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SERIES: Matthew (The King, His Kingdom And Me)

TITLE: Program 19 – The Way Of Freedom

THURSDAY

OPEN

I'm standing in the grain fields around the region of the Galilee. "Shabbat" is coming. When there are three stars in the sky then it starts officially. But an hour before that they begin to say, "Shabbat Shalom." "Sabbath peace." The Sabbath is to bring peace. The Sabbath is to be a day of rest. I want to ask you a question, Beloved. Is your Christianity one of peace, one of rest or one of turmoil, one of a burden? We'll talk about it today.

PART ONE

In Matthew chapter 11, as you can remember, Jesus commissions his 12. And He tells them how He's going to [send them forth as sheep among wolves.] (PARAPHRASE, Matthew 10:16) He tells them that they're going to be persecuted. And then as that chapter, as we know it, draws to a close, what Jesus says is: "**Come [un]to Me, all [ye that] are weary and heavy-laden, and I will give you rest.**" And then he says in verse 29 of chapter 11,

“Take My yoke upon you and learn [of] Me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For My yoke is easy...,”

now listen carefully, my yoke is easy **“...and My burden is light.”**

(Matthew 11:28-30) And chapter 12 and remember there are no chapter divisions, he says, **“At that time Jesus went through the grain fields on the Sabbath....” (Matthew 12:1a)** He was walking through the grain fields with His disciples. And they became hungry and so they reached down and they picked up the grain of wheat and they took that grain of wheat in their hands and they began to go like this to separate the wheat from the chaff because the grain was ripe. And what they would do is they would take the chaff and they would blow it away and they would have the kernel of wheat that was left. And that wheat was sweet and they would take that kernel of wheat and they would put it in their mouths and they would eat it as they went along because they were hungry. Now what is the connection here, what is Matthew trying to show us? Matthew, of course, is showing us the King. He’s showing us the Son of David, he’s showing us the Son of Abraham. He’s showing us that this is the One that is to take the throne. And yet, he also tells us that this is the one that is the Lamb of God. He has told his disciples that he’s sending them out into the world and that they’re going to be persecuted and hated by all men because of His name sake. And yet He says, **“...My yoke is easy and My burden is light.” (Matthew 11:30)** And at that time, on that occasion, is when He goes through the grain fields. And it says, **“But when the Pharisees saw this, they said to Him, ‘Look [look], Your disciples do [what’s] not lawful...on the Sabbath.’” (Matthew 12:2)** Now remember He has just said : Learn of Me, **“...My yoke is easy... My burden is light.” (Matthew 11:30)** In other words, “When you get in the yoke with Me,” and a yoke, as you know, was a piece of wood that had two loops on it. You would put the animals of the same kind within that yoke to pull a burden. And Jesus is saying, [“If you’ll take My yoke upon you, you will find that my yoke is easy and my burden is light.”]

(PARAPHRASE, Matthew 11:29-30) Why? Because I'm there with you. Now contrast this with the scribes and the Pharisees. The scribes and Pharisees were putting on them a yoke that was too heavy to bear. They were putting on all these details of the law. And if there was anything that they loved it was the Sabbath, because on the Sabbath they were to do no work at all, even today. I had a Jewish friend, Danny, and Danny said to me, "You know the greatest gift that God has given us," because Danny doesn't know Jesus as the Messiah, Yeshua. But he said "The greatest gift he's given us is the Sabbath." Because on the Sabbath everything closes, on the Sabbath, in the Jewish community, no one works. And yet, you will find many differences in Israel of what happens on the Sabbath. And it depends on how much they adhere, not only to the law, but to the traditions that have been added to the law, the interpretations that they've done of the law so that they make sure that they don't break one of God's single laws. Well, what He's saying, what the Pharisees are saying is, you're doing what's not lawful on the Sabbath. You're taking the grain, you're rolling it in your hands and as you take that grain and as you roll it in your hands what you're doing is you're working, you're working. You're harvesting grain, you're harvesting grain. And you're blowing that chaff away. It doesn't have anything to do with the fact they're hungry and there is food available. Rather it's the law. It's the burden of the law. Not that the law was a burden, but what was added to the law was a burden. "[And Jesus] **said to them, 'Have you not read what David did when he became hungry, he and his companions, how he entered the house of God, and they ate the consecrated bread, which was not lawful for [them] to eat nor for those with him, but for the priests alone?'**" (Matthew 12:3-4) ["Remember when David went and remember how hungry the people were and David went in and he asked for the bread and the bread was given to him? It was bread that only the priests were supposed to eat."] (PARAPHRASE, Matthew 12:3-4) And yet, it was meeting a need. [God's yoke is easy, His burden is light.] (PARAPHRASE,

Matthew 11:30) It's not to bend you and bow you and break you. Rather the law was given for our good. The law was our schoolmaster to shut us up to obedience until faith in Christ could come. The law was to protect us. It was not to ruin us. And so it says, "...[Don't you remember] **how he entered the house of God, and they ate the consecrated bread, which [is] not lawful for him to eat nor for those with him, but for the priests alone? Or have you not read....**" (Matthew 12:3b, 4-5a) Now what is Jesus doing? Once again Jesus is pointing the scribes and the Pharisees, not to the traditions of men, but to the Word of God. It's the Word of God, Beloved, that becomes our plumb line that allows us to discern whether the traditions of men are valid or invalid. And so then it says, "...**Have you not read in the Law, that on the Sabbath the priests in the temple break the Sabbath and are innocent?**" (Matthew 12:5) And He's taking them back to Numbers. And as he takes them back to Numbers and they talk about what the priests do on the Sabbath, the priests when they're in the temple, they prepare the sacrifices. And they're in a sense, working, but it's all right. So what He's trying to get them to is the heart of the law and not the letter of the law, because it's the letter of the law that kills. And then He says, "**But I say to you... something greater than the temple is here.**" (Matthew 12:6) Something greater than the temple. Why? Because Jesus was the fulfillment of all that the temple was. Jesus, the brazen altar where the sacrifice was made was a picture of the cross of Jesus Christ, where He would be bound to the cross, and where He would shed his blood as a sacrifice for their sins. When you go into the temple and you see the Table of Showbread on the right, He's the Bread of Life. When you see the Menorah on the left, the candlestick, He's the Light of the World. When you see the altar of incense before the veil of the temple, He's Christ, our High Priest. When the see the veil in the temple, that veil is a picture of the body of Jesus Christ, and it all leads into the presence of the Holy of Holies, the very throne of God. All of it speaks of Jesus, "**...Something greater than the temple is here.**"

(Matthew 12:6b) And it says, **“But if you had known what this means, ‘I desire compassion, and not ...sacrifice,’ you would not have condemned the innocent.”** (Matthew 12:7) What is He saying? You just condemned these men for picking this grain of wheat and eating it when they were hungry because it was a day of the week, because it was a Sabbath. You condemned them because of that, and he wants them to know and understand that what does God want? What does he want? He says, **“‘I desire compassion, and not a sacrifice.’”** (Matthew 12:7b) What is He saying? “Listen, your relationship with Me is a matter of the heart. It’s not just going into the temple and making a sacrifice. It’s not just giving an animal to Me as a burnt offering or that. But it’s a matter of the heart.” And the scribes and the Pharisees were guilty of keeping the letter of the law without the compassion. O Beloved, listen to what Jesus says. He says, **“...If you had known what this means, ‘I desire compassion, and not a sacrifice,’ you would not have condemned the innocent. For the Son of Man is Lord [over] the Sabbath.”** (Matthew 12:7-8) You’re going to find out later that **“...the Sabbath was made for man...not man for the Sabbath.”** (Mark 2:27) The Sabbath is a day of rest. Jesus offers us rest. He is the Lord of the Sabbath. So what is God’s message to you and to me? Do you know people that are hard and unbending that name, the name “Christian,” that have this legalism about them, that this is what it says and this is what you will do and there’s no grace and there’s no compassion? Stop and think about what we learn about God in Exodus. (See Exodus 34:6) He tells us that He is a God of compassion, that He is a God that is merciful. [Jesus is the Lord of the Sabbath.] (PARAPHRASE, Matthew 12:8) The Sabbath is a rest, a rest for His people, not a burden. And so you and I need to know that if we come along and our Christianity’s full of legalism and we say, “Listen, this is what the law says and this is what you’ve got to do.” And you’re unbending and you’re uncompassionate and you have not mercy about you, then, Precious One, you have missed what it is all about. You

have missed it. And you need to know and you need to understand as I stand in these grain fields here in the Galilee, you need to understand and remember the message. And when you start to get legalistic, when you start to get unbending or when you come to someone that is like that, just know it's not the heart of God. [His yoke is easy, his burden is light.] (PARAPHRASE, Matthew 11:30) and He promises you rest for your soul.

PART TWO

Jesus and His disciples have just been accused by the Pharisees of breaking the Sabbath because they went through the grain fields. And they took the grain because they were hungry and they began to eat it. Now the law says in Deuteronomy chapter 23 in verse 24 and 25, **“When you enter your neighbor’s vineyard, then you may eat grapes until you are fully satisfied, but you shall not put any in your basket. [And] when you enter your neighbor’s standing grain, then you may pluck the heads with your hand[s], but you shall not wield a sickle in your neighbor’s standing grain.” (Deuteronomy 23:24-25)** They had done just that. And yet the problem was they had done it on the Sabbath. And those that were so rigid about the law had accused them. Well it tells us in Matthew about that incident and then the next incident is mentioned in Matthew chapter 12 verse 9. **“Departing from there, He went into their synagogue,” (Matthew 12:9)** the synagogue of these Pharisees, the synagogue of the people that were in that area. And it says, **“And a man was there whose hand was withered. And they questioned Jesus, asking [Him], ‘Is it lawful to heal on the Sabbath?’....” (Matthew 12:10)** They did it so that they might accuse Him. Where were they going to accuse Him? In the synagogue, the synagogue where the Torah is opened, where it is read, where it is discussed by the Pharisees, by the scribes and by those that are passing through. I’m in a synagogue in the city of Capernaum that is built on the foundation stones of the very synagogue that Jesus spoke in, that Jesus worshipped in, that

Jesus taught in, here in the city of Capernaum. This is the synagogue where Jesus said that He was the Bread of Life. As we stand in this synagogue, I want us to see and envision what is happening, because in the synagogue they would sit along the sides. They would discuss the law. They would have the place where they kept the holy scrolls at the back and that's where they would open them and read them. And so now here is this man with this withered hand and here's the Pharisees and they're trying to accuse Jesus. And so they ask, **"...Is it lawful to heal on the Sabbath...?" (Matthew 12:10b)** Because they see this man with this withered hand, with this hand that won't do anything, and they know that He's been healing and they want to accuse Him. **"And [Jesus] said..., 'What man is there among you who has a sheep, and if it falls into [the] pit on the Sabbath, will he not take hold of it and lift it out?'" (Matthew 12:11)** If the sheep on the Sabbath falls in a hole, are you going to leave it in the hole because it's the Sabbath? And the answer, of course, is "No. You're not going to." And then He says, **"How much more valuable then is a man than a sheep! So then, it is lawful to do good on the Sabbath." (Matthew 12:12)** It is lawful to do good on the Sabbath. Remember what we were learning, Jesus was a man of compassion. Jesus was the Son of God. He had a heart that was equal to the heart of God. The Pharisees and the scribes that did not believe in Jesus were men that were rigid with the law, and the law was more important than the person. And so the question now is, "Can you do it on the Sabbath?" **"...He said to the man, 'Stretch out your hand!' [And] he stretched it out, and it was restored to normal, like the other[s]. But the Pharisees went out and conspired against Him, as to how they might destroy Him." (Matthew 12:13-14)** They wanted to get rid of Jesus. The Sabbath was only an excuse. But I think you and I need to have some understanding about the Sabbath. I want us to go to Exodus chapter 20, verse 8. And in Exodus chapter 20, verse 8, which is the law, the giving of the law, God tells us the purpose of the Sabbath. And this is what it says, **"Remember the**

Sabbath..., to keep it holy. Six days you shall labor and do all your work, but the seventh day is a Sabbath [to] the Lord your God; in it you shall not do any work, you or your son or your daughter, your male or your female servant or your cattle or your sojourner who stays with you. For in six days the Lord made the heavens and the earth, the sea and all that is in them, and [he] rested on the seventh day; therefore the Lord blessed the Sabbath...and made it holy.” (Exodus 20:8-11) So they were not to do any work. Of course we have the story in Numbers chapter 15 of a man that breaks the Sabbath. In Numbers chapter 15 in verse 32 it says, **“Now while the sons of Israel were in the wilderness, they found a man gathering wood on the Sabbath day. Those who found him gathering wood brought him to Moses and Aaron and to all the congregation; and they put him in custody because it had not been declared what [they] should... [do] to him. Then the Lord said to Moses...,”** now listen carefully, God is speaking. **“‘...[This] man shall surely be put to death; all the congregation shall stone him with stones outside the camp.’ So all the congregation brought him outside the camp and stoned him to death with stones, just as the Lord had commanded Moses.” (Numbers 15:32-36)** Why? Because that man was breaking a picture. He was gathering wood, he was doing work on the Sabbath. And God wanted them to see, I’ve given you a law, I’ve given you a commandment. And [you shall work six days but on the seventh you shall rest.] (PARAPHRASE, Exodus 34:21) This man flagrantly broke the commandments of God. And [if you kept the whole law and broke it in one point then you were guilty of all.] (PARAPHRASE, James 2:10) So he was stoned and put to death. But this is different. In the synagogue, here is a man with a withered hand. It’s not an issue of working, it’s a issue of a man who is created in the image of God with a withered hand. And so Jesus heals him. He heals him on the Sabbath. Why? Because Mark gives us the answer. As we go to the Gospel of Mark we find the same incident. And it says, **“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.’” (Mark 2:27-28) On the Sabbath God can do His work. On the Sabbath no man is to work because God has done his work and He has rested. And what He wants them to understand is this: [That when God created the Sabbath He created the Sabbath for man. He did not create man for the Sabbath.] (PARAPHRASE, Mark 2:27) The Sabbath was the benefit. Pliny, the historian, talked about three things that the Jews have that you don’t see anywhere else. One of them was a temple without a statue of a God. Another one was a day on which they would rest and no one would work. Well that’s what the Sabbath was. It was made for man not man for the Sabbath. (See Mark 2:27) Remember God created man before He created the Sabbath. So as you think of this I want you to remember that God is a God of compassion. It’s the letter of the law that kills. These men were not interested in keeping the law, they were interested in destroying a man who claimed to be the Son of God. The man who was evidencing by all of His works and all of His healings and His words that He was not an ordinary man but He was a man sent from God, a man who went against their traditions, a man who went against the laws that they had added to the law. You and I need to understand, Precious One, that the law was made for the benefit of man so that He, God, might shut us up to obedience until Christ would come. Christ was here.