

Weaving the Word

Healing a Shriveled Hand

Part 12 – September 14, 2014



Welcome to a place where **we're learning to distinguish the difference between religion and the good news!**

You see, **we have to understand why Jesus hates religion so much** (I'm just going to pick up where I left off last week).



In his book, *Jesus the King*, Tim Keller writes that **at the end of His great act of creation the Lord said, "It is finished," and He could rest.**

On the cross **at the end of His great act of redemption the Lord said, "It is finished" – and we can rest.**



On the cross, Jesus was saying of the work *under* your work, the work of earning your keep and justifying yourself, the thing that makes you *so weary*, the need to prove your value because you're *never ever good enough*, **THAT** is finished!

But, when it comes to your ongoing restoration, are you more working with Him or against Him?



Last week we wove together Matthew, Mark, and Luke's accounts of how the religious leaders condemned Jesus for allowing His followers to pluck grain on the Sabbath, the Day of Rest.

Today, we're weaving their three perspectives of how Jesus followed this up by healing a man with a shriveled hand ... *on the Sabbath*.



Matthew is making a case to the Jews, so he includes challenges like, "Is it *lawful* to heal on the Sabbath?"



Mark is recording Peter's action-packed preaching to the Romans: "He looked around at them *in anger* and, *deeply distressed*".

Doctor Luke is a highly educated investigator for the Greeks, so he offers clarifying details: "[a man] whose *right hand* was shriveled".



When we weave all three together, we get one 3D story, filled with details you can't see in any *one* account.

But, first we need to understand *why* Jesus *hates* religion *so much*.



Man always resorts to using religion as a device to measure our acceptability with God. And, that's *absurd*; to be acceptable, we must be *blameless, perfect, and pure!*

Thankfully, we're *not expected to be acceptable* (by our own merit). But, we *are expected to humbly allow Jesus to make us acceptable by receiving His perfect purity as our own, and then gratefully, obediently, following Him as the Lord of our rest'oration.*

So, you workin' more *with Him* or against *Him* on *yours*?

Restoration is substituted with religion by those who want to be *liked by God*, but don't want to be *like God's Son*.

There's nothing wrong with tradition *or* routine *or* ritual ... *until* the moment they become a way to rank your position in *any way*.

Whatever measure you choose to use, you'll either succeed, which'll lead to conceit, or fail, which'll lead to despair. And, if you rank yourself, you'll eventually rank *on* others; either because you *feel superior* or you *feel miserable*. Or *both!*

To the degree these things manifest *through us*, we invalidate the work of Christ *for us*, and reject the work of God *in us*; and Jesus just becomes a tool I use to build my case that I'm a *good person*.

Jesus *hates religion* as much as He *loves restoration*.

And, He *really loves restoration!*



"Woe to you, teachers of the law and Pharisees, you hypocrites! You travel over land and sea to win a single convert, and when he becomes one, you make him twice as much a son of hell as you are." – Matthew 23:15 NIV

I love it when Jesus talks like there's a *New Sheriff* in town: *"I'm the New Law 'round here; and, there'll be no more rustling my Father's flock. I designed the Sabbath and I'll define the Sabbath; now, who wants to defy me?"*

Watch how far those *outlaws* will go to protect their religion, and how far the true *Law Man* will go to protect *us from it*.

After last week's confrontation in the field, Jesus is now set up for a showdown in the synagogue, a fight He's been waiting for.

The tension hangs so thick, you could cut it with a knife.

... Another time he went into the synagogue, ... Going on from that place, [where His disciples plucked grain on the Sabbath, and Jesus declared Himself “Lord of the Sabbath”, and the Pharisees accused ‘em of violating the Sabbath] he went into their synagogue, ... On another Sabbath he went into the synagogue and was teaching, ... and a man with a shriveled hand was there. ... and a man was there whose right hand was shriveled. [Thanks, Doc] ... and a man with a shriveled hand was there ... Some of them were looking for a reason to accuse Jesus, ... The Pharisees and the teachers of the law were looking for a reason to accuse Jesus, so they watched him closely to see if he would heal on the Sabbath. ... so they watched him closely to see if he would heal him on the Sabbath. ... Looking for a reason to accuse Jesus, they asked him, “Is it lawful to heal on the Sabbath?” ... Jesus said to the man with the shriveled hand, “Stand up in front of everyone.” ... But Jesus knew what they were thinking and said to the man with the shriveled hand, “Get up and stand in front of everyone.” So he got up and stood there. ... Then Jesus asked them, “Which is lawful on the Sabbath: to do good or to do evil, ... Then Jesus said to them, “I ask you, which is lawful on the Sabbath, to do good or to do evil to save life or to destroy it?” ... to save life or to kill?” But they remained silent. [They’re insecure and anxious about their own regulations] ... 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? How much more valuable is a man than a sheep! Therefore it is lawful to do good on the Sabbath.” Then he said to the man, “Stretch out your hand.” ... He looked around at them all, and then said to the man, “Stretch out your hand.” ... He looked around at them in anger [at the religion they refused to let go of, that kept ‘em from seeing their need for Him; it’s like being angry at your brother for refusing to go to rehab when you know the drugs will kill him] and, deeply distressed at their stubborn hearts, [Their hearts were as shriveled as the man’s hand!] said to the man, “Stretch out your hand.” ... He did so, and his hand was completely restored. ... He stretched it out, and his hand was completely restored. [If ever there was a moment where the miracle was instant, this is it! POW!] ... So he stretched it out and it was completely restored, just as sound as the other. ... But they were furious and began to discuss with one another what they might do to Jesus. ... [This is the moment their minds turn to murder] But the Pharisees went out and plotted how they might kill Jesus. [Religion will always try to kill relationship] ... Then the Pharisees went out and began to plot with the Herodians how they might kill Jesus. – Matthew 12:9-14, Mark 3:1-6, Luke 6:6-11 NIV

The Herodians were the far left liberals of Jesus’ day, and the Pharisees were the far right conservatives. They hated each other. *But they hated Jesus even more.*

The Herodians saw Him as a threat to their political power; the Pharisees saw Him as a threat to their religious authority. *Politics and religion: two of the biggest tests of our humility.*

The Pharisees took the moralistic approach of judging others: “The good people are in and the bad people are out – and of course *we’re the good ones.*”

The Herodians took the progressive approach: “The open-minded are in and the close-minded are out – and of course *we’re the open-minded ones.*”

Both postures are very hostile to the Good News.

Jesus didn't say, "The good are in, and the bad are out," or "the open-minded are in, and the close-minded are out." **Jesus came to proclaim that the *humble* are in, and the *proud* are out.**

... clothe yourselves with humility toward one another, because, "God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble." – 1 Peter 5:5b NIV

Jesus didn't come to *reform religion*.

He came to end it.

To triumph *over it*.

To take it to the cross and replace it with himself.

Salvation requires only a moment; *restoration*, a lifetime.

We should walk away from the man with the shriveled hand with a strong grip on God's desire to restore, and our desperate need.

Paul says "*continue to work out your salvation ... for it is God who works in you*". (Phil 2:12)

Restoration is all about allowing the ongoing work of God, which comes down to *doing His will*, which comes down to *knowing His heart*, which comes down to *hearing His voice*, which comes down to *consistently finding a peaceful place to dwell in His Word*.

Not with a stopwatch.

Not with a scorecard.

You only need a willing heart and a desire to reach out to the One who restores.

This is what Jesus fought and died to provide for you.

I love Richard Lucas' imaginary conversation between an early Christian and her neighbor in Rome:

"Ah," the neighbor says. "I hear you are religious! Great! Religion is a good thing. Where is your temple or holy place?" **"We don't have a temple,"** replies the Christian. **"Jesus is our temple."** "No temple? But where do your priests work and do their rituals?" **"We don't have priests to mediate the presence of God,"** replies the Christian. **"Jesus is our priest."** "No priests? But where do you offer your sacrifices to acquire the favor of your God?" **"We don't need a sacrifice,"** replies the Christian. **"Jesus is our sacrifice."** "What kind of religion is this?" sputters the pagan neighbor. And the answer is, of course, ***it's no kind of religion at all.***