

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

I. Introduction.

A. Orientation.

Luke has been showing us

Jesus’ authority:

Over the devil –

He can resist and command him –

His life –

No one could take it from Him,

But He will lay it down willingly –

The Word –

No one spoke as He spoke –

The demons –

They feared Jesus;

When He commanded them,

They immediately obeyed –

Sickness –

He ordered it to leave,

And it did –

Fish –

They obeyed His command to fill the nets –

And men –

When He called Peter, Andrew,

James and John to follow Him,
They immediately left their boats
And did so –

Last week,
Luke showed us Jesus' authority over sin –
He forgave the paralytic,
And proved He did by healing him –

And His authority to call
And to save whom He will
In the conversion of Levi.

Levi was one of the most despised among the Jews
Because he helped the Romans
Oppress his own people for profit.

Jesus not only offered him eternal life –
Which is in itself a great privilege –
He gave Levi His Spirit
So he could receive this life –
Which was powerfully shown
By his immediately calling together
His friends and associates
So they could also hear Jesus
In the hopes they too would be saved.

B. Preview.

This morning,

Luke continues to show us Jesus' authority

In one more very important area: the Sabbath.

He does it through two separate accounts:

When the disciples fed themselves on the Sabbath (vv. 1-5),

And when Jesus healed a man on the Sabbath (vv. 6-11).

II. Sermon.

A. First, we see Luke's account

Of the disciples feeding themselves on the Sabbath.

As they were traveling from town to town,

They happened to be passing

Through some grainfields on the Sabbath,

And as they did

The disciples were picking the heads of grain,

Rubbing them in their hands

To separate the grain,

And were eating it (v. 1).

When some Pharisees saw what they were doing

They immediately began to accuse them:

“Why do you do what is not lawful on the Sabbath?” (v. 2).

We need to understand

That they weren't accusing them of stealing –

God gave the Jews the right

To eat from their neighbor's field,

As long as it was only to satisfy their immediate hunger.

Moses, “When you enter your neighbor’s vineyard, then you may eat grapes until you are fully satisfied, but you shall not put any in your basket. When you enter your neighbor’s standing grain, then you may pluck the heads with your hand, but you shall not wield a sickle in your neighbor’s standing grain” (Deu. 23:24-25).

I don’t think our neighbors

Would appreciate our doing this today –

But in Jesus’ day

It was perfectly acceptable.

That wasn’t the issue:

The issue was they were doing this “work” on the Sabbath –

The Lord says, “Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy” (Ex. 20:8) –

We are to set the day apart for Him.

How?

By not working on it –

Sabbath means “rest” –

He continues, “Six days you shall labor and do all your work, but the seventh day is a Sabbath of the LORD your God; *in it* you shall not do any work” (vv. 9-10).

And by not making anyone or anything else work on it:

“*In it* you shall not do any work, you or your son or your daughter, your male or your female servant or your cattle or your sojourner who stays with you” (v. 10).

Why?

Because this is what the Lord did

At the end of the Creation week;

This is the pattern He set for us;

This is the day He gave to us

From the very beginning:

“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” (v. 11).

God wants us to rest –

Not only from working,

But also from the world:

From the things that tend

To draw our minds and hearts away from Him –

So that we might have a taste of heaven,

And be reminded that we’re only passing through.

The disciples weren’t resting:

They were working.

So what does Jesus do?

He doesn’t rebuke them, but defends them:

Luke, “And Jesus answering them said, ‘Have you not even read what David did when he was hungry, he and those who were with him, how he entered the house of God, and took and ate the consecrated bread which is not lawful for any to eat except the priests alone, and gave it to his companions?’ And He was saying to them, ‘The Son of Man is Lord of the Sabbath’” (6:3-5).

Notice three things here:

First, Jesus declares Himself to be Lord of the Sabbath –

To be its Master,

To have authority over it –

This is really a declaration that He is God:

God gave the Sabbath,

And only He has the right

To tell us what may or may not be done on it.

Second, when Jesus declares Himself

To be the *Lord of the Sabbath*,

He's also telling us

That the *Sabbath continues* in the New Covenant:

You can't be Lord of something that doesn't exist.

Jesus will later charge the twelve –

When He gives them the Great Commission –

To disciple the nations,

“Teaching them to observe all that I commanded you” (Matt. 28:20).

His teaching isn't just for the Jews –

It's also for the Gentiles – for us.

Third, in saying this,

He wasn't changing the Sabbath:

He was simply correcting a Pharisaical misinterpretation –

Just as He does in Sermon on the Mount:

“You have heard it said . . . but I say to you.”

He's telling us there are exceptions

To the “no work” clause,

Just as there are exceptions

To some of the other commandments.

Normally, it wouldn't be lawful

For David and his men

To eat the consecrated bread –

Which was only for the priests –

But here's an instance where it was:

When they needed it to preserve their lives.

The Lord never intended

The law regarding this bread

To be kept at the risk of someone's life.

In the same way,

He never intended the Sabbath to endanger life,

But to be a way to preserve it:

We need rest;

And we need to step back from the world

To remind ourselves what life is really about:

For God's glory; not man's pleasure.

Jesus tells us, "The Sabbath made *for man*, and not man for the Sabbath" (Mark 2:27).

We can show mercy on the Sabbath –

In this case: Mercy to ourselves.

The Westminster Assembly

Calls this kind of work: a work of necessity.

We are not to do unnecessary work –

Work that can be done on other days –

But we may do what we need

To preserve our lives.

B. We see a second exception –

Which is really the same as the first,

Only with a different application –

In Jesus' healing a man on the Sabbath (Luke 6:6-11).

Luke tells us

That on a subsequent Sabbath,

Jesus entered the synagogue –

Jesus again reminds us

That God gave us the Sabbath

To spend the day with Him –

And He made it the same day for each of us,

So that we might get together

For worship and fellowship.

At this particular synagogue

There was a man with a withered hand (v. 6).

The scribes and Pharisees knew

Jesus healed the sick,

And so they watched Him closely

To see if He would do so on the Sabbath

That they might accuse Him (v. 7).

Jesus knew what they were thinking –

Either by the look on their faces,

Or the Spirit's revealing it to Him –

But He didn't let that stop Him.

He told the man to come forward.

And after he did (v. 8),

He challenged His would be accusers:

“Is it lawful to do good

Or to do harm on the Sabbath,

To save a life or to destroy it?” (v. 9).

It’s never God’s intention

That we harm or destroy a life

On the Sabbath or any other day –

Unless someone is unjustly trying

To harm or take away our life,

Or the lives of others –

We may defend ourselves.

But that’s not what Jesus is asking:

He’s asking, whether

It’s right to see someone in need

And do nothing to help them

In the name of keeping the Sabbath –

Should we help them if we can,

Or make them suffer

Because of the fourth commandment?

Jesus waited for an answer,

But there was none:

They knew to answer this

Would expose their hypocrisy –

Not to answer it would do the same:

That's why Jesus asked.

Even though Jesus knew they wanted to trap Him,

He didn't let that stop Him:

He told the man to stretch out his hand –

And he did –

Believing –

And he was healed (v. 10).

They, of course, were immediately outraged,

And began discussing what they might do Jesus (v. 11) –

How they might destroy Him (Matt. 12:14; Mk. 3:6) –

Even though He helped a man in need.

The Lord gave us the Sabbath –

He gave us a day off –

So that we can rest physically –

He also gave it to rest our souls –

That we might draw back from the world,

And join each other in worship,

That we might be refreshed

And reminded that there is a better rest

Still waiting for us in heaven,

After our work on earth is done.

But there are exceptions –

Just as for some of the other commandments:

We are to obey the authorities,

Unless they tell us to disobey God.

We are to protect life,

Unless someone tries to take ours,

Or someone else's, away unjustly.

We are to tell the truth,

Unless those asking

Intend to use it unjustly.

And we are to rest on the Sabbath,

But we may also take care of our needs –

Jesus doesn't want us to go hungry –

And the needs of others –

We may help relieve their suffering.

But remember: these are exceptions, not the rule.

The Lord of the Sabbath

Wants us to rest and worship on His day,

That we might be stronger

And better equipped to serve Him –

That's why He gave us this day,

And so may He give us the grace

To take the day off and worship Him. Amen.