

Saturday Is For The Lord

Matthew 12:1-14

Intro

Several years ago, I came into contact with the phrase “***Saturday Is For The Boys***”...

- As you would expect, it was a Saturday afternoon, and I was driving down Golf Course Road when I noticed a truck with a large flag that was emblazoned with the words “***Saturday Is For The Boys***”...

Now, as I have since found out, this saying is usually used in a joking manner to communicate that Saturday is the time for guys to hang out together...

- To go fishing, to watch sports, to cruise around, to gather together to work on some project, the list goes on and on...

Now, it is obvious that Saturdays have a special place in our culture — *and not just for the boys*...

- While many people do not go into work on Saturdays — that doesn’t mean they don’t have things to do...

Youth sports, yard-work, home projects, travel, catching-up on work — the possibilities are endless...

So, decisions must be made about how we are going to spend our Saturdays...

And these decisions are nothing new...

During the time of Jesus' earthly ministry, the Pharisees — who were the self-appointed religious leaders of the day — *had very strict rules for what you **could** and **could not** do on Saturday...*

- But in those days Saturday had a different name — it was called the **Sabbath**...

And it is this subject of what could and could not be done on the Sabbath that is the backdrop of our study today...

With this in mind, would you please follow along as I read the passage that we will be working through this morning...

Matthew 12:1-14 (NKJV)

1 At 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.

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!"

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

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?

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

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

7 But if you had known what this means, I desire mercy and not sacrifice,' you would not have condemned the guiltless.

8 For the Son of Man is Lord even of the Sabbath."
Healing on the Sabbath

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.

Let's move into our first section...

1) Eating on the Sabbath (vs 1-8)

Now, before we move into vs 1, it is important to remind ourselves of the context — so let's look back to the last few verses of Matthew 11...

Matthew 11:28-30 (NKJV)

28 “Come to Me, all you who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.

29 Take My yoke upon you and learn from Me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls.

30 For My yoke is easy and My burden is light.”

The idea is that we are to first *lay down unnecessary burdens* — whether they are *self-imposed burdens* or *burdens imposed on us by others...*

- Then we are to be *yoked to Christ* — *we are to live with Him* — for ***the rest of our lives*** — and it will bring ***rest to our lives...***

This understanding is vital as we move into Matthew 12...

1 At 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.

Now, it is vital that we understand that this was not stealing — in the Law, provision was made for just this sort of thing...

Deuteronomy 23:25 (NKJV)

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.

So, as you walked through the grainfield of a fellow Israelite, you were able to take enough for a *snack* but you were not to *harvest* his grain...[expand]

- [ex. difference between enjoying a drink and a snack at a friend's house and emptying his fridge and freezer...]

2 And when the Pharisees saw it,

At this point, I have to ask the question — *“Why were the Pharisees in the grainfields?”...*

- *Were they following Jesus and His disciples?...*
- *Were the Pharisees hidden in the field wearing **grainfield camouflage**?...*

Whatever the case, how the Pharisees conducted themselves was a horrible way to live — especially for themselves...

- The Pharisees spent their time and energy following others around so that they might point out what is wrong with them — that's the *fault-finding attitude of the legalist*...

And because the legalist can never do enough, he is in a continual state of tension...

- *So he takes that tension and directs it outward in an effort to bring others into his legalistic system...*

Now, I covered this topic of legalism extensively as we studied **Matthew 9:14-17** in a message called ***New Wine***...

- I would encourage you to listen to that message if you struggle with legalism or if others are trying to bring you into their legalistic system...

Continuing on in Matthew 12:2 we read...

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

To understand what the Pharisees are complaining about, it is important to understand that they had an established tradition of **39 categories of actions** that were forbidden on the Sabbath...

- Please understand — I didn't say *39 actions* that were forbidden on the Sabbath — I said **39 categories of actions** that were forbidden on the Sabbath!...

And the reason why they developed such a complex system is straight-forward...

It is because no one can ever be made righteous through legalistic rule-keeping...

- *So there is never any peace for the legalistic rule-keeper...*

The legalist then must make a choice — let go of the rule-keeping or increase the rule-keeping in an effort to finally find peace...

- The committed legalist always chooses the latter — so law after law — regulation after regulation — rule after rule — must be established in a never-ending pursuit of self-righteousness...

The Apostle Paul — under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit — explains this beautifully as we turn to...

Romans 10:1-4 (NKJV)

1 Brethren, my heart's desire and prayer to God for Israel is that they may be saved.

2 For I bear them witness that they have a zeal for God, but not according to knowledge.

3 For they being ignorant of God's righteousness, and seeking to establish their own righteousness, have not submitted to the righteousness of God.

4 For Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to everyone who believes.

Now, as we turn back to **Matthew 12:2**, please understand that the Pharisees were interpreting the action of the disciples *as reaping and threshing on the Sabbath...*

- Plucking grain as reaping? — rubbing the grain in your hands to knock off the chaff (ex. eating sunflower seeds) as threshing?...

If we take a step back from this situation we begin to see just how absurd it is...

If you asked your son to reap and thresh a grainfield and he picked a few heads of grain, rubbed them together in his hands and gave you the grain — *would you say, “Good job!”?...*[expand]

- Now, as we make our way into vs 3, we see that the Lord Jesus *refuses to submit to the legalistic standards of the Pharisees...*

And He resists the Pharisees in a way that I had not noticed before...

- You see, the Pharisees approached Jesus as if they were *lawyers...*

The Pharisees are proclaiming themselves to be experts in the law and they are complaining that the disciples are lawbreakers...

So, the Lord Jesus responds as a lawyer...

In our passage we will see that the Jesus puts His lawyer suit on and responds to the Pharisees with three precedents to show that the Pharisees are wrong...

And verse three Lawyer Jesus gives us Precedent #1...

3 But He said to them, "Have you not read

Ouch! — This would have insulted their pride...

- But remember the context — the Lord Jesus and His disciples were minding their own business and the Pharisees confronted Jesus to accuse the disciples of wrong-doing...

The Pharisees were the aggressors — they were the ones bringing a frivolous lawsuit — and if you come at the King, you best not miss...

- *So, the Lord Jesus goes straight at them — they claimed to be experts in the Word of God so He challenges them from the Word of God...*

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

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?

This is ***Precedent #1*** — the Lord Jesus brings up a case from the life of David...

This case is taken from **1 Samuel 21**, when David and his men are on the run from Saul and they are in need of food...

- According to the law, the showbread was only to be eaten by the priests — but David and his men are allowed to eat the showbread because they are in need...

And the Old Testament passes no judgment on David for committing this act — but more to the point, *Jesus passes no judgment on David for committing this act...*

- What we have here is the ***hierarchy of values*** — *that a lesser rule or law may be broken to serve a higher purpose...*

For example, traffic laws are good laws to observe — but an ambulance driver is justified in breaking traffic laws in order to preserve life...[expand]

*But this is the sort of thing that the legalist **doesn't understand** or **doesn't want to understand**...*

- Because the legalist wants rules that apply to every situation — no ifs, ands or buts...

Tragically, the legalist refuses to walk by faith — the legalist refuses to receive the righteousness that Christ gives freely to all who trust in Him...

- The legalist wants to establish his own righteousness through the keeping of some system...

*And if this describes **you** — if you are on the treadmill of legalism...*

- *If you are daily climbing the limitless mountain of unending rules and regulations— then I simply remind you of...*

Matthew 11:28-30 (NKJV)

28 “Come to Me, all you who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.

29 Take My yoke upon you and learn from Me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls.

30 For My yoke is easy and My burden is light.”

As we move on in Matthew 12, we come to vs 5 where the Lord Jesus brings Precedent #2...

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

Here Lawyer Jesus brings up a very interesting example taken from...

Numbers 28:9-10 (NKJV)

9 'And on the Sabbath day two lambs in their first year, without blemish, and two-tenths of an ephah of fine flour as a grain offering, mixed with oil, with its drink offering—

10 this is the burnt offering for every Sabbath, besides the regular burnt offering with its drink offering.

By referring to this precedent, the Lord Jesus is pointing to the reality that the priests do work on the Sabbath and ***not only is it not condemned by God — it is actually commanded by God...***

- And I believe the case that the Lord Jesus is making is that the prohibition against work on the Sabbath had *exceptions — extenuating circumstances must be taken into account...*

This is where wisdom comes in — this is where spiritual leadership is needed — to rightly discern what pleases God in different circumstances...

- But the legalist chooses rules over discernment — regulations over faith...

But the irony of the situation is that the no legalistic can truly live by their own standard — they always fall short — and that leads to anger and frustration and a never-ending desire for control...

As we continue on in Matthew 12, let's look at how vs 5 & 6 go together...

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

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

Please understand that this is a clear proclamation of deity...

- By proclaiming Himself to be greater than the temple, Jesus is claiming to be divine...

And if Jesus is divine, then He is the interpreter *not only of the Sabbath law but of all of the Law...*

- Since this is true — if we refuse to seek His interpretation — if we refuse to seek His leading and guidance in all of our understanding — then we will inevitably go off-track...

7 But if you had known what this means, I desire mercy and not sacrifice,' you would not have condemned the guiltless.

Here the Lord Jesus once again points out that the Pharisees had misinterpreted the scriptures — they really didn't understand the Word of God — they had missed the big picture...

And the Lord Jesus points this out by quoting...

Hosea 6:6 (NKJV)

**“For I desire mercy and not sacrifice,
And the knowledge of God more than burnt offerings.”**

I believe the idea here is that God would prefer that His people focus on being merciful to one another — rather than focusing on giving just the right sacrifice...

The Lord Jesus addressed this topic in...

Matthew 23:23 (NKJV)

"Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you pay tithe of mint and anise and cummin, and have neglected the weightier matters of the law: justice and mercy and faith. These you ought to have done, without leaving the others undone."

So justice, mercy and faith come *before* sacrifice — and we can rightly offer the correct sacrifices only by *first* focusing on justice, mercy and faith...

This is the heart behind...

Micah 6:6-8 (NKJV)

**6 With what shall I come before the LORD,
And bow myself before the High God?
Shall I come before Him with burnt offerings,
With calves a year old?**

**7 Will the LORD be pleased with thousands of rams,
Ten thousand rivers of oil?
Shall I give my firstborn for my transgression,**

The fruit of my body for the sin of my soul?

**8 He has shown you, O man, what is good;
And what does the LORD require of you
But to do justly,
To love mercy,
And to walk humbly with your God?**

Before we continue on, let's look at Matthew 12:7 one more time...

But if you had known what this means, I desire mercy and not sacrifice,' you would not have condemned the guiltless.

The Pharisees had **condemned** the disciples — they had passed judgment on the disciples and declared them guilty...

- But the Lord Jesus declared the disciples not guilty — they were guiltless in regard to the grainfield situation...

LESSON — Beware of those who seek to condemn you so that they might bring you into the bondage of their system...

- If the Lord Jesus sets you free then you are free indeed — don't allow others to put you in bondage...

As Paul exhorts believers in...

Galatians 5:1 (NKJV)

Stand fast therefore in the liberty by which Christ has made us free, and do not be entangled again with a yoke of bondage.

Continuing on in Matthew 12 we come to vs...

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

Now, the word **even** not in the best manuscripts so a better reading would be "**For the Son of Man is Lord of the Sabbath**"...

- And I believe that what the Lord Jesus is communicating is very simple — *if He is Lord of the Sabbath* — then He is the one who gets to say how the Sabbath is used...

If a person is Lord of something then they are the one who gets to say how that thing is used...[expand]

- And since Jesus is Lord of the Sabbath — He gets to say how it is used — and anyone who disagrees with Him is simply wrong...
[expand]

Let's move now to our second and final section...

2) Healing on the Sabbath (vs 9-14)

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

Wonderfully, the Lord Jesus chose to participate in worship services...

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.

This is an absolutely terrible situation...

In an effort to accuse the Lord Jesus of breaking the Sabbath, the Pharisees use a disabled man as a pawn in their scheme...

- And this is how it is with the self-righteous legalist — others are simply a means to their ends — they don't care about **people**, they just care about their **system**...

Now, I want to back up for a moment and think about the situation...

The Pharisees have a system that has been constructed over a long period of time — and the whole point of that system is **self-righteousness through self-effort**...

- John the Baptist and the Lord Jesus come on the scene and speak out against this system...

But instead of repenting and submitting to what these men of God had to say, the Pharisees essentially ignored John the Baptist and defiantly opposed the Lord Jesus...

- And, in their opposition of Jesus, the Pharisees were willing to *use and abuse anyone in order to accomplish their goals*...

With this in mind, we move into vs 11 as the Lord Jesus introduces Precedent #3...

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?"

It is perfectly clear that a man who has a sheep that falls into a pit *on the Sabbath* is going to get that sheep out of the pit *on the Sabbath*...

- Any reasonable person is going to understand that the rescue of a helpless sheep does not defy God's intention for the Sabbath...

And as we move into vs 12, the Lord Jesus argues from the lesser to the greater...

12 Of how much more value then is a man than a sheep?

Please notice that the Lord — in no uncertain terms — affirms that a man is ***much more valuable*** than a sheep...

- ***Man is made in God's image — sheep are not...***

And if a person would help a sheep on the Sabbath — it would make sense to help a human being on the Sabbath — because a human being is much more valuable than a sheep...

- *Now, at the end of vs 12 — Jesus — the Lord of the Sabbath — gives the ultimate principle for the Sabbath...*

Therefore it is lawful to do good on the Sabbath."

What should a person do on the Sabbath? — Whatever is good...

And what is it that is good?...

The simplest answer is that what is good is whatever falls into the categories of ***Loving God*** and ***Loving Others***...

- And what is good for the Sabbath is good for every other day of the week — it is lawful to do good every day of the week...

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.

So, despite His enemies, the Lord Jesus did good on the Sabbath — which was no different from what He did on every other day...

- And instead of wondering what day it is — we should just do good every day...

[ex. “a small good thing” story — Christian magazine...]

Now to our final verse...

14 Then the Pharisees went out and plotted against Him, how they might destroy Him.

Instead of rejoicing in the healing of the man with the withered hand, the Pharisees plot to kill the Lord Jesus...

- Tragically, the Pharisees did not care about the disabled man — they did not care about the Lord Jesus — and they only cared about their system and their own make-believe self-righteousness...

Conclusion

We will stop here for today...

But before we close in worship I want to remind you that...

Saturdays are for the Lord...

But it doesn't stop there — because the Lord Jesus is not only the Lord of the Sabbath — He is the Lord of Every Day of the Week...

The Apostle Paul makes this clear in...

Colossians 1:16-18 (NKJV)

16 For by Him all things were created that are in heaven and that are on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or principalities or powers. All things were created through Him and for Him.

17 And He is before all things, and in Him all things consist.

18 And He is the head of the body, the church, who is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead, that in all things He may have the preeminence.

Jesus is the Lord of All — and He is always doing good...

- And since we are yoked to Him — let's make it our mission — to do good ***everyday***...

Let's pray...