**The Gospel of Luke**

**Lesson 13** Luke 6:1-11 Jesus, Lord of the Sabbath!

**Questions:**

1. What important truth did you learn from the lecture, and how does it apply to your life?
2. Read Wiersbe pages 73-76.
3. How is the Lord’s Day different from the Sabbath? What does the Lord’s Day commemorate?
4. Why did Jesus claim to be Lord of the Sabbath?
5. Read Luke 6:1-5 along with Matthew 12:1-14, John 7:21-24, and 1 Samuel 21:1-6.

**A Clash over Sustenance** (vv.1-5)

*The Occasion*

“On a Sabbath, while he was going through the grainfields, his disciples plucked and ate some heads of grain, rubbing them in their hands” (v. 1). The Jewish legal code contained a gracious provision for the hungry that allowed for a person to handpick fruit or grain for personal consumption: “If you go into your neighbor’s vineyard, you may eat your fill of grapes, as many as you wish, but you shall not put any in your bag. 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 grain” (Deuteronomy 23:14,15). So, the disciples were not guilty of pillaging someone’s field. The rub was that they picked the corn on the Sabbath, a day on which the fourth commandment specifically prohibited work:

Six days you shall labor, and do all your work, 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. (Exodus 20:9,10)

Over time the Jewish leaders had developed a series of thirty-nine clarifications of work, exotic legalisms, with each category capable of endless subdivision. The *Mishnah* explicitly listed as three of its thirty-nine categories “reaping…threshing, winnowing” (M. Shabbath, 7.2).

Jesus’ disciples *reaped* when they “plucked…some heads of grain” and *threshed* and *winnowed* when they “rub[bed] them in their hands.” And when they began to eat the kernels, they prepared food on the Sabbath. The Pharisees were outraged— “Why are you doing what is not lawful to do on the Sabbath?” (v. 2). They thought they had Jesus and company dead to rights (caught red-handed) in a flagrant breaking of divine law. Their jaws flexed with firmness, and a flush of satisfaction lit their pious faces. They were sure they had Jesus trapped.[[1]](#endnote-1)

1. What additional details does Matthew provide to Luke’s account concerning   
   Jesus’ reply to the Pharisees?

List the two examples Jesus gave about violations of their Sabbath rules.

1. From Matthew 12:5 and John 7:21-24, how did the Priests violate the Sabbath?
2. Read Matthew 23:15. What do you think Jesus meant by this accusation, and how does it relate to the issues above?
3. Are religious leaders today guilty of similar hypocrisy? How so?
4. Read John 19:30. Explain the following phrase and apply it to the issues above. Religion says, “Do!” Jesus says, “Done!”
5. In verse 5, Jesus said to his disciples, “The Son of Man is Lord of the Sabbath!”   
   What does this phrase imply about Jesus? Who is He (John 1:1-3; Col 1:15-20;   
   Heb 1:1-3)?

The phrase “the Lord of the Sabbath” is found in Matthew 12:8, Mark 2:28, and Luke 6:5. In all three instances Jesus is referring to Himself as the Lord of the Sabbath or, as Mark records it, “The Son of Man is Lord even of the Sabbath” (Mark 2:28). In these verses, Jesus is proclaiming that He is the One who exercises authority even over the rules and regulations that govern the Sabbath day.

As such, Jesus was proclaiming to the world, especially to the legalistic Pharisees, that He was greater than the Law and above the laws of the Mosaic Covenant because, as God in flesh, He is the Author of those laws. Unable to keep the Law, however, the Pharisees had instituted a complex and confusing system of Sabbath laws of their own that was oppressive and legalistic. They had set up strict laws regarding how to observe the Sabbath, which included 39 categories of forbidden activities. In essence, these religious leaders had made themselves lords of the Sabbath, thus making themselves lords over the people.

As Creator, Christ was the original Lord of the Sabbath (John 1:3; Hebrews 1:10). He had the authority to overrule the Pharisees’ traditions and regulations because He had created the Sabbath—and the Creator is always greater than the creation. Furthermore, Jesus claimed the authority to correctly interpret the meaning of the Sabbath and all the laws pertaining to it. Because Jesus is Lord of the Sabbath, He is free to do on it and with it whatever He pleases.

As Lord of the Sabbath, Jesus had the right, power, and authority to dispense it in any way He pleased. The Lord of the Sabbath had come, and with His death and resurrection He became the fulfillment of our “Sabbath rest.” The salvation we have in Christ has made the old law of the Sabbath no longer needed or binding. When Jesus said, “The Sabbath was made for man, not man for the Sabbath” (Mark 2:27), Jesus was attesting to the fact that, just as the Sabbath day was originally instituted to give man rest from his labors, so did He come to provide us rest from laboring to achieve our own salvation by our works. Because of His sacrifice on the cross, we can now forever cease laboring to attain God’s favor and rest in His mercy and grace.[[2]](#endnote-2)

1. Read the following commentary by Dr. Kent Hughes.
2. Has Jesus become your Sabbath? If so, explain.
3. Read Matthew 11:28-30 along with Hebrews 4:14-16. What lessons   
   do you learn from these two texts?

The second lesson was a stupendous theological declaration: “And he said to them, ‘The Son is Lord of the Sabbath’” (v. 5). That was a staggering statement claim because the Sabbath was a divine institution thundered down from Mount Sinai by   
God himself. Jesus’ words asserted that he was greater than the Sabbath was a divine institution thundered down from Mount Sinai, for *lordship declares* *supremacy.* As such, Jesus Christ is greater than David. If David could override the Law without blame, how much more could the greater Son of David—Messiah himself—do so?

Extending the implications of Jesus’ being “Lord of the Sabbath,” there is a sense in which he *is* the Sabbath because he supplies in his person everything the Sabbath was meant to give—peace, rest, restoration, communion. The writer of Hebrews makes a very subtle application of Jesus’ Sabbath power by first noting that whereas the original Joshua failed to bring rest to his people, the ultimate Joshua (Jesus) would do so. His conclusion thrills our souls: “So then, there remains a Sabbath rest for the people of God, for whoever has entered God’s rest has also rested from his works as God did from his” (Hebrews 4:9,10).

Jesus has come to mercifully meet the needs of his people. On that Sabbath he broke religious convention in order to mercifully deal with his disciples’ hunger. As “Lord of the Sabbath,” he shows mercy and meets our deepest spiritual needs—regeneration, renewal, peace, rest.[[3]](#endnote-3)

1. Read Luke 6:6-11 along with Matthew 12:9-14 and Mark 3:1-6.
2. Why were the Pharisees watching Jesus so closely?
3. Read the following texts and explain how these religious leaders tried to trap Jesus, and in John’s account, deal with the evidence.

* Matthew 22:15-22
* Mark 12:18-27
* John 11:17-57 and 12:9-10

1. What do these incidences reveal about the hearts of these men? Do you see how religion hardens the heart?
2. What do you learn about the stubbornness of the human heart from the following?

* Mark 3:5
* Acts 7:51
* Acts 19:9
* Romans 2:5

1. How did Jesus reveal his omniscience (all-knowing)?
2. What did Jesus do for the man with the shriveled hand?
3. Read Matthew 12:9-14 again.
4. What additional statements did Jesus make to the Pharisees not included in Luke’s account?
5. After this incident, what were the Pharisees plotting to do to Jesus?
6. Read Mark 3:1-6 again.
7. Give some additional facts from this account concerning Jesus’ feelings and actions toward these religious leaders.
8. Verse 5 states, “He looked around at them in anger and, deeply distressed at their stubborn hearts, said to the man, “Stretch out   
   your hand.”

* Was Jesus’ anger sinful or righteous (John 2:12-17)?   
  Explain the difference.
* Read Ephesians 4:26-27. What does it mean to not sin when angry? What should we be sure to do with any anger at the end of each day?
* How might our anger give Satan a foothold in our hearts/lives?

**Closing Reflections**

Does Christianity make a difference? Is there a difference between card-carrying, Bible-believing Christians and their culture in situations needing mercy? According   
to some pollsters and social commentators, Christians are prime candidates for intolerance. However, this was statistically put to the test in 1983 in a book entitled   
*The Religion Factor in Australian Life*. Part of the survey asked people about their attitudes toward various groups—people with criminal records, emotionally unstable people, people of a different race, members of minority religions, students, people in sects or cults, left-wing extremists, immigrants/foreign workers, never-married mothers, unemployed persons, heavy drinkers, aborigines, people with large families, homosexuals.

The answers were analyzed according to various religious groupings, and an “index of tolerance” was created. Can you guess who was most tolerant? Not liberals, not Catholics, not evangelicals, but *conservative fundamentalists*, by a significant margin. Those with no religion came in last.[[4]](#endnote-4)

The fact is, true faith produces mercy. It is no surprise that the abolitionist movement was rooted in evangelical Christianity, led by Christians such as William Wilberforce. The same is true for the roots of modern social concern, with the likes of Lord Shaftesbury and William Booth. Likewise, the elevation of women and the protection and care of children sprang from the concern of followers of Jesus Christ.

Or course, mercy or compassion does not make one a Christian. Nevertheless, true faith produces a merciful heart. True Christians are compassionate to the needy—the poor, the immigrants, the cultural outcasts, unstable people, alcoholics, drug addicts, prisoners, AIDS victims. And Christians care about sinners. They witness to them about the love of Jesus Christ and win them to him.

Dynamic mercy in all its dimensions is nothing less than the life of Christ in us. Such a life is costly. It is inconvenient. It raises tensions. It brings conflict. It is humbling. It is countercultural. But it is our calling, for God says, “I desire steadfast love and not sacrifice, the knowledge of God rather than burnt offerings” (Hoses 6:6).[[5]](#endnote-5)

1. Do have trouble showing mercy to others? Yes or no. Explain your answer.
2. What is the greatest truth you have learned from this lesson?

1. R. Kent Hughes, Luke: That You May Know the Truth (Wheaton: Crossway, 2015), 205-206. [↑](#endnote-ref-1)
2. https://www.gotquestions.org/Lord-of-the-Sabbath.html [↑](#endnote-ref-2)
3. Hughes, 207-208. [↑](#endnote-ref-3)
4. Quoted in Hughes, 210. Philip D. Jensen and Tony Payne. *The Good Living Guide* (Sidney: St. Mathias,   
   1991)m pp. 434-44. [↑](#endnote-ref-4)
5. Hughes, 209-210. [↑](#endnote-ref-5)