

Illustration

Introduction

Well as we continue to journey through the book of Luke, we're going to look at two separate scenes this morning... but you'll see Luke puts these two scenes together to communicate the same point—which is quite related to what we looked at last week.

See last week Jesus picked at the Pharisees' dead religion... the Pharisees missed it... their religious activity and practices, their fasting... it had become an end—not the means. The religion itself had become their god. So much so, that they couldn't recognize God Himself—Jesus the promised Messiah.

This morning we're going see this

Exegesis

Luke 6:1-11

On a Sabbath, while he was going through the grainfields, his disciples plucked and ate some heads of grain, rubbing them in their hands. 2 But some of the Pharisees said, "Why are you doing what is not lawful to do on the Sabbath?" 3 And Jesus answered them, "Have you not read what David did when he was hungry, he and those who were with him: 4 how he entered the house of God and took and ate the bread of the Presence, which is not lawful for any but the priests to eat, and also gave it to those with him?" 5 And he said to them, "The Son of Man is lord of the Sabbath."

So in this first scene... we see it is the Sabbath... and Jesus is with his disciples and they find themselves walking through some grainfields... and we can see the disciples are hungry and so it says they "*plucked and ate some of the heads of grain, rubbing them in their hands*"...

why rubbing them? Because wheat needs to be threshed—it's the process of separating the chaff from the grain... you rub the wheat in your hand and let the wind separate the chaff and from the kernel of grain...

Now to us... this doesn't sound problematic... right, what's the issue?

Well... the problem is, there are some sour Pharisees watching very closely... looking for any opportunity to condemn Jesus. And here they think they find opportunity they've been waiting for...

See, it's the Sabbath... and on the Sabbath... God's Law mandated that no work be done...

It's the 4th in the 10 commandments

Exodus 20:8-11

"Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy. 9 Six days you shall labor, and do all your work, 10 but the seventh day is a Sabbath to the Lord your God. On it you shall not do any work, you, or your son, or your daughter, your male servant, or your female servant, or your livestock, or the sojourner who is within your gates. 11 For in six days the Lord made the heavens and the earth, the sea, and all that is in them, and rested on the seventh day. Therefore the Lord blessed the Sabbath day and made it holy."

This is the Sabbath command given to Israel... repeated several times in Exodus, Leviticus, and Deuteronomy.

And the Pharisees wanting to accuse Jesus... press him, "*Why are you doing what is not lawful to do on the Sabbath?*"

And their charge is based on a strict technicality... "technically" the disciples "broke the law"... they did "work" on the Sabbath... they "plucked" and "rubbed the grain" to eat it.

And you could imagine their excitement... "we finally got Him! He broke the Law!"

Oooh they were not ready for Jesus' response... He says,

Luke 6:3b-4

...“Have you not read what David did when he was hungry, he and those who were with him: 4 how he entered the house of God and took and ate the bread of the Presence, which is not lawful for any but the priests to eat, and also gave it to those with him?”

So Jesus recalls David from the Old Testament... and reminds them of a story from 1 Samuel 21... in this scene, David is running for his life from the wicked king Saul. And while fleeing they stop in Nob, a priest city, and being hungry they asked the priest, Ahimelech for food.

But the only food Ahimelech had was the holy “bread of the Presence”... bread that was only supposed to be eaten by the priests. But David and his men were starving, so Ahimelech gave it to them, and they ate even though they weren’t priests...

And so here is the great David, eating “unlawful” bread... and God permitted it, because it was the right decision in a complicated situation.

Jesus gives such a brilliant response... see the “law” is different in these two stories... but the need is the same... Jesus’ disciples were hungry and David and his men were hungry...

And Jesus reminds them of this similar scenario—from their own Scripture... to basically say, “If you condemn me, then you have to condemn David and his men too!”

No, they can’t do that... not to David... He was a Jewish hero!—the great king, and man after God’s own heart... and so they’re silenced...

And Jesus shuts them up, he declares, “the Son of Man is lord of the Sabbath”

“Lord of the Sabbath”... He’s saying that He has authority over the Sabbath... and this is a claim of divinity here... because who could have authority over the Sabbath?—Only the Lord who created the Sabbath...

Exodus 20:11

“the Lord (who) made the heavens and the earth, the sea, and all that is in them, and rested on the seventh day.” “...The Lord (who) blessed the Sabbath day and made it holy.”

This Lord, Jesus, holds the authority to define and regulate the Sabbath—He is the one who made the law at the beginning, and therefore He knows how it should operate.

And Jesus exposes that the Pharisees had misunderstood the law and it’s purpose... they had turned this law of rest into a merciless system of works. They missed the whole point of the law.

Jesus exposes it... and they have no answer... end of scene.

And that brings to another Sabbath clash...

Luke 6:6-11

6 On another Sabbath, he entered the synagogue and was teaching, and a man was there whose right hand was withered. 7 And the scribes and the Pharisees watched him, to see whether he would heal on the Sabbath, so that they might find a reason to accuse him. 8 But he knew their thoughts, and he said to the man with the withered hand, “Come and stand here.” And he rose and stood there.

9 And Jesus said to them, “I ask you, is it lawful on the Sabbath to do good or to do harm, to save life or to destroy it?” 10 And after looking around at them all he said to him, “Stretch out your hand.” And he did so, and his hand was restored. 11 But they were filled with fury and discussed with one another what they might do to Jesus.

So now on another Sabbath, Jesus is teaching in the synagogue and there is a man whose hand was withered. It’s an incurable condition... an atrophied unusable hand and Luke the detailed physician

even notes it's his right hand—typically the dominant hand... It's a sad disability that came with a stigma... and everyone notices it... but especially the scribes and Pharisees...

And if they have learned anything about Jesus... they've learned He has a heart full of compassion, and they've learned He heals the sick. Let that just be a little side point... even Jesus' enemies know Jesus is compassionate and He heals the broken... that's who He is... don't ever forget it... even in the valley, in the dark season... though He appear distant and cold—He is full of compassion and love, and He is working to heal.

Even the Pharisees know this, and so now they are watching closely... expecting Jesus to heal him... But really they're just looking for another opportunity to accuse Him. Would Jesus dare to heal someone on the Sabbath?

And so they watch closely...

"But he knew their thoughts"... Jesus being God, knew their thoughts and intentions.

And this time, he brings the confrontation to them! He calls the man with the withered hand up in front of the congregation... imagine it...

All eyes are on Jesus and this man.... And Jesus turns directly to the scribes and Pharisees—knowing their thoughts... and He asks them:

"I ask you, is it lawful on the Sabbath to do good or to do harm, to save life or to destroy it?"

See Jesus has to do something here on the Sabbath... he either has to do good to the man by healing him... or he does harm by not healing him...

And so Jesus asks the Pharisees, "What's it going be?"...

Do good or harm? Save or destroy?

And yet again, Jesus exposes their problem... the Sabbath was given to man for the good of man. It was to establish a healthy pattern of rest, that regularly paused to remember God.

It was a law meant for good... to serve and bless man. God's heart in giving the Sabbath law was love!

But the Pharisees had turned it into this harsh system that abandoned love and mercy altogether.

And Jesus hits them between the eyes with this question.

They would rather let a man go unhealed... They would rather let people starve...

And again, they go silent...

And Jesus heals the man... He restores his hand. It's an incredible miracle that proves, indeed Jesus is the Lord of the Sabbath. It proved His words are true.

And again, their scheme backfired... and so without surprise... they don't rejoice for a healed man, but instead... *"... were filled with fury and discussed with one another what they might do to Jesus."*

they furious... who would dare heal a man on the Sabbath? Who would dare defy the traditions of our fathers? Who would choose mercy over judgment? Compassion over harsh tradition?

Jesus would, than the Son of Man, the Lord of the Sabbath—God Himself, who made Sabbath, blessed it and made it Holy.

Jesus came and He corrected all the Pharisees got wrong... He clarified what was revealed from the beginning...

Exodus 34:6-7a

“The Lord, the Lord, a God merciful and gracious, slow to anger, and abounding in steadfast love and faithfulness, 7 keeping steadfast love for thousands, forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin...”

This is the heart of God... a Holy righteous God of justice, no doubt!—“He will by no means clear the guilty,” the unrepentant... But He is full of mercy, full of grace... abounding in steadfast love and faithfulness... forgiving all who humbly come to Him.

The Pharisees abandoned this God... turning to their own “goodness” and “traditions”... and in turn they became cold, selfish, full of hypocrisy... no love, no mercy, no compassion... nothing like God.

But Jesus came to shatter this cold dead religion... and clarify the truth, showing us the heart of God and the heart of His commands.

Jesus, Son of God would choose to good, not harm... He would choose to save, not destroy...

And the cross is the ultimate proof...

Like the man with the withered hand, every one of us had this incurable disease... we were dead in our sin... deserving of God’s wrath and judgement...

But God sent Jesus to save, not destroy...

at the cost of His own life.

He would not give His justice, but He would not withhold His grace.

And so Jesus went to the cross to heal and restore us. By His wounds you we have been healed.

He chose mercy over judgment, love over wrath...

And so made way for the true Sabbath rest:

Hebrews 4:9-10

“So then, there remains a Sabbath rest for the people of God, 10 for whoever has entered God’s rest has also rested from his works as God did from his.”

We shall soon be in heaven in eternal rest, with our God—the Lord of the Sabbath, the Lord of all.

3 quick applications from this passage:

1. Rest in the Rule of Jesus

In this passage Jesus came and totally disrupted the way the Pharisees saw the law and commands of God.

And we often need Jesus to correct our understanding of God’s commands...

Time and time again, we are tempted to see God’s commands like the Pharisees saw it: it’s this a rulebook... do this, don’t do that... keep the rules and you’ll feel good about yourself... and you’re church will respect you... and you’ll earn right standing... and maybe earn God’s love... but there’s no joy in that, there’s no grace, and no relationship with God in that type of religion.

And that’s not what Jesus teaches...

Matthew 11:28-30

“Come to me, all who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. 29 Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. 30 For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light.”

Do you know why God commands forgiveness? Not to hurt you, but to free you

Why sexual purity? It's for your joy and your pleasure

His commands to pray and to know the Word... to serve in your church....

Every command God gives is written with a heart of love... not a heart of anger.

It's for our flourishing, for our joy, for our good.

2. Give the Grace of God

What we see in this passage, is ungracious people in conflict with a gracious God.

And we rightfully condemn the Pharisees in their stubborn cold hearts...

But the fact of the matter is, we all have a little Pharisee in ourselves.

We love the idea of grace... until we're asked to give it. We love forgiveness until we have to forgive...

Ephesians 4:32

"Be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, as God in Christ forgave you."

Do not forsake mercy, grace, and love.

3. Meditate on the Mercy of God

What we see in this passage, is unmerciful people in conflict with a merciful God.

And before we

John 1:16

"For from his fullness we have all received, grace upon grace."

Pray