

# Friday, March 5

Today's Reading: Matthew Chapter 12:1-21

Today's Devotional Message is by Matt Cesare

*"I tell you that one greater than the temple is here. If you had known what these words mean, 'I desire mercy, not sacrifice, you would not have condemned the innocent. For the Son of Man is Lord of the Sabbath.'" Matthew 12:6-8*

If you have ever spent any time around children you have probably heard one (or more) of them say, "That's not fair!" Children somehow have a built-in fairness detector and can and will point out unfairness especially if it is targeted towards them. Many adults respond, "Well kid, life ain't fair." And for the most part they are correct. Life isn't fair, and neither is God. God is Just.

God gave the Law to the Jewish people to teach them how to live in a right relationship with him. God wraps the Law in a covenant or contract between himself and the people. "I will be your God, and you will be my people." We know this agreement best as the 10 Commandment. Around the time Jesus was alive, the Jewish leaders had expanded the Law into 613 rules; too many for any person to actually keep. Break the rules and you damaged your relationship with God. Play by the rules and you would be blessed.

Jesus enters into this world and says, "the rules are great, but not the way you think they are." The Law is established to represent what a right relationship could look like, but man who is sinful is not capable of following all of them. We can't be good enough to earn God's love and truthfully God doesn't want or expect us to try and earn His love. The Bible tells us that God first loved us. It's because of His love for us that He gives us the Law. But what God really wants from us is Mercy. He wants us to first give love to others and then teach them the Law.

This is why Jesus is teaching and healing and "picking grain" on the Sabbath. And the Pharisees cry, "That's not fair. We have obeyed the Law all our lives, why should someone who 'clearly' has sinned be shown mercy without first obeying the Law?!" But Jesus does not come to abolish the Law, in his sacrificial act of death on the cross and through his resurrection, he fulfills the Law, setting right the relationship between God and his people, so we no longer have to follow the rules to please God, but instead put our faith in him and show mercy for those that he loves, which is really what the Law is all about anyhow. The Bible says "The entire law is summed up in a single command: "Love your neighbor as yourself." Galatians 5:14 (NIV)

So it's not really fair, God's love and mercy, His Gospel, is available to everyone, even those who don't play by the rules or "obey the laws". But that doesn't make the law a bad thing. We still need rules to be shown just how much better life can be.

*Prayer: Lord, today I pray that you lead me in the ways of mercy, loving those that the world has called unlovable, and giving me the wisdom to obey you and your commands. Amen.*