

Matthew 12:1-21 **What does God really want from us?**

This morning we will start to look at Chapter 12 and I have titled this message, what does God really want from us?

When I ask the question of what does God really want from us no doubt I would get many good answers. But there is one specific answer we will look at today that has far reaching consequences.

- If we can grasp what Jesus is speaking about here it will do volumes in our relationship with Him, Christians, and the world. Amen!

The key to what Jesus is trying to say to us in this section is found in v7.

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

As we think about our Christian life one of the things that God wants from us is mercy! Amen!

- Mercy is not getting what we deserve.
- God has given us mercy by not giving us what we deserve and now He wants us to give other people mercy as well.

Now as we open this chapter we are going to see a growing hostility towards Jesus from the religious leaders of His day.

- If you have a pen underline the phrase in v2 when the Pharisees.
- V14 then the Pharisees.
- V24 when the Pharisees
- V38 then some of the scribes and Pharisees.

The religious leaders were constantly harassing Jesus because He was not doing things the way they thought they should be done.

- Now the question for us is, are we harassing people because they are not doing things the way we think they should be done?
- Unfortunately I have met too many Christians that are constantly frustrated because people are not doing things the way they think they should be done.
- The same attitude these Pharisees had towards Jesus is the same attitude that causes so much division in the body of Christ and gives us a bad name toward the unbeliever.

In Exodus 34 God gives us His attitude toward us and it is something we need to meditate on.

- The Lord, the Lord God, merciful and gracious, longsuffering, and abounding in goodness and truth, keeping mercy for thousands, forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin, by no means clearing the guilty, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children to the third and fourth generation.

There is much in that verse but the attribute or attitude that God mentions twice is mercy.

- God is merciful and He is keeping mercy for thousands.
- God wants us His children to be merciful towards others. Amen!

V1-2 read-slow;

The issues that we are looking at today focus around the Sabbath.

- Keeping the Sabbath is one of the 10 Commandments.
- And it is intended to be a holy day, and a day of rest.
- And the example we are given for it is the creation.
- For in six days the Lord made the heavens and the earth, the sea, and all that is in them, and rested on the seventh day.

The commandment of keeping the Sabbath is the only one out of the 10 in the NT that we are not commanded to keep.

✠ We are told in the NT that our Sabbath rest is in Christ.

Romans 14: In Romans 14 where Paul is addressing this very same type of attitude, he says:

- One person esteems one day above another; another esteems every day alike. Let each be fully convinced in his own mind.

The idea of the Sabbath was to be a day of rest. And God did give us certain regulations that were designed to help guide us in it.

- But there were also exceptions made also.

Begin: Jesus and His disciples are now walking through the grain fields most likely after the Sabbath service.

- And as they are walking they decide to eat some of the grain that was around them.

But instead of enjoying just a nice Sabbath walk with Jesus they begin to be harassed by the Pharisees.

This gives us a great picture of what religion and religious people do.

- Instead of just letting us enjoy our time with Jesus they come and harass us because we are not doing what they think we should be doing.

The Pharisees are accusing Jesus and His disciples of doing something that is not lawful for them to do.

V4-5 read-slow;

Jesus is now going to give two examples in order to show the Pharisees they are wrong.

Have you not read: the first thing that Jesus does is ask a question.

- He is asking them if they have read the bible.
- In v3&5 Jesus asks them have you not read.

Have the Pharisees read this story of David, of course. But see for them the bible had fallen down very far from being the authority it is supposed to be.

- The Pharisees were more concerned with what men said about the word of God than what the word of God had to say!
- Their view of the Sabbath was not based on what the bible said but what man said about the Sabbath.

But Jesus goes right to the bible. Amen. And He uses a story from the life of one of their beloved leaders David.

In 1st Samuel 21 we have the story of David fleeing from Saul and he and his men come to the Tabernacle. And David asks Ahimelech the Priest if there is any bread to eat and Ahimelech told him the only bread to eat is the Holy Bread which was in the Tabernacle.

- There were twelve loaves of bread in the Tabernacle for the Twelve tribes of Israel and the Priests were the only ones that were allowed to eat it.
- Every Sabbath they would take out the old bread and the Priest would eat them and they would put in twelve freshly baked loaves.

But David was not a Priest and it was not lawful for him to eat the bread, yet he was given the bread to eat because there was a need.

✠ The law was not given to hurt the human condition but to help it.

- And God was not offended by the act, and He did not discipline David or Ahimelech.

David lied: it is also important to notice that Jesus demonstrates mercy in telling the story because He does not mention that David lied to the Priest.

- God desires mercy not sacrifice.

Important: Please understand that Jesus is pointing out that exceptions can be made for a ceremonial regulation, but He is further pointing out that the scriptures do not condemn David for his actions. Therefore the Pharisees strict interpretation of the law does not match the law.

- In other words the Pharisees added something to the law that was not there. Repeat!

And yet too often we in the body of Christ add things to the word of God that are clearly not there.

✠ We are like the Pharisees at times when we add our human traditions to it.

Chuck Swindoll: tells the story of about one point in his son's life he started to grow his hair long. And Chuck kept his silence. And eventually his son told him he did not grow his hair long because he wanted it long he just wanted to see what his father would say.

What was taking place: For several hundred years various schools of Rabbi's had added regulation after regulation, going way beyond the teaching of scripture and in many instances actually contradicting it.

The Mishna and the Talmud: are two other writings that the Jewish people observe, in the Talmud alone they have one section that has 24 Chapters listing Sabbath laws.

- And what they have written is really out there.
- The Talmud itself bears witness to this, when it speaks (no doubt exaggeratedly) of a certain Rabbi who had spent no less than two and a half years in the study of only one of those 24 chapters.
- **For instance:** Baths could not be taken for fear of the water might spill onto the floor and wash it.
- A woman was not to look in a mirror lest she see a gray hair and be tempted to pull it out.
- You could only carry ink enough to draw only two letters of the alphabet, and false teeth could not be worn because they exceeded the weight limit for burdens.

Even today the Jews won't push a button in the elevator because some how they reason that's work.

- They have Shabbat elevators that stop at every floor.

All of these things may be from good intentions, but God never intended the Sabbath to be viewed like that, it was meant to be a holy day and a day of rest.

Deuteronomy 23:25 Just so we know that in Deuteronomy God did allow in the law for people to walk through fields on the Sabbath and pick grain or fruit. You simply were not allowed to basket or reap on that day.

- When you traveled in those days there wasn't a WAWA at every corner so God allowed people to refresh themselves on their journey.
- Also Israel did not run on Dunkin!

V5 read-slow;

Another example: Jesus gives another example of how the Priest are actually working on the Sabbath. Actually they are doing twice the amount of work on the Sabbath then they normally do.

- And yet even though they are working on the Sabbath they are considered blameless.

Perhaps the Pharisees didn't understand as much about Sabbath observance as they thought they did.

- ✠ How can one be so legalistic about not working on the Sabbath when the Priest is actually working on the Sabbath and in of all place the House of God?

One of the keys to their problem is **have you not read!**

Seventh Day Adventist: have their services on a Saturday but even if you are the strictest adherer to the law the Pastor is still working on the Sabbath.

Poole: Where two laws in respect of some circumstance seem to clash one with another, so as we cannot obey both, our obedience is due to that which is the more excellent law."

V6-8 read-slow;

We need to understand that Jesus is really going after them now.

- Once again Jesus is making more claims to His Deity.

The Jews knew that the Temple was where the presence of God was.

- God would appear before the Mercy seat in the Holy of Holies.
- And now Jesus is saying He is greater than the Temple.

Stephen was also Martyred because they said he speaks blasphemous words against the Temple.

- You can't blaspheme a building; they claimed he was blaspheming God.

Now: As we look at this discussion we see that the Temple was greater than the Sabbath because the Priests serve the Lord on the Sabbath.

- And now Jesus says He is greater than the Temple that is greater than the Sabbath.
- And to make it even more clearly, Jesus calls Himself the Son of Man which is clearly a messianic title, and then He goes on to say that He is also Lord of the Sabbath.
- But we need to remember that God is the One that created the Sabbath and now Jesus is saying He is Lord of the Sabbath.

Jesus is standing before these Pharisees and telling them He is Greater than God's Temple, and greater than God's Sabbath.

- There is only one option left. He is God.

Heart of God: The point Jesus is trying to make is that they really didn't know the heart of God!

- And once again Jesus appeals to the scripture. He quotes Hosea 6:6
- God desires mercy not sacrifice!

God told the people to sacrifice but the problem is they were doing it with the wrong heart.

Jesus said, have you not read, have you not read, but if you had known what this means.

- In order to know and understand the heart of God we need to know the word of God! Amen.
- And the word of God tells us that God desires mercy not sacrifice.

What God really wants from us is Mercy!

We think our religious activity impresses God. But it's not our religious activity that impresses God but our acts of mercy that matter to God, because God is a God of mercy.

- God is not impressed that we point out every ones faults.
- But when we do acts of mercy we are being like Him and that is what He desires from us.
- We bring an animal to the altar and God is like big deal. Who owns the cattle on a thousand hills?

God puts compassion before ritual. He wants love not legalism.

People that don't go to church: there are people that don't go to church because they claim Christians are doing every thing wrong. Meanwhile they are not honoring the bible by not going to church.

✠ But even if the church is doing things wrong, then go there and help them to do what is right!

A sacrifice was never more than symbolic, a means of pointing to God's gracious and future provision in Jesus.

- God never intended any sacrifice or law to super cede showing mercy to individuals.

Paul: Paul demonstrated Mercy to the Corinthians.

✠ He said, I will very gladly spend and be spent for your souls; though the more abundantly I love you, the less I am loved.

✠ Paul did not give these people what they deserved, he gave them mercy.

Mephibosheth: One of my favorite stories in the bible has to do with David as well.

✠ After some time after King Saul had died David wanted to know if there were any descendants left of King Saul on whom he might show the kindness of God.

✠ And it turned out that one of Jonathan's sons was still alive and his name was Mephiboseth.

✠ And what is interesting is that he was lame in both legs, but David said he would come and sit with me at the Kings table all the rest of his days.

✠ He shall eat my table like one of the king's.

✠ And David also gave him some of Saul's land back to his family.

Saul spent the remaining years of his life trying to kill David, yet David decided to show mercy to his family by taking care of one of his special need grandsons. Amen!

Marriages and things stay together: one of the main reasons why marriages and ministries and churches and families stay together is because of mercy.

✠ I can only wonder how many times my wife did not give me what I deserve.

✠ And who knows how many times I did not give my wife what she deserves.

✠ We have stayed together because we have given each other mercy.

Church: as a Church we can be a thriving, powerful, living organism in the hands of God if we will offer each other mercy.

- When people do wrong things here don't be so hard on them because we all do things wrong. Amen!

The world is looking for the so-called religious people to offer them mercy.

V9-10 read-slow;

So far Jesus has pointed out that it is okay to pluck grain on the Sabbath and its okay for some people to work on the Sabbath.

- And now Jesus is telling us that its okay to heal on the Sabbath.
- But healing on the Sabbath is not going to make the Pharisees happy.
- **Think about** that for a minute. Someone being healed will not make the Pharisees happy!

We learn here how truly cold and hard hearted the Pharisees were.

- First they know that Jesus has been helping those who are in need and it doesn't even affect them.
- Instead they look to use a man with a withered hand in order to try and trap Jesus.

These Pharisees have just heard Jesus say that God desires mercy not sacrifice and it had no effect on them whatsoever.

- Because they have an opportunity right in front of them to show mercy, by ministering to a man with a withered hand, yet they have no compassion on him whatsoever and simply look at him as a means to accuse Jesus.

Be careful: We as Christians have to be so careful that we are so concerned with our religious activity that we forget about ministering to those in need.

- Lord help me to emphasize.

V11-13 read-slow;

I love the fact that Jesus brings the argument right to their front door.

- Its easy to have an opinion about something when it doesn't affect you, but when it's close to home it causes you to think.

Jesus is asking them what would they do if one of their sheep falls into a pit on the Sabbath?

- Certainly every man there would lift out a mere sheep on the Sabbath.

Then Jesus makes the answer even more obvious by saying a man is of much more value than a sheep so surely you would help him on the Sabbath.

- Jesus has totally demolished their attack..

Now that these Pharisees have nothing to say Jesus tells the man to stretch out his hand and it was totally healed.

Praising God: There is no doubt that this man is praising God. He shows up for the worship service in the synagogue and he leaves healed. Amen.

- That is precisely what God would want to take place.
- Who knows maybe he got home and his parents asked, how was synagogue today?
- I was healed. Hallelujah!

The Sabbath was a ceremonial law that was never intended to get in the way of people being healed or helped or ministered to.

- The Sabbath was meant to be a blessing to man.
- In fact what greater day could one be healed on, then the Sabbath.
- God desires mercy not sacrifice!

Jesus cares: this also shows us that Jesus truly cares about people. You may be here this morning not with a withered hand but with withered heart and Jesus is saying He cares for you and He will heal your withered heart!

- Because it is good for Him to do so!

Picture of the church: Too often the world has the picture that church is to be stoic and boring and an act of duty.

- Our brother Juan just told us at the Discipleship group that those people look like they were baptized in lemon juice.
- When it is intended to be a place of joy and worship and healing.

Listen to how James describes what should take place:

- **James 5:13-16** Is anyone among you suffering? Let him pray. Is anyone cheerful? Let him sing. Is anyone among you sick? Let him call for the elders of the church and let them pray over him, anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord. And the prayer of faith will save the sick, and the Lord will raise him up. And if he has committed sins he will be forgiven. Confess your trespasses to one another, and pray for one another, that you may be healed. The effective and fervent prayer of a righteous man avails much.

James doesn't neglect the fact that sin needs to be addressed in the church, but it is to be addressed so people can be forgiven and healed.

We are so hard on people because of the outward sins that they commit.

- But should I choose to I could watch pornography 24hrs a day 7days a week without anyone knowing it.
- Because I could play it in my mind because of the stuff I have in there.

The man with the withered hand left the synagogue rejoicing and praising God, but the Pharisees left wanting to come up with a plan in which they could destroy Jesus.

Results of religion: We see here in our passage the results of legalistic religion.

- Legalistic religion takes the life right out of you.
- In v7 Jesus says it condemned the guiltless and here it causes them to want to kill Jesus.

I have been around legalistic Christians and they zap the life right out of you.

- What's even more unfortunate is that I have that tendency, and I almost became one.
- But by the grace of God I was spared.

Donald Grey Barnhouse observed: it is at this point in history that Israel's clock stopped. Because Israel, God's chosen and specially blessed people, rejected her Messiah, God placed her on the shelf as a nation; until the fullness of the Gentiles has come.

V15-16 read-slow;

Jesus now leaves the synagogue and the unbelieving Pharisees but we see that great multitudes followed Him and He healed them.

We see here the Mercy of God being displayed. Because Jesus is healing all who come to Him but the unfortunate reality is not all of them will believe.

- God does heal people according to their faith, but God also heals people simply because He is merciful.

Jesus miracles of healing demonstrated His divine power, but they also demonstrated His divine love and compassion for suffering people.

Wondering: You may be here this morning wondering why God hasn't healed you but God assures us one day in heaven we will all be healed.

- We will get our new body and there will be no more pain.

But I simply encourage us all here this morning if we want God to heal us we need to ask Him. We are His children and He cares for us.

- Continue to pray and ask and knock and believe for that healing until you hear God say no.
- Paul prayed for a healing and God eventually told him no.
- God said my grace is sufficient for you.

But Hannah and Rachael prayed for a long time and God healed them.

- Hezekiah prayed and God restored his life. Though he did not do so good with the years he was given.
- We need to pray and ask God to help us not waste the healing He gives us.

God is a God of mercy so we should continue to ask Him to heal us if we need healing!
Amen!

V17-21 read-slow;

Matthew is once again quoting from Isaiah and he is quoting Isaiah 42:1-4 and this prophecy is speaking about the way the Messiah is going to treat those who come to Him.

This prophecy is speaking about the Servant-hood of Jesus, and how God is pleased with Him and it's speaking about His gentleness and His mercy.

Jesus is that Servant of God and we see that His mission was always to go to the Gentiles.

- In fact this prophecy ends by stating the Gentiles will trust in His name.

Gentle and merciful: v19-20 speaks specifically about how Jesus would deal with those who come to Him.

Reed: we see once again that a reed is being used for an analogy. Jesus used it in speaking of John the Baptist and now God is using it in speaking about Him.

A reed grows by river and was used at times for a musical flute that shepherds would play for their sheep.

- But if a reed gets bruised or broken you can't fix it you just throw it away.
- **Yet** if a reed is **bruised** the Servant Jesus will handle it so gently that **He will not break** it.
- He will deal mercifully with them not harshly.

Smoking flax: And if flax, used as a wick for an oil lamp does not flame but only smokes He Jesus will not **quench** it or put it out. Instead, the Servant Jesus will gently nourish the **smoking flax**, fanning it into flame again.

When people come to Jesus He is going to be gentle with them He is going to show them mercy!

Numerous people have come to Jesus bruised like a reed, ready to be thrown away, or people have come to Jesus like a smoking flax they have burnt their life away and they are simply waiting and smoldering as life passes them by.

But Jesus is so gentle and merciful to those that come to Him.

Caught in Adultery: Remember the story in the bible where a woman was brought to Jesus who was caught in the very act of adultery.

- ✠ Yet after Jesus pointed out the sin of the men that brought her to Him, He says, where are you accusers?
- ✠ Neither do I accuse you go and sin no more.

Jesus said to them men that brought her to Him, he who is without sin cast the first stone.

- ✠ Yet the very One who was without sin who could have thrown the first stone said to her neither do I accuse you go and sin no more.

What does God really want from us?

- ✠ God desires mercy not sacrifice.

Matthew Henry: Let us with cheerful confidence commit our souls to so kind and faithful a Friend. Far from breaking, he will strengthen the bruised reed; far from quenching the smoking flax, or wick nearly out, he will rather blow it up into a flame. Let us lay aside contentious and angry debates; let us receive one another as Christ receives us. And while encouraged by the gracious kindness of our Lord, we should pray that his Spirit may rest upon us, and make us able to copy his example

Jim Baker: I think most of us know of Jim Baker from the PTL scandal of the 80's.

- ✠ He ended up going to prison for what he had done. He had totally ruined the name of Jesus Christ.
- ✠ But one day in prison he received a visitor was Billy Graham. And he tells how Billy Graham came and gave him a hug.
- ✠ He said Billy Graham is the epitome of every thing I should have been.

Billy Graham showed mercy by going to see him.

Father Mychal Judge: who was killed in the attack on 911 and is also in the famous picture called the America Pieta where they are carrying his body away from the towers.

✠ But before 911 he also worked with people who had aids.

✠ And when he anointed a man who was dying of AIDS, the man asked him, "Do you think God hates me?" Judge just picked him up, kissed him, and silently rocked him in his arms.

✠ That is mercy.

As a Church we are called by God to offer people mercy, and not only because God is merciful but because all of us are recipients of the mercy of God.

God is beautiful: have we ever wondered what makes God beautiful? He is Spirit so there is nothing physical that makes Him beautiful.

- What makes God beautiful is who He is and what He does.
- God is beautiful when we see the mercy He bestows upon people!

The only reason any of us have been saved from our sins is because of the rich mercy of God.

- **Ephesians 2:4-5 But God who is rich in mercy, because of His great love with which He loved us, even when we were dead in trespasses, made us alive together with Christ (by grace you have been saved).**

Deuteronomy 10:12 And now Israel, what does the Lord your God require of you, but to fear the Lord your God, to walk in all His ways and to love Him, to serve the Lord your God with all your heart and soul, and to keep the commandments of the Lord and His statutes which I command you today for your good.

Thief on the cross: a really great display of mercy comes from Jesus while He is hanging on the cross dying.

✠ We know that He was hung between two other men and as they were hanging there we are told the two of them mocked Jesus.

✠ But later in that day we see that one of the men had a change of heart and he asked Jesus if He would remember him when He came into His kingdom.

✠ And this man who was mocking Jesus only a few hours earlier heard Jesus say, this day you will be with Me in Paradise. Amen!

Jesus also prayed: Father forgive them for they know not what they are doing.

Let's pray!