

# The Lord of the Sabbath (Luke 6:1-11)

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**Introduction:** 39 additional man-made laws attached to the Sabbath. This account is also found in (Matthew 12:1-8) and (Mark 2 23-28). Luke's account will give a doctor's perspective and even a few more details such as it was the man's right hand that Jesus healed.

Brief Recap of chapter 5

- Calling of Simon Peter (5:1-11)
- Healing the leprous man (5:12-16)
- Healing/forgiving the paralytic (5:17-26)
- Calling of Levi (5:27-32)
- Fasting (5:33-39)
  - Illustration of Wedding (vv.34-35)
  - Illustration of Wine skins (the introduction of a new era) (vv.36-39)

The main theme: Jesus disregards man-made rules and regulations of the Scribes and Pharisees because He is Lord of the Sabbath and not them.

Jesus is the perfect and precise representation of God and so in our text here I see 3 arenas that God is concerned about (holiness, human need, and mercy)

**Transition:** The first arena that God is concerned about is holiness.

- I. God is concerned about holiness. (6:1-2)

**Explanation:** Luke records the disciples walking through grain fields on a Sabbath picking grain and eating it. The sequence would be:

- Grabbing a handful of grain

- Rubbing it in their hands to separate the husk from the kernel
- Throwing it in the wind so the chaff would fly away
- Eating the grain and satisfy their hunger

As this was happening, some Pharisees catch them in the act. You might think they just got caught stealing someone's grain. God made a sort of 'drive-thru' provision for the traveler: "If you go into your neighbor's standing grain, you may pluck the ears with your hand, but you shall not put a sickle to your neighbor's standing grain" (Deut. 23:25, ESV).

The Pharisees didn't accuse the disciples of theft but instead they accused them of breaking the Sabbath by harvesting grain.

**Historical understanding:** God gave the Sabbath to the Israelites with a 2-fold purpose.

1. Remember God's work in Creation (Exodus 20:8-11).
2. Remember God's work in Salvation (Deut. 5:12-15).

The Sabbath was created for man as a way to relax his body and refresh his soul in avid worship to God for who he is and what he's done. It was a weekly cycle so this would happen every 6 days.

God taught Israel a lesson in sticks and stones (Numbers 15:32-36). God told Moses to stone the rebellious man for his high handed rebellion. This was a way of God eradicating parasitic heart behaviors in the old covenant.

God is so holy that man cannot approach him in their sinful condition. The Bible says, "For all have sinned and come short of the glory of God" (Romans 3:23). Because of man's sinfulness and consistent violation of God's holiness, "the wages of sin is death" (Romans 6:23a). God always judges sin, "You who are of purer eyes than to see evil and cannot look at wrong..." (Hab.1:13, ESV).

God is so concerned about holiness that He says, “Strive for peace with everyone, and for the holiness without which no one will see the Lord” (Hebrews 12:14, ESV).

God is concerned about holiness and neither Jesus or his disciples violated God’s law.

In Jewish legal tradition, there were 39 categories of activities forbidden on the Sabbath—harvesting was one of them. These were man-made and NOT God-given.

**Illustration:** Growing up we lived on a farm with many acres. The farmer put an electric fence spanning the inside of his property. This fence did not go to the border of the property because the farmer would need to drive a vehicle to check the fence at times. My brothers and I got in more trouble with that fence probably than any other piece of equipment on the farm. The purpose of the fence was to keep the cows from getting away. POINT- that fence was like the oral traditions of the Pharisees. They put up their own fence (probably with good intentions) to keep from breaking God’s laws. The problem was that they elevated the traditions ABOVE God’s laws.

(V.2) They asked Jesus very pointedly why they were breaking the law Jesus didn’t violate God’s law because the Scripture says, “21 For to this you have been called, because Christ also suffered for you, leaving you an example, so that you might follow in his steps. 22 He committed no sin, neither was deceit found in his mouth. 23 When he was reviled, he did not revile in return; when he suffered, he did not threaten, but continued entrusting himself to him who judges justly (1 Peter 2:21-23, ESV).

**Transition:** God is not only concerned about holiness but He is also concerned about human need.

II. God is concerned about human need (6:3-5)

**Explanation:** Jesus fires right back with an almost sarcastic question in v. 3, “Have you not read...” The fact is that the scribes and Pharisees read the Scriptures all the time with careful precision. They could tell you how many words were in the Bible. They had a huge knowledge of the Bible but a non-existent knowledge of God.

**Application:** This is a good reminder for those that read the Scriptures many times to not fall into this trap. Be careful that the Scriptures are ALWAYS over us and not us over the Scriptures. We do not put ourselves over the Bible. We must humble ourselves and pray for the illumination of the Spirit when we read or we can easily become like a scribe and Pharisee and miss out on what God is saying.

**Explanation:** Certainly they knew the story of David. King David was in their mind the greatest king they ever had and was a hero in their mind.

The story Jesus refers to here is found in (1 Samuel 21:1-6).

The human need is seen in the fact that Jesus says that David and his men were hungry. Jesus didn't say they were starving to death and if they didn't get food in their system they would have died. The same is true of his disciples, they were not on the brink of death. King David and the disciples were simply hungry.

Jesus says in (v.4) that they went into the God's house and ate the 'bread of presence' that was reserved for the priest only.

Bread of Presence—each week 12 consecrated loaves of bread representing the 12 tribes of Israel were placed on a table in the Temple. It was used for ceremonial purposes and afterward would feed the priests. David was not a priest but he was hungry and that took precedence over ceremonial regulations. Jesus tells them that, “it was not lawful” for David to eat but he was not punished because he was hungry. Jesus uses their same legal word lawful and throws it right back at them.

By Jesus comparing his disciples actions to King David, the scribes and Pharisees are stumped. If they condemn the disciples, they condemn their greatest king!

Jesus makes a statement which slams their man-made traditions in (v.5).

Jesus created the Sabbath and he is Lord over it, not these men that manipulate and control people by lording their rules and regulations over the people. The Scribes and Pharisees lorded over the people so much that Jesus even at one point called out, “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”(Matthew 11:28-30, ESV). There is a Sabbath rest open for God’s people today and that is found only in the person of Jesus Christ. Refer to Hebrews 4 for a more comprehensive treatment of what I'm talking about here. Stop trying to gain your own righteousness that will lead you to hell in the end. Accept Jesus righteousness by repenting of your righteousness and sin and call on the name of the Lord Jesus Christ.

By being Lord of the Sabbath, Jesus has the authority to interpret the Sabbath, not these hardened sinners pretending to be right with God.

**Transition:** God is concerned about holiness, human need, and mercy.

III. God is concerned about mercy (6:6-11)

**Explanation:** I am convicted about the boldness of Jesus. The Bible says, “The wicked flee when no one pursues, but the righteous are bold as a lion” (Proverbs 28:1, ESV).

Jesus walks right into the synagogue and teaches. He wasn't concerned about what people thought. He was concerned about a man in that synagogue that the religious leaders couldn't have cared less about. Luke identifies like a doctor that the man's right hand was withered. Luke was a doctor and identifying in writing which hand was precision work of a doctor in that time.

Jesus was being watched like a hawk, they were not so concerned about what he was saying but if he would heal on a Sabbath. Interestingly enough, the religious leaders didn't doubt the power of Jesus to heal this man. They were blinded and simply wanted something to accuse Jesus with.

(V.8) Jesus knows what they were thinking. Luke records this again when they come at Jesus with hostility accusing him of satanic power (Luke 11:17). Jesus is the God-man. He knows thoughts like God does, “You know when I sit down and when I rise up; you discern my thoughts from afar. 3 You search out my path and my lying down and are acquainted with all my ways. 4 Even before a word is on my tongue, behold, O Lord, you know it altogether” (Psalm 139:2-4, ESV).

Nevertheless, Jesus asks the man to come and stand in the middle of everything. Now for the object lesson. Some of the best teaching is done with questions. It makes the people think toward the answer.

Jesus asks 2 sets of questions:

1. Is it lawful on the Sabbath to do good, or to do evil?
2. To save life or to destroy it?

The Pharisaic Sabbath law was clear enough: only in case of mortal illness was medical help permitted (Yoma 8:6- "Whenever there is doubt whether life is in danger this overrides the Sabbath"); midwifery and circumcision were permissible as well (Shab. 18:3; 19:2)

Jesus could have let this man continue one more day like he was, after all, the scribes and Pharisees didn't care about this guy except to get angry about Jesus healing his condition.

Jesus showed mercy to this man and healed his hand. In Matthew's record, he gives an illustration about a sheep falling in a ditch and this man being much more valuable than livestock. Jesus said, “I desire

mercy, and not sacrifice, you would not have condemned the guiltless”  
(Matthew 12:7, ESV).

“So whoever knows the right thing to do and fails to do it, for him it is sin” (James 4:17, ESV).

(V.11) These law abiding citizens are so filled with anger they will begin to plot murder which is clearly a violation of God’s Law.

Jesus’ healing this man was an act of mercy because he got use of his right hand back. This was the tip of the iceberg for Jesus because he is on the road to do something for more lasting than healing someone's hand. He is going to conquer sin and death’s reign through the cross.

“Therefore, we are ambassadors for Christ, God making his appeal through us. We implore you on behalf of Christ, be reconciled to God. 21 For our sake he made him to be sin who knew no sin, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.” (2 Corinthians 5:20-21, ESV).

Application:

If you are religious and not righteous today, I invite you to abandon your way and come to Christ! Attempts to gain God’s favor apart from Christ will put you under God’s wrath forever. Repent from your sin and trust Christ as Lord today!

Since all Scripture is profitable for us, there is a present-day lesson for us to learn from Jesus’ clash with the Pharisees. We need to be careful that we do not add our own man-made rules to the Scriptures. Some convictions that we hold dearly may be derived more from our particular Christian culture than derived from Scripture, and we need to learn to discern the differences. It is okay to have cultural convictions, but we should be careful that we do not elevate them to the same authority as Scripture. So much judgmentalism among Christians today occurs because we do this. But that is basically what the Pharisees were doing. So, let’s be careful that we are not modern-day Pharisees

