

## March 23-27

### March 23 — Reading 59 — John 5:10-18 — **Hide and Seek**

<sup>10</sup> So the Jews said to the man who had been healed, *“It is the Sabbath, and it is not lawful for you to take up your bed.”* <sup>11</sup> But he answered them, *“The man who healed me, that man said to me, ‘Take up your bed, and walk.’”* <sup>12</sup> They asked him, *“Who is the man who said to you, ‘Take up your bed and walk?’”* <sup>13</sup> Now the man who had been healed did not know who it was, for Jesus had withdrawn, as there was a crowd in the place. <sup>14</sup> Afterward Jesus found him in the temple and said to him, *“See, you are well! Sin no more, that nothing worse may happen to you.”* <sup>15</sup> The man went away and told the Jews that it was Jesus who had healed him. <sup>16</sup> And this was why the Jews were persecuting Jesus, because he was doing these things on the Sabbath. <sup>17</sup> But Jesus answered them, *“My Father is working until now, and I am working.”*

<sup>18</sup> This was why the Jews were seeking all the more to kill him, because not only was he breaking the Sabbath, but he was even calling God his own Father, making himself equal with God.

**Comment:** The events of this story seem to have been orchestrated by Jesus. It looks like He deliberately healed this man on the Sabbath and told him to carry his mat, an act that violated the manmade traditions added to the Law. Then Jesus “hid” from him, melting into the crowd at the pool area (:13). It was as if He stepped out of the drama intentionally to let it unfold naturally. Sure enough, the Pharisaical police saw this “violation” of the law and confronted the man. Jesus then turned from “hiding” to seeking, as He “*found*” (:14) the man later in the temple. Why did He find him? Now physically well, Jesus had something to teach him about his moral condition: *“Sin no more, that nothing worse may happen to you”* (:14). Like the woman at the well, this man had a sin problem that needed to be faced. Certainly, not all illness is caused by sin but it sometimes is, and it was in this case. Jesus found him to warn him. Jesus found us, too, when we were in our sins and separated from God and he would give the same warning to all Christians: “Sin no more!” Don’t slip back into sinful activities that once controlled your life! Be free, indeed!

**Meditation:** Notice that there is a gap in the recorded story. The healed man went to the Jewish leaders and “squealed” on Jesus (:15), which upset them (:16). Then, *“Jesus answered them...”* (:17), referring to the Jews. How did Jesus and the Jews get together? Did Jesus go to them? The leaders probably went to Jesus because vs. 16 had said that *“the Jews were persecuting Jesus.”* They probably demanded from Jesus why He was *“doing these things on the Sabbath”* (:16), like healing and telling the man to carry his mat, because Jesus responded that *“My Father is working until now, and I am working”* (:17). Basically, He was saying, “If I am breaking God’s Law, then so is God.” The Jews rightly understood when Jesus called God, “My Father,” that He was equating Himself as the Son of God. This sets the stage for further instruction for them by Jesus.

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### March 24 — Reading 60 — John 5:19-47 — **Bearing Witness**

<sup>19</sup> So Jesus said to them, *“Truly, truly, I say to you, the Son can do nothing of his own accord, but only what he sees the Father doing. For whatever the Father does, that the Son does likewise.”* <sup>20</sup> For the Father loves the Son and shows him all that he himself is doing. And greater works than these will he show him, so that you may marvel. <sup>21</sup> For as the Father raises the dead and gives them life, so also the Son gives life to whom he will. <sup>22</sup> For the Father judges no one, but has given all judgment to the Son, <sup>23</sup> that all may honor the Son, just as they honor the Father. Whoever does not honor the Son does not honor the Father who sent him. <sup>24</sup> Truly, truly, I say to you, whoever hears my word and believes him who sent me has eternal life. He does not come into judgment, but has passed from death to life.

<sup>25</sup> “Truly, truly, I say to you, an hour is coming, and is now here, when the dead will hear the voice of the Son of God, and those who hear will live. <sup>26</sup> For as the Father has life in himself, so he has granted the Son also to have life in himself. <sup>27</sup> And he has given him authority to execute judgment, because he is the Son of Man. <sup>28</sup> Do not marvel at this, for an hour is coming when all who are in the tombs will hear his voice <sup>29</sup> and come out, those who have done good to the resurrection of life, and those who have done evil to the resurrection of judgment.

<sup>30</sup> “I can do nothing on my own. As I hear, I judge, and my judgment is just, because I seek not my own will but the will of him who sent me. <sup>31</sup> If I alone bear witness about myself, my testimony is not true. <sup>32</sup> There is another who bears witness about me, and I know that the testimony that he bears about me is true. <sup>33</sup> You sent to John, and he has borne witness to the truth. <sup>34</sup> Not that the testimony that I receive is from man, but I say these things so that you may be saved. <sup>35</sup> He was a burning and shining lamp, and you were willing to rejoice for a while in his light. <sup>36</sup> But the testimony that I have is greater than that of John. For the works that the Father has given me to accomplish, the very works that I am doing, bear witness about me that the Father has sent me. <sup>37</sup> And the Father who sent me has himself borne witness about me. His voice you have never heard, his form you have never seen, <sup>38</sup> and you do not have his word abiding in you, for you do not believe the one whom he has sent. <sup>39</sup> You search the Scriptures because you think that in them you have eternal life; and it is they that bear witness about me, <sup>40</sup> yet you refuse to come to me that you may have life. <sup>41</sup> I do not receive glory from people. <sup>42</sup> But I know that you do not have the love of God within you. <sup>43</sup> I have come in my Father’s name, and you do not receive me. If another comes in his own name, you will receive him. <sup>44</sup> How can you believe, when you receive glory from one another and do not seek the glory that comes from the only God? <sup>45</sup> Do not think that I will accuse you to the Father. There is one who accuses you: Moses, on whom you have set your hope. <sup>46</sup> For if you believed Moses, you would believe me; for he wrote of me. <sup>47</sup> But if you do not believe his writings, how will you believe my words?”

**Comment:** The Jewish leaders had been disturbed by Jesus when He claimed deity by calling Himself the Son of God, so Jesus expanded on that fact in our reading for today. He showed that He is equal to the Father in two ways: in terms of works, doing only what He saw His Father doing (:19), and in terms of judgment, having been given the position of Judge by His Father (:22). Was Jesus who He said He was? The Jews would not take His word for it but there was evidence from others as well. John the Baptist bore witness about Him (:33), the whole Old Testament Scriptures bore witness about Him (:39), and their hero Moses bore witness about Him (:46). That is what we are to do also—bear witness about Jesus; tell people about Him. He is who He said He was—He is God. Like the Jewish leaders, many will reject Jesus as God because of preconceived ideas and sinful determination. Some will “rejoice for a while” (:35) like some did when John witnessed to them, recognizing the light. But some will believe and their lives will be changed like ours have been. Our purpose for telling people about Jesus is the same as the reason Jesus gave to them: “so that you may be saved” (:34). Let’s bear witness about Him.

**Meditation:** Jesus found fault with those Jewish leaders for two reasons: They did not have two things abiding in them—God’s Word (:36) and the love of God (:42). They read the Scriptures but they missed the message. They thought they loved God but they didn’t recognize and love His Son. We should keep this in mind as we read through the Gospels this year. Think about what you are reading. Start a journal, taking notes about things that strike you as you read—things that God is teaching you. Get to know Jesus better. The Gospels were written so that we might know Jesus. The better we know Him, the more we will experience love for Him. Think as you read! Love as you read!

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Matthew 12

<sup>1</sup> *At that time Jesus went through the grainfields on the Sabbath.*

*His disciples were hungry, and they began to pluck heads of grain and to eat.*

<sup>2</sup> *But when the Pharisees saw it, they said to him, "Look, your disciples are doing what is not lawful to do on the Sabbath."*

<sup>3</sup> *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?*

<sup>5</sup> *Or have you not read in the Law how on the Sabbath the priests in the temple profane the Sabbath and are guiltless? <sup>6</sup> I tell you, something greater than the temple is here. <sup>7</sup> And if you had known what this means, 'I desire mercy, and not sacrifice,' you would not have condemned the guiltless.*

<sup>8</sup> *For the Son of Man is lord of the Sabbath."*

Mark 2

<sup>23</sup> *One Sabbath he was going through the grainfields,*

*and as they made their way, his disciples began to pluck heads of grain.*

<sup>24</sup> *And the Pharisees were saying to him, "Look, why are they doing what is not lawful on the Sabbath?"*

<sup>25</sup> *And he said to them, "Have you never read what David did, when he was in need and was hungry, he*

*and those who were with him: how he entered the house of God, in the time of<sup>[fn]</sup>*

*Abiathar the high priest, and ate the bread of the Presence, which it is not lawful for any*

*but the priests to eat, and also gave it to those who were with him?"*

<sup>27</sup> *And he said to them, "The Sabbath was made for man, not man for the Sabbath.*

<sup>28</sup> *So the Son of Man is lord even of the Sabbath."*

**ESV Footnote**

(2:26) Or in the passage about

Luke 6

<sup>1</sup> *On a Sabbath, while he was going through the grainfields,*

*his disciples plucked and ate some heads of grain,*

*rubbing them in their hands.*

<sup>2</sup> *But some of the Pharisees said, "Why are you doing what is not lawful to do on the Sabbath?"*

<sup>3</sup> *And Jesus answered them, "Have you not read what David did when he was hungry, he*

*and those who were with him: how he entered the house of God*

*and took and ate the bread of the Presence, which is not lawful for any*

*but the priests to eat, and also gave it to those with him?"*

<sup>5</sup> *And he said to them,*

*"The Son of Man is lord of the Sabbath."*

**Comment:** Part of this passage has always bothered me. I get it that Jesus defended His disciples for what the Pharisees considered to be “harvesting” on the Sabbath—getting a handful of grain. The Old Testament Law permitted that. What is hard for me to accept is that Jesus seemed to support David who went against the Law by eating the “*holy bread*” of the Presence (1 Sam. 21:6), which was only for the priests. David broke the Law of God and was not rebuked. Later, when David was attempting to bring the ark of the covenant to Jerusalem, well-meaning Uzzah touched the ark, also against the Law, to keep it from falling off the cart when the oxen stumbled, and God struck him dead (2 Sam. 6:6). Touch the holy ark and you die; eat the holy bread and you are forgiven. This is one of the questions I would like to ask God about when I get to heaven. I understand that I don’t see the whole picture now but I know that from God’s perspective, it not only makes sense but it is perfectly right and consistent. We also go against God’s commands occasionally, don’t we? Aren’t you glad that Jesus’ sacrifice has paid the penalty for those sins?

**Meditation:** There is another question in this passage to think about. Mark wrote that David “*entered the house of God, in the time of Abiathar the high priest*” (Mark 2:26). But Abiathar was not the high priest at that time; it was his father Ahimelech who gave the bread to David (1 Sam. 21:1). Is that an error in Scripture? No, because in Jesus’ prayer to the Father, He said, “*Your word is truth*” (John 17:17). So, how can the statement about Abiathar be true? Most translations say either, “*in the time of Abiathar*” or “*in the days of Abiathar*.” The ESV has a footnote that offers the substitute: “*in the passage about Abiathar*.” Those phrases are attempts to translate a very common Greek preposition *epi*, which can mean different things in various contexts and with different grammatical combinations. Actually, the incident did happen “*in the time of Abiathar*” because he was a grown man at that time and was a priest. His father Ahimelech was killed by Saul’s command shortly after he had helped David (1 Sam. 22:16), so Abiathar quickly succeeded him as high priest and also became much more well-known than his father.

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## Matthew 12

<sup>9</sup> He went on from there and entered their synagogue.

<sup>10</sup> 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.

<sup>11</sup> 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? <sup>12</sup> Of how much more value is a man than a sheep! So it is lawful to do good on the Sabbath."

<sup>13</sup> Then he said to the man, "Stretch out your hand." And the man stretched it out, and it was restored, healthy like the other.

<sup>14</sup> But the Pharisees went out and conspired against him, how to destroy him.

## Mark 3

<sup>1</sup> Again he entered the synagogue,

and a man was there with a withered hand.

<sup>2</sup> And they

watched Jesus,<sup>[fn]</sup> to see whether he would heal him on the Sabbath,

so that they might accuse him.

<sup>3</sup> And he said to the man with the withered hand, "Come here."

<sup>4</sup> And he said to them, "Is it lawful on the Sabbath to do good or to do harm, to save life or to kill?"

But they were silent.

<sup>5</sup> And he looked around at them with anger, grieved at their hardness of heart,

and said to the man, "Stretch out your hand."

He stretched it out, and his hand was restored.

<sup>6</sup> The Pharisees went out and immediately held counsel with the Herodians against him, how to destroy him.

### ESV Footnote

(3:2) Greek *him*

## Luke 6

<sup>6</sup> On another Sabbath,<sup>[fn]</sup> he entered the synagogue

and was teaching, and a man was there whose right hand was withered.

<sup>7</sup> And the scribes and the Pharisees watched him, to see whether he would heal on the Sabbath,

so that they might find a reason to accuse him.

<sup>8</sup> But he knew their thoughts, and he said to the man with the withered hand, "Come and stand here." And he rose and stood there.

<sup>9</sup> And Jesus said to them, "I ask you, is it lawful on the Sabbath to do good or to do harm, to save life or to destroy it?"

<sup>10</sup> And after looking around at them all

he said to him, "Stretch out your hand." And he did so, and his hand was restored.

<sup>11</sup> But they were filled with fury and discussed with one another what they might do to Jesus.

### ESV Footnote

(6:1) Some manuscripts *On the second first Sabbath* (that is, on the second Sabbath after the first)

**Comment:** This is the only place in the Bible where it says that Jesus was angry (Mark 3:5). (No, it doesn't say that He was angry when He drove the merchants out of the temple.) I have heard many Christians use this example of Jesus' being angry to justify their own anger but this Greek word seems to be a kind of anger acceptable only for God. It is used in the New Testament 29 times for divine anger, often translated "*the wrath of God*" as His deserved judgment for sin; and only five times for the anger of man, all of which are described as something to be avoided (Eph 4:31; Col 3:8; 1Ti 2:8; Jas 1:19, 20). What was Jesus angry about in our passage? It was the Pharisees' "*hardness of heart*" (Mark 3:5). What makes *us* angry? Is it *ever* about other people's unbelief? Isn't it usually about what someone has done or said to us? They have offended us in some way.

There is a second word for anger used in this passage. It was the reaction of the Pharisees after Jesus had silenced them with His reasoning (Mark 3:4): "*But they were filled with fury*" (Luke 6:11). Their fury was so strong that they wanted "*to destroy him*" (Matt. 12:14; Mark 6:6). The Pharisees were angry because Jesus had violated their own manmade rules attached to the Law. In their view, He had broken the Sabbath. How? All He did was to restore a man to health. What work was involved? The only action mentioned was the man stretching out his hand, which was hardly work. Ask God to remind you of the Pharisees the next time you find yourself being angry over someone violating your personal standards or rights.

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March 27 — Reading 63 — Matt. 12:15-21 (4:25); Mark 3:7-12 — **Jesus the Magnet**

Matthew 12

<sup>15</sup> *Jesus, aware of this, withdrew from there.*

*And many followed him, and he healed them all*

**Matthew 4**

<sup>25</sup> *And great crowds followed him from Galilee and the Decapolis, and from Jerusalem and Judea, and from beyond the Jordan.*

Matthew 12 (cont.)

<sup>16</sup> *and ordered them not to make him known.*

<sup>17</sup> *This was to fulfill what was spoken by the prophet Isaiah:*

Mark 3

<sup>7</sup> *Jesus withdrew with his disciples to the sea,*

*and a great crowd followed, from Galilee and Judea <sup>8</sup> and Jerusalem and Idumea and from beyond the Jordan and from around Tyre and Sidon. When the great crowd heard all that he was doing, they came to him. <sup>9</sup> And he told his disciples to have a boat ready for him because of the crowd, lest they crush him, <sup>10</sup> for he had healed many, so that all who had diseases pressed around him to touch him. <sup>11</sup> And whenever the unclean spirits saw him, they fell down before him and cried out, "You are the Son of God."*

<sup>12</sup> *And he strictly ordered them not to make him known.*

18 *“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.*  
19 *He will not quarrel or cry aloud,  
nor will anyone hear his voice in the streets;  
20 a bruised reed he will not break,  
and a smoldering wick he will not quench,  
until he brings justice to victory;  
21 and in his name the Gentiles will hope.”*

**Comment:** Matthew wrote, “Jesus, aware of this, withdrew from there” (12:15). Aware of what? The previous verse shows that it was because “*the Pharisees went out and conspired against him, how to destroy him*” (:14). He had to get away from those opponents because His time had not yet come to die. He went into unpopulated areas but He didn’t avoid the people who longed to be with Him. They had heard about Him from not only Galilee west of the Sea of Galilee but also from the Decapolis area to the east (Matt. 4:25), Tyre and Sidon to the northwest, and Idumea (Mark 3:8) in the far south. As the quote from Isaiah 42:1-4 implies, some of them were Gentiles and Jesus proclaimed justice to them (Matt. 12:18) and gave them hope (:21). Jesus was a people magnet. Part of the draw was His authoritative teaching but probably a larger part was because “*he healed them all*” (Matt. 12:15). Even evil spirits were reluctantly brought to Him in the bodies of tormented people. When they came into Jesus’ presence, they always fell down before His authority and proclaimed, “*You are the Son of God*” (Mark 3:11). He silenced them because He wanted people to discover His identity on their own by what they heard and saw. Jesus draws people today as well. They see Him in our lives. His light shines through us and people see the difference and it attracts some of them. We have the privilege of exposing the life and teachings of Jesus to those who are being drawn.

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