

“But some Pharisees saw them do it and protested, “Look, your disciples are breaking the law by harvesting grain on the Sabbath.” where he noticed a man with a deformed hand. The Pharisees asked Jesus, “Does the law permit a person to work by healing on the Sabbath?” (They were hoping he would say yes, so they could bring charges against him.)” Matthew 12:2,10 NLT

lectio // Matthew 12:1-14

These comments that thread their way through the gospel accounts are supposed to reveal the detail, the deep knowledge and love for the law. Actually, they just reveal their hearts. The religious leaders see a violation of “work,” yet Jesus tells them, his friends are just eating. And we know, eating is NOT work at all! When they see another violation of work on the Sabbath, Jesus asks them, “since when is healing work?” Who twisted their minds? Who spun a 180° good to be bad? Religion can do that sort of thing. They had such a hard, long list that had been developed over years of not hearing from God, nor from any of God’s spokespersons (Prophets). So they just kept drifting from God himself, buried deep within the myriad of minutiae, loop-holing the things they wanted to do, but holding an entire culture hostage to form and function without relationship with the creator - the God they were supposed to be working for! And, for that, the end result was always the same - KILL the outlier. Thou shall NOT murder meant nothing to them anymore. They plotted to kill God himself! And... accomplished it, sort of. This is where legalism, pharisaical thinking and unbridled religion always leads - kill them, kill them all. We can easily forget the purposes of God in redeeming us as humans, building the Kingdom of God, it looks so different than evermore restrictive rules, crushing guilt and eventually compliance or death. As religious folks, we don’t physically plot to kill anymore, we just call out judgment and write them off so the super wicked ones don’t taint our reputation of holiness. What are we missing here? Have we setup the same patterns of the religious leaders in Jesus’ day?

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Dad,

I love seeing and pointing out the ridiculous ways of religious leaders, then find myself getting caught up in the very same cycle. Someone’s not following the rules, someone is not lining up with what I think the Bible says. Off with their head, cut them off! Being a part of the church without becoming that “religious” type in culture and practice is so hard. After scratching out of the mud out of life, I find myself being so repulsed by mud in other people. Even when I’ve got plenty of it still linger in my soul. Does others sin and struggle remind me of what I was at one time and this makes it hard to see those qualities in the mirror of my own life? Forgive me for being a religious leader!

contemplatio

rest in the presence of God, allowing the words revealed to take root