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~ **The Man with the Withered Hand** ~

You can learn much more about this story by doing these three things:

1. Read the story in Mathew 12:1-21. You can also read the parallel versions in Mark 2:23-28 and 3:1-6 and Luke 6:1-11.
2. Discover key cultural and historical insights.
3. Answer the reflective questions.

1. Read the text of the story from the New American Standard Bible and from the Easy Read Version

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New Living Translation (NLT) Holy Bible, New Living Translation, copyright © 1996, 2004, 2015 by Tyndale House Foundation.

Matthew 12:1-21 - NASB	Matthew 12:1-21– New Living Translation
<p>At that time Jesus went through the grainfields on the Sabbath, and His disciples became hungry and began to pick the heads <i>of grain</i> and eat. ² But when the Pharisees saw <i>this</i>, they said to Him, “Look, Your disciples do what is not lawful to do on a Sabbath.” ³ But He said to them, “Have you not read what David did when he became hungry, he and his companions, ⁴ how he entered the house of God, and they ate the consecrated bread, which was not lawful for him to eat nor for those with him, but for the priests alone? ⁵ Or have you not read in the Law, that on the Sabbath the priests in the temple break the Sabbath and are innocent? ⁶ But I say to you that something greater than the temple is here. ⁷ But if you had known what this means, ‘I DESIRE COMPASSION, AND NOT A SACRIFICE,’ you would not have condemned the innocent.</p> <p>⁸ For the Son of Man is Lord of the Sabbath.”</p> <p>⁹ Departing from there, He went into their synagogue. ¹⁰ And a man <i>was there</i> whose hand was withered. And they questioned Jesus, asking, “Is it lawful to heal on the Sabbath?”—so that they might accuse Him. ¹¹ And He said to them, “What man is there among you who has a sheep, and if it falls into a pit on the Sabbath, will he not take hold of it and lift it out? ¹² How much more valuable then is a man than a sheep! So then, it is lawful to do good on the Sabbath.” ¹³ Then He <i>said</i> to the man, “Stretch out your hand!” He stretched it out, and it was restored to normal, like the other. ¹⁴ But the Pharisees went out and conspired against Him, <i>as to</i> how they might destroy Him.</p> <p>¹⁵ But Jesus, aware of <i>this</i>, withdrew from there. Many followed Him, and He healed them all, ¹⁶ and warned them not to tell who He was. ¹⁷ <i>This was</i> to fulfill what</p>	<p>At about that time Jesus was walking through some grain fields on the Sabbath. His disciples were hungry, so they began breaking off some heads of grain and eating them. ² But some Pharisees saw them do it and protested, “Look, your disciples are breaking the law by harvesting grain on the Sabbath.”</p> <p>³ Jesus said to them, “Haven’t you read in the Scriptures what David did when he and his companions were hungry? ⁴ He went into the house of God, and he and his companions broke the law by eating the sacred loaves of bread that only the priests are allowed to eat. ⁵ And haven’t you read in the law of Moses that the priests on duty in the Temple may work on the Sabbath? ⁶ I tell you, there is one here who is even greater than the Temple! ⁷ But you would not have condemned my innocent disciples if you knew the meaning of this Scripture: ‘I want you to show mercy, not offer sacrifices.’ ⁸ For the Son of Man is Lord, even over the Sabbath!”</p> <p>⁹ Then Jesus went over to their synagogue, ¹⁰ where he noticed a man with a deformed hand. The Pharisees asked Jesus, “Does the law permit a person to work by healing on the Sabbath?” (They were hoping he would say yes, so they could bring charges against him.)</p> <p>¹¹ And he answered, “If you had a sheep that fell into a well on the Sabbath, wouldn’t you work to pull it out? Of course you would. ¹² And how much more valuable is a person than a sheep! Yes, the law permits a person to do good on the Sabbath.”</p> <p>¹³ Then he said to the man, “Hold out your hand.” So the man held out his hand, and it was restored, just like the other one! ¹⁴ Then the Pharisees called a meeting to plot how to kill Jesus.</p> <p>¹⁵ But Jesus knew what they were planning. So he left</p>

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<p>was spoken through Isaiah the prophet:</p> <p>18 “ BEHOLD, MY SERVANT WHOM I HAVE CHOSEN; MY BELOVED IN WHOM MY SOUL IS WELL-PLEASSED; I WILL PUT MY SPIRIT UPON HIM, AND HE SHALL PROCLAIM JUSTICE TO THE GENTILES. 19 “ HE WILL NOT QUARREL, NOR CRY OUT; NOR WILL ANYONE HEAR HIS VOICE IN THE STREETS. 20 “ A BATTERED REED HE WILL NOT BREAK OFF, AND A SMOLDERING WICK HE WILL NOT PUT OUT, UNTIL HE LEADS JUSTICE TO VICTORY. 21 “ AND IN HIS NAME THE GENTILES WILL HOPE.”</p>	<p>that area, and many people followed him. He healed all the sick among them, ¹⁶ but he warned them not to reveal who he was. ¹⁷ This fulfilled the prophecy of Isaiah concerning him:</p> <p>18 “Look at my Servant, whom I have chosen. He is my Beloved, who pleases me. I will put my Spirit upon him, and he will proclaim justice to the nations. 19 He will not fight or shout or raise his voice in public. 20 He will not crush the weakest reed or put out a flickering candle. Finally he will cause justice to be victorious. 21 And his name will be the hope of all the world.”</p>
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2. Discover key cultural and historical insights.

- The Pharisees laid down thousands of laws concerning what a person could or could not do on the Sabbath.
- The Law of Moses allowed plucking grain from another’s field (Deuteronomy 23:26) but the Pharisees considered this reaping which was not allowed on the Sabbath. The Law of Moses allowed this. Deuteronomy 23:25 says this, “When you enter your neighbor’s standing grain, then you may pluck the heads with your hand, but you shall not wield a sickle in your neighbor’s standing grain.”
- The statement, “I desire compassion and not sacrifice” is a quote from Hosea 6:6.
- The priests changed the bread on the Sabbath day. The priests offered twice as many sacrifices on the Sabbath as on other days! The Temple regulations took precedence over the Sabbath regulations.
- The Son of Man, Jesus’ frequent title for himself is based on the vision of Daniel 7 where the Son of Man approaches the throne of God to receive authority.
- Rabbinic law allowed medical help on the Sabbath when a life was in danger but this man’s life was not in danger. He could wait a day.
- Rabbis argued over whether it was permissible to rescue animals on the Sabbath. The Essenes did not allow it. At the most, some rabbis would allow indirect assistance so an animal could free itself. But here we are dealing with poor people in a general audience and to lose one animal would be a severe economic blow to them.

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3. Answer these reflective questions.

God gave the command that his people should rest on the Sabbath and not work. The Pharisees tried to clarify what that meant for the time in which they lived – what constituted work, what was not work. Thus, many man-made traditions and applications of the Law were added to the Sabbath command. Both stories, the one about the grain and the one about the withered hand, pertain to the traditions associated with the Sabbath command. Do you believe the traditions helped or hindered people’s obedience to the Sabbath laws?

Do you know of any religious traditions today that hinder obedience to God’s word? Do you know of any that help obedience to God’s word?

Jesus said that something “greater than the temple” was present. What do you think he was referring to?

Jesus favorite title for himself was the Son of Man. Read Daniel 7 and record what you learn in this passage about the Son of Man.

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Matthew quotes Isaiah 42:1-4. Read this passage and write down what you learn about the prophecy. How did Jesus fulfill this prophecy in his life? Is he still fulfilling it today?
