

CONCEPTS that will be covered in the lesson

- Discuss how the Pharisees are not where they are supposed to be because they are looking to undermine Jesus
- Highlight Jesus' understanding that it is better to offer God's mercy than impose sacrifice on others.
- Conclude with how Jesus does not let the threat of conflict stop or stifle his advocacy of God's mercy

Materials needed:

1. Movie clip (available on rfour.org) from *Les Miserables* (2012 version)
2. Electronics that show the video clip
3. For activity:
 - a. Have a printed version for each student of the "match worker to workplace" chart, located at end of lesson
 - b. And/or -- have a way to display the chart on a screen to work on it as a class

THE LESSON

OPENING PRAYER

OPENING QUESTION

- One of the things we do every class is ask and answer the opening question at the beginning of class – because it helps us 1. Learn more about each other and 2. Helps "warm us up" for some of the ideas in the upcoming lesson. So we're going to do that now.
- So here's the opening question for today's class. I [the teacher] will ask the question and then to give you some time to think of an answer, I will answer first.
- Once I answer the question, we'll go around the circle and each of us will answer.
- When it's your turn, start with your name and then answer the question to the best of your ability.
- **Here's this week's question:** What is a rule that you follow that you see other people NOT follow (or, vice versa, what is a rule that you break that you watch other people follow)?

TRANSITION TO ACTIVITY

- We're continuing our session that looks at stories with conflict in them.
- In today's story, we'll see that the Pharisees are going out of their way to conflict with and interfere with Jesus.
- To help us see what I mean by the Pharisees "going out of their way," let's do a pretty straightforward activity where we match each type of worker with their workplace.

- [*give handout with table of workers and workplaces on it*]
- In the column on the left, we are to put the associated letter of the workplace that we think best fits with that worker
 - Note 1: The two filled-in columns are not lined-up in anyway
 - Note 2: Each workplace will be used once
- *Optional:* We can do this together or individually – though I think it'll be more fun as a group, so let's do it as a group!

DO ACTIVITY

ASK

- Were there some work environments listed where some of the workers, if they visited there, would look really out of place? If yes, what are some pairings you would find strange? (eg: might be weird to see Darth Vader in a coffee shop; might be weird to see a chef in the forest)
- However, was it possible that some of the workers in the list might look at home in more than one of the work environments listed? If yes, do you have any examples? (just about everyone looks like they belong in a coffee shop except, maybe, for Vader)

TELL

- This simple, silly activity is meant to help us start thinking about how certain people, when doing their jobs, are supposed to be in certain places.
- And, if they are in places very different than where they should be, it is pretty obvious -- and, it probably means they are not doing the job they are supposed to be doing.
- Keep this in mind as we read today's scripture story – look for the people who are not in their work environment.
- Note: There is more to this story than workers not working in their correct workspace, but it is an important part of the story
- Another thing to know before we read the story that will help with understanding what is going on in this story is that there was a religious rule during Jesus' time that you should not work (including preparing food *and* helping others) on the Sabbath (aka the day of rest – which was on *Saturday* for the Israelites)
- Let's see what happens.

READ **Matthew 12:1-14** (*recommendation: Have class read it aloud; one person per verse*)

1At that time Jesus went through the grainfields on the sabbath; his disciples were hungry, and they began to pluck heads of grain and to eat. 2When the Pharisees saw it, they said to him, "Look, your disciples are doing what is not lawful to do on the sabbath." 3He said to them, "Have you not read what David did when he and his companions were hungry? 4He entered the house of God and ate the bread of the Presence, which it was not lawful for him or his companions to eat, but only for the priests. 5Or have you not read in the law that on the sabbath the priests in the temple break the sabbath and

yet are guiltless? 6I tell you, something greater than the temple is here. 7But if you had known what this means, 'I desire mercy and not sacrifice,' you would not have condemned the guiltless. 8For the Son of Man is lord of the sabbath."

9He left that place and entered their synagogue; 10a man was there with a withered hand, and they asked him, "Is it lawful to cure on the sabbath?" so that they might accuse him. 11He said to them, "Suppose one of you has only one sheep and it falls into a pit on the

sabbath; will you not lay hold of it and lift it out? 12How much more valuable is a human being than a sheep! So it is lawful to do good on the sabbath.” 13Then he said to the man, “Stretch out your hand.” He stretched it out, and it was restored, as sound as the other.

14But the Pharisees went out and conspired against him, how to destroy him.

ASK

- Verse 1 – Where are Jesus and the disciples? (the grain fields)
- Where are grain fields usually located? (on farms in the country, not in the city)
- What do the disciples do in the grain fields? (they eat)
- Why? (because they are hungry)
- Verse 2 – Who saw the disciples eat? (The Pharisees)
- Do you know where the Pharisees usually work? (They usually work in the synagogues and where the Temple was – which also means their work spaces were mostly in towns and cities)
- So, what do you think -- Are the Pharisees supposed to be in the grain fields? Is that their workspace? (Nope, they are out of their usual workplace)
- Verse 2 – What important thing are the Pharisees concerned about that caused them to leave their regular workspace? (That what the disciples have done is not lawful according to their religious rules. NOTE: The rule is that a person may not harvest or prepare food on the Sabbath)
- What do you think? Is that worth leaving your regular work to regulate?
- Let’s see if Jesus agrees with the Pharisees. In verse 3-7 – does Jesus agree with the Pharisees? (No, not at all. He gives plenty of reasons for why the rule is not important)
- In verse 7, what “rule” does Jesus say is more important than the Sabbath rule? (that mercy is greater than sacrifice)
- In verse 9, whose synagogue does Jesus go to? (“theirs” – meaning the Pharisees who were out in the field; so Jesus is now in their regular workspace)
- Verse 10, what do the Pharisees ask Jesus? (If it is lawful to heal on the Sabbath – they are still focused on the “You shall not work on Sabbath” argument)
- Verse 11 and 12 – What is Jesus’ answer to their question? (Yes, it is better to heal than not to heal on the Sabbath)
- Verse 13 – What does Jesus then do? (heals the man with the crippled hand)
- Verse 14 – What was the reaction by the Pharisees to the man being healed? (They went to plan how to destroy Jesus)

TELL

- The first thing we see with the Pharisees is that they are so focused on undermining Jesus that they were spying on Jesus out in the grain fields.
 - (*Aside:* To help with the ridiculous nature of the Pharisees in this story, I like to imagine them trying to stealthily walk through a field of wheat, and every 10 feet or so, stopping and popping their heads above the wheat to try and see if they can find Jesus)
- As we’ve already established, this is *not* where the Pharisees are supposed to be.
- But, at first, it looks like the Pharisees’ misguided adventure has paid off. They think they’ve caught Jesus red-

handed and so they pop out from behind the corn stalks, pointing and yelling, “Ah-ha! We’ve caught you!”

- The Pharisees’ think that Jesus and the disciples should not eat that food because they are “preparing it” and preparing food on the Sabbath is a “no-no.”
- But, Jesus disagrees
- Jesus’ disagrees by reminding them that scripture says that God does not desire sacrifice, but mercy – a thing sorely lacking in the Pharisees’ argument.
- Now, disagreeing with the Pharisees wasn’t something you usually did, especially when talking about God stuff. What Jesus did, here, by not accepting what the Pharisees said about God was very unusual.
- But Jesus wasn’t done with this conflict between him and the Pharisees.
- Later that day, Jesus goes into town and goes to the synagogue of those *same* Pharisees
- The Pharisees are now on their home turf, their home court. They have home field advantage, now, so to speak.
- And, once Jesus is there, the Pharisees are wanting to continue this argument about working on the Sabbath.
- But Jesus does not back down. In fact, not only does Jesus continue to disagree with the Pharisees in their work environment, he actually does the thing they were daring him to only *answer* about.
- Jesus actually heals the man, on the Sabbath, in the synagogue, in front of the Pharisees and everyone else.
- This is a pretty impressive “in your face” type of healing!
- But even more astonishing is the response by the Pharisees.
- Instead of being thankful for the man’s healing, they instead plot to destroy Jesus.
- When we compare the results, then, of Jesus and the Pharisees – we see that one perspective leads to being fed and healed, while the other perspective leads to trying to destroy a person who provides the feeding and healing
- So what do you think, who has the better argument?

TRANSITION TO VIDEO CLIP

- Sometimes when we hear others say “Be compassionate,” it sounds kind of peaceful and maybe even easy.
- But nothing could be further from the truth.
- It is difficult to be compassionate.
- Partly because the world will argue with you about it – even those who should be encouraging compassion.
- And partly because the people you are to be compassionate towards don’t always make it easy.
- For example, let’s what the following movie clip.
- The clip is from *Les Miserables*. The main character, Jean (Jon), is homeless and unwanted.
- Let’s see what happens to him.

WATCH *FIRST HALF* of VIDEO CLIP

[Pause movie clip after Jean is brought in by the police – video gives you a 5 second opportunity to pause.]

ASK

- Have you tracked what’s happened so far? If so, what’s happened so far? (The bishop has shown mercy to Jean/Jon, but then Jean went and stole valuables from the bishop. However, the police caught Jean and brought him back to the Bishop)
- Has Jean treated the Bishop fairly? (No)
- So what do you think would be a *fair* response by the Bishop here? (*have him arrested or let him go with a warning*)

will probably be the two offered answers – feel free to ask them why they offer those answers)

- Thank you for sharing your thoughts! Let's see what happens

WATCH REST OF VIDEO CLIP

ASK

- What did the Bishop do with Jean? (covered for Jean and gave even MORE silver to Jean)
- In other words, instead of enforcing the rules, the Bishop showed mercy to Jean.
- Now, would enforcing the rules have been justified for the Bishop? Sure.
- That would've been the Pharisee way, right?
- And, honestly, it probably would've been easier, too.
- The police were definitely ready to help out, weren't they?
- And, hardly anyone would've been opposed to the Bishop demanding "justice" – I mean would you have faulted the Bishop if he had had Jean arrested?

TELL

- The Bishop does a very difficult thing by showing compassion here. It takes resolve to go against what everyone expects and to help someone after they betray you.
- But the reason the Bishop shows mercy is so that Jean can see that God's way is much better than the way of the people who keep beating him and making life so unbearable for him.
- And it *works*. This mercy, shown by the Bishop, is what initiates Jean's transformation from a criminal life to an honest life.
- In today's Bible story, a different type of transformation happens – a man is healed.
- A man is healed because Jesus did the hard work of advocating for God's mercy and compassion.
- This is not easy work.
- And, as we saw in today's story, to be an advocate for God's mercy and compassion is to sometimes be in direct opposition with important, powerful people.
- But, like we saw with David and Goliath story, **the reason to engage in conflict was not to win, but to better reveal to others the truth of who God is.**
- In this case, not only was God's mercy on display because of Jesus' choice, but it was very clearly contrasted against the small-minded, petty, and uncaring perspective advocated by the Pharisees.
- Again, I ask you to consider which argument appears to be more attractive to you?
- And that's the good news for today.

CLOSING PRAYER

See next page for the "Match worker to workplace" chart

ANSWERS to the chart (listed on next page)

1. Office – CFO
2. Truck / Car --- UPS Delivery Person
3. Other People’s Homes – Plumber
4. Coffee shop – blogger
5. Courtroom --- Bailiff
6. Restaurant --- Hostess
7. Airplane – Pilot
8. Hotel -- Concierge
9. Outside – DNR officer
10. Foundry --- Metallurgist
11. Hospital --- Nurse
12. College --- Professor
13. Death Star --- Darth Vader
14. CERN Accelerator --- Physicist
15. Synagogue --- Pharisees

Match the worker with the place they would be most likely to work. Write the letter of the work place in the column to the left of the worker most likely to work there.

WORK PLACE ANSWER	WORKER	WORK PLACE
	1. Chief Financial Officer (CFO)	A. Coffee shop
	2. UPS Delivery Person	B. CERN Accelerator
	3. Plumber	C. Hospital
	4. Blogger	D. Restaurant
	5. Bailiff	E. Truck / Car
	6. Chef	F. Airplane
	7. Pilot	G. Foundry
	8. Concierge	H. Synagogue
	9. DNR Officer (Department of Natural Resources)	I. Office
	10. Metallurgist	J. Outside
	11. Nurse	K. College
	12. Professor	L. Other People's Homes
	13. Darth Vader	M. Courtroom
	14. Physicist	N. Hotel
	15. Pharisees	O. Death Star