

Bookends of the Gospels: Matthew 12 and John 3

Matthews bookend

What about the signs of God? So, John and Matthew are independent of each other? I really don't think so. Here in Matthew 12 Jesus is being questioned on his authority. Jesus picked grain on the Sabbath. In Biblical terms, it was unlawful to work one day a week. It was Friday night until Saturday night. Jesus and the disciples were hungry. He picked grain heads and ate them. That was considered work.

They asked him by what authority could you break the sabbath? Jesus went crazy on them. He questioned them on the ethics of letting people starve over the law. He healed a man and challenged their morals. It even says in Matthew 12:15 "He healed them all." Jesus went nuts on proving his point.

Jesus then threw them under the bus over demons. Should a house be swept clean of demons? Who can fight demons? Where does evil reside and come from? In a way this is the same age-old question: who is Jesus? Maybe, it's further: who is God? Matthew 12 is a confrontation on what we think religion should look like and what the kingdom of God does look like.

What I like about this chapter is the religious rulers. It's all of us today. I have had non-Christian people tell me I am not acting very Christian. I have had church members rebuke me. I have also had people say they know what God is really like. The harsh reality is we all have beliefs, opinions, and judgments on right and wrong. Matthew 12 is a microcosm of everyone's point of view on what God is? Jesus is pressed by the religious rulers and even his own family to be something else than he was.

What's it all mean?

I have bookended Matthew 12 and John 3 for several reasons. They ask by what authority Jesus did what he did. By who's spirit are these things done? It's not about condemnation through judgments and laws, but the essence of God: love. Who is manipulating Jesus. In John 3 who is manipulating John. They are connected because it's the same God. All of these sections in Matthew 12 point to who is Lord over Jesus. It's interesting that Jesus mildly says he is Lord of the Sabbath.

What it all means is intent. God made the laws to protect us. There is a gleaning law that says the poor can eat the ends of a field. There is a law that asks us to rest. There is only one who can judge. Only one who can do signs of wonder. This is a deep chapter. When we read John 3 it will be even deeper. It's not about our laws and how we enforce them. It's about God's laws and why he gave them. These bookends are here to say that this is God's plan, will, and intent. Far too often we make it about us.