

An Angry Jesus?

Only one time in the Gospels was Jesus called angry and it is in our text today. As usual, it is “religious” people that cause Jesus to be most grieved over their behavior, particularly when they take God’s “Sabbath” and distort it from God’s intended purposes. We need to be sure we understand God’s Sabbath, our treatment of those He loves, and that we accurately reflect his character.

Mark 2:23-3:6

²³One Sabbath he was going through the grainfields, and as they made their way, his disciples began to pluck heads of grain. ²⁴And the Pharisees were saying to him, “Look, why are they doing what is not lawful on the Sabbath?” ²⁵And he said to them, “Have you never read what David did, when he was in need and was hungry, he and those who were with him: ²⁶how he entered the house of God, in the time of Abiathar the high priest, and ate the bread of the Presence, which it is not lawful for any but the priests to eat, and also gave it to those who were with him?” ²⁷And he said to them, “The Sabbath was made for man, not man for the Sabbath. ²⁸So the Son of Man is lord even of the Sabbath.”

³Again he entered the synagogue, and a man was there with a withered hand. ²And they watched Jesus, to see whether he would heal him on the Sabbath, so that they might accuse him. ³And he said to the man with the withered hand, “Come here.” ⁴And he said to them, “Is it lawful on the Sabbath to do good or to do harm, to save life or to kill?” But they were silent. ⁵And he looked around at them with anger, grieved at their hardness of heart, and said to the man, “Stretch out your hand.” He stretched it out, and his hand was restored. ⁶The Pharisees went out and immediately held counsel with the Herodians against him, how to destroy him.

I. Sabbath is a day to delight in the Lord (vv. 2:23-28).

There is a human tendency to add to the Gospel and make God’s Sabbath day an attempt by man to prove himself by adhering to rituals and rules which did not even come from God. Making “plucking heads of grain” a sin was a man-made rule, not God given. Jesus declared that “the Sabbath was made for man, not man for the Sabbath”. The seventh day was meant to be both a day of rest, and a day of delighting in the Lord (Is. 58:13,14) a day on which he would pour His blessings on us. To make sure they understood the centrality of a relationship through Christ Jesus and that God meant to bless the Sabbath through Him Jesus said “So the Son of Man is lord even of the Sabbath”.

II. Sabbath is a day to demonstrate God’s character to others (vv. 3:1-6)

When a man-made rule caused the religious leaders to indict Jesus for preparing to heal a man with a withered hand, Jesus asked them (paraphrased), “What do you think God is most interested in, letting the powers of darkness exercise control or letting God exercise His sovereignty through compassion and healing?” When the Pharisees refused to answer, Jesus was both angry and grieved because of their hardness of heart. In the same way, Jesus asks if we are willing to reflect God’s character in our lives. When He confronts us with specific questions about doing His Will, especially to our brothers and sisters around us, it is likely that when we don’t respond, or respond in a way contrary to the way He would, we may be grieving Him.

Discussion Questions

1. What dynamics make the Sabbath a special day, and a day of blessing for us?
2. What can keep us from experiencing “Delight in the Lord” on the Sabbath?
3. How could “Hardness of heart” manifest itself in our lives when the Lord asks us to reflect His character in our treatment of others?
4. How have you seen God heal - physically, emotionally, or spiritually - in someone’s life, including yours? What does that tell you about God’s heart for the broken?

Pray together that God will be our greatest delight in our Sabbath worship, and that we would be eager to reflect His heart of compassion to those He brings into our fellowship.