

Lord of the Sabbath

Jesus healed the leper, sent a paralyzed man home walking, and invited Levi to walk by His side. But that's not what it was really about. It was about cleansing, forgiving, and reconciling. Did you see that? Today's lesson deals with people who were blind to the obvious. Are we blind, or do we see? As discussed last week - do we prefer the "old" or "new"?

Note: I've enjoyed and recommend Mark E. Moore's "The Chronological Life of Christ." Some of my comments can be found in his material by coincidence (he's not the only one making such observations articulated in his material), and other times, I've leaned on his accurate and helpful observations. He's done an excellent job making 1st-century culture and practices available.

Events that occur between the end of Luke 5 and the beginning of chapter 6:

- Jesus travels back to Jerusalem (for Passover?), heals an invalid on the Sabbath, and debates the Jewish leaders. This is possibly the beginning of Jesus' second year of ministry.
- Controversy over the Sabbath will now carry into Galilee as He makes His way back. We will look at the two following accounts out of order (though they happened around the same time) simply because they flow a bit better.

Healing On The Sabbath (Luke 6:6-11)

- Let's quickly consider this because they go hand in hand.
 - Consider Matthew 12:11-13. Mark's account adds, "But they were silent. And He looked around at them with anger, grieved at their hardness of heart," (3:5) before telling the man to stretch out his hand.
 - Exodus 23:4-5,12; Deuteronomy 22:1-4. You should help an animal who'd fallen due to its burden. But, what about if it's the Sabbath?
 - From Mark E. Moore's "The Chronological Life Of Jesus" page 152, "The Oral Law was clear in its regulations for Sabbath healing. You could provide medical attention which would save a life, but that was all. If a man fell off a cliff and cracked his head, you could stop the bleeding, but you could not set a broken leg. Since a withered hand was not life-threatening, it would be illegal to heal this fellow on the Sabbath . . . the Oral Law made provision for rescuing animals that fell into a pit on the Sabbath (b Sabbath. 128b)."
- Brethren, we should take note of two facts:
 - This should have been obvious.
 - This was important enough to make Jesus mad (which doesn't happen a lot).

Working On The Sabbath (6:1-5)

- It's helpful to begin with the background commandments and examples:
 - Deuteronomy 23:25 specifically addressed and allowed Israelites to pick grain from a neighbor's field. You can't use a sickle in your neighbor's field but can pluck by hand. The problem? It was on the Sabbath. Exodus 20:9-11 commands Israel not to work on the Sabbath.

- Examples: gathering manna (Exo. 16:26); fieldwork implied (Exo. 34:21); treading grapes, loading animals, and selling/buying goods (Neh. 10:31; 13:15-18; Amos 8:5); gathering sticks for fire (Exo. 35:3; Num. 15:32-36); bearing burdens (Jer 17:21-23).
- A number of traditions had grown up around the lawful observance of the Sabbath. The Mishnah, a compilation of Jewish traditions, lists 39 separate work-activities that were forbidden on the Sabbath. These include precise regulations of what was considered work. The incident that stirred controversy this sabbath day involved the disciples of Jesus picking grain from the field, removing the husk, and eating the seeds. The specific objection of the Pharisees is not stated in the account, but Luke's gospel says the disciples not only plucked the ears but rubbed the grain in their hands to remove the husk. The scribes, according to activities 3 and 5 of the 39 work-activities listed, could have construed this as "reaping" and "threshing," both of which are listed in the Mishnah as prohibited on the sabbath day (106; Shabbath 7, 2). Taken from "Truth Commentary" by Stauffer, page 67.
- David's account is found in 1 Samuel 21:1-6. The bread of presence was to be eaten by the priests as seen in Leviticus 24:5-9.
 - The big question: Did David sin?
 - Those who say David sinned argue:
 - Jesus said it *wasn't lawful* for any but the priests to eat.
 - Application: Jesus is essentially saying that David did wrong, yet the Pharisees won't accuse him, but they do accuse Jesus and His disciples when they did nothing wrong. It's important to note: The "Lord of the Sabbath" did not give His disciples permission to break the Law.
 - Those who say David didn't sin argue:
 - Jesus also said the priests profaned the Sabbath (yet they didn't really) in Matthew 12:5-7. This interpretation argues that Jesus is making it clear that all actions were lawful (His disciples, David and his men, and the priests), so the Pharisees should acknowledge the same.
 - Application: Judge with righteous judgment and not by appearance or tradition.
- Jesus' driving point?
 - They were not a merciful people (Matthew 12:7).
 - They were not the Lord of the Sabbath.
 - Jesus rightly divided God's word. Traditions did not taint His interpretation. The Sabbath was made for man, and our Lord understood that more than anyone. Jesus, the ultimate fulfillment of David's role as king, knew how to think and lived accordingly.
- Application?
 - We need to think things through. There's nothing wrong with feeding on the word of God through teachers, preachers, podcasts, and books. But brethren, if you don't learn how to feed yourself, you haven't learned how to think. That's why the religious leaders were a mess in Jesus' time (because they all parroted what the Rabbis before them thought) and why the people blindly followed them.
 - Example: Here are my personal thoughts based on my labor: The Sabbath commands Israel not to work, but what constitutes work? There's a difference between picking grain and putting a sickle to grain. There's a difference between not working and

having responsibilities as a priest. There's a difference between eating the priest's bread because you feel like it vs. running for your life and having nothing to eat. There's a difference between herding animals on the Sabbath vs. helping an animal stuck in the mud. Jesus had the correct interpretation and application of the law. Could it be that David's actions weren't lawful or sinful? How could one say a thing? Look at Nadab and Abihu's brothers, Eleazar and Ithamar, in Leviticus 10. They didn't eat the sin offering as commanded. Yet, Aaron makes the case that God wouldn't have approved considering what had transpired. Moses approved. Argue that Moses and Aaron are wrong, but the text doesn't state that and no punishment comes to them. What about Hezekiah when he restores the Passover in 2 Chronicles 30? "'May the good Lord pardon everyone who sets his heart to seek God, the Lord, the God of his fathers, even though not according to the sanctuary's rules of cleanness.' And the Lord heard Hezekiah and healed the people." Was that unlawful? Well, it wasn't according to the Law. So, it was unlawful. But did it offend God? Did God treat them as sinners or "heal" them?

- Mercy will lead to approval, not condemnation. Don't follow blindly (not just by what we teach but also by what we do). Don't anger Jesus with our stubbornness! Have you seen modern examples of this? Remember Matthew 11:28-29. Isn't it interesting how Matthew recorded this right before Jesus was challenged on the Sabbath . . .