

MATTHEW 12:9 – 37

THE INDECISIVE HEART

My father has lots of sayings, but one of the most quoted would have to be, “He who hesitates is lost.” He was fond of saying this when someone wouldn’t commit to turning or pulling out into an intersection in traffic. But there is a great deal of truth to this, as we will see today.

Last week we saw how the Pharisees were lying in wait for Jesus to “mess up” regarding the Law. They had placed their dogma above scripture and we can all fall into that trap if we’re not careful. There is a great deal going on here and a great deal said, but the main issue comes down to one of the heart.

Mt. 12:9-14

9 Now when He had departed from there, He went into their synagogue. 10 And behold, there was a man who had a withered hand. And they asked Him, saying, “Is it lawful to heal on the Sabbath?” – that they might accuse Him.

11 Then 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? 12 Of how much more value then is a man than a sheep? Therefore it is lawful to do good on the Sabbath.” 13 Then He said to the man, “Stretch out your hand.” And he stretched it out, and it was restored as whole as the other. 14 Then the Pharisees went out and plotted against Him, how they might destroy Him.

- Is it lawful to heal on the Sabbath? We can see their motives in asking the question. Jesus answers with a question. This is a rhetorical question, which was meant to bring them to a place of common sense and practicality. Last week talked about a simple, practical type of faith.
- Jesus simply told the man to show Him his hand and it was healed. (No spitting, no hair plucking, figs and string.)
- Jesus made no declaration of healing and couldn’t be accused of violating the Sabbath even in these conditions.
- Note what the Pharisees did as they left.

15 But when Jesus knew it, He withdrew from there. And great multitudes followed Him, and He healed them all. 16 Yet He warned them not to make Him known, 17 that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by Isaiah the prophet, saying:

*18 "Behold! My Servant whom I have chosen,
My Beloved in whom My soul is well pleased!
I will put My Spirit upon Him,
And He will declare justice to the Gentiles.*

*19 He will not quarrel nor cry out,
Nor will anyone hear His voice in the streets.*

*20 A bruised reed He will not break,
And smoking flax He will not quench,
Till He sends forth justice to victory;*

21 And in His name Gentiles will trust."

- Jesus departed.
- Pick your battles!
- Why did Jesus leave?
- Take that Pharisees!
- Why did He tell the people not to speak of the healings?
- Why quote these verses from Isaiah 42:1-4? Context. These verses are in the middle of chapters, which spoke of Cyrus as the deliverer of Egypt as he allowed them to go back to their homeland. In this, Cyrus was a "type" of Jesus as He had come back to deliver His people from their bondage to the Law. The context was not lost on Matthew (Levi – the priestly line.)
- These verses were hard for the Israelites to reconcile as being Messianic. They speak of a deliverer with the opposite qualities of a conquering king. This is why Jesus departed in this instance and didn't stay to fight or quarrel.

22 Then one was brought to Him who was demon-possessed, blind and mute; and He healed him, so that the blind and mute man both spoke and saw. 23 And all the multitudes were amazed and said, "Could this be the Son of David?"

24 Now when the Pharisees heard it they said, "This fellow does not cast out demons except by Beelzebub, the ruler of the demons."

25 But Jesus knew their thoughts, and said to them: "Every kingdom divided against itself is brought to desolation, and every city or house divided against

itself will not stand. 26 If Satan casts out Satan, he is divided against himself. How then will his kingdom stand? 27 And if I cast out demons by Beelzebub, by whom do your sons cast them out? Therefore they shall be your judges. 28 But if I cast out demons by the Spirit of God, surely the kingdom of God has come upon you. 29 Or how can one enter a strong man's house and plunder his goods, unless he first binds the strong man? And then he will plunder his house. 30 He who is not with Me is against Me, and he who does not gather with Me scatters abroad.

- Most scholars believe this to be a different Sabbath since the Pharisees had left to plot against Jesus. Now they have come back with another ploy to make Him look bad.
- The battle for the people is now at a pivotal point. Many have been healed as we saw a few verses earlier. Many are now asking if Jesus could be the “Son of David.” (Messianic title)
- But now they play a face card. They accuse Jesus of exorcising demons by the prince of all demons.
- Jesus again counters with a question. Why would Satan want to cast out demons? This is counter-intuitive. How can a house stand if the people in it are fighting against one another?
- This is an excellent question for those of us who are to be the spiritual head of our homes. In fact, it’s a good question for anyone to ask.
- Verse 28 sets up verse 29. If you (Pharisees) are wrong then surely the kingdom of God has come upon you.
- Verse 29: This is not a recipe for exorcism, but Jesus is putting anyone within earshot on notice that He has now come and is cleaning the house, the world that Satan has been ruling with very little impunity.
- Jesus throws the gauntlet stating that anyone who doesn’t gather, (harvest) with Him is against Him. This is leading to main thrust of the tension between Jesus and the Pharisees. (The indecisive heart)
- There is no neutral ground when it comes to Jesus and His message.

31 “Therefore I say to you, every sin and blasphemy will be forgiven men, but the blasphemy against the Spirit will not be forgiven men. 32 Anyone who speaks a word against the Son of Man, it will be forgiven him; but whoever speaks against the Holy Spirit, it will not be forgiven him, either in this age or in the age to come.

A Tree Known by Its Fruit

33 "Either make the tree good and its fruit good, or else make the tree bad and its fruit bad; for a tree is known by its fruit. 34 Brood of vipers! How can you, being evil, speak good things? For out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaks. 35 A good man out of the good treasure of his heart brings forth good things, and an evil man out of the evil treasure brings forth evil things. 36 But I say to you that for every idle word men may speak, they will give account of it in the day of judgment. 37 For by your words you will be justified, and by your words you will be condemned."

- Verses 31 and 32. The unpardonable sin.
- What is it? Is it simply attributing the works of God to Satan? No.
- The Pharisees believe Jesus is guilty of blasphemy, but Jesus makes it clear that they are dangerously close to being guilty of what they accuse Him.
- "So, have I committed the unpardonable sin?" If the question bothers you, then you haven't yet done it. It is a heart condition.
- Why can one speak evil of Jesus but not the Holy Spirit? Because the Spirit is the one who draws us to Christ. Rejecting that calling results in a rejection of the Gospel, resulting rejection by God.
- Don't be indecisive! Make the tree good or make it bad! Get in or get out!
- By following Jesus around making accusations, the Pharisees have revealed their hearts. Do they really want to believe? They probably feel they are doing their jobs, but the hardness of their hearts won't allow them accept the truth. They are playing on the fence. This is the crux of the theme of this chapter – an indecisive heart!
- When the Pharisees or any other unbeliever stands before God at the judgment, we will be judged by our words, which reveal our heart towards God. Everyone will be without excuse.
- **How can you, being evil, speak good things? For out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaks.**
- **Either make the tree good and its fruit good, or else make the tree bad and its fruit bad; for a tree is known by its fruit.**

No man can have two masters. There was another instance in which a Pharisee found himself in the same situation as these.

Acts 9:4-6

3 As he journeyed he came near Damascus, and suddenly a light shone around him from heaven. 4 Then he fell to the ground, and heard a voice saying to him, "Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting Me?"

5 And he said, "Who are You, Lord?"

Then the Lord said, "I am Jesus, whom you are persecuting. It is hard for you to kick against the goads."

6 So he, trembling and astonished, said, "Lord, what do You want me to do?"

Look at all Paul had done in order to damage the Gospel. And then look at what God did with him when he surrendered. Are any of us here today like Paul?

QUESTIONS:

- When is the last time any of us had our hearts (spiritually speaking) checked?
- Where are the blind spots we have failed to see in our zeal, feeling as if we have arrived at a place of high spiritual achievement?
- Can we see where, in our lives we are banging our heads against God's will in our lives?
- How is this affecting our homes?
- Specifically speaking, what causes the most tension in our homes and how does it relate to what Jesus says in these verses?