

# Gospel of Matthew

12:1-13

## ***What is More Valuable***



When I show you a George Washington , and an Abraham Lincoln, and Andrew Jackson, I hope it would not be difficult to place in the order of value. George - \$1 / Abraham - \$5 / Andrew - \$20 / Grant - \$50. Who is on a \$100 bill? - ***Benjamin!*** How many here (if I gave you a choice between George, Abraham, Andrew, or Benjamin) would choose George over Benjamin? Or, for that matter, Andrew over Benjamin? No? Why? Well it's obvious that \$100 dollars is more valuable than \$1. But, what if you had been told all your life by people that you respect that one dollar was more valuable? You would get this all wrong, wouldn't you? It would be a mistake because of being misled! Not your fault, but still, a mistake!





This passage is about the people that could *never* give themselves over to Jesus. They had swallowed too many lies and had incorporated them solidly into their world view! But Jesus is confronting the lies they have bought into. It begins with what may have been an incident that was intended to provoke. It

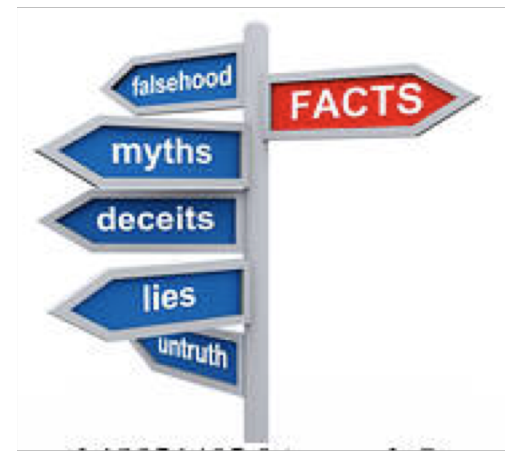
was obviously something that the disciples of Jesus had done before and felt they had every right to do. This practice of a traveler taking some of the grain by the road side was not considered stealing in that culture. That was not what was the problem. It was the day that they did it on – Saturday – the Jewish Sabbath! Jesus had obviously told the disciples that they could do this on the Sabbath. That was good enough for them and so they stripped the stalks of wheat, filling their palms and picking the grains and gnawing on them one at a time chewing husk off and spilling it out and chewing on the grain, kind of like we eat sunflower seeds. They did this with an innocence that spoke to their total trust in Jesus having declared it okay to do. But, oh boy, did it start something! The Pharisees saw this and went nuts! Can you imagine someone going stark, raving, crazy, outraged by something so completely innocuous?!

Oh, yeah, I guess we can, can't we. It's happening all the time these days! A certain type of people with a certain mind-set are constantly being offended and outraged about the craziest things! All you can do is shake your head in bewilderment! It is truly bizarre! It is like time has been rolled back and we have a new kind of Pharisee that rules the culture with a new (and quite different righteousness) - and all these little morality tyrants being offended by the strangest things and taking it upon themselves to police the thoughts and the words of everyone in the society, with a zealousness that rivals that of the old time Pharisees! Craziness! There is so much righteousness posturing these days by the media, by business heads, and by public figures that it simply makes one's head spin!





And now the snowflakes are warning that their winter is coming! If something does not happen to stem this tide, that threat is definitely forecasting a bleak future for this country! This movement is really is about people with lives that have no meaning, latching on to any meaning, even a bad one, and throwing themselves totally into it! Because having no meaning is the worst thing of all!



These people need Jesus! His yoke is easy and His burden, light! He brings fullness to one's life, not empty philosophy and political power and force, but real and substantive meaning! And he is not a tyrant, and He polices only those who give Him whole-hearted permission! But even that, He does gently. But false ideas will effectively insulate the person that holds these beliefs from the truth claims of Jesus. Their truth grid is clogged with falsehoods, lies and errors that stop the truth of Jesus from entering their ears and penetrating their brains for any kind of consideration!

Enough of that. Back to the text. So these Pharisees go crazy over the disciples of Jesus picking grain and eating it on the Sabbath Day when all forms of work were forbidden! This was breaking the rules, in their opinion and they were *ANGRY*!



So Jesus destroys them with an O.T. story about David who they venerated. When David was on the run from King Saul who had it in for him, and he and his men had been desperately hungry. They went to a place called “Nob” where there seems to have been a temple or something along those lines. Remember that this was before the first temple was built by David’s son, Solomon. So the worship of God in Israel was not relegated to Jerusalem. Anyway, David needed food, and so he asked the priest for some food, and since there was only consecrated bread – bread offered before the Lord – the priest offered them that, and they took it. David even lied a little bit to get the bread – said they were on a secret mission from the king – when actually David was on the run from him! So they ate, were satisfied, and were not judged as having broken the law.

It wasn’t long and a vindictive King Saul had the 85 priests of Nob killed and then killed **EVERYONE** in the town – men, women, children, and animals! He didn’t believe the story that they thought they were aiding the king when they were aiding David. They were conspirators in Saul’s mind and he killed them all and anyone that was in any way connected to them. It is one of the most unjust, tyrannical, and just plain evil acts of any of the kings of Israel and there were some very bad men among them

This was certainly not lawful, but David was still considered a holy man of God and writer of scripture, and a prophet, by these very men that were accusing Jesus of law-breaking!

Then Jesus cites the fact that priests work on the Sabbath all the time! Then He makes a startling claim. “***One who is greater than the temple is here***”. He is obviously speaking of Himself! He is saying that He is greater than the Law and temple – greater than Judaism itself. He proclaims Himself Lord over the Sabbath! He gets to say what is legal and not legal - not the priests, not the Pharisees! He speaks the truth, but He could not have said anything more offensive to the Pharisees!! He indicates that God does not care about the issue like they cared about it. What God really cared about was a man’s heart – whether it contained the quality of mercy. If their hearts had the quality of mercy that God was seeking in them, they would not have been harassing hungry people grabbing a bite to eat to assuage their hunger!



Right from there, Jesus went to a synagogue in an unspecified city. He encounters a man with a withered hand. For the priests and Pharisees, this seems like an encounter made in heaven! They have Him right where they want Him! They are just waiting to pounce. Evidently they thought that it was illegal to practice medicine on the Sabbath too, and I guess, miracles may have fit into that category in their minds. Jesus points out their inconsistency in vs. 11. They obviously thought that the life of an animal was more valuable than a man. So Jesus turns, and with a word transforms this man's hand into a fully restored and functional appendage! It is a wonderful, most amazing act! It was an act of creation as the hand was not healed but literally recreated. It could be nothing else!





And then there is that disappointing reaction, heart-breaking really. They go and begin to seriously figure out how they can kill Jesus! They feel they must shut Him up because they can't argue with Him. He bests them and makes them look like fools every time.



Notice that Jesus is not trying to convert these guys. That is not possible. Their minds are shut to Him and ANYTHING He might say or do! I think that He could even have shown Himself to them on His heavenly throne and they would have decided to go to hell rather than bend the knee to Him! Whatever He says is for the sake of His disciples and for the onlookers who were actually capable of contemplating His arguments and objectively assessing His actions!



There is but two true applications of this passage for us today. The first is



that, Jesus is Lord! Even the great Law of Moses surrenders to His authority!

The second is that Jesus does way more than heal withered hands. His intent is to heal hearts. It is human hearts that are withered and broken! It is human hearts that need His healing touch! It is human hearts that need to be recreated, made right, made in the mold of God's own heart!