

JESSE, AUBRI, & CEDRIC PORTER – AFRICA MISSION TRIP

INTRODUCE

Well, good morning church! If I haven't met you yet, my name is Chris Martin, and I'm the Lead Pastor here.

If you've got your Bibles, and I hope you do, please open them up to Matthew chapter 12. Matthew 12. That's where we're going to be.

We want every person to have a hand on their Bible. You can open your phone or tablet to Matthew 12. If you open one of the hard-backed black bibles under your seat, Matthew 12 will be on page **816**.

INTRODUCTION

Now, if you've been around Fathom for any amount of time, you know I wasn't raised in the church, so for us, Sunday was just another day of the weekend.

- But on my block there was another family.
- And these guys were pretty conservative Christians.

And I can remember going over to their house on Sundays,

- to see if the kids wanted to come out and play.
- And their mom coming to the door and saying:
 - *"no, they can't come play.*
 - *Today is the Sabbath."*
 - And closed the door.

Now, that word didn't mean anything to me at the time, but I learned from those kids that they weren't allowed to play as usual on Sundays.

- They weren't allowed to watch TV or play Nintendo.
- And they went to church all morning.
- And then they would come home and be at home,
- having "family time."

I didn't know what that meant.

- like maybe they just sat around and talked
- or stared at the wall
- or something!

But here's where my mind went:

the Sabbath was a day where you aren't allowed to do anything.

- *"Hey, can I go over to Billy's house?"*
- *"No! it's Sabbath!"*
- *"There's no fun on the Sabbath.*
- *You will sit here and think holy thoughts.*
 - *This is the day that the Lord has made.*
 - *You WILL rejoice and be glad in it!"*

But it didn't make any sense to me.

TRANSITION

I'm calling today's sermon **SLIDE CLOSED ON SUNDAYS**

Think Chick-fil-a, Hobby Lobby, or Kanye West...

You see, there's this popularized version of the Sabbath...

And then there's the biblical idea of the Sabbath.

- And if you were with us last fall during our Disciplines series,
- we covered the spiritual discipline of practicing Sabbath,
- but today, I want to take more of a theological approach.

As Biblical Christians, are we supposed to be CLOSED ON SUNDAYS?

CONTEXT: THE SABBATH

So, we are in a section of Matthew's gospel where opposition is growing and mounting against Jesus, and in chapter 12 we find opposition coming at him from the Pharisees.

- Now, the Pharisees were a branch of Judaism
- with a very high view of the law,
- and they put great stress on strictly obeying the law...
- down to the very smallest of details.

And in our text today, we find Jesus at odds with the Pharisees over one of their favorite laws to battle about, the Sabbath.

In the Jewish law the sabbath was a day set aside for rest and worship.

- It was the 4th of the 10 commandments.
- And, it was actually rooted in Genesis 2, where,
- after God finished his work,
- he rested on the seventh day from all his work.
- And God blessed the seventh day and made it holy.

And so, God's people, too,

- were to rest from their work on the seventh day.
- They were to enter his rest,
- to remember the sabbath day,
- and to make it holy.

Now, the Old Testament only stipulated that the Sabbath was to be set apart as a day of rest from work to worship,

- but the Jewish people needed directions
- on what constituted "work" on the Sabbath.
- So, rabbis had developed 39 rules
- on what could or could not be done.

And the Pharisees were ardent

- on trying to keep these 39 rules to the letter,
- so that they could keep the 4th commandment
- of observing and keeping the Sabbath.

But they have now gotten to the point where they are missing

- the very heart of God's Sabbath commandment
- because they are so focused on the sabbath rules they created
- to help them keep the sabbath.

Do you see the irony here?

Let's look and what this text says about being CLOSED ON SUNDAYS.

BLANK SLIDE

Matthew 12 starting in verse 1:

MATTHEW 12:1-2

[1] At that time Jesus went through the grainfields on the Sabbath. His disciples were hungry, and they began to pluck heads of grain and to eat. [2] But when the Pharisees saw it, they said to him, "Look, your disciples are doing what is not lawful to do on the Sabbath."

EXPLAIN: SABBATH LAWS

Now, unlike today,

- where roads go around properties,
- in the ancient world roads went right through the fields.

And Leviticus 19 permitted travelers to pick grain to eat if they were hungry.

- This is what Jesus' disciples are doing.
 - But this was the Sabbath.
- And these 39 complex Sabbath laws were in place.

And the Pharisees see Jesus' disciples and accuse them of breaking up to 4 of these rules.

- The plucking the grain could be considered reaping,
 - which was forbidden.
- Rubbing it to separate the grain from the husks was threshing...
 - again, forbidden.
- Blowing away the husks could be winnowing,
 - forbidden.
- And for good measure, they may have seen the whole as preparation of food,

- which orthodox Jews still practice.
- They prepare all their sabbath food ahead of time,
- and even have special timers on their ovens...
- you may have seen sabbath settings on certain ovens...
- this is to keep this law!

TRANSITION

So, the Pharisees are questioning, *“Why are your disciples breaking the Sabbath laws?”*

Well, Jesus responds in verse 3:

MATTHEW 12:3-5

[3] He said to them, “Have you not read what David did when he was hungry, and those who were with him: [4] how he entered the house of God and ate the bread of the Presence, which it was not lawful for him to eat nor for those who were with him, but only for the priests? [5] Or have you not read in the Law how on the Sabbath the priests in the temple profane the Sabbath and are guiltless?”

EXPLAIN

Jesus says twice here **have you not read? Have you not read?** He’s pointing out their ignorance of the very scriptures that they are trying to adhere to.

And he gives two quick little examples to show their ignorance:

First, he reminds them of David in 1 Samuel 21,

- when he and his men were hungry,
- they entered into the Tabernacle
- and ate the consecrated bread...
- which was only supposed to be eaten by the priests.

So, David is 'officially' in violation of the law.

But Jesus is pointing out that no one condemns David.

- If David and his men could break the Torah
- for the sake of hunger,
- how much more could Jesus and his disciples?

And second, he uses the priests as an example.

- By the fact that the priests engage in temple duties on the Sabbath
- they too, are officially guilty of Sabbath violations,
- yet the rabbis considered their temple service an exception.
 - It's like the staff here...
 - listen, we aren't CLOSED ON SUNDAYS, y'all.
 - We're open for business!

And since priests are doing God's work,

- they are "guiltless"
- even though technically they "profane" the Sabbath.

And he takes it to the nth degree in verse 6:

MATTHEW 12:6-8

[6] I tell you, something greater than the temple is here. [7] And if you had known what this means, 'I desire mercy, and not sacrifice,' you would not have condemned the guiltless. [8] For the Son of Man is lord of the Sabbath."

POINT 1

Jesus just took this to the next level.

- He said to these Pharisees,
- that he is the lord of the Sabbath.
 - That he gets to interpret the law.
 - That he is greater than the temple
 - and the priests
 - and the law itself.

And it's my first point on what it means to be CLOSED ON SUNDAY.

The Sabbath is about **SLIDE MERCY, NOT LEGALISM.**

The pharisees had come to believe

- that the strictest adherence to the sabbath laws
 - were what was necessary.
- And in doing so,
 - they missed all that the sabbath was about!

The sabbath wasn't meant to become

- this burden...
- and this weight...
- that robbed us of joy!

No!

- It wasn't supposed to be this set of rules
- that you had to legalistically follow,
- even to the point that if you were hungry
- and you hadn't prepared food
- that you were in breach of the sabbath law
- to whip something up to eat.

No! When we treat the law like that we miss the whole point!

The law, when used legalistically, robs us of joy!

- But the law was meant to be a set of guiderails
- to keep us living the way that will bring us the most joy!

You see, we misconstrue the law when we think it is about robbing us...

it's not about robbing us...it's about freeing us!

ILLUSTRATION: SWADDLE

I've illustrated it like this: when my daughter was first born, in the hospital, I learned something that drastically affected how the first 6-months of her life went. The nurse taught me how to swaddle.

Now, if you have kids you likely know the swaddle method.

- This is where I would wrap her as tight as I can in her blanket.
 - I'd bind her arms to her side
 - and get her good and wrapped.
 - Like a little human Chipotle burrito.
 - I guess this is to simulate the womb
 - or something weird like that.

But if I didn't swaddle her,

- then in the middle of her sleep
- she would most likely twitch or fidget or move
- and punch herself in face
 - waking herself up...
- and then she'd start screaming...
 - waking me up!

So, I would lay her down to swaddle her.

- Which sounds cozy...but it's kinda violent.
- I mean, it's like a strait jacket for an infant...
- it's like you're using ratchet straps...

And she would fight me the whole time I'm trying to swaddle her.

She didn't like that restriction.

So, once I had her swaddled, I had pick her up and rock her.

And here's what she did.

- She'd cry out. And fight. And struggle.
 - And then she'd go limp and relax
 - and her eyes would go to half-mast.
- Then a minute later she'd struggle and fight again...
 - but then she'd relax, go limp,
 - and her eyes will move to being little more than slits.
- And then she'd normally have one more fight left in her...
 - and she'd struggle and she'd fight,
 - but she would give up and give in to her exhaustion,
 - and finally go limp and fall into a deep sleep.

APPLICATION

This is an image of how the sabbath law is meant to be for us.

- You've got this law of the sabbath
- that is meant to be a swaddle to bring you rest.

And we sometimes say,

- *"No, no, no...that doesn't feel like freedom!"*
- *That feels like bondage!"*

But only when submitted...

- only when you are swaddled in...
- will you find the rest that you so desperately need...
- the freedom that you truly desire.

Being CLOSED ON SUNDAYS is about MERCY, NOT LEGALISM!

BLANK SLIDE

Ok. Let's keep going. Matthew 12 verse 9.

MATTHEW 12:9-10

[9] He went on from there and entered their synagogue. [10] 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.

EXPLAIN

It's interesting that Matthew calls it **THEIR synagogue**. Did you see that?

- That is...the Pharisee's synagogue...
- their home turf...
- and again, they question Jesus about the Sabbath.

Now, back to those 39 Sabbath rules.

The law was specific:

- one could heal on the Sabbath
 - only if it was a life-threatening situation.
- But if it was not such,
 - one should wait until the next day.

So, this man with a withered hand is not life-threatening.

Now, note those last few words in verse 10: **so that they might accuse him.**

Ok, follow me here:

- They're in THEIR synagogue...
- and there's a disabled man in THEIR synagogue...

And what do the pharisees do?

- Do they help the man in THEIR synagogue?
- Do they get him medical care, or provide for his needs?
- Do they try to comfort this man, or pray for this man?

No!

- They see Jesus come into THEIR church...
- and they see this suffering man in THEIR church...
- and they decide to USE this man from THEIR church...
- as a trap for Jesus **so that they might accuse him.**
 - They don't care about lawfulness.
 - They don't care about Sabbath.
 - They certainly don't care about this man.

They only care about trying to trick, expose, and ultimately—as we’ll see in verse 14—kill the Lord of the Sabbath.

Verse 11:

MATTHEW 12:11-14

[11] 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? [12] Of how much more value is a man than a sheep! So it is lawful to do good on the Sabbath.” [13] Then he said to the man, “Stretch out your hand.” And the man stretched it out, and it was restored, healthy like the other. [14] But the Pharisees went out and conspired against him, how to destroy him.

POINT 2

Jesus gives a scathing rebuke of the Pharisees. Essentially he’s saying,

- *“What sort of people are you?*
- *That you would use, abuse,*
- *and neglect a suffering member in your synagogue.”*

And Jesus heals the man, again, proving his authority over the Sabbath with not just words, but now deeds.

And makes it clear: **it is lawful to do good on the Sabbath.**

Now, I don’t think many of us are trying to trap Jesus by using people like this, but I do think there’s a point here for us.

And it’s me second point about being **CLOSED ON SUNDAYS.**

- The Sabbath is about **MERCY, NOT LEGALISM.**
- And, the Sabbath is about **SLIDE LOVE, NOT LAZINESS.**

The Sabbath is a day about doing good...it's about loving others.

- Jesus makes that clear that rules about keeping the sabbath
- were never meant to restrict us
- from working to do good and loving others.
 - Sabbath rest is about doing good.
 - It's about caring for others.
 - It's about loving God's people and serving others.

APPLICATION

Now, I've heard recently this pushback to coming to church and serving others on Sunday because it's "our Sabbath."

- *"It's our family day.*
- *We just need to take a day off."*

And yes, we all need breaks, even from serving at church.

But lest we miss something here:

- doing good for those in our church
- on the Sabbath is a good and right part
- of practicing and remembering the Sabbath.

We cannot say that we observe the Sabbath if we neglect God's people.

APPLICATION: SUNDAY'S ARE SPECIAL

So, let me get on my soap box for a minute.

Gathering with your church is a vital part of keeping the Sabbath!

- It's not that your faith doesn't matter during the week,
 - but something special,
 - something unique,
 - something life giving,
- happens when we all come together on Sundays.

I heard it put that:

- it's true that a person does not have to go to church to be a Christian.
- But it's also true that one does not have to go home to be married.
 - But in both cases, if they do not,
 - they will have a very poor relationship.

Gathering on Sunday isn't a command per-se, in that I cannot point you to one verse...but it was a very natural outcome of the movement of Jesus.

- And giving up on doing good to those in THEIR midst...
 - in our midst...
- because of some strange Sabbath law,
 - or what I'd qualify as some sort of laziness...
- is certainly not how we enter the rest that God intends for us.

ILLUSTRATE: HEBREWS 10

And this trend isn't unique to us. The New Testament tells us...

- that even in the first century church,
- people were giving up meeting together.

Which encouraged me this week: that some weren't going to church even back then.

They're like,

- "Oh the Apostle Paul's preaching?"
- Nah!
- We heard him last week!"

This is true in our day as well!

- Like, there are some of you who won't be here next Sunday...
- cause you're here today!
 - I know, that's not you.

But there are SOME people...

- who decide...
- every week...
- WHETHER they are going to go to church...OR NOT.

But Jesus has just said that doing good to the people in THEIR very midst is a part of Sabbath keeping.

The Sabbath is about LOVE, NOT LAZINESS!

Listen, if you're going to persevere in your faith,
you need to stay close to and serve with God's people!

ILLUSTRATION: GO DEEPER

Robert Murray M'Cheyne, the 19th century Scottish preacher said this:

SLIDE *"Unfathomable oceans of grace are in Christ for you.*

Dive and dive again, you will never come to the bottom of these depths."

BLANK SLIDE

Our vision at Fathom is that all people would GO DEEPER with God, and people ask me how to do that.

- *“How do I go deeper?”*
 - And the first thing I always say is this: *“show up.”*
- This is a family.
- You gotta show up.
- It’s going to be impossible,
- to stay connected to the family,
- if you never show up for dinner.

And I just meet so many people who have spent their whole lives going from church to church to church to church...and they just never go deep.

ILLUSTRATION: LOVERS

This is just like the guy who dates 20 girls and thinks he’s a great lover.

He’s not a great lover! He’s a looser!

- That’s just like getting to level 1, 20 times.
- Not getting to level 20, one time.
- It’s like being a perennial White Belt!
 - [How long have you guys been married? ____ years?]
 - They’re great lovers!

Love is about going deep!

- And some of you say you want your faith to go deep,
- but you’re only willing to date...
- or maybe...
- you’re always just flirting.

EXPLAIN: JESUS NOT CHURCH

Another thing I hear all the time is people who say,

- *“Well, I love Jesus...*
- *I’m a Christian...*
- *but I just gave up on the church.*
- *I love Jesus,*
- *just not the church.”*

And I want to say, *“What do you mean by that?”*

Because what you’re saying is you’re giving up on PEOPLE!

- The church isn’t this building...
- or this room...
- or these chairs...
- or even this service.

The church is US. Together.

WE ARE THE CHURCH WHEN WE GATHER!

- So, when you give up on the church,
- you’re giving up on us!

And how in the world can you give up on us

when Jesus hasn’t given up on us?

- Look we know we’re a mess.
- We know we’re a wreck.
- And I think you’d fit right in with us!

But we’re not going to give up...

- Let’s not get lazy!
- Let’s love each other well!

CONCLUSION

So, you can see that the DISCIPLINE of Sabbath and the THEOLOGY of Sabbath feed off each other?

- You have to practice the DISCIPLINE of Sabbath...
 - to really get the THEOLOGY of rest...
- BUT without the THEOLOGY...
 - the DISCIPLINE is in vain!
- It becomes LEGALISM or LAZINESS.

So, church, I think, if possible, you should be CLOSED ON SUNDAYS.

- If I didn't work for the church that's the day I would Sabbath.
- And some of you do have to work on Sunday's, too,
- and so, you should Sabbath a different day.

But I think we should be CLOSED ON SUNDAYS, AND I think coming to and serving at church should be a part of your Sabbath routine.

- Gathering with God's people
- to hear God's Word,
- to worship,
- to take communion,
- to pray,
- to serve the body...
- to love...
- to show mercy!

This is meant to be a part of your Sabbath.

And that's where Jesus offers you rest for your soul.

Today choose MERCY.

Today choose LOVE.

Today choose to Sabbath.

Let's pray. **LYRICS SLIDE W/PADS**

RESPONSES:

Well, every week at Fathom we respond in 4 ways:

- COMMUNION – THE LORD’S SUPPER
- GIVING TITHES & OFFERINGS – fathomchurch.org/give
- PRAYER - fathomchurch.org/prayer
- SINGING

So, I’m going to read the Words of Institution from the Apostle Paul, we’ll take communion, and then we’ll sing:

1 CORINTHIANS 11:23–26 – WORDS OF INSTITUTION

[23] For I received from the Lord what I also delivered to you, that the Lord Jesus on the night when he was betrayed took bread, [24] and when he had given thanks, he broke it, and said, “This is my body, which is for you. Do this in remembrance of me.” **TAKE**

[25] In the same way also he took the cup, after supper, saying, “This cup is the new covenant in my blood. Do this, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of me.” **TAKE**

[26] For as often as you eat this bread and drink the cup, you proclaim the Lord’s death until he comes.

Love you church, let’s stand and sing together.

RESOURCES USED:

- Anyabwile, Thabiti. *Matthew 12:1-21*.
- Carson, D.A. Matthew: The Expositor's Bible Commentary.
- Osborne, Grant R. Matthew: Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament.