LIFE BIBLE MINISTRY

Matthew 12 (Part 1) :1-14

Jesus, Lord of the Sabbath

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SERMON TRANSCRIPT

Matthew chapter 12 let's look at the first 14 verses it says at that time Jesus went through the grain fields on the Sabbath his disciples were hungry and began to pick some heads of grain and eat them and when the Pharisees saw this they said to him look your disciples are doing what is unlawful on the Sabbath he answered haven't you read what David did when he and his companions were hungry he entered the house of God and he and his companions ate the consecrated bread which was not lawful for them to do but only for the priests or haven't you read in the law that on the Sabbath the priests in the temple desecrate the day and yet are innocent I tell you that one greater than the temple is here if you had known what these words mean I desire mercy not sacrifice you would not have condemned the innocent for the Son of Man is Lord of the Sabbath going on from that place he went into their synagogue and a man with a shriveled hand was there looking for a reason to accuse Jesus they asked him is it lawful to heal on the Sabbath he said to them if you or rather if any of you has a sheep and it falls into a pit on the Sabbath will you not take hold of it and lift it out how much more valuable is a man than a sheep therefore it is lawful to do good on the Sabbath and then he said to the man stretch out your hand so he stretched it out and was completely restored just as sound as the other but the Pharisees went out and plotted how they might kill Jesus Wow let's pray father God open our hearts to the ministry of your word and and and guide us today not just in understanding but in application we pray that you'd help us to be able to really lay a hold of of the path of plugging this stuff in to our daily lives we ask it Lord in Jesus name Amen as we get into chapter 12 here we see Jesus once again having confrontations with the Pharisees and there are basically two incidents here in the grain field first and then finally in the synagogue in the first case we're told that Jesus and his disciples were going through walking through the grain fields and while they were they became hungry and they began to pick grain off the stalks and eat it sounds a little bit strange to you and I but the Pharisees were right on this thing I don't know if they just kind of like followed him around looking for an opportunity I suppose so but anyway the Pharisees jump right on this thing and they say hey you know this is that's unlawful what you're doing now what exactly was unlawful about this was it unlawful to walk through someone's grain field and pick the grain no actually that was the opposite it was that was lawful in

fact it was commanded that the farmers who the Jewish farmers when they came to harvest their crops they were only supposed to go through the crop once they were not to go back a second time and harvest because you know things are gonna they're gonna miss some and some of the grain is gonna fall to the ground but they were supposed to leave it they were specifically told commanded in the law to leave that grain on the ground or if he had a vineyard don't go through and harvest all the grapes leave some for the poor and so this was kind of if you will kind of like a built-in welfare system into the Mosaic law it wasn't a handout without any kind of work involved the people who were poor still had to go into the fields and and and pick the grain and get the grapes or whatever but the farmers were to have a heart of mercy and so forth and and care that would leave that kind of thing behind so when the Pharisees said to Jesus and his disciples what you're doing is not lawful they weren't referring to them going through the grain fields the way they were what they were referring to was the day on which they were doing it because we're told it was the Sabbath and as you know the Sabbath was and is a time of rest and you know the law basically said that Israel was to remember the Sabbath day and keep it holy and which means to set it apart for God they could work on six days they were not to work on the seventh day Sabbath which was and is today Saturday and so forth and this observance was you know for Israel a sign of the covenant that they had with their their God you know this is our covenant sign that we are the family of God and and so forth of course the Jews had taken the Sabbath the simple command to rest on the Sabbath and they made it ridiculous like they often did they added regulation upon regulation upon regulation upon regulation and it became it literally became ridiculous and then they began to look for loopholes of how to get around it and if you heard of all the things that they would do to get around the Sabbath regulations you would laugh some of you have even looked into some of this I'm sure in your studies and stuff and it really was a ridiculous sort of a thing I don't really want to sit and talk a lot about the Sabbath and I know that some of you might want me to just because maybe the Sabbath was an issue for you or is an issue for you maybe some of you were raised in homes where they kept the Sabbath and for you it would be an interesting kind of a study to go through and talk about how that applies to us today but I'm not going to really get into it today if you want to get more information pop on to our website at ccontario.com go to our Q&A page and there's probably like two or maybe even three responses that I've written over the years fairly lengthy responses with scripture and address the issue of Sabbath keeping for believers today here's the reason why I don't want to get into it because even though the Pharisees are coming to Jesus and trying to make that the issue that's not the issue they're trying to say hey it's the Sabbath don't work on the Sabbath in fact the Pharisees would have charged the disciples with no fewer than four violations of the Sabbath just for what they were doing walking through the grain fields picking grain and popping in their mouth they would have charged them with reaping threshing winnowing and preparing food which was not to be done

on the Sabbath seriously reaping is cutting the stock and removing you know that area threshing is pulling the grain from the stock winnowing is separating the outer husk from the the seed itself the wheat seed and then finally preparing it they used to take it and rub it in their hands and and and mush it together and then pop it in their mouth isn't that crazy four violations according to the Pharisees in one mouthful and that's just kind of that was just the beginning and so it became this this this ridiculous list of rules and regulations but you know for legalists that's it I mean there is nothing more to a legalist than following rules and they judge spirituality and correctness by keeping the rules and how well you keep the rules and and that sort of thing the problem with legalism is it makes no room for people it makes no provision for caring for people and the needs of people fall by the wayside and that is the point that Jesus is going to try to convey even though the Pharisees are trying to make the Sabbath the point Jesus is saying no that's not the point you guys you're not getting it and so he begins to speak to them look again with me in your Bible in verse 3 he says haven't you read what David did when he and his companions were hungry now that's a pretty interesting thing to say right off the bat to say to a group of Pharisees haven't you read he starts it off in the form of a question but he says haven't you read that's kind of like telling a Bible scholar you know who has like a doctor's degree and you know this kind of study saying haven't you ever read the Bible don't you ever read the book haven't you read where it says well see and you know I don't think Jesus means it to be a dig necessarily what he's trying to convey is you've read it but you've not understood it don't you remember the story he says of when David and his companions came into the the holy place and and among the priests and and and they said we need something to eat there's a story it's in it's in 1st Samuel I think it's chapter 16 don't quote me on that but right around there and David and his men go and see the priest the high priest and David says to the priest we're hungry we need something to eat do you have any food and the priest said actually no we don't have any food here except the bread of the presence the consecrated bread that would go into the holy place and would be put before the Lord and it was it was replaced once a week and and then after that only the priests could eat it okay after it had been in that nobody else can eat that bread according to the law but Jesus points out to them don't you guys remember reading in the scripture where David and his men were And took the bread that was only lawful for the priest to eat and it was given to them and they ate it And what Jesus is kind of saying to them? Well, he's saying a couple of different things But one is listen if you are ready to condemn me for what we've done here You're gonna need to condemn David too, which is something they never would have done but second of all he's calling attention to something that a ritual a rule was violated and There were no consequences. Why in this case? Was it overlooked when these men came into this area and ate this consecrated bread without any issues? Why Jesus is calling attention to?

This thing right here human need It wasn't like David waltzed in with some attitude of bravado or or lack of respect or something like that and said hey Give me that bread you got there. I don't care if it is holy bread give it here That wasn't that would have been a different thing altogether, that's not what David did He came with an attitude of respect then they were hungry and the priest gave them the bread and that was without incident again Because human need listen human need trumps rules and regulations God cares about people and God never established rules to tread over the top of people right That's the important thing that Jesus is trying to convey to them in this situation by the way It was first Samuel 21. I just saw a note here that I made about it so Again, the point of the whole discussion is to underscore the fact that human need is more important than observing ceremonial rules and rituals now that's something that the Pharisees Completely missed in the Word of God Jesus goes on to speak to them of another situation He says in verse 5 in your text haven't you read he says that's another dig kind of on the Pharisees a little bit There who were men of the word So to speak he says that on the Sabbath the priests in the temple actually Desecrate the day and what that means is they work because what was the Sabbath was all about resting but he said don't you guys realize don't you know that the priests work on the Sabbath and Yet, you know, they're innocent and Then he goes on to say in verse 6. I tell you that one greater than the temple is even here Jesus is making reference to the fact that God Doesn't take a day off Related to people coming to him worshiping and what did the priests do? Well, they slaughtered animals they took the blood of the animals they sprinkled it on the altar They made all these other sacrifices burnt offerings and things like that But they did it seven days a week even on the Sabbath and yet and that was their work and yet they were innocent Jesus is once again saying why why are the the priests given kind of a free card to work on the Sabbath?

Because people are coming to God you think there's a day when people can't come to God I mean, is that what God wants to convey to his people? Listen, you can come talk to me on six days But on seven today just I'm gone. I'm you're not I'm not available You know what? God cares way too much for people Doesn't matter when you come why you come how you come he wants you to come and He's never unreachable, you know He cares about people Doesn't matter what day or whatever it might be mercy wins out over regulation mercy wins out over rules and Then he says in verse 7 look with me in verse 7 in your Bible If you had known what these words mean, I desire mercy not sacrifice You wouldn't have condemned the innocent and he's quoting a well-known Old Testament passage there that they had obviously read many times But never understood You know even in the Old Testament God said to them I want mercy Not sacrifice, but they were all about sacrifice what we have to do the regulations. We have to keep To be pleasing to God You want to be pleasing to God?

Have a heart of mercy toward other people and then of course in the latter part of the portion that we've read this morning verses 9 through the through the end Jesus then has a chance to teach by example. We find that Jesus goes to the synagogue on a particular day Well, you know, you know what day they go to the synagogue. It's on the Sabbath day and What does he find there but a man in the front row with a shriveled hand very obviously? this this man has a physical issue and We know from another gospel account that he had been planted there By the religious leaders to trap Jesus to try to get him to do something It's really kind of comical and and interesting when you think about it. You can trap Jesus into being merciful They're crazy and that's really what they're trying to do.

They put a man right in the front row So that when Jesus gets up to speak There's this man sitting there with this obviously malformed hand and They they it says they asked him is it lawful to heal on the Sabbath again from another gospel account We find an interesting response of Jesus. He just it says he sighed deeply You know what? That's like right when people start either asking questions. He knows why they're asking it They're asking because they want to trap him by his answer. And so he just goes And Then he again Asks them a question He said in verse 11 listen if you guys have a sheep and It falls into a pit on the Sabbath.

Are you gonna look at it and think well, there's nothing I can do about that today Yeah, that's ridiculous. You're gonna reach down and lift your sheep out of there. However, you need to do that and Then he asked this question in verse 12. How much more valuable is A man Than a sheep Therefore he's answering their question. It is lawful to do good on the Sabbath and with that He turns to the man.

He says stretch out your hand the man Obediently does so and listen while they are watching Certainly every eye in the synagogue is Fastened on Jesus and this man. Jesus says stretch out your hand and while they're watching his hand becomes whole Right before their eyes His hand is completely restored and it goes on to say that the Pharisees jumped up and down and said that is so cool We think that you are the Son of God And That's not what it says What we're told in verse 14 is that having seen this most amazing miracle the Pharisees got up Went outside and they said this man must die Because he is doing these things on the Sabbath Well There it is folks in technicolor the legalistic darkened mind that exalts rules and regulations above people and the Pharisees are shown for who they are They cared nothing about the fact that the disciples were hungry when they were walking through the grain fields they cared nothing for this man with a shriveled hand whom they Deposited right in the front row of the synagogue. They cared nothing for when he was healed You know, the Bible says rejoice with those who rejoice Here's a man who is physically restored and rather than rejoicing with him praise God What this this wonderful miracle that took place they walk outside and they say this man needs to die And all they could see was a violation

and That is the legalistic Darkened mind they can't see people All they can see are violations of their rules And you know Jesus had already quoted them an Old Testament passage one Old Testament passage about how God desires mercy not sacrificing You know, he could have gone on you know that don't you he could have kept quoting Old Testament passages There were lots of them This was not an isolated verse in the Bible that told the Jews that God Desired mercy and that he himself was a God of mercy I want to show you on the screen just a few passages from the Old Testament a couple from Micah first We'll take a look from Micah chapter 7. Look at this Who is a god like you? Micah asks who pardons sin and Forgives the transgression of the remnant of his inheritance.

Look what he says. You do not stay angry forever but delight to show Mercy look at that. Isn't that amazing God delights to show mercy. You know what? Maybe I've jumped a little too quickly here What is mercy you guys?

Hopefully everybody has a good working definition of that word mercy is not Receiving what you deserve, okay? When you deserve punishment, when you deserve the worst, God doesn't give it to you. That's mercy. It's withholding, you know, because of a heart of love and a desire. Look what it says about God.

He delights to do it. You don't have to prevail upon him to be merciful. You don't have to beg him to be merciful. God is like, I'm just looking for an opportunity to be merciful to people. I delight.

Are there things you delight in? Think about the things you delight in. Just think about it for a minute. What do you delight in? Does anybody have to try to talk you into that?

Whether it's whatever? No, you're just like right there. Yes and amen. God delights to show mercy. And so since God delights to show mercy, shouldn't they be a people who also does that as well?

Look what also it says in Micah in chapter six, verse eight. It says, he has showed you, oh man, what is good. And what does the Lord require of you? Here it is, to act justly and to love mercy. I love that.

And to walk humbly before your God, right? God wants you because he delights to show mercy. God wants you to love mercy too. And the reason that we do that is because we've been shown mercy ourselves. I really truly believe that it's almost, well, I got to be careful making generalities in my statements, but I think that it's extremely difficult for anybody to really truly understand the concept of mercy until they've been the recipient of it.

Well, if you're in Christ today, you are a recipient of God's mercy. Look what Paul writes to Titus here on the screen, chapter three. But when the kindness and love of God, our Savior appeared, he saved us. Why? Not because of righteous things we had done.

Nope, wasn't because of us. It was because of what? It was because of his mercy. He saved us through the washing of rebirth and renewal by the Holy Spirit. I love that passage because it reminds me that the fact that I'm a Christian today has nothing to do with me being a good person at all.

He did not save me because of anything righteous that I had ever done. In fact, the only thing I brought into my relationship with God was the sin that I needed to be forgiven from. So why am I in Christ? Why are you in Christ? Well, it says it right there.

It's because of his mercy. You see, we are the recipients of mercy. We have understood mercy. God showed us mercy. He was merciful to you.

Not holding your sin against you, but forgiving you through Jesus Christ, his son, who paid the price of your sin. And through his mercy, you are now saved from your sin. Wow. You know what? We ought to be acting right now like one of those, like a crowd at an NFL football game when your team just ran in the winning score or something like that.

We should be blown away. We should be just so blessed by God's mercy. But more than that, we should be givers of that mercy. Look now what Paul says in Colossians chapter three. He says, bear with each other.

Legalists don't know how to do that, but he says, for you guys, bear with each other. And forgive whatever grievances you may have against one another. How are you and I to forgive? We're to forgive as the Lord forgave us. That means we're to show mercy in the same way we've been shown mercy.

We're to forgive like we've been forgiven. How are you doing on that score? Are you forgiving in the way you've been forgiven? You see, as recipients of these things from God, we are to turn around and show them to others. We are to be the kind of people who are quick to forgive, quick to show mercy, quick to bear with people.

When it says bear with people, what does it mean? It means bear with their weaknesses. So many times we criticize people for their weaknesses, you know, rather than bearing with them. But that's not mercy. That's not the heart of mercy that God delights in and wants you to walk in and to love yourself.

You know, I got to say, as Christians, we've done a pretty rotten job of loving people, particularly ourselves, even in the church. We're probably harder on ourselves than we are anybody. That shouldn't be. Jesus told us at one point that the world should know that we are his disciples, his followers, by the love we have one for another. And yet we're known for shooting our wounded around here.

That shouldn't happen. And then the way we respond to the world, you know, the world shouldn't walk into a place like this and feel condemned. I mean, if the word of God is convicting them, that's a whole different issue, but it shouldn't be because you and I are sticking our nose up in the air and refusing to see people as they are, people whom God loves, people for whom Christ died on the cross. That's the way we should see people. And we should bear with them, you know?

Somebody comes in and doesn't use the right words in their language. Maybe it's a little rough, you know, from their life in the world. Well, you know, you don't jump down their throat. You bear with them. You show mercy, tenderness.

And you remember, you know, wasn't that long ago, I used to talk just like that and worse. But you know what? God forgave me. He's going to forgive you too. I mean, mercy and mercy.

I've received it. Now I'm going to give it. You know, there's an interesting dynamic when it comes to mercy. It seems to kind of ferment with age. I know it seems kind of strange, but it's true.

The older you get and the more life you live, the more you seem ready to extend mercy to other people. And it's probably because the longer we live, the more we recognize our own personal failings and mistakes, you know? And we get to the point where we see it in somebody else and we look at our own lives and we go, yeah, yeah, me too. Remember that story when the religious leaders, once again, wanted to trap Jesus. And so they brought a woman in and threw her down at his feet and they said, this woman was caught in the act of adultery.

Now, the law of Moses says we're supposed to stone these people. Remember, they want to go back to the rule. That's the rule, Jesus. Moses gave us a rule, stone people like this. What do you say?

They're just hoping they can catch him with something. Well, Jesus knows he's dealing with a ridiculous situation because first of all, if the woman was caught in the act of adultery, where's the man? The Bible, what the word said was they should both be taken out to the city gates and stoned. But here's just this woman. They're preying upon this woman and she's not denying anything they have to say.

I have no reason to doubt that it's a genuine situation. There was, in fact, an adulterous something or other going on, but that's not the point. The point is they drop her at Jesus' feet and they say, there, now, boom. What are you going to do about it? Moses says we should stone her.

You come up with any other statement than what Moses said, we've got what we need, we've got the evidence that we need to say he's no friend of Moses, he's no friend of the law. And so Jesus says, all right, finally, he says, all right, fine, stone her. But with this one consideration, let he among you who is without sin go ahead and hurl the first rock. And you know, the Bible tells us that one by one they started to drop their rocks and go home, but it tells us it started with the eldest first. So that's why I was saying this concept of mercy seems to kind of ferment with time and with age and when we recognize that we, in fact, we are sinners and we are greatly in need of God's mercy and forgiveness all the time, every single day.

The last thing you and I ever want to try to do is to convey to somebody that people who come to church are people who've got their act together. In fact, quite the opposite. The reason we're here today is because we don't have our act together. We're basically kind of mess ups, but we are walking in the mercy of God who loves us, who fills us with life and joy and purpose and forgives our sins. And that's something we want to pass along.

Because that's a freedom from rules and regulations that everybody needs to experience. Listen people, if you're trying to be good enough, if you're trying to keep rules and you're trying to be a good Christian, you know what I say every time, knock it off. You can't do it. You can't be good enough. You never will be good enough.

If you're trying to measure up with God, stop right now and fall at his feet and call upon his mercy. Say Lord if I live a life that is pleasing in your sight. It's because of you not because of me It's because of your power your word your grace living in me, and I'm just gonna fill myself up with you And I'm gonna let you do the rest But I'm never ever gonna let go of your mercy You You