

RELIGION, RULES, AND RITUALS

Mark 3:1-6

INTRODUCTION: In our Scripture reading today we come across a group of religious, rule keeping, and ritual keeping people that honestly thought they were the only ones close to God and the only ones obedient to God, and yet they did not even know God. Today we will look at three practices that not only make our Lord Jesus angry but also hurt His heart.

I. DON'T PUT YOUR RELIGION OVER GOD!

It is important to see when and where this story took place: Mark 3:1. This was the Sabbath Day and Jesus was in the synagogue with a man hoping for healing, but with other men who had a different mission entirely: Mark 3:2. These Pharisees were not in the synagogue to worship the Lord, they were there to find fault and to see if Jesus would heal on the Sabbath Day. Religious legalist are always watching others to see them mess up. Legalism is when we turn our religious preferences into divine principles. Legalist put their traditions even above God's Word. We can find ourselves with so many man-made rules that instead of resting in Jesus we are constantly anxious about everything: Matthew 11:28-30. Religion gives us work, does and don'ts. Jesus will give us rest. Do you want religion or relationship? Do you want God or to just play church?

II. DON'T PUT RULES OVER GOODNESS!

Our Lord knew the Pharisees were watching His every move so He got right to the point: Mark 3:3-4. Our Lord Jesus healed seven different times on the Sabbath Day and that broke the Pharisees man made rules. Jesus was more concerned with doing good than He was to keep any one's man-made rules. These Pharisees had made their man-made rules on top of what God had commanded. God's Word in the Old Testament had 613 rules. They added 1,500 more rules in the "Mishnah" but even that was not enough for them. Jesus never put man-made rules over doing good. Remember, it always angers Jesus when you put man-made rules over doing good!

III. DON'T PUT RITUALS OVER GRACE!

Jesus asked these Pharisees a question they either could not answer or would not answer. Their hearts were stubborn and their minds were made up no matter what the truth was! Mark 3:5. Why did Jesus become so angry with those religious rulers? It all goes back to what God's house, God's day and God's Word and even what God Himself are all about. Our God is all about grace! God is all about restoration and refilling that which is empty. These religious leaders did not care about his man's withered hand because their hearts were withered! In our time it is not so much about rituals. Today so many in the church are concerned with their traditions. Now there is nothing wrong with tradition unless we put our tradition over God's Word! When our tradition does not allow for God's grace to flow, we had better change our traditions. Remember, religion is all about what others want from you. Christianity is all about what God wants from you. Man's religion is all about rules, requirements, regulations and rituals. True Christianity is all about relationship with Jesus Who is all about goodness and grace. Man's religion will wind up destroying the very one they say their religion is all about: Mark 3:6. Remember, it is not just what Jesus did in this healing but when He did it that angered the Pharisees: John 9:13-16. These Pharisees were so blinded by their rules, rituals and regulations that they felt it was wrong to heal on the Sabbath but ok to hire a hitman on the Sabbath! Luke 6:41-42.