

Justice and the Sabbath Laws – Teaching Notes

(Mt. 12:1-14; 6/3/18; Pas. Baines, Jr.)

Introduction: A key idea in today's lesson is that Jesus urges doing good of the sabbath, instead of just complying with traditions. Prayerfully, we will be challenged to live more by divine truth than by our own traditions.

Body:

Read Matthew 12:1-5

I. Law and Temple. Jesus and His disciples were walking through a grain field on the sabbath. The disciples picked and ate some of the grain because they were hungry. The Pharisees challenged Jesus about His disciples' behavior. Jesus refers to scriptures that justify His disciples' behavior.

Applications –

- **Divine truth over human traditions.** Notice in vss. 1-2 that the disciples and Jesus were being attacked because of their failure to comply with the traditions. The issue was not breaking God's law, it was breaking the religious people's traditions. First, every believer should ask God to help them discern the difference between tradition and divine truth. And we should have a greater allegiance to divine truth than to traditions. Second, those who help the leader should see that when the enemy cannot attack the leader, his next target is those who are close to leader. We should all strive to live by God's word, so we are not a part of hindering the progress of God's work. *Let's work on living by divine truth more than human traditions.*

- **Knowing and living by God's word.** Notice in vss. 3-5 that Jesus responded to the attack with reference to how to live by God's word. First, we need to study and be familiar with God's word. Personal and church based studies will help with this. Second, we need to make sure we are trying to understand how to live by what we read in the Bible. It is not enough to know the stories. We should strive to understand how to live by the lessons hidden in the stories. Third, as we understand, we should obey. Knowing what to do is not the same as being obedient. Be a doer, not just a hearer. *Let's work on knowing and living by God's word.*

Read Matthew 12:6-8

II. Sabbath and Messiah. Jesus talks about being greater than the Temple. He alludes to the Pharisees' ignorance about the meaning of scriptures. He mentions that He is the Lord of the sabbath as well.

Applications –

- **Jesus is greater.** Notice in vss. 6-8 that Jesus is greater than the Temple and the sabbath. It is easy to get church goers to agree that Jesus is in a category all by Himself. However, God is calling us to obey Him, as if He is so special in our lives. The following are at the core of what Jesus wants us to focus on: making sure we are saved by faith in Jesus' substitute death payment, loving God with all that we have (which is demonstrated by obeying Him), and loving others, as we love ourselves. *Let's work on living like Jesus is greater than the Temple and sabbath.*

- **Be merciful.** Notice in vs. 7 that Jesus talks about God being more concerned with mercy towards people than sacrifices towards Him. Trying to love God without loving people (especially needed people) is worthless. The Christian religion is a love religion. Think about how this idea relates to

how we can be more concerned about people wearing caps in the sanctuary than them being in the presence of life changing worship. Some would rather keep people out who don't behave according to their traditions than to allow them to come and possibly receive a life changing word from the Lord. *Let's make sure that we prioritize mercy towards people over what we claim that we do for God.* God loves people so much that He sent His Son to die for our sins. A full meeting space where people can hear the word of God and be blessed by the worship experience seems more pleasing to God than an empty sanctuary where people worship today the way they have been worshipping for the last 50 years.

Read Matthew 12:9-14

III. Ritual and Humanity. Jesus went to their synagogue and found a man with a shriveled hand. The Pharisees looked for a reason to bring charges against Jesus. Jesus challenged them to understand that it is lawful to do good on the sabbath. He healed the man. And the Pharisees plotted to kill Jesus.

Applications –

- Ministering over carrying out traditions. Notice in vss. 9, 11-13 that Jesus was in the synagogue and ministered to the sick man on the sabbath. First, if Jesus went to the church and study periods of His day then surely every believer should regularly be in worship and study today as well. Second, there are some people in the worship and study periods who have issues. They may be functional, but they also have issues. Think about those who attend with broken families, unhealthy bodies, financial distress, and lack of joy. Third, not only should we see them, but we should strive to minister to them. As Jesus ministered to the man on the sabbath because doing the good work of ministry was more important than the traditions around the sabbath, we should do the same. We should allow God to work through us to do what needs to be done in the lives of people, when they are here. We should not try to do on Saturday when people are not here what we could do on Sunday when they are here. Fourth, thank God, God can still heal. God may not do it when and how we want Him to, but He always does what is best for us. And there are times when God sees to it that He heals our bodies. *Let's work on letting God use us to not only attend worship and study periods regularly, but let's also allow Him to use us to minister to others as well.*

- The Pharisees. Notice in vss. 10, 14 that the Pharisees looked past the sick man to see what they could accuse Jesus of doing wrong. When things started to favor Jesus more than them, they plotted about how to kill Him. First, it is so sad to see how many in our churches are more concerned about keeping the preacher and leaders straight than with helping sick people get well. Too many are concerned with making sure things are done "right" (i.e., the way we have been doing it) than with doing the right thing (i.e., helping people to get saved and growing in the Lord). Second, it is terrible to see how church goers can become so evil in protecting "their church." As those in the text plotted to kill Jesus, there are still secret meetings aimed at stopping what God is trying to do through the one He sent. *Let's avoid being like the Pharisees.* We should always be open to God having His way. We should never resort to ungodly methods to achieve godly objectives.

Conclusion: Let's work on living more by divine truth than our own traditions. God has much for those who obey His will.