

A King Like No Other

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[0 : 0 0] The scripture reading comes from the book of Matthew, chapter 12. Please follow along on the bulletin or your own Bible. Starting in verse 9, we read, He went on from there and entered their synagogue, and a man was there with a withered hand.

And they asked him, Is it lawful to heal on the Sabbath, so that they might accuse him? He said to them, Which one of you who has a sheep, if it falls into a pit on the Sabbath, will not take hold of it and lift it out?

Of how many more value is a man than a sheep? So it is lawful to do good on the Sabbath. Then he said to the man, Stretch out your hand.

And the man stretched it out, and it was restored, healthy like the other. But the Pharisees went out and conspired against him. How to destroy him?

Jesus, aware of this, withdrew from there. And many followed him, and he healed them all, and ordered them not to make him known. This was to fulfill what was spoken by the prophet Isaiah.

[1 : 1 8] Behold my servant, whom I have chosen, my beloved, with whom my soul is well pleased. I will put my spirit upon him, and he will proclaim justice to the Gentiles.

He will not quarrel or cry aloud, nor will anyone hear his voice in the streets. A bruised reed he will not break, and a moldering wick he will not quench, until he brings justice to the victory.

And in his name, the Gentiles will hope. This is the word of God. Thank you so much, Echo. Bring this up here.

Great. So we're continuing in the series that we have been looking at. In Matthew, we had a pause last week as we stopped to really reflect on some of what I think God has really been saying to us as a church, about slowing down and really making Christ the center.

And so we're going to come back to Matthew. But let me just pray for us as we get into God's word together. Amen. Father, I pray that this morning we would hear you speak to us.

[2 : 4 7] And I pray that you'd help us to respond to you. Thank you that you're God who loves to speak to us. And Lord, I pray that you would show us that you're better than we think you are.

Lord, you'd show us that you are everything we need. That the things that we chase after, that the communities we want to be part of, the things that we think will give us life, show us that actually life is found in you.

And I pray that this would not just be a head knowledge thing, but I pray it would be a deep heart knowledge. And I pray we'd go out of here changed. I pray that we'd be a community, which is so different in this city where there is so much that bruises us and bruises people.

I pray that we'd come and find you as a gracious, gentle savior. Lord, we give you this morning. Please open our ears to hear your voice. In Jesus' name. Amen.

Amen. Great. I don't know about you, but when you think about relationships, one of the key things in relationships is when someone speaks, what should happen?

[4 : 03] Well, they should listen first, but then you actually need a response. Okay? Because my wife will actually sometimes say something or ask me something, and I may be a little bit in my own world, and then she will say to me, and I won't say anything, and she will say to me, can I get a response, please?

Because relationships require communication and responses. And when God speaks in his word, and when God speaks in the book of Matthew through this gospel, or through a sermon, or through any area of scripture, he doesn't just say things so we kind of think about it.

He doesn't just say things to just kind of inspire us, like a good TED talk. He says things because he's looking for a response from us. And so the question that the passage we've just read is actually asking us is how are we responding to Jesus today?

Because Matthew chapter 11 to 12 is actually a whole section which is all about how the religious leaders, the Pharisees, are responding to Jesus.

And we've looked at this a couple of weeks ago, but the Pharisees aren't the bad guys in the first century. They're the good guys. They're the guys who want God's kingdom to come.

[5 : 30] They're the guys who are praying that the oppressive Roman invaders who are occupying them will get kicked out and God's kingdom will come. And they think that if they just obey and believe the Bible, God's kingdom will come.

That's not bad, right? That's a good thing. And so the Sabbath was the sign, the greatest sign, of actually obedience in this relationship of trust, of worship, of rest, in this relationship between God and his people.

And so they went to that. They went, we need to obey this rule of the Sabbath. And so they go, okay, we mustn't work on the Sabbath. So what does that mean? Well, what's work?

And so they then began to create all these categories for what work constituted. And people love to debate this. And they came up with this whole system of rules which were all about defining what work was and what it wasn't.

So you couldn't climb a tree because if you broke a twig, that might constitute reaping, like it's similar to reaping a field which could be work. Okay?

[6 : 42] You could only carry a thimble full of ink because if you carried more than that, then that would be work. Okay? And they had a whole load of stuff and this heart that was actually wanting to obey God had drifted into a system of rules which had become a system of righteousness which then became a system of who is in, who is out, who are the righteous, who are the wicked.

Do you remember that? We looked at that a couple of weeks ago. And we saw how Jesus comes along and he starts challenging their whole system.

Do you know if somebody actually challenges your most deeply held beliefs, how do you normally respond? Do you like it? No. No. The Pharisees didn't either.

And so the Pharisees, like prosecutors in a law court, have their notebooks out trying to find any evidence to accuse and condemn Jesus so they can get rid of him.

In fact, the word accuse, which is here in verse 10, is actually the word categorize in Greek. In other words, they want to put Jesus in the category of junk box so that they can just delete him and they can carry on just as they are.

[7 : 59] And then any evidence they find to see Jesus supporting work on the Sabbath, they're going to use to delete him. That's the idea. And so Jesus, in this passage, comes right into the religious and social center of the Pharisees.

He's on their territory. It's their synagogue, it says, on a Sabbath to do some teaching. And people are mingling around everywhere and the Pharisees plant this man, we'll call him Will, okay, for the sake of it, with a withered hand on the front row visible for everyone to see.

And they sit back and watch and wait to see what's going to happen. And they, do you remember in the previous story, we had the disciples picking grain on the Sabbath.

And actually, that issue was a debatable issue for rabbis about whether you could, that was work or not. But the issue about healing on the Sabbath, there was complete consensus amongst rabbis about this.

So, you could only heal on the Sabbath if it was a life or death situation, okay, only if it's life or death, that's fine.

[9 : 20] You know, they're not unreasonable, okay. But this man has got a withered hand. And withered is actually the word dried up, which actually implies it's not a genetic issue, it's actually he may have had an accident or something's happened to him to affect his arm.

So, and Luke actually tells us it's his right hand, which would have been his working hand. So, this actually has seriously impaired his life. But it's not an emergency. And so, Jesus could kind of heal him tomorrow if he wanted to.

And so, this works perfectly. The trap is laid. Is Jesus totally dismissive of God's law about the Sabbath by healing this guy who it's not even an emergency?

Do you see the idea of what's going on? And so, the Pharisees then go, with Will on the front row. They say, Jesus, Jesus, we've just got a question we'd like to ask very innocently.

Is it lawful to heal on the Sabbath? And they stop and they wait to see what Jesus will do. I want you to see two things here.

[10 : 33] And during this talk we're going to look at two big things. One is a self-righteous community. And the other is a Christ-centered community. And what Christ is like versus this.

And so, in this self-righteous community, here are two things for you to see. Self-righteous people are blind to their own hypocrisy.

Let's have a look at this. when he comes into the Sabbath, sorry, I've just lost my notes.

Okay. So, he comes in and they're concerned about obedience, the Pharisees, their own and others. And Jesus then, he doesn't just directly answer their question, he asks the question back.

Jesus always likes doing that. And he says, which of you, excuse me, which of you who has a sheep, if it falls into a pit on the Sabbath, will not take hold of it and lift it out?

[11 : 41] Of how much more value is a man than a sheep? And then he actually answers the question, Jesus doesn't do this very often, but he says, it is lawful to do good on the Sabbath.

What's he saying? He's saying, you guys are so worried about the Sabbath, yet you only keep the rules when it's convenient for you. He says, when it's something that you really care about, like your property, a sheep, then you're quite happy to break the rules.

But when there is someone that you don't really care about, like this man with a withered hand who's hurting and vulnerable, you're going to be really strict on the rules.

And he says, well, that actually shows you the second thing about what self-righteous people are like. They don't see their own hypocrisy, but also they're blind to the value of other people.

Do you notice something? In the passage, the Pharisees completely ignore Will. They don't actually address him at all. But they've planted him there.

[12 : 51] And in fact, they're using him. He's a prop. He's a pawn in their own agenda for what they're trying to do. They don't see him at all. In fact, when Jesus heals the man later on, instead of rejoicing, Will, you can get your career back again.

What are they doing? They're not rejoicing. They're fuming. Because they don't care about him at all. They don't see him. All they see is their own agenda and what they think is right and what they think is wrong.

Now, I think we actually all know what this is like. We see this outside in the world around. You know, there's the boss who starts promoting strongly like, we've got to value people, equal opportunities, diversity.

They promote it. You've got to be on board with it in this company. And then, if profit is at stake, they'll mercilessly fire people, trample over people without a second thought because people were actually props for their own agenda.

Don't we know that? That's actually self-righteousness and hypocrisy. But before we get all kind of, yeah, those guys are like that out there, isn't, can't we be like that too?

[14 : 15] You know, here's a scriptural command that is very precious to me. Let your yes be yes and your no be no. Okay? CG leaders, you can thank me for this later. But, if, if you say that you are coming to an event or to your CG, don't, that means back out at the last minute just because you feel a little tired or you've got a better offer somewhere else.

Let your yes be yes and no be no. That's a scriptural command and don't wait to the last minute to commit either. Okay? Love people, love your leaders. but, and by the way, some of us do need to hear that.

But can I make a confession? I'm not sure whether I should say this, but, when someone is constantly flaky, always backing out at the last minute, in my heart, I can categorize people in the junk box, just kind of dismissing, oh, they're just like that.

And instead of thinking how to love them, maybe by having a conversation, just gently actually pointing stuff out, inside, your heart can just end up withdrawing from them and judging them. Anyone else like me?

Three people, great. Okay. Let's just get together afterwards. But the really interesting thing is, when it comes to people in my extended family that actually I'm not so keen on meeting up with, I can quite easily luck die, very easily.

[16 : 03] I can break a commitment really easily because I don't care about it as much. And so, here, a good command, that's a good scriptural command, yes be yes, yes be no, it's important, can become a rule which can blind us to ourselves and can blind us to other people.

And we become accidental Pharisees. And you know, the church of Jesus can actually end up looking exactly like the world even though its moral rules can be even better than the world because we have not let Jesus walk into the synagogue of our system and our rules and our righteousness.

To confront it. And so actually over the last couple of weeks I think Jesus has been doing that with us. I think he's been trying to come into us as a church where we're distracted and busy and he's trying to say let's not miss Jesus because we're justifying ourselves.

But when Jesus walks into your synagogue two things will happen. One, either you'll seek to junk box him from your life like the Pharisees and we can do that subtly or obviously either by absenting him and his word from your life from your schedule from your timing from your decisions about your kids about everything else because you're too busy for that.

That's actually junk boxing Jesus. because actually if you bring Jesus into that he may disturb you you know and we don't want to be disturbed that much.

[17 : 44] And either we stay like that and we'll stay self-righteous or we'll respond to him in faith and like will does and he will receive healing and restoration and that's what God is wanting for each one of us this morning.

And that's whether you're a Christian or whether you're a seeker or whether somebody just dragged you along this morning. You see God is calling us to respond to him and no response is a response.

That's the self-righteous community that God is calling us not to be like. But I want to move on to look at Christ and what a Christ-centered community looks like by looking at who Jesus really is.

Okay? So let's have a look at the next part of the passage because what you see excuse me is sorry let me step back and just say I'm going to show you three things that I think you're going to see about Jesus here.

The first thing I want you to see about Jesus is that Jesus dies to himself for the sake of others whereas the Pharisees are blind to themselves and blind to others Jesus dies to himself for the sake of others.

[18 : 59] you know if you look here in the passage what you see is the Pharisees know that Jesus has the power to heal. You know in a time where there are no antibiotics there's no surgery you see in verse 15 many people Jesus can pull a crowd of people desperate for healing.

You notice that? And yet if you look back further in the passage you see how Jesus responds in this and I love this about Jesus because if you know that you're walking into a trap okay where your life and your ministry could be on the line you'd probably want to play it politically kind of cool wouldn't you?

Like is it lawful to heal on the Sabbath? You go well guys that's a complex question. I prefer to talk about the need for harmony in our synagogue. That would be much better.

You know Jesus could save his own skin get on with his ministry for far more years. He could have a far bigger impact on cost benefit analysis it doesn't make sense for Jesus to actually go and heal Will at that moment.

But Jesus isn't like us. Look at what Jesus does. While everyone else had ignored Will he ignores the others and he focuses on Will.

[20 : 26] He looks him right in the eye and he says to the man stretch out your hand and the man stretched it out and it was restored healthy like the other.

You see what happens? Will gets the blessing because he responds to Jesus Jesus takes the consequences and he has to run for his life.

Do you see that? Because the Pharisees then start plotting how to destroy him and this is a pivotal part in the gospel of Matthew. Now I want us to see this because as Christians I think we often forget this.

Jesus lays down his life for us as sinners on the cross doesn't he? He takes the hit so that we go free. We know that if you're a Christian but I think what we often fail to see is that wasn't just the cross that was the pattern of the entire life and ministry of Jesus.

This was his very heart this was the way that he operated all the time. This is who he is. You see his heart is the very nature of love and his heart is still that same heart for you this morning.

[21 : 55] You see self-righteous people are fair weather lovers. That means they will love people until it bites them back and then they go why should I keep loving them?

I don't deserve what I'm getting back but Jesus isn't like that and neither is his followers because if you think about it we've bitten Jesus plenty by our coldness by our distraction by just forgetting about him and just focusing on so many other things our sinfulness but you know Jesus hasn't moved on from you.

Jesus isn't too busy for you. He hasn't written you off. He's not going hey there's so many other people in the universe that I could deal with I don't want to bother with them. He's not like that and so this morning as he looks at you in the eye he says stretch out your hand to me because I want to restore you I want to heal you stop going everywhere else because I am willing to take the consequences so that you can get the blessing.

Jesus dies to himself for the sake of others. secondly under this point Jesus is also strong in weakness.

Do you know Jesus he withdraws and tells those he's healed don't tell anybody about this. That's not great PR if you're trying to kind of build a kingdom but actually we see this in the gospel of Mark he only says this to Jews because they have an image of who they think the Messiah the king should be and he doesn't want them to project their ideas onto him he wants to show you who he really is.

[23 : 44] And so what you see is self-righteous people like the Pharisees they like what is strong they wanted someone to beat the Romans self-righteous people like getting their own way we like power and we're okay with putting others down because it makes us feel better about ourselves.

we want strong leaders to make up for our own sense of weakness but Matthew quotes Isaiah 42 which is an incredible prophecy about what God's servant will be like and here's what he says behold this is God's king behold my servant whom I have chosen my beloved with whom my soul is well pleased so he's saying this is the one who literally delights the soul of God this is what makes the father's face light up when he sees his name on his news feed what's he like he says I'll put my spirit on him he'll proclaim justice to the gentiles that means he is a spirit empowered judge who will bring justice to bear both judgment and restoration he's the one who calls the shots he has power you know like if you see a crocodile with these huge teeth a crocodile can just one snap of his teeth he can just tear people apart have you seen that and so what the what the pharisees are wanting they're wanting

Jesus to be a crocodile who's going to come to the gentiles and gentiles are romans and to just snap him and eat him up that's what he wants because Jesus can delete who he likes but here's the surprising part what does Jesus actually like to do what delights the father he says he will not quarrel or cry aloud nor will anyone hear his voice in the streets huh that's weird he's saying with his sovereign power he's not pushy he's not insisting on his own way he's not big on self-promotion in fact all the other shouters and hawkers on the streets who are peddling their own voices seem to drown out his voice sometimes and people might want miracles from him but they don't want to listen to him I don't know if you've ever felt ignored you know there's the cool kids that everyone loves in the school and listens to them but they don't listen to you you know adults we have that as well right and

Jesus knows exactly what that's like but he's not flustered by it he's not trying to be strong and kind of dress cool and kind of get great photos on Instagram to get likes from people he's not like that because he knows that his victory is brought through weakness so though he will bring justice he doesn't need to trample on people he doesn't need to push his own way to get past people or be in the in crowd why because he's utterly secure he knows that he's pleasing to his father and that's more important to him than being in the cool crowd I wonder whether that's more important for you than being in the cool crowd because he's so secure in his father's delight for him his power can be seen in hiddenness and weakness Jesus is willing to die to himself for the sake of others he's willing to be strong but actually in weakness and here's the third thing

Jesus is tender to the weak and I love this part because you see self-righteous people like the Pharisees when they see weak people they junk box them they use them they walk over them but Jesus isn't like that he says a bruised reed he will not break and a smoldering wick he will not quench until he brings justice to victory and in his name the gentiles will hope I went to the flower market and all I could find I didn't want to buy anything so I just went to the scraps on the side this is a bruised reed it's a common grass well I mean just use your imagination it's a common grass on the side of river banks something knocks into it and just breaks it do you know what they used to use it for making pens and flutes and even tape measures things like that but once it's like this it's so common you just throw it away it's not worth anything you can get another one quite easily a smoldering wick what is that it's when the candle is dying and you know you start getting that smoke just when it's kind of leaving and you just put it out and just oh that's better that's what self righteous communities do and do you know what our society is full of bruised reeds joy shared beautifully about what the experience of a bruised reed is like and by the way

[29 : 35] I'm not talking about modern culture's victimhood mentality okay you know where suddenly bruised reed becomes a badge of honour and like everyone's suffering from burnout even though you've been for like three holidays in the last six weeks or you know your boss says to you hey your work hasn't been up to standard recently and you go I'm being oppressed at work that's not what we're talking about that's not a bruised reed that's a reed that needs to get over itself but bruised reeds are those who've been knocked by life with all those expectations on you maybe by others maybe even by your own sinfulness and your doubts and your struggles bruised reeds are those who others just treat and go yeah you can throw it away maybe like you think of the way sometimes our society treats domestic helpers or the person that I spoke to recently says whenever

I do anything I hear my dad's voice at the back of my man saying why can't you do anything right bruised reeds just as joy shared keep bruising themselves you know bruised reeds we're often hard on ourselves going oh why am I so stupid oh why did I do that again why am I not as successful as them why am I not as disciplined as them why am I not as as them and that self righteous community leaves behind a trail of bruised reeds and you know what we often try and do we often try and compensate because actually each one of us knows deep down that we are bruised in some way and those of us who don't God will bruise you but often what we try and do is we try and go hey I'm not a bruised reed I'm a really cool reed and we want to get sucked into the system of the people around us so that we all look and when we start filtering we go oh no

I'm fine and we try and put up these images and try and be successful like everybody else try and compare ourselves to everyone else so that we don't actually end up being seen or feeling like a bruised reed because who wants to feel like that you know I spoke to a youth who said to me I know getting good grades lots of money dressing cool and had everyone like you isn't ultimately satisfying but I just want to know what it feels like anyone like that do you know what he's saying is I'll do what I know is not good because I'm driven by the desire to feel even for a second not like a bruised reed but the amazing thing about Jesus is this the world outside will try and crush you or try and pretend to be better than we are but

Jesus is in some ways like a crocodile oh he has huge teeth he can snap and break his enemies like that but have you seen a crocodile with its newborn eggs which it carries in its teeth with the most tender gentleness that you could ever imagine you see some of us think that Jesus is actually going to snap you and tear you apart when he gets to you but this says here he says he doesn't break a bruised reed he doesn't snuff out he's the only one who doesn't snuff out of a smoldering wick when he walks into your synagogue he will break and bruise your self righteousness but he will be so tender with your fragility when you come to him you don't get why did you only read your bible once last week you don't get why is your kid the only one in stream class who can't sit still but opens all the cupboards and distracts every other kid that's my kid you can have words with him later you get the one with all authority who looks us in the eye and says

I know you're not as faithful as you should be I know you don't read your bible as much as you should I know you aren't all that you wish you were but listen I love you I see you I know you and I want to give you a different kind of righteousness than the one that do you know the word for righteousness in the original word from Mesopotamium actually means a straight river reed I don't know if you knew that I went to the flower market this is all I could get but I want you to imagine this is actually like this thick because Jesus says I am the straight reed I am your righteousness the one that actually you really are looking to be but you can't be by yourself if you're self righteous he'll bruise you but if you're bruised he'll reach out and heal you and do you know how he'll heal you you know how he brings justice to victory he brings it through himself taking the consequences so that you can be blessed and what he does he's not trying to make you okay now you can be a straight independent reed by yourself that's what he's going to be self righteous if you're like oh no

[35 : 48] I'm fine now no what he does he actually wants to tie himself to us and that's what he does on the cross he says I'm your righteousness I'm your straightness he said actually where you are bruised and you are broken I am strong so you don't have to go around comparing yourself to everyone you don't have to go around trying to be someone you're not you can rest in my love because I am your straightness I am your righteousness and that's where your healing and restoration is found if you reach out in faith to me and stop relying on yourself don't junk box me in favor of any other system of righteousness out there because it's going to crush you I'm the only one who can heal you so come to me let me just close with this how is

Jesus calling you to respond to him he's not calling you to start trying to work harder he's not saying to those you just need to be more at church all these other things you need to pray more occasionally he's saying you need Jesus more than you think you do and if you get that you need Jesus more than you can imagine to be the one that you cannot be then that means you need to center your life around him you need to get into his word just like Kevin talked about last week about being Mary not Martha about putting away your phone and getting into his word he's not telling you that just to beat you up he's inviting you to find healing in him he also is saying to us are you willing to empty your junk boxes and realize as you come to me that actually there may be people in your life that actually

I want you to display the love that I have for you to them so don't walk out of here just being busy and ignoring the people that maybe have hurt you maybe have annoyed you maybe you just don't want in your life at all but he says I actually want to heal you in those areas come to me and I will give you rest and healing because I am a king like no other king let's pray maybe as you just think today of like your what's your impression of who Jesus really is as we shared earlier all of those expectations all of those things that other people have projected onto you or you've actually projected onto

Jesus he wants to show you he's not like that what does it mean for you to respond to him today do you know that he's reaching out to you today so father

I just want to pray this morning I want to pray for those who really feel like that bruise reads this morning father I pray that they would come and surrender their bruisedness to you instead of trying to fix themselves or just live in a despair of not being like other people lord I pray that they would find this great security that joy talked about in you I pray for those of us who actually we struggle with their own self righteousness which actually is all of us but those of us who know that there are people in our lives there are areas of our hearts where we're actually pushing you to the side because we want to have our own way we don't want to love the way you call us to love because we know we can't by ourselves father I pray that we run to you with these things Lord let us go hey this is really hard but God I want to please you more than I want to do what

[41 : 08] I want to do because I know that you are a good and gracious king let us see your love I pray this morning and worship you in Jesus name Amen