

6/7/26

Sermon Title: Finding Rest in the Lord of the Sabbath

Preacher: Pastor Kim Soonbae

Scripture Passage: Matthew 12:9-21

⁹ Going on from that place, he went into their synagogue,

¹⁰ and a man with a shriveled hand was there. Looking for a reason to bring charges against Jesus, they asked him, "Is it lawful to heal on the Sabbath?"

¹¹ He said to them, "If any of you has a sheep and it falls into a pit on the Sabbath, will you not take hold of it and lift it out?"

¹² How much more valuable is a person than a sheep! Therefore it is lawful to do good on the Sabbath."

¹³ Then he said to the man, "Stretch out your hand." So he stretched it out and it was completely restored, just as sound as the other.

¹⁴ But the Pharisees went out and plotted how they might kill Jesus.

God's Chosen Servant

¹⁵ Aware of this, Jesus withdrew from that place. A large crowd followed him, and he healed all who were ill.

¹⁶ He warned them not to tell others about him.

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

¹⁸ "Here is my servant whom I have chosen, the one I love, in whom I delight; I will put my Spirit on him, and he will proclaim justice to the nations.

¹⁹ He will not quarrel or cry out; no one will hear his voice in the streets.

²⁰ A bruised reed he will not break, and a smoldering wick he will not snuff out, till he has brought justice through to victory.

²¹ In his name the nations will put their hope."

After His dispute with the Pharisees regarding the Sabbath, Jesus departed from them.

Then, on another Sabbath, He entered their synagogue.

⁹ Going on from that place, he went into their synagogue,

We know from Luke's account that this was not the same Sabbath on which the disciples plucked and ate heads of grain in the fields.

(Luke 6:6) On another Sabbath he went into the synagogue and was teaching, and a man was there whose right hand was shriveled.

By referring to it as “their synagogue,” Matthew highlights the growing distance between the Jewish synagogues and the early Christian community that had already been established by the time he wrote his Gospel (around A.D. 50–70).

The Jewish synagogue system was developed during the Babylonian exile and became more firmly established during the time of Ezra.

As many Jews were dispersed and lived far from the Temple in Jerusalem, synagogues served as places for worship, prayer, and the teaching of the Law. Jews regularly attended the synagogue on Sabbaths and feast days, and those regarded as especially devout were frequent participants.

It is estimated that there were nearly 480 synagogues in existence before the destruction of Jerusalem in A.D. 70.

When Jesus entered the synagogue, there was a man with a shriveled hand.

This was not merely a coincidence.

Those who opposed Jesus had deliberately placed the man there in order to accuse Him and bring charges against Him.

The Pharisees had been closely watching Jesus' actions, looking for evidence to condemn Him.

Since they had been unable to find fault with Him, they now set a trap and waited for Him to fall into it.

With the intention of placing Jesus in a dilemma, the Pharisees asked Him whether it was lawful to heal on the Sabbath.

Their question was not motivated by a desire to learn the truth, but by a desire to find grounds for accusing Him.

¹⁰ and a man with a shriveled hand was there. Looking for a reason to bring charges against Jesus, they asked him, “Is it lawful to heal on the Sabbath?”

By asking this question, they sought to place Jesus in a carefully crafted dilemma. On the one hand, He could not heal the man without, in their view, violating the Sabbath.

On the other hand, He could not ignore a suffering man without contradicting His own teaching that mercy and compassion are more important than sacrifice. Their goal was to portray Jesus as hypocritical, biased, and inconsistent.

According to the traditions of the Jewish elders, there was an exception that allowed medical treatment on the Sabbath if a person's life was in immediate danger.

The problem, however, was that the definition of what constituted a life-threatening condition was often unclear.

The Pharisees were convinced that healing a man with a shriveled hand did not qualify as an emergency and therefore violated their Sabbath regulations.

Thus, in a place devoted to the study of Scripture and prayer, they were plotting a malicious scheme against Jesus.

In response, Jesus gave the example of a sheep that falls into a pit on the Sabbath. He argued that it is lawful to do good on the Sabbath.

According to the regulations established by the Pharisees themselves, if an animal fell into a pit on the Sabbath, food could first be provided to sustain it through the day.

If its life was in danger, however, a person was permitted to pull the animal out directly.

Jesus then pointed out that a human being is far more valuable than a sheep.

Therefore, He restored the man's shriveled hand, demonstrating that acts of mercy and restoration are fully consistent with God's purpose for the Sabbath.

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¹² How much more valuable is a person than a sheep! Therefore it is lawful to do good on the Sabbath."

¹³ Then he said to the man, "Stretch out your hand." So he stretched it out and it was completely restored, just as sound as the other.

The Pharisees were willing to rescue a sheep that had fallen into a pit on the Sabbath, yet they had no desire to show mercy to a man with a shriveled hand. Instead, they were so preoccupied with their political objective of condemning Jesus that they were using this suffering man as a tool to achieve their goal.

Jesus confronted them by pointing out that if it was permissible to do good to an animal on the Sabbath, then surely it was right and proper to show mercy to a human being who bears the image of God.

While the Pharisees were concerned only with observing legal regulations, Jesus focused on God's true purpose for the Sabbath—mercy.

He went beyond mere rule-keeping and taught that the Sabbath is a day on which people should actively do good.

After teaching the Pharisees the true meaning of the Sabbath, Jesus commanded the man to stretch out his hand.

The man obeyed, and Jesus healed him.

Because he believed that Jesus had the power to restore his withered hand and responded in faith, he received the blessing of being made completely whole through Christ's creative power.

The Sabbath is a blessed day on which the life God created is meant to enjoy rest. It is not a day of oppression but a day of liberation for weary souls and a day of joy.

There can be no exception, even on the Sabbath, to receiving the blessings of the gospel that Jesus came to bring.

Jesus is the Lord of the Sabbath, greater than the Sabbath itself.

Yet the Pharisees committed the absurd act of trying to condemn the very Lord whose Sabbath they claimed to defend.

They became so obsessed with what people were not supposed to do that they lost sight of what they were called to do.

At this point, the Pharisees could no longer debate Jesus regarding His ministry on the Sabbath.

Feeling threatened by His authority and His interpretation of the Law, which challenged their own power to bind and loose, they began plotting how they might kill Him.

Ironically, the Sabbath controversy became one of the key events that hardened their resolve to put Jesus to death.

Knowing their intentions, Jesus withdrew from that place.

Nevertheless, many people followed Him, seeking healing even on the Sabbath, and He healed them all.

Despite the threat of death hanging over Him, Jesus continued to heal more people on the Sabbath, fulfilling God's will by demonstrating compassion and mercy to those in need.

¹⁴ But the Pharisees went out and plotted how they might kill Jesus.

¹⁵ Aware of this, Jesus withdrew from that place. A large crowd followed him, and he healed all who were ill.

¹⁶ He warned them not to tell others about him.

Jesus was never indifferent to those who were weary and scattered, to those who labored under heavy burdens, or to the weak and helpless.

Instead, He brought them the promise of ultimate salvation, for He is their Messiah.

After healing the people, Jesus commanded them not to tell others about Him. He was concerned that premature publicity might hinder the fulfillment of His messianic mission through His death on the cross.

The appointed time had not yet come, and He did not want to provoke greater hostility from His opponents before completing the work the Father had given Him to do.

Furthermore, if word spread widely about His miraculous power, many people would seek to make Him their earthly king.

Such political enthusiasm would distract from and potentially obstruct His true mission—the redemption of sinners through His sacrificial death on the cross.

Therefore, Jesus acted with great caution and restraint.

Jesus is the Messiah for whom the Jewish people had waited for centuries.

Yet He is not only the Messiah of the Jews but also the Messiah of all nations.

To accomplish His mission, He faithfully walked His appointed path—the path of suffering and ultimately the path of the cross.

Matthew then quotes the book of Isaiah to demonstrate that the works Jesus performed on the Sabbath were the fulfillment of God's Word spoken through the prophet Isaiah.

In this way, Matthew shows that Jesus' ministry perfectly fulfilled the promises and purposes of God revealed long beforehand through the Scriptures.

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

¹⁸ “Here is my servant whom I have chosen, the one I love, in whom I delight; I will put my Spirit on him, and he will proclaim justice to the nations.

¹⁹ He will not quarrel or cry out; no one will hear his voice in the streets.

²⁰ A bruised reed he will not break, and a smoldering wick he will not snuff out, till he has brought justice through to victory.

²¹ In his name the nations will put their hope.”

The phrase “the one I love, in whom I delight” echoes the voice that came from heaven at Jesus' baptism.

Therefore, this passage emphasizes that Jesus, as the Son of God, is also the Servant of the Lord foretold in the Old Testament.

He is both the Son of God and the Servant specially chosen by God for a unique redemptive mission, the One anointed with the Holy Spirit.

To proclaim justice to the nations is a distinctive task entrusted to the Messiah, God's chosen Servant.

The expression “to proclaim justice to the nations” refers to Jesus reaffirming and declaring God's righteousness—revealed through the Law and summarized in the commandments to love God and love one's neighbor—and to His disciples carrying that gospel to the ends of the earth.

Although the gospel would first be proclaimed to the lost sheep of Israel, it would eventually expand to the Gentiles because of Israel's rejection and persecution.

This truth becomes especially clear in Christ's missionary commission:

(Acts 1:8) But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth.

Jesus proclaims God's justice through humility and lowliness.

The "bruised reed" and the "smoldering wick" symbolize weak and helpless people.

The "bruised reed" represents those whose hearts have been crushed and broken by suffering, disappointment, and hardship.

The "smoldering wick" refers to those whose last hope is fading away, whose inner light has nearly gone out, and whose souls are growing dark.

Matthew portrays these bruised reeds and smoldering wicks in people such as tax collectors, sinners, and the man with the shriveled hand—individuals who were often marginalized or used as tools by the Pharisees.

The phrase "until he has brought justice through to victory" points to the time when the Messiah, the Suffering Servant, establishes God's righteousness over the powers of evil—not through the worldly glory many expected, but through gentleness, humility, and sacrificial service.

It refers ultimately to Jesus Christ's death on the cross and His resurrection, by which He conquered death and firmly established God's justice in the world.

Jesus is the Messiah who invites and restores those who labor and are burdened. Until justice is victorious, until righteousness triumphs completely, He will not break the bruised reed or extinguish the smoldering wick.

This is the prophecy concerning the Messiah spoken through the prophet Isaiah: (Isa 42:1) Here is my servant, whom I uphold, my chosen one in whom I delight; I will put my Spirit on him, and he will bring justice to the nations.

(Isa 42:2) He will not shout or cry out, or raise his voice in the streets.

(Isa 42:3) A bruised reed he will not break, and a smoldering wick he will not snuff out. In faithfulness he will bring forth justice;

(Isa 42:4) he will not falter or be discouraged till he establishes justice on earth. In his teaching the islands will put their hope.

Isaiah foretold the Messiah as the Servant through whom the Lord would work—a suffering Servant who would accomplish God's purposes.

Matthew therefore understood this prophecy to be fulfilled in Jesus, who endured opposition and persecution from the Pharisees and many others of His day.

Matthew emphasizes that Jesus' quiet and unassuming ministry, His refusal to stir up the crowds for personal glory, perfectly matched the ministry of the Messiah foretold by Isaiah.

In the end, the Son would fulfill the role of the Servant through His obedience, even to death on a cross.

Through the Servant's humiliation and self-sacrifice, people are restored, and that restoration becomes the hope of all nations.

Beloved members of Church of Godly Dreams,
Jesus came as the compassionate Messiah who will not break a bruised reed or snuff out a smoldering wick.

The Pharisees sought only to use the man with the shriveled hand for their own purposes.

They had no concern for his pain, sorrow, or despair.

But Jesus looked upon him with compassion, showed him mercy, and restored him completely—even though He knew that doing so would further intensify the threats against His own life.

Jesus embraced sinners and the sick with compassion and gave true rest to wounded souls.

While the Pharisees placed heavy burdens of legalism upon people, Jesus invited those who were weary and burdened to come to Him and receive rest.

Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and today and forever.

Even now, He does not break the bruised reed or extinguish the smoldering wick.

Are you weary under the weight of life's burdens?

Are you struggling with guilt and regret?

Are you discouraged by illness and suffering?

Have you been wounded by others, with your hope growing dim?

Today, the Lord still speaks to us: "Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest."

Let us come to Jesus Christ, who frees us from the snares of sin, anxiety, and fear, and who grants true rest to our souls.

His yoke is easy and His burden is light.

He is the Lord of the Sabbath and the compassionate Messiah who restores the bruised reed.

May each of us enjoy true rest in the grace of Jesus Christ and faithfully share the mercy we have received with the world around us.

I pray this in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ. Amen.