

“Honoring the Sabbath”

Luke 6:1-11 January 5, 2014

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Introduction

The Apostle Paul once wrote, “Let no man therefore judge you in meat, or in drink, or in respect of an holyday, or of the new moon, or of the Sabbath days: Which are a shadow of things to come; but the body is of Christ,” Colossians 2:16-17. And yet, this is exactly what Jesus was facing in light of the Pharisees accusation in today’s lesson. They were judging Him and accusing of Him of violating the sanctity of the Sabbath day, charging Him with blatant disregard to the commands of God. Jesus, knowing their thoughts on both occasions, knew the true purpose of the Sabbath has evaded the understanding of the Pharisees and rightly responded to their charges.

Luke 6:1-2 “And it came to pass on the second Sabbath after the first, that he went through the corn fields; and his disciples plucked the ears of corn, and did eat, rubbing them in their hands. And certain of the Pharisees said unto them, Why do ye that which is not lawful to do on the Sabbath days?”

Everyday there’s something new to deal with. Or, at least, Jesus must have felt like that. I wonder if He ever got the feeling that no matter what He does somebody will always have something to criticize. Feeling threatened by His ministry the scribes and Pharisees were often filled with wrath at His words and actions, see Luke 4:16-30.

This day was no different. It almost appears as if they are following Jesus to gain a reason to come against Him. In this verse, Jesus and His disciples were walking through a grain field. As per law, they were afforded the privilege on an ordinary day to pluck grain to satisfy hunger as long as they didn't fill up a container, Deut. 23:25. The issue present had nothing to do with the plucking of the grain rather the day in which it was being done, the Sabbath.

In the beginning God sanctified the Sabbath day as a day of rest. It was in honor of His own resting after the Creation, Genesis 2:2-3. This mandate was carried over in the Ten Commandments to promote rest and worship, Exodus 20:8-11. By the time we arrive in the New Testament the Pharisees had issued an almost oppressive charge over the Sabbath day, delineating it from its original intention. Being more concerned with strictness of rules rather than human compassion, they stopped at nothing to insure their way of interpreting the law was preserved rather than the mercy of God.

David Guzik's commentary on Enduringword.com, on this lesson shows how even in modern times the strictness of their rules overran the mercy of God:

"This approach to the Sabbath continues today among Orthodox Jews. In early 1992, tenants let three apartments in an Orthodox neighborhood in Israel burn to the ground while they asked a rabbi whether a telephone call to the fire department on the Sabbath would violate Jewish law. Observant Jews are forbidden to use the phone on the Sabbath, because doing so would break an electrical current, which is considered a form of work. In the half-hour it took the rabbi to decide "yes," the fire spread to two neighboring apartments," (Enduringword.com).

Luke 6:3-4 "And Jesus answering them said, Have ye not read so much as this, what David did, when himself was an hungred, and they which were with him; How he went into the house of God, and did take and eat the showbread, and gave also to them that were with him; which it is not lawful to eat but for the priests alone?"

The incident to which Jesus is referring here is found in 1 Samuel 21:1-6. David was on the run from Saul. With his life continually hanging by a thread he fled to the land of Nob where he came to Ahimelech the priest. David asked for five loaves but the priest declared that there was no common bread, only hallowed bread. But, if the men have kept themselves from women they could partake. David reassured them that they had and Ahimelech gave him the hallowed bread, feeding them that were hungry.

The Jews revered King David. Giving him as an example, though he was Lord over him, Jesus showed how genuine human needs coupled with mercy and compassion could be met.

This would not be the last time that Jesus challenged the Pharisees of letting rules get in the way of love for one another. In Matthew 23:23 He scolded them and said, "Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye pay tithe of mint and anise and cummin, and have omitted the weightier matters of the law, judgment, mercy, and faith: these ought ye have done, and not to leave the other undone."

The Sabbath was to be honored to benefit man not man for the Sabbath. Mark 2:27 says, "The Sabbath was made for man, and not man for the Sabbath." The principle behind this is that man be allowed time to rejuvenate and have his needs met for his physical and spiritual renewal. Not to become oppressed by a list of do's and don'ts, especially if they go outside of satisfying the needs of true human compassion.

Luke 6:5 "And he said unto them, That the Son of man is Lord also of the Sabbath."

To put another bur in the saddle of the Pharisees so to speak, Jesus, by using this wording identified Himself as "**Lord also of the Sabbath,**" which in essence is identifying Himself as God. In that He is expressing His authority and superiority over the Sabbath. Jesus was telling them that as the "**Son of man**" He outranked their opinion of what it was to truly keep the Sabbath.

Luke 6:6-7 “And it came to pass also on another Sabbath, that he entered into the synagogue and taught: and there was a man whose right hand was withered. And the scribes and Pharisees watched him, whether he would heal on the Sabbath day; that they might find an accusation against him.”

It’s a sad day when one can’t come into the sanctuary of God to worship without being watched for faults. Let me remind you of this, Jesus was completely without sin or fault (see 1 Peter 2:22; Hebrews 4:15). Anything that the Pharisees are seeking is not out of pure motivation of God’s law being violating, rather their own rules and regulations. “For they bind heavy burdens and grievous to be borne, and lay them on men’s shoulders; but they themselves will not move them with one of their fingers,” Matthew 23:4.

As He was teaching, there He took notice of a **“man whose right hand was withered.”** Surely the compassionate heart of Jesus, as with everyone He met, wanted nothing more than to see this child of God, one of His created, be made whole again. But, on the other end of the spectrum, the Pharisees cared less for the man’s condition and more about the day of a proposed healing. They valued the day over the life. This Jesus had issues with.

Luke 6:8-10 “But he knew their thoughts, and said to the man which had the withered hand, Rise up, and stand forth in the midst. And he rose and stood forth. Then said Jesus unto them, I will ask you one thing; Is it lawful on the Sabbath days to do good, or to do evil? to save life, or to destroy it?”

One question is the revealer of the heart. One question opens up the true motivation of man. They were one question away from revealing their true nature on the inside rather than the piousness they paraded on the outside.

Jesus is the Word made flesh (John 1:14). Hebrews 4:12 tells us, “For the word of God is quick, and powerful, and sharper than any twoedged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, *and is a discernor of the thoughts and intents of the heart,*” (emphasis mine). So yes, He knew what they were thinking on the inside though their pious façade said

something else. With thoughts revealed He asked the question that would expose them for their evil intents and also to show what He knew was right.

“Is it lawful on the Sabbath days to do good, or to do evil? to save life, or to destroy it?” In the book of John Jesus is noted as one who is a life giver. “I come that they might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly,” John 10:10b. He that opposes Him is one that seeks to “steal, and to kill, and to destroy,” John 10:10a. In my opinion Jesus was asking them what side were they on; the side of the destroyer or the Giver of life? The day that was made for man should be used to build man up and not tear him down!

Jesus then saw the crowds. He is noted as **“looking round about them all.”** But, Jesus saw the need of the man more and this was His focus on this Sabbath day. He spoke to the man and said, **“Stretch forth thy hand. And he did so: and his hand was restored whole as the other.”** Jesus made the man His focus and the man himself focused on what Jesus told him to do and acted in obedience. His obedience brought him to the place of restoration and wholeness. Wow! What a lesson in that alone!

Luke 6:11 “And they were filled with madness; and communed one with another what they might do to Jesus.”

Remember how I said, “One question is the revealer of the heart?” If the question alone didn’t do the job, then Jesus’ act of compassion truly showed what was on the inside of these men. So in tuned were they with their own traditions that they let their anger boil up to the point of **“madness.”** In other words, they were beyond hot! If they were cartoon characters we would seek smoke spewing from their ears in a comedic fashion with faces red and aflame. The lids of their heads may have even exploded in the air spouting more smoke as if it were an overheated volcano 😊.

The picture I present may seem funny but the situation was not. These men that represented God had hearts that was far from His. How could they not look at this man and want to see him made whole as well? How could they put a day in

precedence over a life? Their hearts was so far from God that they thought evil against His Son and **“communed one with another what they might do to Jesus.”**

Conclusion

Even before His death on the cross Jesus was ushering in grace over laws. He was showing through His life and ministry that the “weightier matters of the law, judgment, mercy, and faith” were just as important as observant days, rituals and traditions. Jesus didn't teach one not to observe the Sabbath but He showed how to love in the midst of it.