Grace to You :: *Unleashing God's Truth, One Verse at a Time*

Jesus Is Lord of the Sabbath, Part 2
Scripture: Mark 3:1–6
Code: 41-12

Turn in your Bible to Mark chapter 2...Mark chapter 2. I want to read the Scripture for this morning's study, including last week's lesson and then on in to the one for this morning. So we'll start where we really started last Sunday, at least in our reading, Mark chapter 2 verse 23.

“And it happened that He was passing through the green fields on the Sabbath and His disciples began to make their way along while picking the heads of grain. The Pharisees were saying to Him, ‘Look, why are they doing what is not lawful on the Sabbath?' And He said to them, ‘Have you never read what David did when He was in need and He and His companions became hungry? How he entered the house of God in the time of Abiathar, the high priest, and ate the consecrated bread which is not lawful for anyone to eat except the priests and he also gave it to those who were with him.' Jesus said to them, ‘The Sabbath was made for man and not man for the Sabbath. So the Son of Man is Lord even of the Sabbath.' He entered again into a synagogue and a man was there whose hand was withered. They were watching Him to see if He would heal him on the Sabbath so that they might accuse Him. He said to the man with the withered hand, ‘Get up and come forward.' And He said to them, ‘Is it lawful to do good or to do harm on the Sabbath? To save a life or to kill?' But they kept silent.

“After looking around at them with anger, grieved at their hardness of heart, He said to the man, ‘Stretch out your hand,' and he stretched it out and his hand was restored. The Pharisees went out and immediately began conspiring with the Herodians against Him as to how they might destroy Him.”

The shocking truth that the religious leaders of Israel desired to destroy Jesus Christ seems very hard to grasp. What had He done? Brought healing so that people debilitated and distressed by diseases could find relief and comfort and restoration and usefulness, brought deliverance from demons so that people possessed, indwelt, demonized, could be freed from that hellish domination. Brought comfort therefore to the sorrowing, even brought food to the hungry and then the message of eternal salvation, the message of the forgiveness of sin and the promise of eternal life in the Kingdom of God in heaven for all who repent and believe. Wasn't this more than the Jewish people could have ever hoped for? Not only a message of salvation, but a messenger who demonstrated His power to give salvation by showing that He had power over the material world, power over the demonic world, and even power over sin. What else could they want?

Why did they hate Him? Well they didn't hate Him because He healed people. They didn't hate Him because He fed them. They didn't hate Him because He cast out demons. They didn't hate Him because He brought funerals to an abrupt end by raising the dead. It was what He said that made them hate Him, not what He did. And what He said was that He was God, God the Son. He had come down from heaven. That He was the Messiah, the Savior. But more than that, He, in fact, was God. The truth is, He supported that claim by His power over disease, by His power over demons, by His power over death and by His authority over sin. Wasn't that convincing enough?

Why would the claim so infuriate the leaders of Israel? Why would it drive them to want Him dead? And wasn't the good news good news? Wasn't it good news that the spiritually blind could receive spiritual sight, the spiritually dead could receive spiritual life, the spiritually oppressed could receive spiritual liberation? Wasn't it good news that the Kingdom of God was open to all who would repent and believe?

It should have been good news but there was a tremendous barrier to that because the message of Jesus was that this salvation which He offered was not available by human works. You couldn't earn it. You couldn't merit it. You couldn't deserve it. You couldn't achieve it. No matter how many morally good things you did, and morally bad things you avoided, how many rituals you performed, or how many ceremonies you observed, this salvation was apart from works, apart from merit, apart from worthiness, apart from human achievement by grace through faith. And in their religion, spiritual pride reigned. You earned your spiritual status. Jesus said, “That won't do it. You need to humble yourself, confess your unworthiness and repent of your sin.”

In essence, His message was in complete, direct opposition to the apostate Judaism that dominated the nation and was pervade by the religious leaders, namely the Pharisees and scribes. It was for this they hated Him. They hated His theology. They hated the fact that He attacked them at the point of their spiritual pride. It's an age-old story, folks, but the more religious people are and the more proud they are of their religion, the more proud they are of their spiritual achievement, the more proud they are of their accomplishment religiously, the more resistant they are to the gospel of grace. That's why the people that responded to Jesus were the tax collectors, prostitutes, criminals, low-lifes who had no spiritual pride, who were not allowed to go to the synagogue, who were not allowed to go to the temple, who were the outcasts, the unsynagogued, they had no pride to hold on to. They came to Jesus.

Now understand what spiritual pride does. These religious leaders and all the people that followed them, which was the majority of the population of Israel, had on the outside said no to a lot of fleshly behaviors. They made serious concessions that the low-lifes didn't make. They said no to outward violations of the Ten Commandments. They said no to adultery, sins of the flesh, lying, murder, lusts that manifested themselves in wicked behaviors, these are the forbidden sins. These are the open sins. They gladly restrained themselves from those on the outside. They could say with the rich,

young ruler, “All of these laws have I kept from my youth up.”

Paul was one of the Pharisees, by the way, And you remember what he said? This is how he viewed himself, “As measured against the Law, blameless,” Philippians 3, “I was blameless. As far as anybody knew, I toed the mark.”

Now, you know, that's a high price for a sinner to pay cause lust of the flesh, lust of the eyes, evil in the heart, evil desire, covetousness, greed that manifest itself on the outside is the fulfillment of the most natural impulses of non-believers. But highly religious people say no to those things on the outside. They're willing to live under binding moral constraints. They're willing to live under very tight rules and regulations that make it look like they're very holy.

You say, “Well how can sinners do that?” Because pride, spiritual pride, is such a self-satisfying sin that it makes up for all that you have to forfeit. Listen, spiritual pride is like an aphrodisiac, it's like a drug. Spiritual pride is a high, walking around in overtly spiritual pretense in the way you dress and the way you conduct yourself and making outward pretenses and outward prayers and outward acts of manifest fasting, making an issue out of your giving for all to see. That's what they did. They found so much personal satisfaction in spiritual pride that they were willing to let other behaviors go. Spiritual pride is a very, very powerful, powerful sin. It's also a damning sin.

Now, of course, in secret...that's another story. In secret, they couldn't restrain the flesh so in secret they committed every sin in their hearts. And Jesus exposed that in the Sermon on the Mount, His great sermon in Matthew 5 to 7. When He said essentially, “You think you're okay because you don't commit adultery, I'm telling you if you lust after a woman in your heart, you've committed adultery. You think you're okay because you didn't kill somebody, I'm telling you if you hate somebody, you're a murderer.” And He went down a long list of invisible sins to expose the real ugliness and corruption of their hearts.

You see, if you're not regenerate, if you haven't been transformed, if you haven't been changed and converted by belief in the gospel of Jesus Christ, there is nothing that can deal with the wretchedness of your heart. You can mask it by controlling your behavior but you can't do a thing about it on the inside. That's why Jesus said about them, they're like whited sepulchers, they're painted white on the outside but inside they're full of stinking dead-men's bones. They were okay wit living a wretched life of sin in their own minds, and as far as the outside was concerned, restraining their visible behavior for the sake of spiritual pride because spiritual pride is such a high. Pride is the most satisfying of all sins.

Why did they hate Jesus? Because He attacked them at the point of their pride. He said, “I reject your assessment of your condition before God.” He said in the Sermon on the Mount, “If your righteousness doesn't exceed that of the scribes and Pharisees, you have no part in the Kingdom.”

He denounced them. Their hostility toward Jesus was the result of His rejection of their entire works/righteousness system that elevated human pride. That was sort of all they had left and He attacked it.

The zenith of this system of manifest spiritual pride was Sabbath. On Sabbath they all came out into public view at the synagogue. On that great day, all the focus of their self-righteous proud system reached its clarity. This was their time to shine. Now remember, God had instituted the Sabbath in Genesis 2 verse 3, He rested after He had created the world in six days. And then He blessed it and sanctified it, set it apart. In Exodus 20 verses 8 to 11, as God lays out the Ten Commandments, He says, “Remember the Sabbath to keep it holy.” In Exodus 31 He defines what that means, simply, don't work...don't work, stop your work. Whatever work you do, don't do it. That simple. That was it, folks, that was it. Worship God, take a day of rest, don't work. It was for rest, recreation, restoration, worship.

But in the system of the Pharisees, the self-righteous system, which, by the way, had been long developing for centuries, the Sabbath then gave them an opportunity to parade their self-righteousness. And how would they do that? Be developing hundreds of rules for conduct on the Sabbath which they would adhere to and thus would manifest the high degree of spirituality that belonged to them before the populous. They created overlaid laws upon laws, upon laws, upon laws, upon rituals, routines, rules, restrictions, restraints that made the Sabbath Day anything but rest, it was the most difficult, limiting day of the week. And in Matthew 11:28 when Jesus said, “Come unto Me all you that labor and are heavy laden, all you that are weary, I will give you rest,”

He was talking about the weariness under which those people lived in the constraint of a self-righteous system such as manifested itself on the Sabbath. It was the worst day of the week and Jesus, in order to attack their religious system, had to attack their Sabbath. In order to expose their spiritual bankruptcy and error of that system, He had to assault the corrupted Sabbath, and that is exactly what He does.

They hated Him because He shined light on their darkness. And theirs was a religious darkness. Do you remember in John chapter 3, Jesus said, “Men love darkness rather than light because their deeds are evil?” Well, these people had seen the light, Jesus is the light that lights every man that comes into the world. They had seen the light. The light was manifested in staggering ways through what He said and, of course, the miracles that He did. But they so loved the darkness that they ran from the light because their deeds were evil. Religious people run from the true gospel. They run from the true light of the glory of the gospel of God shining in the face of Jesus, as Paul put it. The charge against the world in John chapter 3, and the Jews included, is that people are in such deep, thick darkness, including religious darkness, and that darkness is so precious to them because it fulfills their pride that they hate the light of the truth and they refuse to come to the light. And that's why John in chapter 1 says, “He came to His own, His own received Him not.”

False religion is deep, thick darkness built on spiritual pride, hates the exposure of the light, of grace and repentance. Sanctimonious self-righteous proud religious sinners love their damning darkness because they love to think highly of themselves and they love people to think highly of them. So, this is the pathology behind the conflict.

Now how did Jesus treat the Sabbath? Some people would tell us today that you need to be sensitive to their feelings. You don't want to offend them if you're going to win them. That was not Jesus' approach.

What did Jesus do on the Sabbath? Whatever He wanted, absolutely whatever He wanted. Was He kind and compassionate and gentle and tender? Absolutely. But when it came to confronting error, He was in direct assault mode. He paid no attention to their regulations. They were not biblical regulations. He defied them. He defied them openly. And He defied them repeatedly. It is His defiance of the Sabbath that leads Him to the cross, even though at the trial of Jesus when He went before Pilate, the Jews didn't bring up the Sabbath violations. Reason? Because the Romans didn't care about the Sabbath. When they got Him to Pilate, they brought up the fact that He was a threat to Caesar and it was in the light of the fact that He was presented as a threat to Caesar that the Romans conceded to kill Him, but the driving force for the Jews to have Him executed was His antagonism toward their religious system which focused particularly on His blatant direct attacks on their Sabbath which was the high point of their system.

Jesus did whatever He wanted on the Sabbath. He violated the Sabbath particularly and explicitly to expose the wickedness of their superficial proud system. In John 5:18 we read this, “For this cause, the Jews were seeking all the more to kill Him.” What cause? He was not only breaking the Sabbath but calling God His Father making Himself equal with God. The combination of claiming to be equal with God and breaking the Sabbath was it.

Now in our text in verse 28, “He declared Himself to be Lord of the Sabbath.” That is a shocking statement...shocking, beyond comprehension to the Jews. God ordained the Sabbath, Genesis 2 verse 3. God demanded Sabbath observance, Exodus chapter 20 in the Ten Commandments, verses 8 to 11. If He says He's Lord of the Sabbath, He's saying He's God. And He backed it up by miraculous power over disease, demons and death...and even over sin.

By the way, just as a footnote, Jesus is Lord over the Sabbath, and He abolished the Sabbath. After His death and resurrection, there is no more Sabbath. The seventh day of the week disappears from all religious calendars. We now meet on the first day of the week, celebrating the resurrection of Jesus Christ. The Sabbath was a shadow, we have the reality in Christ. Hebrews chapters 3 and 4 says Christ is our rest, we have entered into the rest the Sabbath portrayed, a rest to come. Christ is that rest, we don't need the shadow, the substance is here. And so Colossians 2 verses 16 and 17

says, “Don't let anybody hold you to a Sabbath.” The Lord of the Sabbath has nullified the Sabbath, it's gone.

Well Jesus is attacking it in the text before us. He says the Sabbath was never intended to be restrictive, the Sabbath was made for man, for man's benefit, verse 27, to be a time of rest and blessing and joy and refreshment. It was not man who was made to conform to some ridiculous restraints on that day. And the Lord of the Sabbath would demonstrate a proper Sabbath observance.

He set Himself deliberately then in opposition to His enemies, and took the very steps that led to His death. Now these two stories are connected together in Matthew, Mark and Luke. All three of those synoptic gospels record these two together. They're very likely two subsequent Sabbath days, we don't know where, in a synagogue somewhere. But if you go back to chapter 1 verse 39, you remember it was His objective, verse 38, to go preach everywhere and to go to synagogue to synagogue all over Galilee and preach and heal and cast out demons.

So, we come in chapter 3 verse 1 to the second of these two little Sabbath incidents, the context is first...the context, verse 1, “He entered into a synagogue,” again, somewhere in Galilee, we don't know where. Luke 6:6, the parallel in Luke says He was teaching as He always did, that's why He came He says in chapter 1 verse 38. So He's teaching in the synagogue. And His teaching wasn't like any teaching anybody had ever heard obviously, always His purpose to teach salvation, forgiveness of sin, repentance and faith, the gospel. And so He's in the synagogue somewhere, we don't know what town, it doesn't matter, this is not about time and place, this is about attitudes, this story. And a man was there whose hand was withered. Luke says it was his right hand, just to be specific and assuming that most people are right handed, that would be a very debilitating injury or disease caused malformity. We don't know anything about the affliction or how he got the affliction, all we know is that his hand was withered and the Greek term that is used there refers to atrophy...atrophy, it's used of dead plants. So we might assume that it was dead to any use.

This would be a very serious problem. Most people are right handed, maybe that's why Luke says it was his right hand. He couldn't do the things you needed to do perhaps to earn a living. There's an old tradition that says he was a stone mason who had lost the ability to work and had been reduced to a beggar. Well, whether that was true or not, he would have lost the ability to use that hand, of course, and that's the point...that is the point. He's a man with a severe need. He's a man who would have difficulty earning a living, to provide for himself and his family.

However, having said that, it must also be said that it's not a life-threatening injury. He's not on the brink of death. It's not terminal. Jesus could have waited for the first day of the week, right? Could have waited till the second or the third day of the week. This is a postponable healing, doesn't have to happen on the spot. Why does He do it then? He does it for the purpose of breaching the Sabbath. It is an attack. It is an assault. That's what it's intended to be and never did Jesus pull back on

assaulting false religious systems.

Well that's the context, and then there's one other element in the context, verse 2, “They were watching Him.” Luke 6:7 says scribes and Pharisees namely, they were watching Him closely. This is intensive observance. This is not casual observance, this is sinister scrutiny. They were watching Him to see if He would heal him on the Sabbath.

He had done it before on the Sabbath. This is pretty amazing, really, it shows what hypocrites they were. They were supposed to be the protectors of the Sabbath. They were going to make a case out of Jesus healing this guy on the Sabbath being a violation of the Sabbath, and yet they desperately wanted Him to violate their Sabbath.

Now let me just give you a little bit of background about this. There is nothing in the Old Testament about not helping people on the Sabbath...nothing. All it says is don't work, don't do your normal work. Does that mean you don't do anything? Of course not. You prepare food for the family, you go visit relatives, you do whatever you want to do. It's just different than the diligent, hard work of the rest of the week.

They knew what Scripture said. The Pharisees and the scribes knew what Scripture said. Yet they had developed laws, traditions that said the efforts of a physician, or the efforts of a relative to help a sick person constitute work and cannot be done on Sabbath. Pretty harsh, but that was the way it was. The rabbis decided that helping someone on the Sabbath was work.

They also developed an exception and that was if the person was threatened with imminent death...you could stop the bleeding. Now remember, there are no medical doctors like we know them today. They didn't even understand the pathology of disease, or weren't even close to understanding. But there were physicians who did whatever they could based upon the knowledge of the time to help people and there were friends and relatives who came alongside. This was constituted work unless it was to prevent an immediate death...couldn't be done. Well, they wanted to see Jesus violate their Sabbath.

Now keep this in mind. They had their laws to deal with people helping people. They had never seen a healer because there had never been one, right? Never...never been one...never in redemptive history had there been a person who went around healing everybody. Never had been one. So they didn't have laws about healers...they just had laws about helpers. But they viewed what Jesus did as help even though never in a healing that Jesus did, did He exert any effort, He healed with a word, He healed with a touch. But because it constituted helping someone, they cast it in the category of violation. They wanted Jesus to violate the Sabbath, that's what it says at the end of verse 2, they were watching to see if He would heal him on the Sabbath so they might accuse Him. They wanted to have reason to accuse Him. They wanted to paint Him as a blasphemer, a Sabbath violator,

irreligious and He would help them do that if He would heal. So they're silently standing there to be the protectors of the Sabbath, hoping and hoping and hoping that He violates the Sabbath.

Now there's one little note that Luke adds here, Luke 6:8 in the parallel account in Luke. Matthew 12 has a parallel account, too. Luke adds this, “But He knew what they were thinking.” Of course, He always knew what people were thinking, it's called omniscience...knows everything. John 2, it says, “He didn't need anybody to tell Him what was in the heart of a man, He knew what was there.” He reads their minds. They had no concern for the man. They could have cared less about the man's disability. They could have cared less about the man's exigencies because of that disability. They just wanted Jesus to look like a blaspheming law-breaker. Well, He knew what they were thinking...of course. That's the context, that sets the stage.

Then comes...we'll call it the question, verses 3 and 4. “He said to the man with the withered hand, ‘Get up, come forward.’” Now the man hasn't said anything. The man hasn't asked for a healing, He just calls him out of the crowd. “Hey you back there with the withered hand, come here.” Jesus is the aggressor here. He's not hesitant, He's not reluctant, He's not shy. “Get up, come forward.” Luke says it all started when Jesus began teaching, so He's now stopped His teaching, He's read the minds of the Pharisees and the scribes, and He brings the man up to bring this thing to a confrontation. When He brings the man up, Matthew 12:10 in Matthew's account, Matthew says, “First, the Pharisees and the scribes asked Jesus, ‘Is it lawful to heal on the Sabbath?’” They ask Him the question. He doesn't answer. He doesn't answer. But Matthew says He gave them an analogy. “Would you rescue a sheep on the Sabbath if a sheep was in danger of being wounded or injured? Would you rescue a sheep?” And, of course, they would because a sheep has a value. If you would...and He knew they would, and they did in that culture. “If you would do that, would you not help a person?”

And so, first they posed the question. He responds with a very general kind of analogy of do you help people on the Sabbath when you would help an animal on the Sabbath? Or, you know, is it like India where you let the person die and save the fly?

Then He turned the question on them in verse 4. “He said to them, ‘Is it lawful to do good or to do harm on the Sabbath?’” You asked Me if it was lawful to heal, let me rephrase t he question and put it to you. “Is it lawful to do good or do harm on the Sabbath, to save a life or kill it?” Boy, that question is so loaded because they were wanting to kill Him and, believe me, they would have killed Him on a Sabbath if they could have, and He was wanting to do good.

Who's really on God's side here? Is it lawful...digs the knife in. What does He mean “Is it lawful?” Is it according to the Law of Moses? Or the Law of God? What does Old Testament Scripture say? Does Old Testament Scripture have anything to say about doing good?

They knew the answer. They were experts in the Scripture. They would have thought of Isaiah 1 verse 11, “What are your multiplied sacrifices to Me?, says the Lord.” I've had enough burnt offerings of rams and the fat of fed cattle, I take no pleasure in the blood of bulls and lambs and goats. I'm sick of your external stuff. When you come to appear before Me, who requires of you this trampling of My courts? Bring your worthless offerings no longer. Incense is an abomination to Me. New moon and Sabbath, the calling of assemblies, I cannot endure iniquity and the solemn assembly. I'm sick of your Sabbaths. I hate your new moon festivals, your appointed feasts, they become a burden to Me, I'm weary of bearing them. So when you spread out your hands in prayer, I'll hide My eyes from you. Yes, even though you multiply prayers, I will not listen, your prayers are covered with blood. And He says, “Wash yourselves, make yourselves clean. Remove the evil of your deeds from My sight. Cease to do evil. Learn to do good.”

So Jesus poses the question to them, “Is it right to do good on the Sabbath?” They would have thought of Isaiah chapter 1 which basically says, “I hate your Sabbaths. It's all hypocrisy. I want you to do good, to seek justice...verse 17...reprove the ruthless, defend the orphan, plead for the widow.” Ruthless people need to be reproved. Orphans need to be protected. Widows need to be cared for. That's what I want. I want you to do good. I hate your hypocritical Sabbaths. That's all the way back in Isaiah's day. They knew that.

They also would have known Isaiah 58...Isaiah 58 talks about God's attitude toward Sabbaths and toward goodness. Verse 6, “Is this not the fast which I choose to loosen the bonds of wickedness, to undo the bands of the yoke and let the oppressed go free and break every yoke?” This is what I want. “Is it not to divide your bread with the hungry, bring the homeless poor into your house? When you see the naked, to cover him and not to hide yourself from your own flesh? Then your light will break out like the dawn and your recovery will speedily spring forth and your righteousness will go before you. Then you will call and the Lord will answer. Then you will cry and He will say, ‘Here I am.' If you remove the yoke from your midst and the pointing of the finger and speaking wickedness and if you give yourself to the hungry and satisfy the desire of the afflicted, then your light will rise in darkness, your gloom will become like mid day and the Lord will continually guide you and satisfy your desire in scorched places and give strength to your bones and you'll be like a watered garden and like a spring of water whose water doesn't fail.”

Verse 13, “If because of the Sabbath you turn your foot from doing your own pleasure on My holy day and call the Sabbath a delight, the holy day of the Lord, honorable and honor it, desisting from your own ways from seeking your own pleasure and speaking your own word, then you will take delight in the Lord.” You better get Sabbath right. You better get it out of your hands and your laws and your rules and your attitudes and in to Mine.

They knew that. They knew what the Old Testament law said. The question is the obvious question...is it lawful to do good? Of course. “To do harm?” No. “Is it lawful to save a life?” Of course.

“To kill?” No. There they were full of venom, wanting to do harm and kill someone on the Sabbath while Jesus wanted to do good and save someone...not because he was on the brink of death but because of the incapacities that made life so difficult.

Our Lord's questions always put His enemies on the horns of a dilemma. What are they going to say? If they say it is lawful to do good and save a life, then they would be unable to accuse Jesus of any violation and they would affirm His act of healing as good and right. They don't want to do that. They want Him to be seen as a blasphemer, not one who does righteously. But on the other hand, if they say it is lawful to do evil and to kill, they would affirm their own merciless wickedness. So they did the only thing they could do, end of verse 4, “They kept silent.”

He did this to them all the time. He just shut their mouths. They knew what the Old Testament said. He framed the extremes, forced them to silence. They knew the Sabbath was of all days for good, not for bad. The real issue here is the underlying issue is, “Which of us is honoring God? Am I honoring God with a desire to do good and save a life? Or are you honoring God with a desire to do harm and kill Me?” Who really represents God here? Do you? Do I?

And then He did something for effect. Verse 5, “After looking around at them with anger..” Whew...dramatic silence, folks. They aren't saying a word. The air is thick with silence. Nobody is breathing. And Jesus stares them down eyeball to eyeball. “Looks right at them so nobody mistakes what He's doing and He is angry.” That's so interesting. This is the only explicit mention of Jesus being angry in the New Testament. Was He angry at other times? Sure, cleanse the temple at the beginning of His ministry, at the end of His ministry. This is the only time it actually says Jesus was angry. The Old Testament is full of references to God's anger. There are hundreds. Twenty times it talks about the anger of the Lord. But this is a rare statement, explicitly says “Jesus was angry.”

Angry at what? Unbelief, rejection, angry at their devastating apostate religion, angry at their spiritual pride, angry at this gross iniquity. This is the severest of sin's expressions to reject the gospel, to reject grace and goodness. They were merciless, compassionless, brutal, hard-hearted, proud, self-righteous. Yes God is angry with sin, so is Jesus. But it's so amazingly followed by this statement, “Grieved at their hardness of heart.” Anger, *orge*, a very strong word, indignation, wrath would be synonyms. It's used in Romans 13 of vengeance, punishment. He was furious. But it also says He was grieved. That means to fill sympathy. These are the juxtaposed attitudes of God as He looks at the obstinate unbeliever, angry and grieved at the same time. Grieved at their *porosis*..*porosis.* It's a word translated hardness. It's used of marble, hard-hearted. By the way, it's used to refer to the disciples in chapter 6 verse 52 and chapter 8 verse 17, so there are times when even His disciples were hard-hearted. But here it's a settled, permanent condition and it both makes Him mad and angry and sad. He is angry at their unbelief and their rejection and He is sad at the consequence, the necessary condemnation that is to come.

Clearly Scripture teaches human responsibility, doesn't it? Human culpability, human volition is a reality. Every sinner is guilty for is own sin, culpable for is own sin, will be held guilty before God for rejecting the gospel, rejecting the truth and will go to hell because of his own unwillingness to embrace the truth. That's the other side of sovereign election, isn't it? Our Lord's anger was mixed with grief. He is angry and yet He is filled with pity. It's like when He arrived at Jerusalem, Matthew 23:37 and 38, and He wept. Luke 19:41 to 44, He wept over the city and then He immediately pronounced judgment on it. The paradox, the apparent paradox of sovereign election and human responsibility are matched by the paradox of the Lord's severe anger at those who reject Him, and at the same time severe grief over their necessary condemnation. He is both angry and sad. He finds no pleasure in the death of the wicked.

But nonetheless, He will move to the confrontation...from the question to the confrontation, verse 5, “He said to the man, ‘Stretch out your hand.’” No work, by the way, in that action. No work in that command. “And he stretched it out and his hand was restored.”

Can you imagine the buzz that went through the synagogue? People went to their local synagogue, everybody knew him. Everybody could see the healing. It must have been a tremendous buzz in that place when that hand just took perfect shape, became fully functional. You would think that any reasonable, sensible person, even a Pharisee and a scribe, would say, “You know what? I think I need to rethink who this person is. Maybe I need to go back and take a look at this again. That's just inexplicable, that's just...you just don't go from something like this to a fully functioning hand, it's just...I just need to think about this all over again.”

No, Luke 6:11 says this, “They were filled with rage,” rage, *agnoes,(?) gnoea(?)* means to know, *a-gnoes(?), agnoea(?)* would mean not to know, it's the alpha primitive negates, to be devoid of understanding. The simple way to translate it, they were filled with madness, they lost their minds, they were void of understanding, they were at their wit's end. They went over the top, out of control, their madness is motivated by this hatred of Jesus' teaching that attacks their self-righteous spiritual pride. So they go into paroxysms of psychopathic rage against Him. And Luke also says, “They then discuss together what they might do to Jesus.” I would have liked to have heard that conversation..Luke 6:11...the plot to kill Him now takes on more energy. The plot to kill Him takes on greater momentum.

This, dear friends, is Judaism's official response to Jesus, here it is. We're just in to the third chapter in Mark and already we have the official response to Jesus. “Kill Him, kill Him, kill Him.”

So the context is set, the question is posed, the confrontation occurs. And the final word in the story is in verse 6, we'll call it the conspiracy. They've got to do this right. They've got to protect themselves. They've got to preserve their reputation. They know that He is winning the people superficially. The

synagogue must have exploded with wonder over the miracle. They're mad with rage. They start to talk about how to kill Him. Somebody gets control of the thing a little bit and verse 6 says, “They went out and immediately began conspiring with the Herodians against Him as to how they might destroy Him.

Destroy is the operative word here, *apollumi*is the Greek verb, means to utterly destroy, kill. They want to destroy Jesus. They want to obliterate Him.

Now what about the Herodians, who are they? Well they're not a sect of Judaism. They're not like the Essenes or the Pharisees or the Sadducees which were Jewish sects. They're not a part of Jewish religion. The Herodians are secularists. Remember now, Herod the Great was an Idumaean petty king who ruled at the will of Rome in the land of Israel. And when he died, he divided up Israel into four sections and gave a section to each of his sons, or at least four of is sons, and it was all split in those four ways.

There were Jews in Israel who had no interest in religion, they were secularists and they had attached themselves to the Herodian cause, to the cause of Herod the Great and his progeny. They were politically driven, loyal to the Herodian dynasty. They had found their way into favor with these Herodians. Herod Antipas, Philip the Tetrarch, Archelaus, and they were beholding to them probably for reasons of personal gain, personal elevation. They may have been tax collectors, some of them, who were attached to the Herodians because the Herodians were in league with Rome. They were considered by the true Jews to be Hellenists, to have been Romanized, or some how influenced by Greek culture, and so they were the secularists who were not friends of the Pharisees. In fact, they were staunch enemies. The Pharisees opposed Hellenism, they had nothing in common with those who were in league with Rome or with the Herodian dynasty. Fascinating it is then that every time the Herodians appear on the pages of the New Testament, it is alliance with the Pharisees against Jesus...every time. They had nothing in common. They were basically enemies, very religious, very secular, no common ground except that each saw Jesus as a threat...the Pharisees to their religious system, the Herodians to their dynastic power.

So they came together to commiserate on Jesus. The Jews are now going to pull everybody together because they're going to have to have full cooperation to get Jesus to an execution.

Folks, it's a reminder, a horrible reminder of the blindness against all reality of false religion, is it not? The contrast between Jesus and the Jewish religious leaders is stark; the contrast between divine truth and human tradition, contrast between knowledge and madness, a contrast between goodness and wickedness, compassion and indifference, open honesty and hidden deception, divine power and impotence, the Kingdom of God and the kingdom of Satan.

So the storm clouds have begun to gather on the horizon over the head of Jesus. They will break on Him on a hillside outside Jerusalem called Golgotha where He will give His life. But even in death, He triumphs, paying the price for all our sin, rising from the dead for our justification.

Father, Your Word again is light to us. It is power and life. We pray, Lord, that You would let that light, that life, that power, that truth break upon dark hearts today. People who have found resistance to the light because they love the darkness, they love their evil deeds, they might be flagrant open sinners who love the deeds of the flesh, they might be religious, self-righteous spiritual hypocrites who cling only to pride as their ultimate satisfaction. Whatever the darkness, whatever defines the darkness, darkness it is until the light of Christ shines. May that light shine, may the light of the gospel, the glorious gospel, shine in hearts today, disclosing the deeds of evil that the sinner might repent, come to the light, be transformed. Confrontation is necessary, it is righteous, it is good, it is compassionate, it is kind. We thank You that among that group of Pharisees there was one named Saul and You brought the light and shattered his darkness. Lord, we pray that there would be many who in hearing this would rush to the light and flee the damning danger of spiritual darkness, especially those trapped in false religion. Free them by Your grace, we pray. Amen.

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