

## Sunday Lesson – Jan 31, 2021

### GOSPEL: Luke 6: 1-16

#### *Healing on the Sabbath*

##### Summary

“Luke’s purpose is to prepare his reader for the rejection, arrest, conviction, and execution of Jesus by his opponents by laying the groundwork early in the book, which clarifies the issues which made enemies of the Pharisees (in particular) and the other Jewish leaders, as well as with the masses (hinted at in the Nazareth incident in Luke 4:16-30). The masses rejected Jesus because He would bring blessings on the Gentiles (Luke 4:16-30). The Pharisees rejected Jesus because He claimed to be God (5:17-26), because He associated with sinners (5:27-39), and now, because He did not keep the Sabbath as they interpreted it (6:1-6). These issues will dominate the relationship between the Pharisees and Jesus, culminating in His crucifixion. The section which we are studying provides us with the “continental divide” of the gospels.” *(Excerpts from bible.org/seriespage/18-great-sabbath-controversy-luke-61-11)*

##### Insight

“Why did the Pharisees miss the meaning--and why do we so often miss it?

(i) They did not bring to scripture an open mind. They came to scripture not to learn God’s will but to find proof texts to buttress up their own ideas. Far too often men have taken their theology to the Bible instead of finding their theology in the Bible. When we read scripture we must say, not, “Listen, Lord, for thy servant is speaking,” but, “Speak, Lord, for thy servant is listening.”

(ii) They did not bring a needy heart. The man who comes with no sense of need always misses the deepest meaning of scripture.” *(Excerpts from studylight.org/commentaries/eng/dsb/luke-6.html by William Barclay)*



##### Gospel Reading

“On a certain Sabbath Jesus was walking through a field of ripe grain. His disciples were pulling off heads of grain, rubbing them in their hands to get rid of the chaff, and eating them. Some Pharisees said, “Why are you doing that, breaking a Sabbath rule?” But Jesus stood up for them. “Have you never read what David and those with him did when they were hungry? How he entered the sanctuary and ate fresh bread off the altar, bread that no one but priests were allowed to eat? He also handed it out to his companions.” Then he said, “The Son of Man is no slave to the Sabbath; he’s in charge.” On another Sabbath he went to the meeting place and taught. There was a man there with a crippled right hand. The religion scholars and Pharisees had their eyes on Jesus to see if he would heal the man, hoping to catch him in a Sabbath violation. He knew what they were up to and spoke to the man with the crippled hand: “Get up and stand here before us.” He did. Then Jesus addressed them, “Let me ask you something: What kind of action suits the Sabbath best? Doing good or doing evil? Helping people or leaving them helpless?” He looked around, looked each one in the eye. He said to the man, “Hold out your hand.” He held it out—it was as good as new! They were beside themselves with anger, and started plotting how they might get even with him. At about that same time he climbed a mountain to pray. He was there all night in prayer before God. The next day he summoned his disciples; from them he selected twelve he designated as apostles: Simon, whom he nam Peter, Andrew, his brother, James, John, Philip, Bartholomew, Matthew, Thomas, James, son of Alphaeus, Simon, called the Zealot, Judas, son of James, Judas Iscariot, who betrayed him.” *The Message*

##### What It Could Mean?

“There are two examples here of “breaking” the sabbath that involve Jesus. The sabbath itself is not dismissed or devalued,

rather exceptions to this very important practice are weighed and evaluated. Who gets to deviate and why? The answers in the text have to do with 1) authority and 2) purpose.

First, calling himself Son of Man and Lord, Jesus claims authority over the sabbath. This not only asserts Jesus's authority, but reminds the hearer of God's authority; humans are merely stewards of the practices and institutions given by God.

Further, Jesus uses his power in the second story to heal a man's hand. This command over physical health, done in full view of his critics, puts his power on full display. This is done in the context of teaching, itself a sign of authority, and the healing is accompanied by a pointed question that is not answered.

The question of purpose is addressed differently in each episode. In the first part of the text, the exception is made for the sake of hunger. In the second story, which takes place at another time, Jesus restores a man's hand to health on the sabbath in full view of his critics. The choice Jesus offers is not between doing something and doing nothing. The choice is between doing good or doing harm. The implication of Jesus's question is that acting is not the only way to dishonor the sabbath. Choosing not to act, when that choice results in harm or danger for another, also dishonors the sabbath.

Jesus is attempting to state his commitment to the tradition while advocating—embodying—change. This speaks to the tension experienced by many individuals and communities as they seek to be faithful in the midst of great upheaval. We have a sense that our practices are set in stone.

In early 2021, we hear this differently, in a different time when change has been thrust upon communities. This text provides an opportunity to reflect on our interrupted traditions, some cherished and some ready to be left behind. The sabbath is a gift meant for renewal and rest. If there are those who are not able to reap this benefit, then the community suffers. And the

whole community is then called to respond. Like justice, sabbath is personal, but also communal.

This text names the needs of others—to do good and to preserve life—as the criteria for choosing to act differently than before. In our current moment, after a forced break, communities are facing a myriad of choices about suspending, restarting, continuing, or changing practices that our communities have had for generations. Asking which approaches preserve the lives of our neighbors can help guide us forward. If there is to be action on the sabbath, it is not for harm or destruction, but for the feeding and healing of the world.” (Excerpts from *workingpreacher.org* by Kendra A. Mohn)

### Readings for Further Study

- [Mark 2: 23-28 & Matthew 12: 1-8](#) *The Sabbath was made for man, not man for the Sabbath*
- [Hebrews 4/Romans 10: 4](#) *Jesus became our rest/Jesus culmination of the law*
- [Colossians 2: 16](#) *We are not judged by whether or not we keep the Sabbath day*

### Thought for the Day

“God did not intend the Sabbath to be a burden, but rather a time of joy. The Bible says that blessings come when we honor the Sabbath and call it a delight (Isaiah 58:13). Yeshua said the Sabbath was made for our benefit (Mark 2:27). So enjoy it and give thanks to God for giving us rest.” ~ *David Wilber, A Christian Guide to the Biblical Feasts*

### A Prayer

Lord of the Sabbath, your followers were told not to work on the Sabbath, and yet they boldly plucked grain to show that you are Lord of all. The world tells us not to rest on the Sabbath. Show us how to rest boldly, rejecting conventions that go against your will, and instead praying and resting as you did up on the

mountain, for the glory of your word and work, Lord Jesus  
Christ. **Amen**