

Gospel of Matthew

12:15-28

Jesus – the Bruised Reed



Jesus has just made the religious “experts” angry. He has, in effect, tweaked their noses, when they cautioned him to not do what he was obviously poised to do. But He had totally disregarded them by healing a man with a withered hand on the Sabbath Day, and somehow, to the religious experts, that was considered a terrible infraction against the Law of Moses. Even after seeing the man’s hand recreated, a stupendously amazing event – something certainly not seen every day – and so wonderful for the man himself – it seems incomprehensible that these religious men had responded by deciding that Jesus must be stopped – silenced - *permanently* – that He must die! And they began plotting to murder Him! Now, Jesus could have waited until the next day to heal this man, but it was the principle of the thing. He opposed the ridiculous additions to the Sabbath laws as completely unnecessary, and He would not accede to it despite the trouble he was bringing down upon Himself. He was a revolutionary in that sense – taking on **THE MAN!**



So our text this morning begins with Jesus wisely withdrawing from that city and moving away, getting back on the road. But the sick, and those who assisted the sick, left the city with him and were following behind waiting for Jesus to pause on the road and begin healing people again. He was their only hope to get their life back! What the doctors could do was *worse than* nothing! Almost everything they would do would be counterproductive in that time and place. And even if it did no harm, it did no good either! Medicine was in such a state of ignorance and error that if the disease or illness didn't hurt, debilitate, or kill you, the doctors certainly would finish the job! So Jesus was their only option and they were clinging to His every movement - desperate, but hopeful! They were not going to let Him go until He had touched and healed them!



I can't imagine that perpetual pressure from people! Celebrities, in these days when people seem to have no life of their own and live vicariously through the lives of their favorite "stars" - those

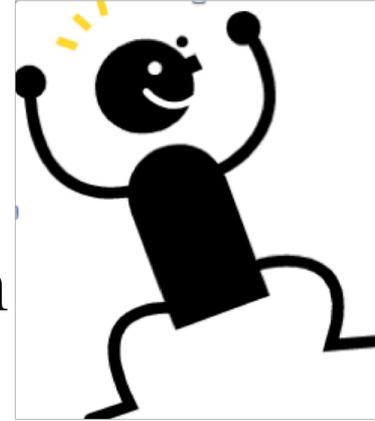


celebrities can never go out in public or they will soon be mobbed for a signature! It is a horrible way to live and all the money a celebrity makes along with the status, honor, and respect paid them is not worth the loss of their freedom in society. Jesus had reached that point of celebrity status! He was not being left alone now. He could have found a central place and taken a stand there for the purpose of healing *all* the people in the land so He didn't have to deal with the sick anymore. But that would have taken a great chunk of time, and He was on a schedule. His task was not to heal *all* the sick but to prove His authority to make the otherwise outlandish claims about Himself that He was making.

So, the enemies of Jesus cleverly began to circulate the rumor that Jesus was doing these miracles by the power of Satan. I mean, we see this today all the time. If you can't win the argument, destroy the reputation of the opposition by rumor and innuendo, and then no one will listen to their arguments, and you win anyway! That is what they were trying to do with Jesus here, but His arguments are so compelling that not many except His haters will entertain such a ridiculous theory. Satan doesn't even possess that kind of power – the power to create or recreate – and if he had it, he would never use it for good anyway, but only for evil!

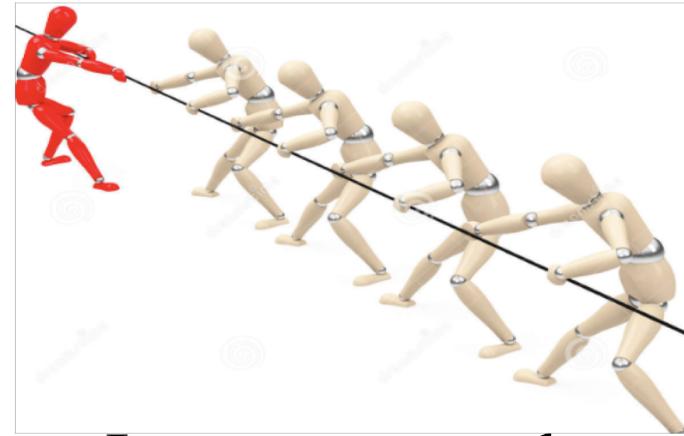


Vs. 22, 23 – Jesus heals a man who only had 3 major problems. He was blind, mute, and he was demon possessed,.. which was why he was blind and mute. So, when Jesus cast out the demon, the man could see and talk. People saw it happen, couldn't believe their eyes (and ears). And then people started to talk, to speculate! They got a little excited. Maybe, (it was suggested) this Jesus could be the Promised One – the Messiah – the “Son of David”?



The Pharisees heard the speculation. It was understandable! The people were sooo ready for the Messiah to finally come. But this talk was dangerous! In their minds, Jesus was the enemy. He just had to be a fraud, a trickster – after all, He was a serial Sabbath breaker!

So they started a slander campaign. Jesus had dismissed them – disrespected- - ignored them! It felt good to them to say that Jesus was performing His tricks by the power of Satan. AND, saying it and supposing it was true - it was for a good cause, right?! Someone had to do



the dirty work of taking him down! But then Jesus countered their efforts with irrefutable logic. Satan wouldn't cast out His own demons! That would be self-defeating! And Jesus *knew that they knew* that Satan is totally predictable in that he will always destroy, knock down and certainly not heal or build up. It is God that creates new lives, who helps people, that redeems people out of their old ways, and who does what is good! So, He says "Look at what I am doing, and YOU decide who is doing this! [Luke 11:20 – "*by the finger of God*"] If you decide this is of the Spirit of God, guess what - then you know you are looking at the Messiah – "*The Kingdom of God is upon you – IT IS HERE AND NOW, AND I'M ITS KING!*"

Now I want to go back up to **verses 18-21**. By including this, the writer of this gospel trying to prove a point. His point is that Jesus matches the description of the Old Testament prophets. So, as with a lot of other Old Testament prophecies that he shares in earlier chapters, He includes this quote too - right from Isaiah! What Isaiah predicted in this prophecy is that the Promised One would face opposition when He came. He would do good and, conversely, face opposition even though He was doing good. He would be a bruised reed that would bend but not break, or a low-burning wick that looked weak and easy to extinguish, but who would actually prove to be impossible to snuff out!! He would “***bring justice to victory***”!



Of course everyone expected that of the Messiah. They were sure that it was written in concrete that He would make the Roman oppressors pay for their crimes against Israel! He would dispense justice from God upon the world and Israel would end up on the top of the heap of nations where it was thought, without question, they belonged!



The book of Revelation speaks extensively to the plan of God that the



Messiah would, toward the end of His plan for the world - (*His* world) - bring judgment against the nations of the world and then take over and for the first time EVER the nations of the world will be ruled with unerring justice. The world will become a place where those guilty of murder, rape, theft, corruption, abuse of power, underpaying workers, even in marriages breakups, etc... etc... etc..., the guilty will will be divided from the innocent, accurately, justly, every time! The King will oversee the saints, and the saints will do the everyday nuts and bolts of seeing to the fair distribution just governance. The only ones that will complain about this arrangement and be discontented are those that are trying to get away with something!

It is after this revealing Old Testament passage that the gospel writer speaks to the way people “bruised” the reed, or attempted to snuff His flame – imagery obviously referring to Jesus. He got brutally criticized – slander, gossip, innuendo, character assassination. But it did not seem to have stopped or even slowed Him down. He knew who He was, so it hurt only the haters themselves! I won’t say it didn’t bother Him. It did! [Vs. 30-32]



Listen – if you stand up for Jesus, you may be the most charming person in the world, but eventually, you will be criticized, slammed, slandered, and it will hurt. People will cleverly discredit you. They will call you ignorant, stupid, backward, homophobic, Islamophobic, misogynistic, intolerant, white privileged, and a host of other labels they seem to be dreaming up and adding to the dictionary every other week to discredit Christians or anyone else who disagrees with them politically. This will indeed bruise your ego. You will feel the sting of rejection, of being and outcast, and you will read nasty and untrue things about yourself on social media. But accept, even *embrace it* as normative. Jesus warned us that just as the world hated Him it would also hate those that love Him! We need to turn this thing around in our minds to be honored that we are walking the path that Christ walked