

# Mercy for the Bruised and Broken

*Disclaimer: this is an automatically generated machine transcription - there may be small errors or mistranscriptions. Please refer to the original audio if you are in any doubt.*

Date: 12 October 2025

Preacher: Shawn Woo

[ 0 : 00 ] Please turn with me in your Bibles to Matthew chapter 12. If you don't have a Bible, please raise your hand and we'd love to give you a copy for you to have. Use while you're here and you can take it home with you.

Matthew chapter 12, verses 1 to 21. Let me pray for the reading and preaching of God's word. Heavenly Father, you are the author, the ultimate author of this word.

And so Lord, speak to us in and through your word and expound to us the true meaning of this passage. Teach us what it means to find soul rest in Christ.

Teach us what it means to relate to Jesus our Lord. Lord, who is gentle and lowly, who does not break a bruised reed or quench a smoldering wick.

Help us to see Jesus and worship Jesus and relate to him and love Jesus the way he actually is.

[ 1 : 19 ] The way your word reveals him to us. Rather than according to our own prejudices and fancies. Rather than according to how the world portrays him.

So draw us nearer to Christ this morning through your word. It's in his precious name we pray. Amen. If you are able, please stand.

Join me as I read from Matthew 12, 1 to 21. At that time, Jesus went through the grain fields on the Sabbath.

His disciples were hungry and they began to pluck heads of grain and to eat. But when the Pharisees saw it, they said to him, Look, your disciples are doing what is not lawful to do on the Sabbath.

He said to them, Have you not read what David did when he was hungry and those who were with him? How he entered the house of God and ate the bread of the presence, which it was not lawful for him to eat, nor for those who were with him, but only for the priests?

[ 2 : 31 ] Or have you not read in the law how on the Sabbath the priests in the temple profane the Sabbath and are guiltless? I tell you, something greater than the temple is here.

And if you had known what this means, I desire mercy and not sacrifice, you would not have condemned the guiltless. For the Son of Man is Lord of the Sabbath.

He went on from there and entered their synagogue. And a man was there with a withered hand. And they asked him, Is it lawful to heal on the Sabbath?

So that they might accuse him. He said to them, Which one of you who has a sheep, if it falls into a pit on the Sabbath, will not take hold of it and lift it out? Of how much more value is a man than a sheep?

So it is lawful to do good on the Sabbath. Then he said to the man, Stretch out your hand. And the man stretched it out, and he was restored, healthy like the other.

[ 3 : 35 ] But the Pharisees went out and conspired against him how to destroy him. Jesus, aware of this, withdrew from there, and many followed him, and he healed them all, and ordered them not to make him known.

This was to fulfill what was spoken by the prophet Isaiah. Behold, Behold, my servant whom I have chosen, my beloved with whom my soul is well pleased. I will put my spirit upon him, and he will proclaim justice to the Gentiles.

He will not quarrel or cry aloud, nor will anyone hear his voice in the streets. A bruised reed he will not break, and a smoldering wick he will not quench, until he brings justice to victory.

And in his name, the Gentiles will hope. This is God's holy and authoritative word. Please be seated. The English idiom, Missing the forest for the trees, speaks of a human tendency to focus on small individual details in such a way that we fail to see the larger, more important picture.

By fixating on an individual tree, we lose sight of the forest. We lose perspective and fail to grasp the bigger picture.

[ 4 : 55 ] For example, a couple can get so lost in the hundreds of small details in their wedding planning that they fail to take a step back and process adequately the gravity of the wedding vows and the significance of the marriage covenant that they are entering into.

Similarly, sometimes Christians, like the Pharisees in this passage, can be too focused on the minutiae of religious rules and rituals that they miss the weightier matters of Christian obedience. For example, there are pastors and priests who are more concerned about the precise wording of a liturgy than about the purity of the gospel that they preach.

And there are, in certain churches, church members who are more concerned about making sure that their committee in the church is sticking to the letter by all the church bylaws than about actual obedience to the commands of scripture themselves.

I don't say this to discount the importance of liturgies or bylaws. They're not unimportant. However, we also must maintain proper proportion in our belief, in our obedience.

[ 6 : 08 ] In art, it's not just about getting the shapes right or the colors right, but it's also important to get the proportions right for your art to look good. In figure drawing, in order to make a drawing of a human look realistic, you need to follow the eight heads tall rule, or that's what I hear, right?

You have to make them as tall as about eight heads, otherwise they will not look proportional.

Likewise, in photography, people often speak of the rule of thirds. You divide the frame into thirds, horizontally and vertically, and then you're trying to fit the subject into one of those lines or where they intersect in order to create a more balanced composition or a composition that looks more artistically interesting.

In interior design, people speak of the 60-30-10 rule, decorating your house or your room with 60% of the room in the primary color and the 30% in a secondary color and 10% in the accent color in order to create a balanced and cohesive color scheme.

It's not just about having the right materials or the right colors, but also about having them in the right proportions. The same is true for Christian life and doctrine.

It's not enough merely to believe all the right things. We have to believe them in the right proportions. For I deliver to you as of first importance what I also received, that Christ died for our sins in accordance with the scriptures, that he was buried and he was raised on the third day in accordance with the scriptures.

[ 7 : 47 ] This, the gospel of Jesus Christ, 1 Corinthians 15, 3-4 tells us, is of first importance. For this reason, if we get more exercise about what people believe concerning the end times and the millennial kingdom of Revelation 20, though they are not unimportant, then about the gospel, whether they believe the gospel of Jesus Christ or not, then something is amiss in our proportion.

Jesus will later denounce the scribes and the Pharisees as hypocrites in Matthew 23, 23 and he'll say to them, you tithe the mint and dill and cumin and have neglected the weightier matters of the law, justice, mercy, and faithfulness.

These you ought to have done without neglecting the others. The Pharisees were right to tithe their herbs. Jesus says that they should not neglect to tithe them.

However, their proportions were off. They focused on tithing their herbs faithfully while neglecting the weightier matters of the law, justice, and mercy, and faithfulness.

The same thing is happening here in Matthew 12. These Pharisees were meticulous, punctilious about keeping the Sabbath, but they were neglecting the weightier matters of the law, namely mercy.

[ 9 : 09 ] This passage presents Jesus as the counterexample to the Pharisees and shows us that Jesus is the merciful Lord who attends to the bruised and the broken. We're going to first see how Jesus is the Lord of the Sabbath in verses 1-14 and how he is the hope of the Gentiles in verses 15-21.

Here we see two Sabbath controversies between Jesus and the Pharisees in verses 1-14. In the first one, Jesus' disciples are hungry. And so as they go through the grain fields on the Sabbath, they pluck some heads of grain and they start to eat them.

But it says in verse 2, when the Pharisees saw it, they said to Jesus, look, your disciples are doing what is not lawful on the Sabbath. The Jews observed a day of rest, of Sabbath rest from Friday sundown to Saturday sundown, and according to the commands of Scripture, it's commanded in the

Old Testament.

It might seem to us like a peripheral command, something that's not very important. However, for the Jews, for the observant Jews, Sabbath was a part of, really an essential part of Jewish identity, their national identity, and Jewish piety, their worship.

It was one of the ten, the great ten commandments found in Exodus 20 and Deuteronomy 5, which commands God's people not to do any work on the Sabbath. In Exodus 31, 13-16, God specifically says, Above all, you shall keep my Sabbath, for this is a sign between me and you throughout your generations, that you may know that I, the Lord, sanctify you.

[10:49] You shall keep the Sabbath because it is holy for you. Everyone who profanes it shall be put to death. Whoever does any work on it, that soul shall be cut off from among his people.

Skipping a little ahead, therefore, the people of Israel shall keep the Sabbath, observing the Sabbath throughout their generations as a covenant forever. High-handed violation of the Sabbath was punishable by death in the Old Testament, and the person so executed would not be counted as one of God's chosen people.

They were cut off from the promised line. Why is God so insistent on people keeping his Sabbath? Because, as he says in that passage, it is a sign between me and you, God says.

It was by the Sabbath that the Lord sanctified Israel, his people. Sanctified meaning set them apart. This was the way God distinguished the nation of Israel from all the other nations of the earth.

The Sabbath was the sign of the Mosaic covenant that God made with his people. It marked them as his own special possession. This is why Sabbath was a point of national pride, and to profane the Sabbath in effect was to disown the Lord God himself, saying, I don't want anything to do with him.

[12:13] I don't want the mark of being set apart for him. So the Pharisees were not wrong to take the Sabbath commandment very seriously, and Jesus nowhere in this passage suggests that they should stop keeping the Sabbath because it's not all that important.

It's not what Jesus says. However, the Pharisees were wrong in a couple of different ways. One, they were wrong in their interpretation of the Sabbath law, and two, they were wrong in their biblical proportion, the biblical proportion that they gave to Sabbath keeping.

It says in Exodus 20, verses 8 to 10, remember the Sabbath day 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. On it you shall not do any work.

Neither you nor your son or daughter or your male servants or your female servants or even your animals. The original biblical command regarding the Sabbath was pretty straightforward and simple.

Don't do what you normally do six days of the week. Don't do your regular work that you're employed to do. Exodus 34, 21 specifies a little bit further.

[13:26] It says, six days you shall work, but on the seventh day you shall rest. In plowing time and in harvest you shall rest. Even in the extremely time-sensitive periods for farmers of plowing and harvesting, the Israelites were commanded to observe the Sabbath.

Now, this is where the controversy lay with the Pharisees in this passage. By the first century there had been over a millennia of complicated Jewish debate over the nuances of the Sabbath command trying to define precisely what exactly constitutes work.

And by this point Pharisees had agreed upon a list of 39 categories of activities that they believed should be classified as work and therefore forbidden on the Sabbath. And they were so complicated sometimes and difficult that even the Jewish rabbi notes in the Mishnah, which is a collection of Jewish oral traditions, he says this, the rules about the Sabbath are as mountains hanging by a hair.

For the teachings of Scripture thereon is scanty and the rules many. So they're hanging a mountain on a hair of Scripture.

Mountains of regulations. Because harvesting was explicitly forbidden in Exodus 34-21, the Jewish rabbis considered reaping and threshing as two of the 39 activities that were forbidden.

[15:01] Now we can see why the Pharisees were upset at the disciples. The disciples were not doing anything wrong in terms of going through the grain fields and plucking heads of grain and eating them even though it was not their field because the Old Testament specifically allowed for that.

In Deuteronomy 23, 24-25, it specifically said the poor may go through other people's grain fields and pluck heads of grain and eat them. If they took a sickle and started harvesting other people's field, it would be considered thievery.

But if they just plucked it with their hands and ate because they were hungry, it would be considered charity. So the disciples had the right to do what they were doing. The problem, however, for the Pharisees is that it was happening on the Sabbath.

They pluck a head of grain. Hey, that's harvesting. You're reaping. And then they start rubbing it in their hands to get the chaff off so they could eat the grain.

They say, no, you are reaping. No, you are threshing. Reaping and threshing, they're both forbidden activities. Two of those 39 categories. And so you are breaking the Sabbath because you are harvesting.

[16:12] But they're being overly fussy about the Sabbath requirement, as we can see, because the commands were quite simple in its original context, and the disciples weren't really working because they're not farmers.

They're not over-eager farmers who are trying to sneak in a little bit of overtime work during the Sabbath to get some extra cash. They're itinerant preachers.

They don't get to feast every day. They're hungry, and they're taking some heads of grain and eating them. This is why later in verse 7, Jesus tells the Pharisees that they have condemned the guiltless.

So we know that Jesus disagrees with the Pharisees' interpretation of the Sabbath law. But note that that's not the point that Jesus presses. He doesn't argue with them by saying, well, what my disciples are doing don't actually count as work because they're not farmers, and plucking some heads of grain and eating them does not constitute harvesting.

Jesus doesn't say that, even though that's true. If Jesus argued that, then he would have gotten enmeshed in the rabbinical debates about what constitutes work and what the category should be, and he would have played right into the Pharisees' obsession with the letter of the law.

[17:29] So instead, Jesus turns to address the legalistic heart of the Pharisees by pressing a much more fundamental question about the spirit of the law.

He questions the Pharisees in verses 3-4, have you not read what David did when he was hungry and those who were with him, how he entered the house of God and ate the bread of the presence, which it was not lawful for him to eat, nor for those who were with him, but only for the priests?

Jesus is alluding to 1 Samuel 21 verses 1-6. After finding out from his friend Jonathan that King Saul is bent on killing him, David flees, and during his flight, he comes to Ahimelech, the high priest, the priest of Nob, and then he asks for loaves of bread.

The priest answers David, I have no common bread on hand, but there is holy bread. According to Leviticus 24, 8-9, every Sabbath day, the high priest was to set out 12 freshly baked loaves of bread inside the temple, and then he was supposed to take out the old batch from the previous week, and then he and his sons, other priests, were supposed to consume that week-old bread in the holy place, and they were the only ones who were allowed to eat it.

The bread of the presence literally means in Hebrew, the bread before the face, because it's the bread that sits before the face of God in the temple of the Lord. It represents the presence of God, the living God, dwelling with his people and having fellowship with them.

[19:06] That's why there's 12 loaves, representing the 12 tribes of Israel, communing with God himself. This is also called the show bread in different parts of the Bible, because it's displayed or shown inside the temple.

people. So these 12 loaves that are taken out, it was a Sabbath day when David's visiting, and so this old batch has been taken out, and Ahimelech gives them to David to eat.

And because Leviticus 24, 9 says that this bread must be eaten in the holy place, presumably David and his men entered the holy place to eat it, which is what Jesus says in this passage, he entered the temple to eat it.

And yet, nowhere in Scripture is David or Ahimelech, the priest, condemned for this infraction. By sharing the story, Jesus is exposing the blindness of the Pharisees.

Aren't your Scriptures your final authority? Have you not read what David did when he was hungry and those who were with him? It was not lawful for David to eat that bread, nor for his men to eat that bread.

[ 20 : 24 ] And yet, God did not condemn them for that illegal activity. Note the repetition of the phrase, not lawful. It was not lawful, they said, for the disciples to eat the grain on the Sabbath.

And then Jesus said it was not lawful for David to eat the show bread. So what's the point that Jesus is driving at? Note the repetition also of the word hungry in verse 1.

Matthew told us that Jesus' disciples were hungry. And then Jesus tells us in verse 3 that David and his men were hungry. The hunger and need of the disciples at that time seems to be one of the points that Jesus is making.

In the parallel account in Mark 2, 23, 28, Jesus makes this point explicitly by saying that David was in need and was hungry, he and those who were with him.

Now please don't hear what I'm not saying. Jesus is not saying that the various dietary restrictions of the Old Testament all go out the window as soon as you're hungry. Right? He's not saying that the law of God can be bent and broken for all kinds of self-perceived extenuating circumstances.

[ 21 : 36 ] But what Jesus is getting at and he's doing is to get the Pharisees to examine their own hearts and consider the implications of their overly strict application of Sabbath law.

What if the poor are hungry and in need on the Sabbath day? Never mind the farmers who have jobs and who have fields and they should rest on the Sabbath day after working for six days.

But what about the poor who don't have a farmland and they're hungry? Can they pluck some heads of grain and eat them? Are you really honoring God by your rigorous application of Sabbath preventing them from taking plucking some heads of grain and eating them?

This is Jesus' point in verse seven. You're getting the proportions wrong. He says, if you had known what this means, I desire mercy and not sacrifice, you would not have condemned the guiltless.

He's citing Hosea 6 there. For I desire steadfast love and not sacrifice the knowledge of God rather than burnt offerings, which he's already quoted once before in Matthew 9, 13.

[ 22 : 42 ] God cares about the heart, not just the appearances. God cares that you keep the spirit of the law, not just the letter of the law. If you neglect the love of neighbor to keep the minutia of Sabbath regulations, then you have the proportions of Scripture wrong.

Jesus is also making another point about his identity and his authority. Try to put yourself in the Pharisee's shoes for a moment. Jesus just came up with this amazing comeback of the story of David.

What would be your comeback to Jesus mentioning the story of David? The first thing that comes to my mind in the shoes of the Pharisee is, well, that was David.

He's no ordinary chap. He's the anointed one. He is the future king of Israel. In fact, he is the greatest king in the history of Israel.

Surely the high priest made an exception for him. Ah, so you do admit that for certain cases the law makes exceptions. When David is invoked in the Gospels, we have to pay attention.

[ 23 : 58 ] Matthew, in particular, mentions David more frequently than any other New Testament writer. In the genealogy of Jesus in chapter 1, Matthew took pains to know repeatedly that Jesus is the son of David, descendant of David from the royal house.

Jesus is frequently addressed by that title son of David throughout the Gospel of Matthew. And if David and his men could eat the bread of the presence, which only the priests were allowed to eat, is it a problem that the disciples of the son of David, the Messiah, are plucking and eating some grain on the Sabbath.

Though Jesus doesn't say this explicitly here, he is implying that something greater than David is here. That's the recurring thrust of chapter 12.

Jesus will make this point explicitly in verse 6, where he says, I tell you something greater than the temple is here. He'll say it again in verse 41. Something greater than Jonah is here.

And again in verse 42, something greater than Solomon is here. In fact, Jesus will later make this point in Matthew 22, 41 to 46, that he is in fact greater than David.

[ 25 : 12 ] He is David's Lord. This is the point that Jesus presses home in verses 5 and 6. Or have you not read in the law how on the Sabbath the priests in the temple profane the Sabbath and are guiltless?

I tell you something greater than the temple is here. Jesus is making the good observation that the priests are working all through the Sabbath.

In fact, according to Numbers 28, they work twice as hard on the Sabbath because they have to make double the number of sacrifices that they normally make on regular days. By doing this, they

profane the Sabbath, Jesus says.

Treat the Sabbath like the other days in some sense. And yet they are guiltless, as Jesus says in verse 5. How can this be? There were special categories of work that were allowed even on the Sabbath.

And one of them was work inside the temple. In John 7, 19 to 24, Jesus brings up another example of this kind. When the Jewish leaders give him a hard time about healing a man on the Sabbath, Jesus brings up the fact that even they circumcise their infants on the Sabbath day, if it falls on the eighth day when they're supposed to circumcise their infants.

[ 26 : 31 ] So he says, if on the Sabbath a man receives circumcision so that the law of Moses may not be broken, are you angry with me because on the Sabbath I made a man's whole body well? Do not judge by appearances, but judge with right judgment.

The Pharisees were missing the forest for the trees. They were so fixated on keeping the letter of the law that they were missing the spirit of the law entirely.

What was the purpose of the Sabbath anyway? God intended it to be a blessing to his people. God intended it to give them rest from their labors.

And yet, ironically, because of the many accretions of rules and regulations over centuries and millennia that the Jews had added to the Sabbath command, instead of being restful, it became burdensome.

Sabbath was intended to be by God an expression of our love for neighbor because masters were required to let their servants and let their children and even their animals rest on the Sabbath day.

[ 27 : 38 ] But by their over rigorous application of the Sabbath, the Pharisees were discouraging and preventing people from doing good deeds, which are expressions of the love of neighbor on the Sabbath.

Such as letting poor people pluck and eat some grain or letting the sick receive healing. When the rubber meets the road, Jesus is saying in verse 7, I desire mercy, not sacrifice.

This doesn't mean that sacrifices are not important. Read the book of Leviticus. It's all about sacrifices. Nonetheless, showing mercy to your neighbor is even more important.

That is the weightier matter of the law. To press this point home further, Jesus performs a miracle of healing in the following passage in verses 9 to 14.

On the Sabbath, seeing a man with the withered hand, the Pharisees in the synagogue pick a theological fight with Jesus. Is it lawful to heal on the Sabbath?

[ 28 : 44 ] The Jewish oral tradition allowed the work of healing on the Sabbath, but only under extenuating circumstances. For example, if there's a life-threatening injury or if a woman is giving birth to a child, then they were allowed to work and assist in that labor.

The man that has a withered arm is an entirely different story. If he has a withered arm, most likely he probably has some form of paralysis in his arm. And when you don't get to use your arm for a long time, the muscles atrophy and it withers.

And so he has this. But this is a permanent condition. It's a chronic condition, one that he may have had for a very, very long time. And certainly, it won't do him that much harm to wait just one day so that he can be healed on what's not the Sabbath.

That's the point that the Pharisees are making. But Jesus makes an even better point in verses 11 to 12. Which one of you who has a sheep, if it falls into a pit on the Sabbath, will not take hold of it and lift it out?

Of how much more value is a man than a sheep? So it is lawful to do good on the Sabbath. Jesus appeals to the common sensical and popular sentiment of his day that most Jews, even the Pharisees apparently, subscribe to, that if on the Sabbath day your sheep falls into the pit, then they would not hesitate to pull the sheep out of the pit.

[ 30 : 15 ] Surely the animal could wait there until the next day. But instead, they pull the animal out. If helping out your animal is permissible on the Sabbath, why not helping a fellow human?

Of how much more value is a man than a sheep? The Sabbath was intended to offer rest and relief for people.

So if the Sabbath is keeping you from doing that for people, then you are missing the very point of the Sabbath. So Jesus concludes, it is lawful to do good on the Sabbath.

And note the utter blindness of the Pharisees. He says in verse 14, the Pharisees went out and conspired against him how to destroy him. Here they are faulting Jesus for doing good on the

Sabbath while they themselves are plotting murder against Jesus on the Sabbath.

See how far they have strayed from the true intent of the law. When the law of God that we obey and the command, and that we teach to others, when that law becomes not a means to give life to people, but instead a means to bludgeon people.

[ 31 : 38 ] If the law of God that we preach does not spring from humble love for people and rather from self-righteous legalism, then we are missing the forest for the trees.

Applying Jesus' positive, broad principle here, it is lawful to do good on the Sabbath, would have radically transformed the way the Jews were observing the Sabbath at the time.

Jesus is not saying don't ever rest. He does call his disciples to come away and rest time to time.

But why does Jesus think that he has the authority to transform the Sabbath in this way?

Who is he to make such an authoritative pronouncement about the law of God? So let's go back to understand that to verse 6 and verse 8. Jesus said in verse 6, I tell you, something greater than the temple is here.

That's an audacious statement. The temple is the focal point of Jewish worship. It's the very dwelling place of God. Yet Jesus says, I am greater than the temple.

[ 32 : 50 ] He can say that because he is the new temple of God who in his flesh makes the once for all sacrifice for sin and in so doing fulfills the entire law of God and brings about the end of the entire sacrificial system.

This is why Jesus repeats that word guiltless in verse 7 to refer to his disciples. The priests who work inside the temple on the Sabbath are guiltless. Well then, so are my disciples, Jesus says, because they are following and attending to me.

And that work is even more important than the temple duties that continue in the Sabbath. This is a staggering claim about Jesus' identity and authority.

Jesus is greater than the temple because he's not merely the dwelling place of God. He is the dwelling of God himself, God in human flesh. Jesus makes a similar point in verse 8.

For the Son of Man is Lord of the Sabbath. He's saying, I am the master of the Sabbath. How? This too is a claim to divinity.

[ 34 : 00 ] In several places in the Old Testament, Exodus 31, 13, Leviticus 19, Isaiah 56, verse 4, Yahweh, the Lord God, describes the Sabbath as my Sabbath.

They're his. This is my Sabbath. They belong to me. And Jesus is saying here, Sabbath is mine. I am the Lord of the Sabbath.

The Son of Man is Lord of the Sabbath. Jesus is not merely a law keeper. He is the law giver. He is the Son of Man prophesied of in Daniel chapter 7. He is the messianic king who has cosmic divine authority.

The Sabbath itself exists to serve Jesus. It exists to do Jesus' bidding. It exists to point to Jesus. How does it do that?

Now we see why this passage follows on the heels of the preceding passage, Matthew 11, 25 to 30, that we looked at last week. Look at verse 1. At that time, Jesus went through the grain fields on the Sabbath.

[ 35 : 05 ] That phrase, at that time, links this passage to the preceding passage, where Jesus promised to his followers in chapter 11, verse 28, Come to me, all who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.

The purpose of the Sabbath was to give rest to God's people. And it's not a coincidence that this passage is followed by two Sabbath controversies. Jesus is saying, in essence, what he said earlier in Matthew 5, 17, I have not come to abolish the law, but to fulfill them.

I am the fulfillment of the Sabbath. Just like how Jesus is the Passover lamb who is sacrificed for sin, so he's the fulfillment of the Passover feast, just as Jesus is the fulfillment of the Feast of Tabernacles, which commemorated the time that the Israelites lived in tents in the wilderness, drinking water from the rock that God provided for them.

And in that context of celebrating the Feast of Tabernacles, what did Jesus say in John 7, 37 to 38? If anyone thirsts, let him come to me and drink. Whoever believes in me, as the scripture has said, out of his heart will flow rivers of living water.

I am the fulfillment of the Passover. I am the fulfillment of the Feast of Tabernacles. I am the fulfillment of the Sabbath, and therefore I am able to give you rest for your souls.

[ 36 : 27 ] The Sabbath that the Pharisees taught was wearisome and burdensome. They tie up heavy burdens, Jesus said in Matthew 23, 4.

They tie up heavy burdens, hard to bear, and lay them on people's shoulders, but they themselves are not willing to move them with their finger. But instead, Jesus says, Come to me, all who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.

Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light.

This is why Hebrews 4 teaches that the only way we can enter that eternal Sabbath rest that God has promised to his people is through Jesus Christ, the great high priest, who is greater than David, who is greater than the temple.

That's why in Colossians 2, 16 to 7, Paul writes, Therefore let no one pass judgment on you in questions of food and drink, or with regard to a festival, or a new moon, or a Sabbath.

[ 37 : 38 ] These are a shadow of the things to come, but the substance belongs to Christ. The Sabbath was merely a shadow of the substance, the real thing that was to come.

The Sabbath was merely a servant of the Lord Jesus Christ, who was to come, because Jesus is the one who fulfills the Sabbath and offers us eternal life and soul rest.

This is why I don't teach that observing a physical Sabbath is no longer... I don't teach that the physical Sabbath is a legal requirement for Christians. Though certainly there can be wisdom in the practice of regular rest.

The sole rest that Jesus offers is for all those who rest from their works, recognizing that no amount of the good works that they do can earn their salvation, but instead believing in the finished work of Jesus Christ on the cross, the good news that Jesus died for our sins and was raised for our justification, so that all of his righteous deeds are counted on behalf of those who have put their faith in him.

This is how Jesus is the Lord of the Sabbath. And because Jesus is the Lord of the Sabbath, he is also the hope of the Gentiles. Aware that the Pharisees are plotting to kill him, Jesus withdraws from the synagogue and then continues his ministry of healing to those who follow him.

[ 39 : 03 ] But as he does that, interestingly, he orders them not to make him known, he says in verse 16. This is, again, a consistent pattern that we've noted so far in the Gospels, right?

In chapter 8, verse 4, after cleansing a leper, Jesus told him to say nothing to anyone. In chapter 9, verse 25, when Jesus raised a ruler's daughter from the dead, he first made sure that the crowd had been put outside.

In chapter 9, verse 30 to 31, after healing the two blind men, he sternly warned them, see that no one knows about it. And then later in Matthew 16, 19 to 21, when Peter confesses that Jesus is the Christ, the promised messianic king, Jesus strictly charges his disciples to tell no one that he is the Christ.

And he says the same thing again after his transfiguration in chapter 17, verse 9. Until the right time, Jesus keeps his identity under wraps, until it is time for him to go die on the cross as the atoning sacrifice for sin, Jesus avoids full-on confrontation with these Pharisees.

And this humility and this modesty of Jesus' ministry, according to Matthew, is a fulfillment of the prophecy of Isaiah 42, 1 to 3, which he cites in verses 18 to 21.

[ 40 : 19 ] Behold, behold, my servant whom I have chosen, my beloved with whom my soul is well pleased, I will put my spirit upon him, and he will proclaim justice to the Gentiles.

He will not quarrel or cry aloud, nor will anyone hear his voice in the streets. A bruised reed he will not break, and a smoldering wick he will not quench, until he brings justice to victory, and in his name the Gentiles will hope.

This is a fairly loose translation of Isaiah 42, but the translation serves Matthew's purposes, because verse 18 closely echoes what God the Father pronounced over his son when Jesus was baptized in chapter 3, verse 16 to 17.

As the heavens opened, he saw the Spirit of God descend upon him like a dove and come to rest on him, and then the voice from heaven, the Father's voice pronounced, this is my beloved son with whom I am well pleased.

So he's describing those same intimate terms, my beloved with whom my soul is well pleased, I will put my spirit upon him. Jesus, unlike the Pharisees, has the Father's signature.

[ 41 : 30 ] Jesus' ministry is not the loud, brash, attention-seeking, self-centered ministry, but a quiet, humble, faithful, and God-centered ministry.

Jesus' ministry not one where he lays heavy burdens on people, but rather one where he lifts the burdens off of people. Look at how tenderly Jesus is described in verse 20.

A bruised reed he will not break, and a smoldering wick he will not quench, until he brings justice to victory. A reed in those days was used for measuring things like a ruler, or for supporting things. But a bruised reed is not sturdy enough for either of those purposes. It's good only for being snapped off, and used for fodder for the fire.

But Jesus is a gentle and lowly Lord, who will not break a bruised reed. Instead, he will tape it up, nurture it, in hopes that the fibers will grow stronger again, and that it will grow tall, and strong, and straight, and be a useful reed.

[ 42 : 47 ] Likewise, back in those days, people used strips of linen cloth as lamp wick, and if it began to smoke, then it was not very useful as a lamp, or as forgiving light, because the smoke could only impede visibility, and pollute the air.

A smoldering wick is a wick that is weak, that's about to go out. It has small bits of amber burning on it, but no real flame that gives off light and heat.

Most people would at that point just wet their fingers, and snuff out the fire. But because Jesus is gentle, and lowly, the Lord will not quench the smoldering wick.

Instead, He will shield it. He will blow on it. Fan it back until it's aflame again. Beloved brothers and sisters, children of God, do you feel like you're a good-for-nothing bruised reed this morning?

Barely holding on to the tree of Christ, do you feel like a smoldering wick? There's more smoke in your life than fire and light, barely burning the lamp of Christ.

[ 44 : 17 ] Do you feel weak, blemished, poor, and needy? Well, then this is encouragement to us that our Savior does not break a bruised reed, and He does not quench a smoldering wick.

We don't need to hide our weaknesses. We don't need to hide our wounds from our head, Jesus Christ, or from His body, the Church of Christ. We can instead, as it says in Hebrews 4, 15-16, come to the throne of God with confidence.

Because Jesus is the high priest who sympathizes with our weaknesses, knowing that we will receive mercy and find grace to help us in our time of need.

Do you see other bruised reeds around you? Do you see smoldering wicks all around you? Then seek to imitate the compassion and mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Aim to see good in people. Instead of fixating only on the smoke, only on the bruises, and saying, oh, look at all those bruises.

[ 45 : 30 ] Look at all that smoke. And then being inclined to write them off and dismiss them offhand. Labor to see what is good in them as Jesus does for us.

Labor to see that tiny ember that is still there burning. And fatten into flame with encouragement. Cover up their bruises with love.

Bandage it with the love of Christ that you have received from him. I want to recommend to you a book by a 16th century English pastor named Richard Sibbes.

It's called The Bruised Reed. It's based on this passage. And in it he says this, Men must not be too curious in prying into the weaknesses of others.

We should labor rather to see what they have that is for eternity, to incline our heart to love them, than into what weakness which the Spirit of God will in time consume to estrange us.

[ 46 : 38 ] Some think it's strength of grace to endure nothing in the weaker, whereas the strongest are readiest to bear with the infirmities of the weak. Do you see it as a mark of your strength and maturity and discernment to harp on any weaknesses and bruises you see and smokes you see in other believers?

I'm not saying that there's no place for correction or admonishment.

Scriptures give ample evidence that that's what we're supposed to do as well in the body of Christ. However, I'm afraid that I've failed in many ways in this regard and that many of us fail in this regard to be as compassionate and merciful as our Savior toward one another.

And this is what gives hope for the Gentiles. Isn't that interesting in this passage? That Jesus is in controversy with the Jews and the Pharisees and then in the passage that follows, it describes him as the one who proclaims justice to the Gentiles in verse 18.

And in verse 21, it says, in his name, the Gentiles will hope. The Gentiles are not people that are usually in the in crowd in the Gospel of Matthew. In Matthew 5.47, Jesus, if you greet only your brothers, what more are you doing?

[ 48 : 06 ] Do not even the Gentiles do the same? Matthew 6.7, the Gentiles heap up empty phrases when they pray, thinking that they will be heard by God.

In Matthew 18.17, when your fellow Christian brothers and sisters, instead they refuse to repent of their sin and continue in their sin, it says to dissociate from them and treat them like a Gentile. Gentiles are people who are excluded. Gentiles are the people who don't belong to the covenant community of God. So how is it that Jesus is the hope of the Gentiles?

He proclaims justice to the Gentiles because Jesus is the Lord of the Sabbath. Remember, what is the covenant mark that sets the Jews apart from the Gentiles?

It's the Sabbath. It's the Sabbath that sets them apart. And Jesus says, I am the Lord of the Sabbath. I have come to fulfill the sign of the Sabbath.

[ 49 : 05 ] And so I will die on the cross for the sins of all people, Jews and Gentiles, so that all those who repent of their sins and trust in me, in me they will find the rest that they seek, the life that they seek, the eternal soul rest that only I can give.

I give even to Gentiles because I have fulfilled justice. I have fulfilled the righteousness of God. I receive the just wrath of God and the judgment of God on the cross so that I can extend mercy without end to all those who come to me.

That's why Jesus is the hope of the Gentiles. So brothers, sisters, let's learn from this.

And I want to close with this blessing from Jude and exhortation from Jude, which talks about showing mercy to the bruised and the broken. Amen. Keep yourselves in the love of God, waiting for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ that leads to eternal life.

And have mercy on those who doubt. Save others by snatching them out of the fire. To others, show mercy with fear, hating even the garment stained by the flesh.

[ 50 : 24 ] Now to him who is able to keep you from stumbling and to present you blameless before the presence of his glory with great joy. To the only God, our savior, through Jesus Christ, our Lord, be glory, majesty, dominion, and authority before all time and now and forever.

Amen. Amen.