

**THE GOSPEL OF  
MATTHEW**

**Chapter 12:1-21**

Thursday Morning Bible Study  
Our Redeemer Lutheran Church  
Wauwatosa, WI

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**Lord of the Sabbath – 12:1-8**

- This is another incident of Jesus’ disciples acting differently.
- V. 1 – Jesus and his disciples arrived at their destination in the early evening, at the beginning of the Sabbath.
- They were hungry, so they plucked grain and ate them. Was this “work”? A major debate in Jesus’ day.
- V. 2 – “The disciples do what is not lawful on the Sabbath!”

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**Lord of the Sabbath – 12:1-8**

- The word “work” for the Hebrew referred to 39 categories of creative and productive acts which were forbidden.
- The word first appears in Gen. 2:2 when God had completed all his “work” of creation and rested. So the word was understood to refer to any creative act of production. But it was never an exhaustive list.
- V. 3 – Jesus defense? It is NOT that He is Lord of the Sabbath and therefore can willingly disregard the Sabbath laws. He has not come to abolish the law, but to fulfill it.

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Lord of the Sabbath – 12:1-8

- Jesus shows that sometimes there are loftier matters that apply. Jesus says that the disciples are not breaking the law, but upholding it.
- V. 3-4 – David, on the run from King Saul, came to the high priest and asked for food, for life was at stake.
- The only food was the 12 loaves of the Bread of Presence.
- What was the greater commandment – to give bread to the hungry or to dispose of them as the law demanded?

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Lord of the Sabbath – 12:1-8

- Jesus’ point is that the preservation of life was greater than needed to obey a sabbath rule. What the disciples did was technically forbidden, but the preservation of life was the greater act.
- V. 5 – The priest desecrates the Sabbath as well. To make sacrificial worship work on the Sabbath, the priest must violate the provision to not work.
- A positive commandment takes precedence over a negative one.

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Lord of the Sabbath – 12:1-8

- V. 6 – The usual interpretation is that Jesus is the “something greater,” but that doesn’t fit the context.
- Jesus’ argument is that the “something greater” is the need and hunger of the disciples, which is greater than the sabbath rules.
- If human need is greater than temple service, and temple service is greater than the sabbath, than human need is greater than the sabbath.

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### Lord of the Sabbath – 12:1-8

- The need for “mercy” (“chesed”) is greater than some sabbath rule.
- V. 7 – Jesus quotes Hosea 6:6 – The call for mercy is greater than sacrificial rules. On the ranking of commandments, mercy (*chesed*) ranks higher than ritual matters.
- If they had understood this, they would not have questioned.
- “Chesed” (mercy or compassion) is central to how Jesus acts. It supersedes all ceremonial rules. - The Good Samaritan

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### Lord of the Sabbath – 12:1-8

- V. 8 – “The Son of Man is Lord of the Sabbath”
- Mark 2:7 – “The Sabbath was made for man, not man for the sabbath.” – an argument from creation.
- Adam (man) was made first. The Sabbath was given to him to help him.
- “Lord” was an elevated title of respect.
- “Son of Man” really refers to Jesus as a human being – like all of us. Therefore, mankind is master over the Sabbath.

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### Lord of the Sabbath – 12:1-8

- A Summary of Jesus’ Argument in Matthew 12:1-8:
- 1. Compassion for human need and human suffering (*chesed*) takes priority over the Temple service (example from 1 Samuel of David and his men in the field)
- 2. The Temple service takes priority over the Sabbath (example from the Torah of the priests serving even on the Sabbath)

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Lord of the Sabbath – 12:1-8

- A Summary of Jesus' Argument in Matthew 12:1-8:
- 3. Therefore, compassion for human need takes priority over the Sabbath
- 4. After all, the Sabbath was made for human beings, not humans beings for the Sabbath
- 5. Human beings are thus lord of the Sabbath, and take priority over it

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The Man with the Withered Hand – 12:9-14

- V. 9 - Jesus enters a synagogue on the Sabbath and there is a man with a withered hand.
- Luke adds the detail that it was his right hand – the symbol for "*chesed*."
- V. 10 – Is it permitted to heal on the Sabbath? A topic of debate in Jesus' day.
- V. 11 – Jesus asks a question of his own: Is it lawful (permissible) to do good on the Sabbath?

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The Man with the Withered Hand – 12:9-14

- V. 11-12 – Jesus is not opposed to the Sabbath laws, but seeks to apply them according to the principle of "*chesed*."
- If it is permissible to help your animal, how much more so for a human being?
- We don't die by the commandments, we live by the commandments!
- Proverbs 3:27 – If it is in your power to do good, do it!
- 14 – The Pharisees turn against him.

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God's Chosen Servant – 12:15-21

- 15 – Jesus seeks to avoid confrontation. He is drawing huge crowds from all over.
- 16 – Jesus heals all who were sick, but does not want to be proclaimed as the Messiah. Why?
  - 1) Jesus didn't come to be a miracle worker. He is there to call people to repentance.
  - 2) He needs time to train his disciples, so that they can carry the message forward.
  - 3) Galilee is on the verge of a revolution and Jesus doesn't want to get caught up in something like that.

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God's Chosen Servant – 12:15-21

- V. 17 - Matthew sees that happening with Jesus secrecy and his prolific ministry and desiring to keep it in low profile.
- V. 18 – Matthew quotes Isaiah 42:1-4, the longest single quotation from Isaiah, and the first time the Gospels make the connection between the Suffering Servant of Isaiah and Jesus.
- The one whom the Father has chosen at his baptism is indeed the one who is the Servant in Isaiah.

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**God's Chosen Servant – 12:15-21**

- V. 18 – He will bring forth “justice” for the nations.
- “Justice” is not just punishing the guilty, but Biblically it means to “straighten out.” He comes to realign that which was put out of alignment by sin.
- Who is the “Servant” of Isaiah? Israel? Moses? The Messiah? Matthew sees that it clearly is Jesus. He is the Word in the flesh.
- 19-20 – Jesus will not raise his voice or be heard in the streets until he brings everlasting justice.

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**God's Chosen Servant – 12:15-21**

- 21 – Justice is realignment – realigning the nations with the True God.
- Matthew, who is not translating the OT, but paraphrasing the OT, reduces Is. 42:4 to the simple truth that in the name of Jesus the Gentiles will have hope

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