



Acts of Mercy and Sacrifices

Matthew 12:1-8

And if you had known what this means, “I desire mercy, and not sacrifice,” you would not have condemned the guiltless. For the Son of Man is Lord of the Sabbath (Matthew 12:7-8—ESV).

Why do societies and some people make laws? Some for the benefit of those they hope to bless. Others for the benefit of special interest groups or themselves. Why did God give us the Law of Love, the Ten Commandments, and other regulations about how to worship God and live rightly. Among other reasons, God did so for the benefit of all creation and those God created in His image. Over many generations, scribes, Pharisees, and rabbis made additional laws and regulations that became traditions. These laws did not coincide with the intentions or revealed will of God in the Scriptures. Many of them used these laws and traditions to condemn others rather than to bring God's blessings to others. Those who condemned Jesus for not making His disciples obey their manmade laws used their laws to condemn them rather than seek ways to show them mercy and help them. If they had put God's Law of Love first and loved their neighbors as themselves (including their enemies), they would have thought of some way to feed the disciples rather than condemn them and let them go hungry. Perhaps one of them could have invited Jesus and His disciples to come to their home for dinner, as Zacchaeus and other Pharisees did. Or, they could have given them money to buy food to relieve their hunger.

Jesus expects us to be merciful to others, bless others, and help others. Too many focus their attention on religious rituals that involve some sacrifice as a substitute for being merciful to others. They use their religious rules to condemn others, thinking they are better than others because they follow their made-up rules and traditions. They think by sacrificing their time and money for religious reasons and rituals that they can earn extra credit with God and receive God's favor. Let's pray, bless, and show mercy God's way, which may be costly to us.