

# The Wrath of Christ

## Galilean Ministry Part 14

Mark 3:1-6 (Mt.12:9-14, Lk.6:6-11) 2/10/2018

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Summary: The Pharisees came with the purpose of getting evidence against Jesus. He went out of his way to make a scene to challenge their attitudes. He asked questions that seemed to miss the point of whether a non life threatening illness could be healed. But he wasn't missing the point; he was changing the point. He wanted them to think in terms of good vs evil, life vs death (Dt.30) rather than regulations. They refused, angering Jesus with hard heartedness. We should have receptive hearts.

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**Mark 3:1 Again he went into the synagogue, and a man with a shriveled hand was there. 2 They were watching him closely to see if he would heal him on the Sabbath. 3 Jesus said to the man with the shriveled hand, "Stand up in front of everyone." 4 Then Jesus asked them, "Which is lawful on the Sabbath: to do good or to do evil, to save life or to kill?" But they remained silent. 5 he looked around at them in anger and, deeply distressed at their stubborn hearts, said to the man, "Stretch out your hand." he stretched it out, and his hand was completely restored. 6 Then the Pharisees went out and began to plot with the Herodians how they might kill Jesus.**

## Introduction

### Context

The first thing Mark does in his book is to show who Jesus is and what his ministry was like – that's ch.1. The very next thing Mark wants to do in is to show the storm clouds begin to gather that ultimately lead to the crucifixion. He does that by describing five conflict encounters between Jesus and the Jewish authorities. We come tonight to the 5<sup>th</sup> of those encounters.

Jesus had hinted about the day when the bridegroom would be forcibly taken away. These encounters show that the groundwork for that is already beginning. This shows that Jesus' death was not the result of a single incident. It wasn't a sudden impulse or crime of passion where a lynch mob got out of control one day. The rejection of Jesus Christ was the settled conclusion of the people that had developed throughout Jesus' entire public ministry.

All through these 5 encounters, you can see the opposition escalating. In the first one, it was just in their thoughts, and it gets more and more confrontive, until this 5<sup>th</sup> one. By the end of this account, Jesus and the Pharisees are toe to toe, absolutely furious with the other. You can't have two kingdoms occupy the same place at the same time. They are going to collide, and one will have to give way to the other.

## The Surveillance

### Routine Sabbath Attendance

It all happens in the synagogue.

**Mark 3:1** Again he went into the synagogue

He says **again**, because that was Jesus' regular practice.

**Luke 4:16** ... on the Sabbath day he went into the synagogue, as was his custom.

Every week Jesus attended the synagogue, which is a rebuke, I think, to people who don't go to church because they can't find one that is good enough for them. You think it's hard for you to find a good church; can you imagine how hard it was for Jesus to find a decent synagogue? The preaching back then was abysmal, and yet Jesus still regularly attended. He didn't say, "Oh, I'll just worship at home."

### Their Purpose: Entrapment

**1** Again he went into the synagogue and a man with a shriveled hand was there. **2** They were watching him closely to see if he would heal him on the Sabbath, in order that they might accuse him.

So they've got Jesus under surveillance. This term for **watching** could even be translated *they were lying in wait*. It's a trap, and they had a clear purpose. It was **in order that<sup>1</sup> they might accuse him**. The term **accuse** is typically used of formal legal charges. They are not here with open minds. They have already formed their conclusion about Jesus; now they're here for the purpose of getting the legal proof they need for a formal indictment. They are like a prosecutor who is intent on getting a conviction. They're going to find a way to find Jesus guilty.

And they have the perfect sting operation set up here with this shriveled hand guy. Here's why: according to rabbinic law, one of the many things you could not do on the Sabbath was to practice medicine. But like all legalistic rules, they needed to have exceptions. And one exception they all agreed on was if someone's life was in danger, you could do what was necessary to sustain their life on the Sabbath. The different factions debated and argued about exactly what problems counted as life threatening, but everybody agreed that if it wasn't life threatening, no medical treatment was allowed on the Sabbath, because practicing medicine is work.

And even if you're saving a life, you have to be careful not to do anything to improve their situation. Just keep them alive – that's all you could do, once the Sabbath is over, then you could do whatever else to help them recover. On the Sabbath you could put on a bandage, stop the bleeding, but not a medicated bandage because then you're getting into recovery.

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<sup>1</sup> Greek: *hina*

So the reason this is a perfect sting operation is that a shriveled hand is definitely not a life-threatening issue, but they knew enough about Jesus to know that he wouldn't be able to resist healing this guy. So they're pretty confident they're going to be able to nail Jesus this time.

So I don't know if they obtained a FISA warrant or not, but the Pharisees have Jesus under surveillance, and they are in the synagogue bird dogging him, hoping to catch him in an infraction.

What they should have been doing is listening to the sermon, Jesus was the one preaching that day, according to Luke. If they would've just listened, they could have learned something. But they aren't there to learn, they aren't there to worship, they aren't there to minister to anybody; they are there to gather evidence for an indictment against Jesus.

## Confidence in Jesus' Power

Isn't it amazing that they are counting on Jesus performing a miracle? They were watching to see if Jesus would heal him. It doesn't say they were watching to see if he could. They knew he could, and were banking on the fact that he would. There's no doubt in their minds that Jesus has the power. If a disabled person comes into my house, no one is keeping an eye on me to see if I decide to heal the guy. Not even Jesus' enemies doubted his power. The Pharisees had more confidence in Jesus' power than many evangelicals today. Thousands of years removed you have people trying to come up with revisionist history and theories that maybe the miracles never actually happened, but during that time, the evidence was so undeniable that no one doubted it.

So, were they right? Does Jesus heal this guy? Not yet. Look what Jesus does.

## Jesus' Question

### Jesus Makes a Scene

#### 3 Jesus said to the man with the shriveled hand, "Stand up in front of everyone."

What's he doing? Jesus is going to make a scene. You can picture Jesus' mother, "Now Jesus, don't make a scene." "That's exactly what I'm going to do mom." Jesus knows why the Pharisees are there.<sup>2</sup> So, with all the people gathered for corporate worship, and the religious big shots in the house, Jesus interrupts the service, and calls this guy to stand in front of everyone – literally, **in the center**. The seating in the synagogue was around the perimeter, and the preacher was in the middle. And Jesus calls this guy to stand right there in the center of the room – all eyes are on him and his deformity. Jesus was going out of his way to draw attention to what he was about to do.

You would think, if you know you're under surveillance, you'd try to be a little more subtle. Jesus could have healed this guy without anybody even knowing. The guy could have just been walking home from the synagogue and suddenly notices his hand is healed. Just make it an anonymous healing. Or he could have just whispered to the guy, "Meet me out back afterwards and we'll talk off line." Or Jesus could have just waited a few hours until sundown, when the Sabbath ended – then it wouldn't bother anyone. Some people point out that this guy would have needed his hand to work to earn a living, which is true, but he can't do any work on the Sabbath, so why not wait a few hours? Wouldn't it be better for Jesus to do that instead of leading with his chin like this? No. He's not going to wait till sundown, he's not going to do it quietly out back; he's going to make a scene.

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<sup>2</sup> Luke 6:8.

## Ideal Point of Conflict

Of all the run-ins Jesus had with the Pharisees, more of them were over the Sabbath than any other issue, and that's not by accident. Jesus could have easily done the things he did on the Sabbath the day before or the day after. But he went out of his way to do them on the Sabbath day, because their way of interpreting the Sabbath law was the clearest example of everything that was wrong in their religion. Contrasting his way of interpreting the Sabbath law with their way was one of the best ways to communicate not only what was wrong with their system, but what was at the heart and soul of the gospel that Jesus preached.

## Why These Questions?

So he gets this guy up in front of everybody, but then he doesn't heal him. He just tells him to stand there, and then turns and puts the Pharisees on the spot with a question. Actually, two questions.

**4 Then Jesus asked them, "Which is lawful on the Sabbath: to do good or to do evil, to save life or to kill?"**

What is the point of those questions? Why does he say, **Which is lawful ... to do good or to do evil?** Is he saying it would be evil for him to wait a few hours to heal this guy? What would be so evil about that? Jesus hasn't healed him yet, and that delay wasn't evil.

And why does he say, **...to save life or to kill?** The Pharisees might say, "Who said anything about killing? We're not asking you to kill the guy – just wait till sundown to heal him."

Some people point to the end of the passage where they are plotting to kill Jesus, but I don't think that's what Jesus is talking about, because it hasn't happened yet. They didn't react that way until after what Jesus does in v.5. So why does he bring up killing?

Also – isn't this a false dilemma? Are those the only two options – save life or to kill? What about healing? That's the question at hand, isn't it? And Jesus doesn't even mention healing – only saving life or killing.

And why does Jesus get so infuriated when they don't answer his question?

And why does he ask if it's lawful to save life? The Pharisees already all agreed that you could save a life on the Sabbath. Wouldn't a more pertinent question be, "Is it lawful to heal someone who has a non-life-threatening problem, on the Sabbath?" It seems like Jesus is just totally missing the point.

## Morality, Not Procedure

The reason it seems like Jesus is missing the point is that he's changing the point. Jesus does that. He never falls into the error of letting his opponents define the starting place for the debate. What Jesus is doing here is reorienting and redefining the entire discussion of the Sabbath from a completely different perspective. For the Pharisees, the Sabbath, and all of law keeping was a matter of regulations and procedures – external practices. Jesus wants to reframe the entire issue in terms of the heart – internal morality – good and evil. The question is not this procedure vs. that procedure; it's whether there is good or evil in your heart.

That's always been the issue for God – even in the OT Sabbath law.

**Amos 8:4 Hear this, you who trample the needy ... 5 saying, "When will ... the Sabbath be ended that we may market wheat?"—skimping the measure, boosting the price and cheating with dishonest scales...10 I will turn your religious feasts into mourning and all your singing into weeping.**

If you take the day off of actually doing evil because it's the Sabbath, but that evil is still in your heart, you're breaking the Sabbath.

**Isaiah 1:13 Stop bringing meaningless offerings! Your incense is detestable to me. New Moons, Sabbaths and convocations-- I cannot bear your evil assemblies. ... 16 wash and make yourselves clean. Take your evil deeds out of my sight! Stop doing wrong, 17 learn to do good!**

The Pharisees are doing the same thing the people back in the OT were doing – celebrating the Sabbath while holding evil in their hearts. And by framing the question in terms of good and evil, Jesus is forcing them to come to grips with that.

## **Two Directions of the Heart**

This language seems to come right out of Deuteronomy 30:15.

**Deuteronomy 30:15 See, I set before you today life and good, death and evil.**

On the one side you have life and that which is good. The other option is death and evil. And you are always moving in one direction or the other. Jesus' question is this: Which is better on the Sabbath, to move in the direction of preserving and restoring and protecting life, or in the opposite direction? Don't think just in terms of the end point; think of the direction. You may not be saving or murdering anyone right now, but your attitude toward people is going in one of those directions or the other.

## **Silence**

So Jesus asks them the easiest religious question that's ever been asked: which is allowed on the Sabbath, good or evil? What's their response? Their response is the most awkward silence ever.

**4 ... “Which is lawful on the Sabbath: to do good or to do evil, to save life or to kill?” But they remained silent.**

They took the 5<sup>th</sup>. No response. They just stood there. When it says **they remained silent**, it's an imperfect tense which indicates ongoing silence. They kept on remaining silent. Very awkward. Finally, all the people look back at Jesus. What's he going to do?

**5 he looked around at them**

More silence. Jesus is still waiting for an answer. It was not a rhetorical question. He wants them to respond. They don't respond, so he stares them down. Jesus makes eye contact with each one of these Pharisees. But they still refuse to answer.

## **Jesus' Anger**

Why? Why won't the most highly trained theologians of the day answer the easiest Bible question ever? Their reason for not answering is something that infuriates Jesus.

**5 he looked around at them in anger**

The word for **anger** is *orge* – wrath. Why is he so mad? If there is something that makes Jesus mad, it would be a good idea for us to know what that is, right? Verse 5 tells us.

**5 he looked around at them in anger and, deeply distressed at their stubborn hearts.**

Literally, **hardened hearts**. That is what infuriated Jesus. There is a sin that, more than anything else, provokes fury from God – a hard heart. A hard heart is a heart that cannot be penetrated with truth from God. They might be open minded to a lot of things, but their minds are closed to God. God makes the truth clear, but because of a love of sin they just refuse to face the facts, and they will not embrace the truth as truth.

You could say that sin is the most fundamental thing about depraved humanity that angers God. The whole discussion about the sinfulness of man in the book of Romans goes on for 3 chapters and it all starts with this:

**Romans 1:18 The wrath of God is being revealed from heaven against all the godlessness and wickedness of men who suppress the truth**

Instead of embracing and accepting and welcoming the truth, they suppress it. They might claim to be ignorant, agnostic, atheistic or whatever, but the truth is there, they have it, but they are keeping a lid on it because their petrified hearts refuse to let it in. This anger Jesus has is not the irritation of a teacher who can't get his students to listen; it's the very wrath of God over hard hearted rebellion.

These Pharisees think they are defending the Sabbath day, but in reality they are committing the worst Sabbath offence possible – hardening their hearts. The reason the people of Israel never got to enter God's Sabbath rest in the Promised Land was because they hardened their hearts. And so in his discussion about the Sabbath rest in Hebrews 3,4 the writer warns us three times not to do that.

**Hebrews 3:7 ... "Today, if you hear his voice, 8 do not harden your hearts as you did ... during the time of testing in the desert, ... 10 That is why I was angry with that generation ... 11 So I declared on oath in my anger, 'They shall never enter my rest.'" 12 See to it, brothers, that none of you has a sinful, unbelieving heart that turns away from the living God....15 As has just been said: "Today, if you hear his voice, do not harden your hearts**

**4:1 Therefore, since the promise of entering his rest still stands, let us be careful that none of you be found to have fallen short of it. ... 7 "Today, if you hear his voice, do not harden your hearts."**

The absolute worst Sabbath violation that is possible is to do what these Sabbath protecting Pharisees were doing and harden your heart against Jesus' message.

## Hard Hearts

Jesus asks questions that force them to think of the Sabbath in moral terms, and they just flat out refuse. They don't want to think about good and evil. The problem here isn't just that they aren't listening because they are distracted or something. They are actively rejecting Jesus' message. It's not like they are trying to get it, but Jesus is mumbling or being unclear. They have their fingers in their ears and they are saying, "La, la, la, la... I can't hear you..." If they so much as open the door of their hearts to think along those lines, then they will have to acknowledge that it really is good for Jesus to heal this man, even on the Sabbath, and they will have to come to grips with the reality of the evil in their own hearts.

So they go silent. In all their education and training not one of these men can think of a single thing to say. If healing this guy is so wrong, now's their chance to speak up, but they are silenced.

This question Jesus asked – it's such an easy question with such an obvious answer, there's no way to get it wrong because of lack of education. The only way to get that question wrong is to just harden your heart against God.<sup>3</sup> And so Jesus just looks around the room and watches each one of their hearts crust over and calcify in their resistance of the truth. It's like they are saying, "Hey Jesus, leave our hearts out of this." They just want to talk about procedures and rules. But for Jesus, the issue is not the rules, but who rules. Jesus rules, and he doesn't just rule religious rituals; he makes demands on our hearts. No religious thing you do on the outside is good if what's on the inside is evil.

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<sup>3</sup> In the parallel account in Matthew, Jesus tells them the answer to the question. **Mt.12:11 he said to them, "If any of you has a sheep and it falls into a pit on the Sabbath, will you not take hold of it and lift it out? 12 How much more valuable is a man than a sheep! Therefore it is lawful to do good on the Sabbath."** This came right out of their own rabbinical rules. Even with all their legalistic rules, they had an allowance for retrieving a sheep. They had made an exception for a sheep but not for a man, because they cared more about sheep than men. Like many animal rights activists. Jesus rejected that kind of thinking in Mt.12:12. People are more important than animals.

## Pharisees' Evil Hearts

And the Pharisees wouldn't even begin to accept that, because while their external, ritualistic behavior was impeccable, their hearts would make a black mark on a piece of coal. They don't care about this guy's life.<sup>4</sup> They don't care about the quality of his life, they don't care about his soul, and no doubt they would be perfectly fine if Jesus never healed him at all.

And it's always easy to jump on the Pharisees with both feet, but we all have tendencies in this direction. We fall in love with our traditions and opinions and human wisdom. "It needs to be done this way!" "Is that in the Bible?" "No, but it ought to be." (We don't say that, but we act that way when we have strong opinions.)

It's amazing how militant we can get in the church about our traditions. Which is ironic, because when that tradition first started, the whole point was probably to honor God, or to show kindness to people. But then the tradition becomes a matter of warfare. "That is not the right way to show kindness to people, you jerk." And when we get like that, the last thing we have ears for is Jesus talking to us about our hearts.

## Distress

So Jesus was very angry, but that wasn't his chief emotion. There's another emotion that was even more predominant. **5** he looked around at them in anger and, deeply distressed at their hard hearts. He was **deeply distressed**. That refers to sadness and grief. The looking around in anger is in the aorist tense, which, in this case, speaks of a momentary thing, and the deep distress is in the present tense, which is more of an ongoing idea. So it's, having looked around in anger, he is being deeply distressed. The anger came and went, but the ongoing, remaining emotion is deep sorrow and grief. Jesus didn't hate these Pharisees. His heart broke for them.

Even righteous anger, if you hang on to it too long, will end up causing you to sin. Man's anger does not bring about the righteous life that God desires. And even for God, his anger gives way to sorrow and compassion. The most scathing rebuke Jesus ever gave was when he laid into the Pharisees in Mt.23. But right after that we see him wailing out loud with tears, "Oh Jerusalem, Jerusalem, how often I longed to gather your children together..." Yes, Jesus warned people of hellfire and judgment, but he did so with tears. Heaven help us if we start preaching hellfire and brimstone without any genuine tears for the lost.

## The Healing

Well, this poor guy with the withered hand is still standing there.

**5 he looked around at them in anger and, deeply distressed at their stubborn hearts, said to the man, "Stretch out your hand." he stretched it out, and his hand was completely restored.**

Jesus Christ created muscles in this man's hand and made it completely whole and healthy – just like his other hand. And he didn't do any work. Sometimes Jesus heals with a touch. Sometimes he uses some object lesson, like putting mud on a blind man's eyes. Sometimes he heals with just a word. Here he doesn't even do that. He doesn't even so much as say "be healed." He does tell the guy to display his hand to show that it's already healed, but he doesn't move a muscle or even speak a word to bring about the healing.

How did he do it? With a thought. He just willed it. Jesus just decided this man's hand would be restored, and it was restored. Aside from being still more proof of Jesus' deity, this really makes it tough

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<sup>44</sup> Their attitude was well expressed by a synagogue ruler who was angry with the people who came to Jesus for healing on the Sabbath: "There are six days on which work ought to be done; come on those days and be healed, and not on the Sabbath day" (Lk.13:14).

for them to pin a crime on him. They are accusing him of working on the Sabbath. What work did he do? He thought something good.

Jesus was making it obvious that the only one doing any work at that moment was God. God the Son healed the man. And the only thing Jesus is guilty of is having a kind thought on the Sabbath.

## **Unlawful to do Good, Lawful to Do Evil**

This is how twisted legalistic religion gets. Jesus has a kind thought – moral good, and that’s an intolerable Sabbath violation. And what was in their hearts? Hard hearted rebellion, rejection of Christ and the gospel, and in a moment, murder – but all that was justified. That was lawful in their system. That’s why they couldn’t answer the question, because in their system, it really was lawful to do evil on the Sabbath (in your heart), but not legal to do good. It’s OK to rebel against God and to be full of hatred and plan a murder, but to have a kind thought on the Sabbath – that’s crossing the line. That’s always where legalism ends up. Internal evil is allowed, as long as you follow the rules.

## **Brilliance**

One of my favorite parts of reading the gospels is to see the genius of Jesus Christ. This is child’s play for him, but it’s amazing to see him do this time after time – completely shut down the smartest, most educated, most powerful men with a single statement or question. They think they’ve got him and there is no way out this time, and Jesus just asks them one question and shuts them down completely. Whatever they do, they lose. If they say it’s lawful to do good, then they just gave Jesus permission to heal the guy. But they can’t say it’s lawful to do evil. And if they remain silent, what happens to their case against Jesus? How do you convict someone for doing something when he asked the authorities right before he did it if it was ok, and they wouldn’t answer? No matter what they answer, or don’t answer, they lose. It’s so much fun to watch Jesus play chess with these grand masters because every single game he puts them in check mate with one single move.

## **Conspiracy**

### **6 Then the Pharisees went out and began to plot with the Herodians how they might kill Jesus.**

They make the decision – this Jesus guy from Nazareth needs to be dead. Jesus was right, wasn’t he? The direction their wicked hearts were going really did end up with destroying life. It has become obvious to them at this point that in order for their system to remain intact, Jesus would have to be eliminated.

Did the Pharisees really believe that murder was ok? No. That’s why they don’t kill him right here on the spot. But they did believe that Jesus deserved the death penalty because of how he had violated the law. If someone called them out after the crucifixion and accused them of wrongdoing, they would have pulled out their Bibles and showed them chapter and verse why it was justified. Pascal said, “Men never do evil so completely and cheerfully as when they do it from religious conviction.”<sup>5</sup> That’s true. Once someone convinces himself that the Bible gives him permission for his sinful attitude, look out. They will destroy a person, destroy a church and brag about it, blow up an abortion clinic, commit murder – all without any remorse. I’ve experienced that firsthand, and it’s an amazing thing. People who are normally very concerned about following the Bible, but they convince themselves that some sinful attitude is biblically justified, and conscience just goes completely dead.

The word translated **kill** is normally translated *destroy*. It’s the word Jesus just used in 2:22 where he said that if you try to put old wine in new wineskins you destroy both the wine and the skins. That’s exactly what’s happening here. They try to stuff Jesus and his new wine into the old wineskins of their

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<sup>5</sup> Pensées, 894.



religious system and the result is the destruction of both. They try to destroy Jesus, and the result was the destruction of their own system.

So they go out and hook up with **the Herodians**. There is no historical data on the Herodians, but it's probably a pretty safe guess that they were Jews who supported Herod. Probably liberal Jews who were more into politics than Scripture – like the Sadducees.<sup>6</sup> And so you would expect them to be the natural opponents of the Pharisees, who wanted the death penalty for anyone who didn't take Scripture seriously. But the enemy of my enemy is my friend. Their mutual hatred for Jesus was greater than their hatred for each other, so they join forces.

The Herodians, and Herod, are lumped together with the Pharisees multiple times in the gospels.<sup>7</sup> And it's really not surprising because even though the Pharisees and the Herodians were very different on the outside, they were the same on the inside – evil hearts. Why did Herod have John arrested? Because John called him out on his immoral marriage. It doesn't matter if you're into politics or religion, liberal or conservative, if you are clinging to evil in your heart, you're going to hate Jesus Christ when he exposes that evil.

## The Pharisees' Anger

That's why the Pharisees are so mad. It's not just because Jesus healed this guy. Nothing is more infuriating to a hypocrite than someone who exposes his evil heart. Any time you make a person feel immoral or guilty, get ready for some real hatred to come your way. Jesus constantly exposed people's guilt, which is why his life ended with the masses screaming for his blood. They didn't kill Jesus because he healed people. They didn't kill him for providing food for the multitudes. They didn't kill him for casting out demons. They killed him for exposing their hypocrisy and for shining light on their dark hearts.

**John 3:19 This is the verdict: Light has come into the world, but men loved darkness instead of light because their deeds were evil. 20 Everyone who does evil hates the light, and will not come into the light for fear that his deeds will be exposed.**

Bill O'Reilly wrote a book titled "Killing Jesus" where he asserts the real reason Jesus was crucified was over taxes. He threatened the income stream to Rome, so they executed him. I read a review of that book by someone who mocked the idea and said, "Jesus was crucified because he was a rabble-rouser that got the people stirred up." That's just as wrong as O'Reilly's theory. Jesus got people stirred up, but not against Rome – against him. The Jewish masses were there at the crucifixion chanting, "We have no king but Caesar." If anything, Jesus aroused loyalty to Rome, because they would join up with anyone who would help them eliminate Jesus.

## Conclusion: Receptiveness

So what is the application of this for our lives? The most important one is simply to know Christ better. You've seen yet another facet of his glory, you've seen his wisdom and his wrath and his compassion and his power – hopefully that view of who Christ is will take us one more notch up in our love for him, our fear of him, and our trust in him.

The other application is the obvious one – don't harden your heart. Do the opposite. What is the opposite of hardening your heart? What should these Pharisees have done?

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<sup>6</sup> One wonders if perhaps the Herodians was simply another way of referring to the Sadducees. Prior to Jesus' time, and shortly after it, Herod was in charge of the Temple and the priesthood. During Jesus' time, it was the Sadducees. The Sadducees were theologically liberal, and were very political. And in the event where Jesus warned his disciples about negative influence, Matthew has him saying, "Beware of the yeast of the Pharisees and Sadducees," and in Mark the same account says, "Beware of the yeast of the Pharisees and that of Herod" (Mt.16:6,11, Mk.8:15).

<sup>7</sup> Mk.3:6, 8:15, 12:15, Mt.22:16.

They knew he had miraculous power. They fully expected him to do a miracle. They should have been sitting at his feet in humble submission. They should have done what we learned last week is the key to true Sabbath observance - come to Jesus and take his yoke and learn from him so they could find Sabbath rest for their souls.

The opposite of a hard heart is a receptive heart – like the Bereans. Everybody always thinks the reason the Bereans were commended in Acts 17 was that they searched the Scriptures to see if what Paul was saying was true. It's good to check what you hear against the Scriptures, but that's not the part that made them so noble. What made them noble was their eagerness to accept what Paul was saying.

**Acts 17:11 Now the Bereans were of more noble character than the Thessalonians, for they received the message with great eagerness and examined the Scriptures every day to see if what Paul said was true.**

It wasn't just that they searched the Scriptures. The point is the attitude they had while they were searching the Scriptures. They had hearts of eagerness to receive what Paul was saying. They heard what he said, and thought, "Oh, I hope that's true! Oh, how I hope that checks out!" And they searched the Bible and then said, "Ah – there it is! Yes! It checks out in Scripture. We can believe this!"

That receptive attitude was what made them more noble than the Thessalonians. But eventually the Thessalonians came around.

**1 Thessalonians 1:6 ... in spite of severe suffering, you welcomed the message with the joy given by the Holy Spirit.**

They welcomed the message with joy.

**1 Thessalonians 2:13 And we also thank God continually because, when you received the word of God ... you welcomed it not as the word of men, but as ... the word of God**

It's a very, very big deal how you listen when God speaks. Listen the right way – like the Thessalonians and Bereans, and God will reward you greatly. Listen the wrong way, and even the little understanding you have will be taken away.

**Luke 8:18 Therefore consider carefully how you listen. Whoever has will be given more; whoever does not have, even what he thinks he has will be taken from him.**

If your wife is talking to you and you're not really listening, that's rude, and unloving. If God is talking to you and you're not really listening, that's evil and wicked. And if you keep it up, it can turn into the unforgiveable sin. The Holy Spirit opens your eyes to see something, and you slam your eyes back shut and refuse to accept it even after the Spirit has made it clear. Do that long enough and you lose your ability to accept it. I don't know if there is any greater evidence of a redeemed heart than a heart that is eager to drink in every word that comes from the mouth of God.

**Psalms 119:103 How sweet are your words to my taste, sweeter than honey to my mouth!**

**Job 23:12 ... I have treasured the words of his mouth more than my daily bread.**