

9Departing from there, He went into their synagogue. 10And a man was there whose hand was withered. And they questioned Jesus, asking, "Is it lawful to heal on the Sabbath?"—so that they might accuse Him. 11And He said to them, "What man is there among you who has a sheep, and if it falls into a pit on the Sabbath, will he not take hold of it and lift it out? 12"How much more valuable then is a man than a sheep! So then, it is lawful to do good on the Sabbath." 13Then He said to the man, "Stretch out your hand!" He stretched it out, and it was restored to normal, like the other. 14But the Pharisees went out and conspired against Him, as to how they might destroy Him.

15But Jesus, aware of this, withdrew from there. Many followed Him, and He healed them all, 16and warned them not to tell who He was. 17This was to fulfill what was spoken through Isaiah the prophet:

*18"BEHOLD, MY SERVANT WHOM I HAVE CHOSEN;
MY BELOVED IN WHOM MY SOUL is WELL-PLEASED;
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AND HE SHALL PROCLAIM JUSTICE TO THE GENTILES.*

*19"HE WILL NOT QUARREL, NOR CRY OUT;
NOR WILL ANYONE HEAR HIS VOICE IN THE STREETS.*

*20"A BATTERED REED HE WILL NOT BREAK OFF,
AND A SMOLDERING WICK HE WILL NOT PUT OUT,
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21"AND IN HIS NAME THE GENTILES WILL HOPE."

Does anyone remember hearing Dr. Donald Grey Barnhouse? If you do, you may be dating yourself. He had a successful radio program beginning in the 1950's and continuing today though he died in 1960. Dr. Barnhouse and the Bible.

He was a fundamentalist when that word meant something good. And he was an expository preacher when expository preaching wasn't cool. Good solid meat and potatoes exposition. Not the trendy dandelion salad stuff.

It's interesting that Barnhouse says - This is where the clock stopped for Israel. Right here in Matthew 12, Israel's time clock stopped. This is where Jesus shakes the dust of Israel off his feet and turns instead to the gentiles.

And there may be something to that, as we'll see in Isaiah's prophecy. What we'll see in chapter 12 is that Jesus keeps moving outwards from the center of Jewish religion in Jerusalem. He keeps moving further away in concentric circles from the Jews as the hatred and danger heats up.

When Herod throws John in prison - Jesus moves out to Galilee. But after the incident we'll look at this morning, - He moves out even further. He skirts in a wide circle to places like Tyre and out east of the Jordan river to places that are beyond anywhere national Israel had any interest in. The gentiles, if you will.

His life is threatened, and even though He has massive power to crush His enemies, He quietly backs away. It isn't time for loud confrontation. It's time to back away from Israel, and go ultimately, to the nations.

When God's time, His Father's time IS fulfilled, Jesus will turn His face towards Jerusalem, the city of peace, and be dead in a week. All controlled by God's time clock. In His perfect time.

A signature I love at one of the photographers forums that I chatter at sometimes, by a guy 2 years older than me, stolen from Robert Frost.

*The woods are lovely, dark and deep,
but I have promises to keep,
and miles to go before I sleep,
and miles to go before I sleep.*

In an odd way that describes Jesus in this chapter. If He'd gone to Jerusalem after this confrontation we'll look at in these verses, they'd have killed Him immediately. He has much to do in His visitation before that happens. And Isaiah indicates He'll do it quietly, and the

nations will be at least partially, the beneficiaries.

9Departing from there, He went into their synagogue.

Whose synagogue? There's no indication which town or village this occurred in. Luke tells us it was "another sabbath" so it's a different day than the wheat field confrontation we looked at last week.

I think the possessive pronoun there refers us back to the confrontive Jews. Scribes, pharisees, saducees, religious jews who held power over the common folks, and who were on the attack against Jesus.

Almost as if to say, you Jesus, may have won the hearts of these ignorant peasant farmers and fishermen who are following you around watching the Jesus show, but the synagogue, organized religion if you will, that's still ours. Their synagogue. He isn't welcome there. They're holding onto their power base tenaciously.

10And a man was there whose hand was withered.

Luke tells us it was his right hand. That had further meaning in that culture than it does for us. Although most of us are right handed and would not be able to get much done if someone taped our hand up and made it un-usable. In that culture, your right hand was kept clean and was for eating, and your left hand was for other things.

Withered means something had caused the muscles and flesh to atrophy. It was useless to the man. And he, like the woman with the issue of blood, no doubt had social stigma attached because of his condition.

And they questioned Jesus, asking, "Is it lawful to heal on the Sabbath?"—so that they might accuse Him.

Notice that last part. ...so that they might accuse Him. These pharisees and religious leaders are delighted that this man is there.

You can read all kinds of things into this little drama. Did they see Jesus coming and so they went and got old Joe who normally is the last

guy to sort of sneak in, hopefully un noticed, and then sort of cower in the corner so he can be the first guy out. Un noticed.

Before they only tolerated this man as despised, but now they go and get him and put him front and center in front of Jesus, so they can accuse Him.

And they questioned Jesus, asking, "Is it lawful to heal on the Sabbath?"

Now, think about this for a minute. This is a creative act. Like when God spoke the stars into place. Withered hands don't have any way to be healed. The repairative process is broken. It's irreversable, impossible to do anything with, and Jesus is going to speak, and at the sound of His voice, millions and millions of healthy cells, with this man's DNA are going to replace the useless ones. At the sound of Jesus voice, creation is going to take place.

Now, I know these folks aren't scientists, but still!!! No one before or since, God spoke, could do that. They must realize that! It's not like there's one or two other guys every thousand miles or so who can do that too. No one but God alone can speak, and what he speaks is done. Instantly. Something from nothing. *Performative utterance*. The thing is done, in the saying. Nobody can DO that. Nobody else!! Nobody!!

The hardness of their hearts is astounding! They look right past a creation act and accuse Jesus. Astonishing! Like, everybody can do that, but you better not do it on the sabbath! Really?? Go get old Joe. He'll create a new hand for him. Then we'll have Him, by golly. It's just beyond bizarre. *"Is it lawful to heal on the Sabbath?"* **Unbelievable.**

IN the traditions of the elders, NOT the word of God, the Old testament, but in the traditions that they had created, that they held as equally authoritative as God's word, there were rules for physicians. If an accident had happened, blood is gushing, the physician could take steps on the sabbath to preserve the man's life. Do just enough to keep him from dieing, but no more. Apply a tourniquette and wait for the sabbath to be over before you did anything else to actually heal the person.

That was their man made law. It wasn't God's law.

11 And He said to them, "What man is there among you who has a sheep, and if it falls into a pit on the Sabbath, will he not take hold of it and lift it out?"

We don't have solid evidence but it is speculated that in their hundreds of sabbath rules and restrictions in their traditions of the elders, there may have been just such a loop hole. Your sheep falls into a pit. Pull it out.

In any case, it's a rhetorical question. Even if there wasn't a provision in the traditions, a sheep is valuable. These hypocrites would look around to see if anyone's watching, and jump right in that pit and get that \$80 sheep out pronto.

Notice the ownership in how Jesus says this. Because it's going to carry over into what He says next. *What man is there among you who has a sheep*

12 "How much more valuable then is a man than a sheep!"

You've got a sheep worth \$80 bucks and you'd be right in that pit right now getting your personal possessive pronoun \$80 sheep out. Well, I've got a man. And his value to me is worth more than my life. My blood will flow at Calvary for this man. That's his value to me. And he's fallen into a pit of sin.

Jesus then says; *So then, it is lawful to do good on the Sabbath.*" They would save a sheep because it had monetary value to them. They would turn their backs against this man that has infinite value to the Saviour. Who is good? Who is evil? in this scenario. Pretty much a no-brainer.

These guys are seething with hatred. His answer causes rage.

Mark adds to this drama. You could hear a pin drop. Silence. There is no answering this man Jesus. Mark adds; *But they kept silent. 5 After looking around at them with anger, grieved at their hardness of heart,*

He said to the man, "Stretch out your hand."

This is high drama. Better than anything you'll go home and watch on TV. We can picture this room. The confrontation. The hatred. The degradation and shame of these men. The silence as they seethe with hatred. This man is destroying their power base. Their religion of control. And Jesus stares every one of them down. Mark says, after looking around at them. With ANGER. Mark tells us Jesus was angry at these men. Grieved because their hearts are locked down hard.

13Then He said to the man, "Stretch out your hand!" He stretched it out, and it was restored to normal, like the other.

How'd you like to be this man at the center of this confrontation. With all the power of heaven, and all the hatred of hell. That stare down session. God of very God, angry. Satan seething with hatred and malice. And you're the guy in the middle. The guy who always does his best to just be invisible. Whoa!

His useless hand became a perfect hand. Just like his other hand. No atrophied muscles to painfully re-train. Nothing about it was different than if he'd had a perfect matching right hand his whole life. The skin is tanned and dry just like the left hand. Fingernails and every other feature, as if there had never been a problem.

Where does that come from. Who else in the universe can create millions and millions of cells with this man's DNA to form a hand that is HIS hand but as if it was always there. Same age, same size, perfect in every way. From nothing. It wasn't, then it was.

The Master said "Stretch out your hand!" and by the time he complied, it was already new.

How can you look at that and be so hardened in dis-belief that you say, Satan did that. That's their answer after the next miracle, and Jesus is going to delve into the impossibility of that logic. They're too far gone to hear it though.

Humans have some frightening capabilities. If you dig to the bottom of this whole evolution scheme, it doesn't take much science at all to blow the whole thing up. But people won't hear it. They won't face that honestly. Because their only other choice is a God who has standards, and they'll believe anything before they'll go there.

Very similar to these pharisees and saducees and herodians. Believe something impossible in order to avoid the obvious. Satan created that new hand. Wow. It takes greater faith to believe the ridiculous lie. That's absurd.

14But the Pharisees went out and conspired against Him, as to how they might destroy Him.

This is where we started. They've seen all the evidence. In fact if anything as the evidence piled up they went farther and farther in the opposite direction. A mountain of evidence becomes a mountain of disbelief. They had to ramp up the disbelief. Until finally we're at the point where the only solution they can come up with is murder. This Jesus has to go.

You realise, Jesus is only a year into His ministry. At the one year point they're planning His murder. But God has other plans. God has the day and the hour and the minute and the second chosen when Jesus will die. For us. And it isn't here. It isn't yet.

Mark adds that they conspired with the Herodians. *6The Pharisees went out and immediately began conspiring with the Herodians against Him, as to how they might destroy Him.*

The pharisees hate the herodians. It's like John Birch society nazi republicans hooking up with socialist / communist wannabe democrats in a common cause. You forget that you're enemies because you now have something in common. Both groups want Jesus dead, and the Pharisees are going to need to get Rome on board somehow, so the Herodians are useful to them.

Herodians were jews who were religious liberals. They were like

Saducees but they also had the political connections to Rome. They were in bed with Herod.

Satan's kingdom had become very dangerous for Jesus.

Of course, Jesus is God. He has options that trump Satan. He could send an angel that could make everyone in Jerusalem dead. Instantly. He could send fire from Heaven and consume the Pharisees, like Sodom and Gomorrah. He could be indestructible like the 2 witnesses in Revelation and go to Jerusalem and preach His message and have fire come out of His mouth and consume any pharisee that gives Him trouble. He could hover in the air 4 feet above them while He did that. All kinds of options.

You laugh at that, but I'm not the first one to think like that;

James and John, you'll recall, had these very thoughts when they were traveling through Samaria. The Samaritans were giving Jesus the air. They didn't want anything to do with Him because He was going to Jerusalem, and they hated anyone from there, or going there. The event is recorded in Luke 9.

53But they did not receive Him, because He was traveling toward Jerusalem. 54When His disciples James and John saw this, they said, "Lord, do You want us to command fire to come down from heaven and consume them?" 55But He turned and rebuked them, and said, "You do not know what kind of spirit you are of;...

Yes, Jesus is God and has all the options of the one who spoke the worlds into place. But there is a plan that He is following to the letter. It's the quiet plan.

15But Jesus, aware of this, withdrew from there. Many followed Him, and He healed them all, 16and warned them not to tell who He was.

When Satan's world closed in, Jesus retreats. Ever larger concentric circles. When 85 miles from Jerusalem got dangerous, He moved out to

125. All the people followed Him. He healed every one of them. His mercy and His heart of love never change. He heals the people and tells them, shush. Keep it quiet.

He has 2 more years of ministry before it's time to die on the cross. So He keeps on the move, and keeps a distance from this pack of thugs who want Him dead. Dead or somewhere else. Out of their space.

But there's more to it than that. There's a reason He chose the quiet option. And it's because it was written down 700++ years before He lived it out.

17 This was to fulfill what was spoken through Isaiah the prophet:

These words are from Isaiah 42:1-4. The prophet Isaiah describes Jesus actions to the letter. Let's look at this.

*18 "BEHOLD, MY SERVANT WHOM I HAVE CHOSEN;
MY BELOVED IN WHOM MY SOUL is WELL-PLEASED;*

This is one of the most endearing and beautiful descriptions of Jesus in all the Bible. The greek word used here for the original hebrew for servant is pais. And it means a beloved servant. A servant indistinguishable from a son.

God loves this Son and upholds Him. God's soul delights in this Servant - Son. Jesus is beloved and brings pleasure to His Father in heaven.

*I WILL PUT MY SPIRIT UPON HIM,
AND HE SHALL PROCLAIM JUSTICE TO THE GENTILES.*

You might think to yourself, if Jesus is the second person of the trinity, why does He need the Spirit? And the answer is that when He came to earth as a man, He emptied Himself. He left all that glory behind in Heaven. He walked this earth as a man. Just like us, with all the same impulses and emotions. But without sin. He had the Spirit without measure.

And then Isaiah says *AND HE SHALL PROCLAIM JUSTICE TO THE GENTILES.*

In the Hebrew version it's translated *He will bring forth justice to the nations.*

God never intended for Israel to be like this big bowl full of blessing that doesn't spill over. They get it all and the nations get nothing. Just the opposite. Israel was to be a pipeline of blessing through which God would reach out to the whole world.

But when the beloved Son-servant arrived in Israel, Israel was broken. Useless. As far as the nations go, Israel was a fig tree with no fruit. In fact it was this brokenness that drives Jesus outside the borders of the very nation He came to bring blessing through . . . to the gentiles.

God is going to fulfil His words through Isaiah with Israel, or without them. The nations, the gentiles got the first fruits of blessing before the cross, because the Jews drove Jesus farther and farther out. We see Him in Tyre and Sidon and Decapolis in the gospels. Gentile nations. Driven there by the Jews who hated Him. The very Jews He came to bless.

We have to say, with Paul; *33Oh, the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are His judgments and unfathomable His ways!* Ro. 11:33

*19“HE WILL NOT QUARREL, NOR CRY OUT;
NOR WILL ANYONE HEAR HIS VOICE IN THE STREETS.*

I watched the Fox News debate last night. Interesting to see the contrast of personalities. You've got your Donald Trump type people who quarrel and cry out. They make a lot of noise. Then you've got your Dr. Carson type people who don't have to do that. Quiet. Classy. Brilliant. Funny. You can tell I was enamored.

This verse makes me think of that. The anti-christ, when he comes on the scene has this most notable thing about him. A mouth that speaks

great things. A shouter. A boaster. A quarreler. The world will hear his boasting in the streets and either do what he says, or die. That's the counterpoint to Jesus. He is polar opposite.

When push comes to shove, when the pharisees and herodians plot to destroy Him, He doesn't quarrel, He doesn't cry out, He doesn't command fire to come down from heaven. At least not on this trip. A day is coming. But not here. Not now.

*20 "A BATTERED REED HE WILL NOT BREAK OFF,
AND A SMOLDERING WICK HE WILL NOT PUT OUT,
UNTIL HE LEADS JUSTICE TO VICTORY.*

Israel is a battered reed. A smoldering wick. Broken. Rendered ineffective. Set aside. But Jesus doesn't bring the judgement they deserve. Instead, He goes to the gentiles.

The jews will murder Him, and the time of the gentiles will last 2000 + years while Israel is set aside. Battered. Broken. Smoldering, almost out. But there, just the same.

A day of Justice and Victory has been decreed for Israel. They will be punished double for all their sins. God will have His Justice, but then a day of Victory for them is promised, and God WILL fulfil every promise He ever made to them.

We're right at the end of that gentile blessing period. Israel is in the land. Broken. Smoldering. Pressed on every side. Threatened with extinction. All of this is in God's plan. Isaiah wrote it down almost 2,800 years ago.

We're watching it unfold as if Isaiah was writing the headlines of our newspapers. God is in total control. Don't you worry about a thing.

21 "AND IN HIS NAME THE GENTILES WILL HOPE."

Pinch yourselves. Hear we are!

I said it before, and I'll say it again; *33Oh, the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are His judgments and unfathomable His ways!*