

Jesus is Lord of the Sabbath

Luke 6:1-11

Key Verse: 6:5

"Then Jesus said to them, 'The Son of Man is Lord of the Sabbath.'"

In the last passage we saw that Jesus began to deal with the Jewish religious leaders, who opposed him for calling sinners to repentance. Jesus tried to teach them God's compassion toward the lost. Jesus knew that they were unlikely to change, like old wineskins. Nevertheless, he taught them. Yet, as we see today, they continued to hinder Jesus by claiming that he and his disciples violated the Sabbath law. Jesus defended his disciples and taught a right attitude toward the Sabbath. Most of all Jesus taught that he is Lord of the Sabbath. Then Jesus demonstrated his teaching by healing a suffering man. When we accept Jesus as Lord of the Sabbath, he gives true rest to our souls. Jesus leads us in the way of goodness and life. Let's accept Jesus into our hearts as Lord of the Sabbath and learn to serve him.

I. Jesus defended his disciples (1-5)

In this part Jesus defended his disciples from the Pharisees. In doing so, Jesus depended on the word of God, using the example of David. Then Jesus proclaimed his own authority as Lord of the Sabbath.

First, Jesus appealed to the Scriptures and David's example (1-4). Look at verse 1. "One Sabbath Jesus was going through the grainfields, and his disciples began to pick some heads of grain, rub them in their hands and eat the kernels." It was not easy for the disciples to follow Jesus. Jesus got up early in the morning to pray. Jesus worked hard all day long to serve others. When Jesus laid down to sleep, his rest was short and sweet--mostly short. Despite the demanding pace of life, the disciples could follow Jesus because their hearts were burning with hope, and their minds were bright with new possibilities. They were happy, but they were often hungry. So one Sabbath, as they went through a grainfield with Jesus, they began to pick heads of grain, rub them in their hands, and eat the kernels. This was allowed in the Jewish law. Travelers could eat freely as they walked through a field, as long as they did not harvest (Dt 23:25); it was a kind of Jewish drive-thru system.

As the disciples were chomping on healthy whole-grains, suddenly some Pharisees appeared and said, "Why are you doing what is unlawful on the

Sabbath?" The Pharisees interpreted the disciples' actions as unlawful. It was not because they were eating others' grain, but because they were doing it on the Sabbath. To the Pharisees, this was work--forbidden by the fourth commandment. Exodus 20:10 contains the phrase, "On it you shall not do any work...." To interpret this phrase, the Pharisees had produced pages and pages of commentary defining "work." These are found in the the Talmud (a record of rabbinic discussions pertaining to Jewish law), and in the Mishnah (the first major written redaction of their oral tradition). According to these books, picking heads of grain is harvesting on the Sabbath; rubbing the grain is threshing on the Sabbath; and generally the disciples were preparing food on the Sabbath. They were in violation of three counts of breaking the Sabbath law. These laws were intricate and complicated. For example, they included a ruling that putting a radish in salt on the Sabbath was lawful, but if left long enough to become a pickle, this constituted work, and was thus a violation (See *Life and Times of Jesus the Messiah* by Alfred Edersheim, 1886). The religious leaders used their knowledge of these laws to gain power over labor class people. To us, it may seem silly. But to the disciples, it was a serious matter. They were charged with violations of the Sabbath law by religious police. The disciples must have felt ashamed of their ignorance. They might have felt intimidated and become fearful of the consequences. It seemed impossible for them to stand up to the Pharisees.

Then Jesus came to their aid, and defended them. Jesus did not challenge the Pharisees' rationale in developing the Sabbath law. Instead, Jesus referred directly to Scripture. He asked them, "Have you never read what David did...." Jesus inferred that reading the word of God directly is the best way to know God's truth. Reading the Scriptures is more valuable to a person than knowing all the extrabiblical writings. Jesus referred specifically to an incident with David, the great king of Israel, and a man after God's own heart. When we read about David's life in 1,2 Samuel, we learn how to follow God's heart and obey the Law of Moses as well. Though there are many events to learn from, Jesus referred to the time David fled for his life from King Saul. David went to the house of God and asked for bread. The priest had no ordinary bread, so he gave David holy bread--lawful only for priests to eat. David and his men ate it without incurring guilt. David teaches us that it is permissible to break ceremonial law in order to feed the hungry. David teaches us how to follow God's heart, not just the letter of the law. Jesus' disciples were following God's heart by following Jesus. They were not guilty; they were following the Lord. In this way Jesus defended his disciples from the vicious criticism of the Pharisees.

We can learn a lesson from Jesus: We must protect young Christians with the word of God. Criticism can be toxic to them. The devil assaults them through religious critics. But when a shepherd protects young Christians with the word of God, they can grow and flourish. Last week the Triton UBF celebrated 20 years of ministry. Nearly 200 people gathered to remember what God has done. Many of those present had been very weak at one time. But Pastor Teddy protected them with the word of God and with Jesus' heart. They grew strong, firm and steadfast in faith. Now they have spread all over the world to share the gospel. This kind of result comes when shepherds boldly protect growing young Christians with the word of God.

Second, Jesus proclaims his own authority to use the Sabbath (5). Jesus shared David's story to give the religious leaders God's perspective. This would prepare them to listen to Jesus' main point. Look at verse 5. "Then Jesus said to them, 'The Son of Man is Lord of the Sabbath.'" Here Jesus proclaims that as the Son of Man, he is Lord of the Sabbath and has authority to use it as he pleases. This is the second time in Luke's gospel that Jesus referred to himself as "the Son of Man." In 5:24, Jesus said, "the Son of Man has authority on earth to forgive sins...." Jesus proclaimed his authority in order to counter the Pharisees' hindrance and bless needy souls. In the gospels, the words "the Son of Man" appear 81 times (TNIV notes). Each time, Jesus is referring to himself as "the Son of Man," using it as a Messianic title. These words originate in Daniel 7:13,14, in which the Son of Man approaches the Ancient of Days and receives all authority, glory and sovereign power, to rule peoples, nations, and men of every language. Jesus has all authority from Almighty God. Jesus' teachings carry divine authority. Jesus declared his disciples blameless--they were blameless! Thus, Jesus defended them with his Messianic authority.

Let's read verse 5 together. "Then Jesus said to them, 'The Son of Man is Lord of the Sabbath.'" This teaches us that as Lord of the Sabbath, Jesus is the central figure of the day. Keeping the Sabbath is not simply following rules, but worshiping and serving Jesus. We Christians do this on Sundays. Christ rose from the dead early Sunday morning. Christ appeared to his disciples on a Sunday. So the early Christians held worship services on Sundays to honor the the Risen Christ, the Lord of the Sabbath. They referred to it as "the Lord's day." In the course of time, Jewish trappings fell away. Now, Christians throughout the world gather on Sundays to worship and serve Christ, the Lord of the Sabbath.

What happens when we worship and serve Christ? The word "Sabbath" means "rest." Jesus gives us rest for our souls. Jesus said in Matthew 11:28, "Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest." We become weary and burdened due to our sins. We cannot find rest by sleeping longer, drinking wine or beer or vodka, taking drugs, going on trips, or playing video games, because these things do not solve our sin problem. However, Jesus has authority to forgive our sins. To do so, Jesus went to the cross and shed his holy blood for us. When we accept Jesus' blood by faith, it cleanses us from all sin. We are reconciled with God--our source of life and peace. The Holy Spirit dwells in our hearts and assures us of God's good will and purpose, though we may be in times of hardship. The Holy Spirit fills our souls with joy and gives us absolute meaning of life. The Holy Spirit provides wisdom and strength so that we can carry out our mission successfully and bear much fruit for the glory of God. The Holy Spirit assures us of final victory in our life of faith. This gives our souls rest. Furthermore, the Sabbath points to a future rest in Christ's kingdom. Then, all the distressing powers of evil will be destroyed. Jesus will wipe every tear from our eyes. There will be no more death or mourning or crying or pain. We will dwell in Jesus' glorious kingdom forever. Let's accept Jesus, the Lord of the Sabbath, and find rest for our souls. Let's serve him this Lord's day, and every day.

Dr. Joseph Chung has been serving God in Chicago UBF for 35 years. He has supported his family and worked hardest among us as a one-to-one Bible teacher. But he never looks tired. He always looks joyful and full of life. Now, at the age of 70, he has decided to go to Uganda as a silver missionary. He looks younger and younger. It is because he has Jesus in his soul, who gives him true rest and peace. As you all know, for the last two years, I have been working on a master's degree, while continuing full-time ministry, and caring for my family. Sometimes I felt it was impossible to do everything I needed to do. However, as Jesus comes to my heart through his word, he brings real rest for my soul. Jesus is my source of strength and wisdom to persevere joyfully in my mission.

Many of you know the story of Horatio and Anna Spafford, but it deserves repeating. They were personal friends of D.L. Moody, and Mr. Spafford was a successful lawyer. Then, in 1870, their only son was killed by scarlet fever at the age of four. The following year the Chicago fire wiped out all of their real estate holdings on the shores of Lake Michigan. To help his family

overcome grief, Mr. Spafford decided to take them to England to join Moody in an evangelistic campaign. Circumstances forced him to send his wife and children ahead; he remained behind to join them later. However, as their ship crossed the Atlantic it collided with another and sank in 12 minutes. According to the record, Anna stood bravely on the deck, with her daughters Annie, Maggie, Bessie and Tanetta clinging to her. Her last memory was of her baby being torn from her arms by the water. Then she was knocked unconscious. A plank floated up beneath her and carried her until she was rescued. On regaining consciousness, and learning that only she survived, at first she reacted with complete despair. But then she heard a voice speak to her, "You were spared for a purpose." She remembered the words of a friend, "It's easy to be grateful and good when you have so much, but take care that you are not a fair-weather friend to God." She began to think of God and sent a telegram to her husband saying, "Saved alone." He took the next ship to England. On the way, the ship's captain called him to the bridge and told him that they were passing the exact spot where his daughters had drowned. Mr. Spafford went to his cabin and wrote the words to, "It is well with my soul." He could do so because he had Jesus in his heart. Jesus can give rest to our souls in the midst of any problem or trouble.

II. Jesus heals a man with a shriveled hand (6-11)

The second event in this passage also took place on a Sabbath. Jesus went into the synagogue and taught the word of God to people. The word of God moved their hearts, and brought them to repentance. They received forgiveness and healing. Their weariness subsided and they found rest. Among those in the congregation was a man whose right hand was shriveled. This man must have enjoyed Jesus' message. However, his practical life was full of agony due to his shriveled right hand. The right hand is the source of a man's strength. But this man had no strength in his right hand. He could not work hard like others. He could not defend himself in a boxing match. He could not play baseball or tennis well. It took him twice as long to send a text message or to chat online. He dared not look for a marriage partner, unless it was someone who also had a shriveled hand. Because of his deformity, others would despise him and he must have felt ashamed. He spent a lot of time and energy to keep his shriveled hand hidden. It was his constant thought. Most likely, he had withdrawn from society. He must have usually sat in the back, keeping as quiet as possible. This man, in deep agony of life, was in the synagogue on the Sabbath. Any other time, the Pharisees and teachers of the law would not pay attention to

him. But this day they watched closely to see if Jesus would heal him. They wanted to catch Jesus in the act, and charge him with healing on the Sabbath. Their only interest in the suffering man was to use him as bait in their trap.

When Jesus saw this man, his heart went out to him, and he wanted to heal him. But Jesus also knew what the religious leaders were thinking; he knew they wanted to trap him. Jesus could have finished his message and prayed and told the man to come back the next day for healing. But this would have been yielding his divine lordship of the Sabbath to the legalistic criticism of the Pharisees. It would be sending away a needy person; Jesus never did that. For the glory of God, and to help the needy, Jesus decided to confront the Pharisees directly and also heal the man. Jesus said to the man with the shriveled hand, "Get up and stand in front of everyone." To the man, it was a great challenge. He felt the eyes of everyone fixed on him. As a withdrawn person, he did not want to become the center of attention. From inside a voice screamed, which only he heard: "Don't get up. You'll die of embarrassment." However, Jesus' words had touched his heart deeply; he was drawn toward Jesus and compelled by Jesus' spiritual authority. He also trusted Jesus. In this trust, he found strength. So he got up and stood there.

Look at verse 9. "Then Jesus said to them, 'I ask you, which is lawful on the Sabbath: to do good or to do evil, to save life or to destroy it?'" Jesus' question cut through all the complicated legal rulings of the religious leaders. Jesus' question made the issue very clear and simple. Human beings are not morally neutral; we don't shut down and do nothing, like Buddhist monks attempt to do. We are morally active; we are always doing something. By nature we do what is evil. But by grace, we can do good. On the Sabbath, we must enter into God's rest, and find strength to do good, which pleases God. Jesus was doing good to please God. The religious leaders were doing evil to please their sinful natures. Jesus wanted to save life. The religious leaders wanted to destroy life. It was as simple as that. Jesus exposed the religious leaders in order to liberate helpless people from their oppression. Jesus really wanted them to repent.

Jesus took a moment to look around at all of those gathered in the synagogue. He must have looked right into the eyes of each and every one of the religious leaders. Then Jesus said to the man, "Stretch out your hand." He did so, and his hand was completely restored. Suddenly his right hand was strong and healthy. His lifelong ailment was healed. The man could

make a new beginning in life and pursue God's dream for him. His soul found rest as never before.

However, Jesus paid a high cost to give him rest. In verse 11, the religious leaders were furious. Instead of repenting, they became so angry that they could not breathe properly. They gathered among themselves and began to plot what they might do to Jesus. Eventually this led to Jesus' crucifixion. In order to give us true rest, Jesus gave his life for us.

In this passage we learn that Jesus is Lord of the Sabbath. Jesus deserves our worship and honor. Jesus alone gives true rest to our souls. Let's come to Jesus for real rest so that we can serve him joyfully.