

## Responses to Jesus

Mark 2:23-28; 3:1-12, 20-30

### Introduction:

1. The text that we have just read (Mk. 2:23-27) is the first of three texts we will consider in this lesson.
2. The other two (Mk. 3:1-12 and Mk. 3:20-30) all describe various responses to Jesus.
3. It is interesting that these pericopes precede the Parable of the Soils, which of course, describes various hearts into which the seed of the kingdom is sown.
4. While there are other pericopes that describe men's responses to Jesus we will notice these three and see what we can see in ourselves and other's responses to Jesus.

### Discussion:

#### I. Mk. 2:23-28.

##### A. The circumstance.

1. The disciples are picking heads of grain as they are walking along the grainfields (Lk. 6:1).
2. The Pharisees raise an objection. "Why are they doing what is not lawful on the Sabbath?"
3. Asking questions is generally a very good thing in my experience. I have noticed that some very highly intelligent people are good at asking lots of questions. It creates for oneself a learning experience. But it also creates a situation revealing your ignorance. I have never been too bold about revealing my ignorance. I had rather ask my questions quietly, search for the answers privately on my own, rather than do what these Pharisees did and ask in a more public setting.
4. It would seem to me that they are confident in their conclusion that what the disciples are doing is wrong. Therefore, they are bold in asking their question. Besides, there seems to be a group of them that are united together in their conclusion that what the disciples are doing is wrong.
5. They are asking, "Why are they doing what is not lawful on the Sabbath?" They are not asking if what they are doing is considered stealing. They are not asking what the property owner might think about this. They are not asking whether or not the disciples are hungry. They are not asking the disciples about their own behavior. They are asking Jesus, "Why are they doing what is not lawful on the Sabbath?"
6. They have already concluded that what the disciples are doing is unlawful.
7. The law said, "Remember the Sabbath day to keep it holy. Six days you are to labor and do all your work." The Pharisees had many particulars regarding what constituted work on the Sabbath. Harvesting one's field would be an obvious violation, but the disciples were not harvesting the field. Just picking the heads, but these Pharisees considered this a violation.

##### B. The question.

1. Jesus' question is, "Have you never read . . .?" Cf. 1 Sam. 21:1; 2 Sam. 8:17; 1 Chron. 24:6.
2. Lev. 24:9 specifies that this bread was reserved for the priests. It might be argued legally that David's men had no right to eat this bread. But they were hungry (Matt. 12:3). What they did was not a matter of disrespecting God. It was not a matter of disrespecting the priesthood. It had become a matter of emergency.
- C. Jesus's answer. "The Sabbath was made for man, and not man for the Sabbath. So the Son of Man is Lord even of the Sabbath."
  1. Jesus uses what I would suggest is a commonsense approach.
  2. It stands in contrast to the legalistic approach of the Pharisees.
  3. Their question of what constituted work was a fair question. It is important to think about the rules and what they entail and how to apply them in specific situations. But it is unfair to become so rigid in our application that we destroy the person's for whom the rules are made.
- D. For example. We know that this building is designed for the purpose of biblical instruction. I would defend the use of the first day of the week contribution to rent, construct and use a building for this purpose. I would argue against using the first day of the week contribution to rent, construct and use a building for the purpose of our entertaining ourselves. But let's imagine a tornado destroyed the subdivision behind us and the one across the street and the emergency personnel said, "Could we use your building as temporary shelter?" I would reason that such would be an incidental use and perfectly appropriate. More than that I would reason that to prohibit the use of the building in a time such as that would contradict my understanding of what the Bible teaches. But I can hear some of my brethren say, "They would be serving food and it is not lawful for people to eat in the church building."
- E. But this passage is about people's response to Jesus. The Pharisees are rejecting Him and looking for ways to condemn Him. This becomes even more evident in the next account.

## II. Mark 3:1-12.

- A. The circumstance (3:1-6).
  1. This event occurs in the synagogue, a public place of meeting.
  2. "They were watching Him," evidently the Pharisees in particular (6).
  3. Their objective: "to accuse Him" (2).
  4. After he healed the man with the withered hand "the Pharisees went out immediately and began conspiring with the Herodians against Him, as to how they might destroy him" (6).
  5. Their motives are evil. Destruction is their goal. Their hearts are hard (5). They are silent, not wishing to go public with the truthfulness of their direction. But they are out to destroy. They are not looking for the truth of what God wants and attempting to respond to Jesus' question would be useless for their objective.
- B. The question. "Is it lawful to do good or to do harm on the Sabbath, to save life or to kill?"
  1. It is obvious that doing good and saving life are primary objectives of God. It is

commonsense that He would not institute a law concerning the Sabbath that would violate this primary truth.

2. But the Pharisees are not really concerned about the Sabbath. They are not really concerned about the violation of the Sabbath. They are concerned about getting a condemning judgment against Jesus. His question reveals where their hearts are.
  3. But what about the man with the withered hand? They are not concerned about Him, but Jesus is.
  4. Jesus is angry, grieved at their hardness of heart.
- C. He withdrew and a great multitude followed Him (7-12).
1. Miracles create great interest. Everyone who is sick wants to be healed.
  2. Miracles are designed to validate the messenger and the message. Jesus has been validated by God over and over with every healing performed. How can the Pharisees oppose Him when the people see such miracles?
  3. The crowds pressed around Him just to touch Him.
  4. The text is interesting to me. It says, "He healed many." Matt. 12:15 says, "He healed them all." Matthew quotes a text from Isa. 42:1-4. It identifies God's servant and has God saying, "I will put My Spirit upon Him."
  5. It is here in this region of Galilee, beyond the Jordan, with those from various places including Tyre and Sidon, that these miracles are performed. And Matthew quotes Isa. 42:1-4 with its multiple references to Gentiles having hope!!!! So, it is these "unlikelies" that receive Jesus while the Pharisees (the religious elite) seek to destroy Him.
- D. "Whenever the unclean spirits saw Him, they would fall down before Him and shout, 'You are the Son of God!' And He earnestly warned them not to tell who He was."
1. So, even the unclean spirits are recognizing Him.
  2. But the Pharisees, by contrast, are seeking to destroy Him.

### III. Mark 3:20-30.

- A. The circumstances.
1. He came home (that is into a house) and the crowd gathered.
  2. People were pressing on Him to the point that they could not even eat a meal.
  3. His kinsmen sought to take custody of him saying, "He has lost His senses."
  4. The scribes (Matthew's account identifies them as Pharisees.) from Jerusalem said, "He is possessed by Beelzebul." Whether these two assessments are related is unclear. Perhaps it was the scribes who gave the impression to His kinsmen that he had lost it.
  5. The scribes accused Him of casting out demons by the power of the ruler of the demons. It is ironic that Jesus is being accused of having lost His senses when in fact it is the scribes whose accusations are conflicted.
- B. Jesus is quick to point this out with His question. "How can Satan cast out Satan?" Note that in all three of these episodes Jesus has asked a commonsense question that goes unanswered by His opposition.
1. Satan does not destroy himself.

2. But Jesus is limiting Satan (binding the strong man) by casting out demons.
  3. He is destroying Satan's kingdom. Whose side are these scribes/Pharisees on?
- C. Jesus warns that all sins shall be forgiven and all blasphemies except blasphemy against the Holy Spirit (28-30).
1. This statement has created anxiety for many. They are afraid that somehow, they will accidentally commit this sin and it will not be possible for them to be forgiven.
  2. Such a view misses the context and what Mark is trying to establish here. He is giving examples of responses to Jesus and His teaching. Especially, the opposition associated with the Pharisees. They are not objecting to His performing miracles. They are not objecting to His casting out demons. They are claiming He is doing it by the power of Satan. How is this blasphemy against the Holy Spirit? Isa. 42:1-4 had identified God's servant as having God's Spirit upon Him. They are assigning the miracles that the Holy Spirit is performing through Jesus as come from Satan instead of from God. I suppose someone could do that today, but it would not occur accidentally. They are doing this to deliberately discredit Jesus. Their plan is to destroy Him.
  3. They are not doubting that He is performing miracles, nor are they doubting that He is casting out demons. They are assigning this power to Satan rather than to God's Spirit.
  4. Matthew's account gives us additional information. See 12:32-37. The point is your words reveal what is in your heart. Their hearts are evil and their words too. They are opposed to the Holy Spirit's words and miraculous validation of Jesus. Like Stephen said, "They are stiff-necked and uncircumcised in heart and ears always resisting the Holy Spirit" (Acts 7:51). Forgiveness is not available to those who deliberately refuse what is obviously communication from God.

#### Conclusion:

1. All three of these texts reflect the oppositional hearts of the Pharisees and must be interpreted in that light.
2. They occur up front in the early stages of Jesus' ministry.
3. They set the stage for the parable of the soils and the stage for the rest of Jesus' ministry showing the opposition that Jesus faced.
4. I would point out one other thing in Mark 3. Sandwiched between these last two episodes Mark places the selection of the 12. That paragraph seems almost out of place. But it ends with the statement "and Judas Iscariot, who betrayed Him." It's almost as if Mark cannot think of opposing Jesus without thinking of Judas Iscariot. Indeed opposing Jesus is the betrayal par excellence, to ascribe His communication to Satan, blasphemy, of the worst variety!!!!