus was bringing to the people - a simpler, more practical faith. But there were some who felt threatened. And even those who earlier accepted His Word and believed were beginning to doubt. **Could it be too good to be true?**

"If it's too good to be true, then it probably is." This is a powerful question. But Jesus can deliver on His promises.

We come into chapter 12 with Jesus and His disciples traveling through the fields, apparently on their way to the synagogue.

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

***Mat 12:2** And when the Pharisees saw it, they said to Him, "Look, Your disciples are doing what is not lawful to do on the Sabbath!"*

Jesus was within His rights here.

You could eat from a man's field in order to satisfy your hunger, but you couldn't harvest in order to make money.

Deu 23:25 When you come into your neighbor's standing grain, you may pluck the heads with your hand, but you shall not use a sickle on your neighbor's standing grain.

I want to know how the Pharisees saw Him.

Mote hunting. Going out of their way to find fault with others, and then offending the Law themselves.

Jesus answers them.

***Mat 12:3** But He said to them, "Have you not read what David did when he was hungry, he and those who were with him:*

***Mat 12:4** how he entered the house of God and ate the showbread which was not lawful for him to eat, nor for those who were with him, but only for the priests?"*

The Pharisees prided themselves on knowing the OT. Jesus questions their

knowledge.

"Didn't you read 1 Sam. 21?"

The story of David fleeing from Saul, needing to feed his men, was given the showbread to eat.

This story showed that love is more important than the Law; relationship more important than ritual/ religion.

This illustration was timely. This story happened at a time when David was rejected as King, just as Jesus was being rejected as Messiah.

Jesus then questions their knowledge of the scriptures.

Mat 12:5 Or have you not read in the law that on the Sabbath the priests in the temple profane the Sabbath, and are blameless?

Twice as many sacrifices were offered on the Sabbath as any other day of the week.

What about the priests? How come they could work on the Sabbath? Someone had to facilitate the Worship.

Jesus was asking them, " Don't you know your history with King David?" Then He asked them if they knew their Law, in regards to knowing the responsibilities of the priests.

Now He makes a statement.

Mat 12:6 Yet I say to you that in this place there is One greater than the temple.

Mat 12:7 But if you had known what this means, 'I DESIRE MERCY AND NOT SACRIFICE,' you would not have condemned the guiltless.

Mat 12:8 For the Son of Man is Lord even of the Sabbath.

By making this statement Jesus questions their knowledge of the OT prophets.

Jesus was quoting the prophet Hosea.

Hos 6:6 For I desire mercy and not sacrifice, And the knowledge of God more

than burnt offerings.

The Pharisees were in direct opposition to this scripture. They knew rules and regulations, they knew rituals, but they didn't know the heart of God. That is what legalism and backbiting does. It finds fault and ignores the Law of Love.

If we truly know the heart of our Father, then we understand that He desires mercy more than sacrifice, love more than Law, and relationship more than ritual.

I often speak of apologetics, giving an answer.
I often get a roll of the eyes when mentioning it.
Here Jesus practices apologetics, He makes an airtight case.

He takes an example from David, their most cherished King.
He pointed to the priests, who worked on the Sabbath.
He pointed to the prophet Hosea who declared that God loves mercy more than sacrifice.

So Jesus identified Himself with a prophet, priest, and King. He was the total package.

He clarifies this in the next verse.

Mat 12:8 For the Son of Man is Lord even of the Sabbath."

I am all three. I am prophet priest and King. They rejected this.

The result of the rejection can be seen in the next verse if we look closely.

Mat 12:9 Now when He had departed from there, He went into their synagogue.

Notice that He went into THEIR synagogue not His.

It is a shame when a church becomes ours instead of His.

How does this happen? No church would own up to being guilty of this.

Revelation shows us differently. Jesus saw most of those churches differently

than they saw themselves.

A common observation is that familiarity breeds contempt. We can also see that those birthed into advantage often fail to appreciate what it took to get there.

(Children of moguls, Americans in general)

CONCLUSION: In our day and time, we aren't really threatened by those who want to take us back into the Jewish Law. But we can be confronted by the same malady in another form. We can be lulled into taking for granted what Jesus did for us. We can be lulled into a works-based assessment of our relationship with Jesus.

Welcome to the machine.

Think of it as a marriage. A marriage takes work, but the marriage isn't based on the work. The things we do for our spouses come out of love. The love isn't given because of the works shown.

Those that rejected Jesus' ministry had, to quote the Righteous Brothers, "Lost that loving feeling."

Let us not take our salvation for granted. Let's not become pharisaic in our actions. Let's embrace the simple, practical faith and message that we've been given.

1. Are we guilty on some level of rejecting the Lord of the Sabbath by our attitudes towards service and ministry?
2. Have we become faultfinders?
3. Are we going through the motions or are we coming to Church in order to worship.
4. Are we coming to serve or to be served?
5. Jesus built an airtight case challenging the hearts and the knowledge of the Pharisees.
6. Maybe we, as individuals and as a church need to go to our prophet, priest and King.

7. If we, as a church and individuals have become stagnant in our growth, maybe we all need to repent.
8. That is the question and the challenge to us all today.