

# FOLLOW ME

YES

NO

THERE IS NO MAYBE

Matthew Chs 8 to 12

February to April 2019







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# Thanks for Being Part of a Homegroup

At Central, we believe that disciples grow in circles, not rows. By that we mean that we grow most as believers when we sit together around God's word, discussing the real issues of life as a follower of Jesus.

Central homegroups are part of the DNA of our church. Sunday services are important, but in homegroups there is greater opportunity for learning together, serving together, caring together, praying together and doing life together. God's people are not saved into isolation, but into a community and the best expression of that community is in homegroups.

## **Making the Most of Your Homegroup Time**

Anything worth doing is worth doing well. That's why we ask that you treat your homegroup as an important part of the rhythm of your weekly life. There are a few things you can do so that you get the most benefit out of the group and so that you are a benefit and a blessing to the group.

- Be There:** Your presence encourages others. It means you are not only committed to the group, but to the other members of the group. Being inconsistent sends a negative message to everyone else.
  
- Prayer:** Pray for the people in your group, especially your group leader.
  
- Prepare:** Read any parts of the Bible that your leader suggests, do any homework that comes out of the study. It will not be onerous and you will benefit from it.
  
- Care:** Be willing to give of yourself to the others in your group. The Bible says, "Love one another for love is from God and whoever loves has been born of God and knows God" (1 John 4:7).





## Why Do the Same Study?

At Central Church all homegroups study the same passage or topic that was preached at the Sunday church service. What are the advantages of doing studies this way?

- Unity: Doing the same study means all across the church we are learning the same things at the same time. It can provide topics of conversation across the whole church.
- Growth: People learn better when they hear things more than once. People learn better when they hear things more than once. Marketing people know this. That is why you see the same commercials on TV over and over again. But it is true. Most people will only remember one or two points from a Sunday sermon (and they are usually the stories that are told as illustrations). People learn best when given the opportunity to talk over the subject matter. By hearing the sermon on Sunday and then being involved in a homegroup discussion during the week, you will find the message of God's Word is sown more deeply into your heart and mind.
- Relevance: By preparing our own studies, we can be specific about issues that impact all of us in our time and place. Most group study materials are from America or were written 10 or 20 years ago and speak to issues of another place or time. You will find that the studies we prepare will be practical and relevant in Ipswich, today.



# Jesus Restores

Matthew 8:1-17

## [re]Introducing Matthew's Gospel

Last year, Central Homegroups studied Matthew 1-4 in term 1 and then Matthew 5-7 in term 2. You might recall that Matthew wants his readers to understand that Jesus is the Divine Messianic King promised in the Old Testament (emphasised in the events of his birth) and that he is greater than the great leader and teacher Moses (as emphasised in the Sermon on the Mount in chapters 5-7).

An important theme in the Sermon on the Mount is the true nature of the Kingdom of Heaven. Jesus explains the values of the people of the Kingdom and how they contrast with the values of the world. What's clear in the rest of Matthew's gospel is that some people embrace this Kingdom and some oppose it. In Matthew 8-12 we see the line being drawn between these two groups. Jesus reveals more of his identity and more of the nature of His Kingdom through his miracles and teaching, and then he calls people to follow him, including the author himself (Matthew 9:9).





Matthew wants his audience still today to consider this call. Will you accept that Jesus is the authoritative King over an eternal Kingdom? And if so, are you willing to undertake the seriousness of the demands of following him?

A brief word about the structure of Matthew. You might recall that the main body of the book is structured around 5 blocks of teaching (sometimes called 'discourses'). The first of these is the Sermon on the Mount (chapters 5-7). The second is in the middle of our current area of study. In chapter 10 Jesus instructs his disciples at great lengths about the mission he has for them and the opposition they will face. In the next two chapters (11-12) Matthew emphasises the increasing division between those who follow and those who do not. Jesus then teaches about this division in the parables of chapter 13 (the third discourse). Chapter 13 is such an amazing block of teaching that we have decided to dedicate a whole series to it in 2020! So be patient.

Before you launch into God's word, pray that your hearts would be soft and ready to receive and respond to all our loving Father is saying to us.

### For Starters

Restore or replace? What have you thrown away that you feel a bit guilty about? Maybe you should have tried to fix or restore it? Also discuss what your natural tendency is ... are you more likely to just replace something or will you try to fix it?

We have become a throw away society. When something breaks or just gets old we generally can't be bothered fixing or restoring it. Let's be incredibly thankful that our loving Father is a restorer. Though our world is broken by sin, God sent his Son on a mission to redeem and restore. We get a glimpse of this in today's passage.

### From the Word

#### Read Matthew 8:1-17

1. What does verse 1 indicate about the people's response to what Jesus had been teaching in the Sermon on the Mount?



2. Matthew has given us accounts of three healing miracles. Consider these three people and explain why Jesus' attention towards them might have been surprising for those watching on.
  
3. Jesus reached out his hand to the leper and touched him (verse 3). Understanding the way the ancient world treated lepers (see for example Leviticus 13:46), how might Jesus' touch have made the leper feel?
  
4. How might Jesus' attitude to the leper have made those watching feel?
  
5. What did the leper and Centurion seem to understand about Jesus and how does this account for the way they approached him?
  
6. In contrast to the first two healings, we are given no insights into Peter's mother-in-law's faith. Do you think faith is a necessary precondition to receiving healing from Jesus? Explain your answer in the light of the quote from Isaiah in Matthew 8:17.

### **For Discussion**

7. Jesus' first miracles in Matthew's gospel help all the wrong people. What does this say about Jesus' Kingdom and does our church reflect this aspect of the kingdom (see also Jesus' comment in verses 11-12)?
  
8. Who is the detestable person/people group that you feel you could never touch with a heart of compassion? Is the gospel for them? What might need to change in your heart to see them differently with a desire to see them restored?





9. Jesus broke the rules of touch. He touched the leper and he touched a woman (Peter's mother-in-law). What is the power of physical touch? Discuss how physical touch can make people feel in both the positive and negative sense. What are the unspoken cultural rules of touch that we abide by? Are they good or not?

Who do you know or who in our society might long for caring physical touch and how can we love people in this way?

10. There is a lot of confusion in the Christian world today about miracles and miraculous healing. Considering verse 17 again, what was the purpose of Jesus' healing miracles and how can this help us gain a better perspective on this topic? Allow group members to share from their own experiences through physical suffering.

11. Finally, at a practical level, consider what it means for us as Jesus' people to care for the physical needs of our 'neighbours'. What does care in the name of Christ look like?

### For Prayer

Give thanks for Jesus' work in restoration with the assurance that he does not throw us out in our sin, but came to make us right again with God.

Pray for any in your group who are suffering physically and use the prayer on the following page to guide you as you pray.

Having considered today the healing of a man with Leprosy, pray for the work of the Leprosy Mission worldwide. Today about 4 million people suffer from Leprosy around the world. Although research has found a cure for leprosy, the costs involved in finding, diagnosing, treating and rehabilitating people with leprosy are rising. A new case of leprosy is diagnosed every 2 minutes. Over a year, that amounts to 205,000 new cases. The Leprosy Mission works worldwide with the mission of: Following Jesus Christ, The Leprosy Mission strives to break the chains of leprosy, empowering people to attain healing, dignity, and life in all its fullness. Central Church's, Denise Scott is a long time servant of The Leprosy Mission. Please pray for her and for the work of TLP worldwide.

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## **A Prayer about Health Concerns and Healing**

by Scotty Smith (sourced from The Gospel Coalition US website)

*I will restore health to you, and your wounds I will heal, declares the LORD. Jer. 30:17 (ESV)*

*Dear friend, I pray that you may enjoy good health and that all may go well with you, even as your soul is getting along well. 3 John 2 (NIV)*

*Stop drinking only water, and use a little wine because of your stomach and your frequent illnesses. 1 Tim. 5:23 (NIV)*

*We who are living will also be transformed. For our dying bodies must be transformed into bodies that will never die; our mortal bodies must be transformed into immortal bodies. 1 Cor. 15:52-53 (NIV)*

Dear heavenly Father, my stuffed-up head and slightly sore throat are mere irritants, compared to the health crises many of us face as this day begins. How we long for the Day of no more cancer, no more dementia, no more heart disease, no more respiratory issues, no more Ebola and AIDS, no more disease of any kind—the Day of perfect health.

Thank you for the promise of a resurrection body that will never get sick, wear out, or die. Thank you that our life in the new heaven and new earth will not include visits to the ER, health insurance, medical bills, hospitals, nursing homes, palliative care, or funeral homes. Hasten that Day, Father, hasten it.

Until then, we will pray for healing—thankful that Jesus' finished work has secured the redemption of our whole being—mind, body, and spirit. Though we'd love for you to answer all of our prayers affirmatively, and on our timetable, we will trust and love you when you grant us sufficient grace instead of instant healing (2 Cor. 12:7-12).

Father, we will also seek to take care of these "tents" in which we live (2 Cor. 5:1-5). Thank you for good food, opportunities for exercise, the gift of sleep, clean water—gifts you've given us by grace—gifts you intend us to share with others. Indeed, Father, may our suffering make us more sensitive to the sufferings of others. Even as Jesus joyfully fulfilled the law for us, grant us great joy in fulfilling the law of Christ (Gal. 6:2), as we bear one another's burdens. So very Amen we pray, in Jesus' triumphant and tender name.



## MY SERMON NOTES



# Jesus Calls

**Matthew 8:18-34**

## **For Starters**

Share a time when you signed up for something but hadn't counted the cost (maybe a phone/internet/TV deal). What things may have contributed to your hasty decision?

In this passage, Jesus is pretty blunt about what must be considered before following him. After reading this passage we can't offer the excuse that we didn't know what we were signing up for when we respond to his call on our life.

Dr Don Carson says, "Little has done more harm to the witness of the Christian church than the practice of filling its ranks with every volunteer who is willing to make a little profession, talk fluently of experience, but display little of perseverance...loyalty to Jesus brings with it demands that may be costly." (p 179, Jesus' Sermon on the Mount.)





## From the Word

Read Matthew 8:18-34

1. Here we find two men who want to follow Jesus. How might their motivations be similar? How might they be different? What costs have they failed to count?
2. Jesus refers to himself as the "Son of Man". What is the significance of this title? (see Psalm 8:4, Daniel 7, Hebrews 2)
3. How are we to consider Jesus' attitude to human relationships and responsibilities in light of verse 22? (Also consider Matt 10:37-39)
4. What did the sea represent in the ancient world? Can the disciples' fear therefore be excused?
5. In Jesus crossing to the "other side", how are we reminded of his great love for people?
6. In verse 27, the disciples marvel, "what sort of man is this?" In verse 29, the demons know. Based on verses 18-34, how would you answer this and what does Jesus call his followers to?

## For Discussion

7. Has there been a time when Scripture has confronted and shown you that you have perhaps been worshipping a "Jesus" of your own making rather the Jesus of the Bible? Is there anything in this passage that unsettles you? Why?



8. Despite the demon possessed men being liberated, all the city came out and begged Jesus to leave. Why? How are we sometimes similar in our attitude?

9. What opportunities do you have to move into dark situations in the power and with the light of Jesus? What is stopping you?

### **For Prayer**

Repent if you are aware of any area of your life where you have become comfortable in “almost” following Jesus.

Pray in thankfulness that through Jesus' saving and transforming work that we can grow in offering him the devotion/commitment that he is due.

Acknowledging our weakness and temptation to be fearful or half-hearted, praise the one who is powerful over all of nature and the enemy and leads his people to fill the earth with his light.





## MY SERMON NOTES



# Jesus Forgives

Matthew 9:1-17

## For Starters

Can you recall a situation when you thought without any doubt that something was going to happen in a certain way, only for it to play out totally different?

Sometimes not understanding the complete picture of what is taking place can lead us to misread a situation and give us a false expectation of the outcome. In this passage we see Jesus do things that no one expects him to do. To those who are watching him these things seem to be completely radical, in complete contradiction to the law of the Jews and blasphemous.

Jesus breaks the mold of the Messiah people were expecting and demonstrates his authority over sin, showing what the Gospel is all about.





## From the Word

Read Matthew 9:1-8

1. In verses 1-8, four men bring a paralytic to Jesus. What do you think these men are hoping for?
2. Why does Jesus proclaim forgiveness of the paralytic's sin and then also heal him? (See verse 6)
3. How do these events shape the attitudes of those who are watching? (See verses 3 and 8)
4. In verses 9-13, Jesus calls Matthew to follow him. How does Matthew respond and how is he an example to us (verse 9b)?

Read Matthew 9:9-17

5. In the next scene, Jesus is having a meal with 'tax collectors and sinners'. Why do the Pharisees question Jesus' fellowship with these people (see also Matthew 11:19)?
6. What does Jesus mean in his parable in verse 12?
7. In verses 14-17, even John the Baptist's disciples question Jesus, this time over the way his disciples do not observe the Jewish fasts. Jesus' response might seem a bit cryptic, but what is his point?
8. When Jesus links himself to the bridegroom, he is making a big claim. Look up Isaiah 54:5-8 and Hosea 2:14-20 and discuss who the bridegroom is and how he feels about his bride.



## For Discussion

9. It is clear that Jesus considers the greatest issue in our lives is our sin and our need for forgiveness. How does this challenge how you think about your approach to evangelism with your friends?

10. Jesus' movement towards "tax collectors and sinners" was shocking in the first Century and if we are honest, it is still shocking now. Should we do the same? What goes on in our hearts that makes this so difficult?

11. Who are the 'tax collectors and sinners' in your day to day life? (They could be neighbours, work mates, other parents at school, someone you see on public transport every day.)

12. Table fellowship was important in Jesus' culture. Is it still important in our culture? What does sharing a meal communicate to your guests? Is it something we should do more, especially amongst those who are not Christians?

13. Share some fears or anxieties you may have about moving towards sinners with the gospel. How can you support one another in this mission to the lost?

## For Prayer

Pray that God will give us his heart for the "tax collectors and sinners" in our lives.

Pray for opportunities to share the Gospel and the courage to do so when presented with that opportunity.

Praise God that he has made a way for us to be made new and not just patched up and that through Jesus he has left nothing for us to do for our salvation.





## MY SERMON NOTES



# 4

## Jesus Reverses the Curse

Matthew 9:18-34

### For Starters

What wrongs or tragic situations that you see in the world do you find hardest to take?

As I prepare this study, I have just seen news of a family grieving for a 17 year old son who went missing while swimming off Adelaide's coast. The weeping father vowed to pitch a tent at the beach until his son was found.

The death of a loved one is heart-breaking, but especially the death of a child. It is one instance of a world where not all is as it should be.

Today we see more stories of miracles and we will see how Jesus demonstrates his power over all that is wrong. We will also see how people respond to his power.





## From the Word

Read Matthew 9:18-26.

1. We understand from Luke's gospel (Luke 8:41) that this man was a leader in the Jewish synagogue. When we consider the other people who had so far experienced Jesus' healing ministry, why is this man's situation significant?
2. What elements of drama and sensation do we find in Matthew's account of Jesus and this young girl?
3. In verse 24, Jesus says the girl is sleeping. Why did Jesus use this expression (refer also to John 11:11, 1 Corinthians 15:6)?
4. Before getting to the ruler's daughter, Jesus is interrupted by a woman who touches him. While we have already seen Jesus heal a woman back in study 1, what does Matthew highlight in this case which we did not see back in 8:14-15?

Read Matthew 9:27-31

5. What do the two blind men see that others do not?
6. Read Isaiah 42:6-7. To whom is God referring in this passage and how does the way Jesus gives these men their sight support the assertion that he is the Son of David?

Read Matthew 9:32-34

7. These verses briefly describe another miracle to which there are two contrasting responses. Why do these two groups see Jesus in opposing ways?



## For Discussion

8. Death is natural. True or False?

9. Read the following verses and describe the biblical position regarding sin and death:

- What was the beginning of sin and death: Genesis 2:17, 3:19, Romans 6:23a?
- What is the on-going consequence of Adam's sin for us: Romans 3:23, 5:12?
- How has the power of Christ's resurrection changed things: 1 Corinthians 15:20-22?
- What is the effect of being united with Christ by faith: Romans 6:9, 1 Peter 1:3-5?
- How do those united with Christ now understand death: John 11:25-26?
- What will happen when Christ returns: 1 Corinthians 15:51-57?
- How then should we live in these days: 1 Corinthians 15:58, 1 Peter 1:6-9, Romans 8:18-23?

10. There are two options: 1) to marvel at Jesus and receive him as the Christ, or 2) to reject both the evidence and his claims to be the Christ. There is no middle option.

- a. Do you still marvel at Jesus? What might help you rekindle your awe of him?
- b. How might you demonstrate the power and authority of Jesus amongst those you know who are in the wrong camp?

## For Prayer

Share in your group about those on your frontline who are not yet saved. Pray earnestly that we would be bold to share the gospel and that they would marvel at our saviour Jesus.

Open 1 Peter 1:3-9 and pray through the words of hope that Peter writes.



## MY SERMON NOTES



# Jesus Sends

Matthew 9:35-10:42

## For Starters

If you were about to plan a trip overseas or about to have your child travel around the world what sort of things would you plan, prepare, research and even what type of advice and expectations would you have? Discuss.

Today we come to the second discourse or block of teaching that Jesus gives in Matthew's gospel. He teaches the disciples about making more disciples and he sends them out to have a go.

## From the Word

Read Matthew 9:35-38.

1. What has Jesus been doing? (verse 35)



2. What need does Jesus see? (verse 36)

3. What does Jesus command (it is not a suggestion) his disciples to do in response? (verses 37-38)

In light of this prayer Jesus does something both consistent and profound in his ministry: he acts and trusts in His Father. He acts by raising up, equipping and sending out a team into the harvest and he trusts that his Father will answer his prayer by reaping a harvest through his efforts. We need to imitate Jesus by trusting that our heavenly Father will answer our prayers and act upon our prayers.

Read Matthew 10:1-42

4. What do you notice about the men he has called to send? (Pay attention to the little details that are given in these verses)

5. The list of these disciples emphasises there isn't one specific type of person or personality that should be sent out. Who should be doing the work of the gospel today?

After calling and equipping this ragtag group he gives them specific instructions before they embark on this mission. In order to not get lost in all the little details let us first break down Jesus' instructions and gather his main points.

INSTRUCTIONS:

6. Who are they to go to? (v5-6)

7. What are they to do? (v7-8)

8. What are they to bring? (v9-10)

9. Where are they to stay? (v11-15)



10. In verses 16-25, Jesus tells them to expect persecution. Do you think persecution and opposition should be expected in the Christian life? Why/why not?

11. Who should they fear? (v26-31), and why is this both confronting and comforting?

12. What will this mission cost? (v32-39)

13. Who is being welcomed? (This may seem a little tricky but use verse 40 to break down the pattern). And what is the reward of this welcome? (v40-42).

### **For Discussion**

14. In light of Matthew 9:37-38 how crucial is prayer for any missionary/gospel endeavour (locally and globally)? What should prayer push us towards? How have we put this into practice and how may we encourage one another to put this into practice?

15. It is no coincidence that after Jesus prayed to the Lord of the harvest that he gathered, equipped and sent out his 12 disciples. How important is training and equipping men and women for gospel work? And in what ways are you and should you be investing in this endeavour?

16. In what ways are Jesus 'Instructions' important for us today? Look at the list you made before in 10:5-42 and spend some time unpacking how and why this is important to us. Also look at what may differ for us today.

### **For Prayer**

Pray Matthew 9:37 and pray that we would act upon this prayer.





## MY SERMON NOTES



# Jesus Offends

Matthew 11:1-19

## For Starters

Has there ever been a time in your life where you had been given information about a future event and then when that event came about, it didn't deliver what had been expected? ie: Perhaps a new job or a holiday etc.





## From the Word

Read Matthew 11:1-6

1. Remembering that John is in prison, how might we understand the tone of his question in verses 2-3?

2. Why does John appear to have doubts about Jesus (see Matthew 3:11-12)?

3. In verses 4-5, Jesus replies by quoting Isaiah 35:5-6 and 61:1. Read these verses. How does this give John confidence in Jesus' identity?

4. How does Jesus' method of ministry encourage you?

5. What does Jesus expect of John (see verse 6)?

Read Matthew 11:7-15

6. In verses 7-11 John is seen as the forerunner to the Lord (Malachi 3:1). Why does Jesus go to great lengths to validate John's ministry?

7. What is the purpose of John's ministry that Jesus is trying to draw out?

8. What does Jesus expect of the crowd?



Read Matthew 11:16-19

9. John and Jesus both faced the rejection of the people but for different reasons. According to Jesus, how will we know if someone is genuine (verse 19)?

### For Discussion

10. When you first became a Christian what were some of the expectations you had of Jesus? Did Jesus live up to your expectations?

11. What false expectations do you think some people might have of Jesus?

12. Reflecting on verse 6, what do you think Jesus is expecting of you today?

13. How does your expectation of Jesus shape the way you:

- Minister to others?
- Evangelise to others?
- Encourage others?

### For Prayer

Read Colossians 1:9-10 and pray in light of this passage and this study.





## MY SERMON NOTES



# Jesus Reveals

Matthew 11:20-30

## For Starters

What things might people expect God to do before they will believe?

Interestingly, God has expectations too. How we respond to his self-revelation actually matters.

Today's passage highlights two big doctrines in the Christian life; divine sovereignty and human responsibility. We must hold both simultaneously.





## From the Bible

Read Matthew 11:20-30

1. Have a quick look at Isaiah 23, Ezekiel 26-28 and Amos 1:9-10 and discuss the significance of the cities of Tyre, Sidon and Sodom.

2. What are the cities of Chorazin, Bethsaida and Capernaum guilty of?

3. According to this passage, how does God reveal himself?

4. What heavy burdens were carried by the first century Jews?

5. How is Jesus' offer of rest and use of a yoke different from the world?

6. This offer of rest still seems linked to work. Is there any work we must do to enter his rest? (see John 6:29, John 15:4)

## For Discussion

7. Unbelief may not regularly make our repentance list, but it is a big deal to Jesus. When do you demand more from God to be able to believe/trust/follow him?

8. God reveals himself to those he chooses and yet we are called to come to him. How do we hold these two truths?

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9. What does Jesus' prayer in this passage reveal about himself. What does your prayer life reveal about you?

10. How does being yoked to Jesus bring rest for your soul?

### **For Prayer**

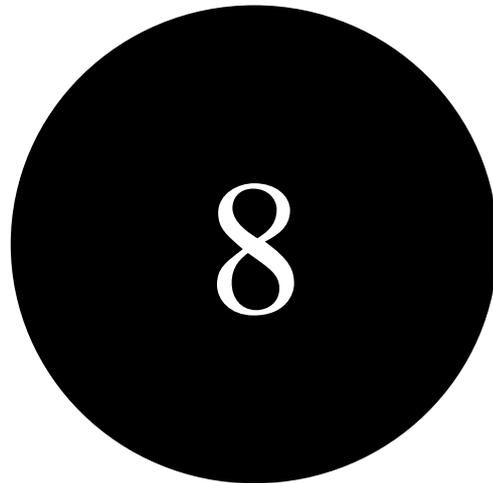
Thank God that he has done everything for us to respond to him. He has spoken to us through his Word and given us his very Son. Confess when, as spoilt children, this hasn't been enough for us.

Thank him for his light yoke, that brings us true rest.





## MY SERMON NOTES



# Jesus Sets Free

Matthew 12:1-21

## For Starters

Have you broken the law? It's confession time ... share your juicy stories.

Jesus was accused of being a law-breaker. Yet he affirmed that he did not come to abolish the law but to fulfil it (Matthew 5:17).

Today we will navigate some rough theological territory as we seek to understand the true place and purpose of God's law.





## From the Word

Read Matthew 12:1-21.

1. The Pharisees accused Jesus of supporting his disciples in breaking Sabbath laws. In your own words, how does Jesus defend them?
2. What does Jesus mean when he says in verse 6 that something "greater than the temple is here"?
3. In verse 7, Jesus lobs an accusation back at the Pharisees. What 'law' have they failed to observe?
4. Why does Jesus have the right to say what he says in verse 8?
5. How does the situation that unfolds in verses 9-13 illustrate Jesus' point?
6. Matthew loves using Old Testament scripture to provide evidence for Jesus. While the leaders are plotting to kill Jesus, Jesus quietly gets on with his compassionate work among the people. What things do verses 18-21 tell us about the Messiah in contrast to the Pharisees?

## For Discussion

7. The Pharisees had laws that went beyond the actual teachings of the Bible. Where have you seen this still happening today?



8. The 10 Commandments upheld the place of the Sabbath as a day of rest for the people of God. Is the New Testament Sunday/Lord's Day the same thing as the OT Sabbath? How are we to understand the idea of Sabbath today?

9. Does this all mean that the Old Testament laws are irrelevant to us today? Was Jesus 'antinomian' (opposed to the law)? Consider the following passages and formulate a good way to think about our relationship to the law.

Galatians 2:15-16

Galatians 5:1, 13-14

Romans 6:15-19

Romans 7:7-12

Ezekiel 36:25-27

10. As you read the Bible, do you feel set free or enslaved ... ashamed or accepted ...? Try to identify why.

### **For Prayer**

Give thanks to God that Christ has set us free and pray that he would help us throw off our slavery to law-keeping.

Ask God to help you strive for the kind of purity of life that is reflected in the law of God, with the goal of bringing glory to God in your life.



## MY SERMON NOTES



# Jesus Wins

Matthew 12:22-37

## For Starters

Think of a time when you could not see the forest through the trees ... when you were so bogged down with finer details that failed to see the very thing you were looking at?

Here in Matthew 12 the Pharisees were blind to the very person they were looking for. They were so bogged down by their hard heartedness that they failed to see who Jesus was. Their greatest sin wasn't that they were spiritually blind, but they took their hatred further by saying Jesus was working for the devil. Let's pick up the story in Matthew 12:22.





## From the Bible

Read Matthew 12:22-37

1. What is the Irony of verses 22-24?
2. In our secular age we can easily presume that there are no demons at all. What does Jesus say about the supernatural and what implication does this have on us today?
3. What is the logic that Jesus appeals to in verses 25-28?
4. How does this implicate the Pharisees?
5. In verse 29 who/what is:
  - The strong man?
  - His house?
  - His plunder?
6. What is Jesus saying about His power?
7. How does someone blaspheme against the Holy Spirit?



8. How does Jesus criticise the Pharisees in verse 32?

9. Read Matthew 7:16-20:

(a) What is Jesus' accusation in verses 33-35?

(b) Can you think of another familiar passage in the bible where a snake (viper) is rebuked for speaking?

(c) What might Jesus be accusing the Pharisees of?

10. What is Jesus' attitude towards "careless words" in verses 36-37?

11. In the beginning of this passage it was Jesus being judged by the Pharisees because of the power of his words, but in the end it is Jesus who judges all men by what comes out of their mouths. How are we judged by what we say?

## For Discussion

**12. For Evangelism.** There is a world of people who do not know Jesus and are living under the ruler of the World, Satan. Matthew Henry writes:

*A soul under Satan's power, and led captive by him, is blind in the things of God, and dumb at the throne of grace; sees nothing, and says nothing to the purpose. Satan blinds the eyes by unbelief, and seals up the lips from prayer.*

How does this reality shape the way you interact with these people?

**13. For Prayer.** It is Jesus who has the power to enter the strong man's house and bind him up and rescue the plunder. It is Jesus who has the power to save us from Satan. It is Jesus who has total power and authority over Satan. How does this reality shape the way we pray to Jesus and who we pray for?

**14. For Encouragement.** Whilst there is no forgiveness for blaspheming against the Holy Spirit, what encouragement can we take from Jesus in whom we can find forgiveness?



**15. For Challenge.** If what we say comes from the heart, and our heart is recognised by the fruit it produces, how might we be challenged as good trees in Jesus to bear good fruit? Is it really as simple as trying to say kind and loving words or something more?

## For Prayer

### ADORATION

Praise be to the Lord who saves and who is the King of Kings and the Lord of Lords who has total power and victory over evil and death.

### CONFESSION

Forgive us for the times when we don't shine Jesus' light with our tongue and what we say is destructive.

### THANKSGIVING

For the Lord who saves and has given us forgiveness for all our sins.  
For saving us from the strong man's plunder and winning the victory.

### SUPPLICATION

Strengthen us to have a heart that yearns to be like Jesus.  
Comfort us and give us victory in our times of doubt.  
Rescue us when we wander and draw us back to the foot of your throne.

