

(Luke 6:6~11)

The only way to understand and truly appreciate this passage is to have at least a basic understanding of the Sabbath day. In its most basic form, the Sabbath refers to the seventh day, the final day of what we commonly refer to as a week. As I noted last time, our calendar is derived from the creation account given in Genesis, which consist of seven days.

The Sabbath is unique in the Hebrew O.T, in that it is the only day that is actually named... The English language gives names to all seven days, the first day, Sunday, the second day, Monday, the third day, Tuesday and so on, with the seventh day being Saturday. However, in the Hebrew tongue, both ancient and modern, the Sabbath, the seventh day of the week, is the only one that is named, all others are numbered. Sunday is day one, Monday is day two, and Tuesday is day three and so on, in keeping with the biblical account given by God, in the first two chapters of Genesis. This was the tradition of identifying the days until the giving of the Law on Mt. Sinai, when they began referring to the seventh day as the Sabbath day.

(Exodus 20) ⁸*Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy. ⁹Six days shalt thou labor, and do all thy work: ¹⁰But the seventh day is the sabbath of the LORD thy God: in it thou shalt not do any work, thou, nor thy son, nor thy daughter, thy manservant, nor thy maidservant, nor thy cattle, nor thy stranger that is within thy gates: (Vs 11) **The meaning** ...¹¹For in six days the LORD made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that in them is, and rested the seventh day: wherefore the LORD blessed the sabbath day, and hallowed it.*

From the giving of the Law forward, the seventh day would carry special significance... It would be referred to as the “*Sabbath Day*,” or the “*Day of Rest*.” It was a special day of observance to commemorate the creation account, how in six days God created the world, and on the seventh day he rested. (Not in the sense he was tired, but in the sense he was finished.) The term Sabbath simply means to *cease, to rest from labor*.

Number 4 of the 10 Commandments, was to ⁸*Remember the Sabbath day, **to keep it holy**...* At the heart of the word Holy, is the meaning of “*separation*.” If something is considered holy, it is “*set apart*” from everything else, and treated with reverence and respect. This day was to be unlike every other day, this was a special day, a day *set-aside* in honor of the Lord. It would be a day in which every single individual and animal, in the nation Israel, would cease from their labors, in honor of the Lord.

The fact that God included this day in the Ten Commandments meant that the entire nation of Israel was under obligation to observe this day. In helping to preserve this day, and to ensure that everyone observed this day, God later declared that the penalty for violating the Sabbath was death! Anyone found not honoring this day, by working, *was to be put to death!*

(Exodus 31) ¹²*And the LORD spake unto Moses, saying, ¹³Speak thou also unto the children of Israel, saying, Verily my Sabbaths ye shall keep: for it is a sign between me and you throughout your generations; that ye may know that I am the LORD that doth sanctify you. ¹⁴Ye shall keep the Sabbath therefore; for it is holy unto you: **every one that defiles it shall surely be put to death: for whosoever doeth any work therein, that soul shall be cut off from among his people.** ¹⁵Six days may work be done; but in the seventh is the Sabbath of rest, holy to the LORD: whosoever doeth any work in the Sabbath day, he shall surely be put to death.*

This is just one of many times that the Lord makes it crystal clear, that work on the Sabbath would not be tolerated. The reason for the punishment being so severe, was to ensure the keeping of this day. I’m sure there were a few who rebelled early on, but when people began being put to death, that quickly changed. The scriptures give one account of a man being put to death, for picking up sticks on the Sabbath.

(Numbers 15) ³²*And while the children of Israel were in the wilderness, they found a man that gathered sticks upon the Sabbath day. ³³And they that found him gathering sticks brought him unto Moses and*

Aaron, and unto all the congregation. ³⁴And they put him in ward, because it was not declared what should be done to him. ³⁵And the LORD said unto Moses, **The man shall be surely put to death: all the congregation shall stone him with stones without the camp.** ³⁶And all the congregation brought him without the camp, and stoned him with stones, and he died; as the LORD commanded Moses.

Early on, while the nation was yet wandering in the wilderness, the Lord made it clear that anyone found not honoring the Sabbath, by “working” on the Sabbath, would be put to death. It didn’t take long, for the Sabbath Day to become almost the heart of the Jewish faith. Soon they became very diligent, taking every precaution as to not violate the Sabbath.

Now given that they were to cease from every form of work sounds simple enough, but it would prove to be anything but simple... The issue quickly became, *what constitutes work* and what does not. What is right to do on the Sabbath, and what is wrong. What is acceptable behavior and what is unacceptable behavior. The task of determining what constitutes work, was given to the religious leaders, the ones given charge of the oversight of the Law.

As you can imagine, wanting to ensure that the Sabbath was not violated, the list of things you could not do, became quiet lengthy, while the list of things you could do, grew smaller and smaller. As a matter of fact, when you read from the collection of “*Sabbath Day Laws*” in the Jewish Talmud, you quickly realize that the restrictions had gotten way out of hand...

Read *Sabbath Day Restrictions*... The restrictions had gotten ridiculous... Rather than be a “*Day of Rest*,” it had become a “*Day of Burden*.” The day set aside for rest and relaxation, was anything but. It had become harder to rest, than it was to work.

The restrictions were so stringent you couldn’t do anything...*literally!* Point and case, these two stories recorded here in this passage. Our last time together, we looked at the first part of this section, where Jesus and his disciples were accused of violating the Sabbath, because they pulled some grain while walking by a wheat field, and rubbing them in their hands, to separate the wheat from the chaff, to eat the grain. The charge there was that of “*harvesting*” on the Sabbath. By rubbing the wheat in their hands to separate the grain from the chaff, they were accused of *threshing*.

Here in this section, once again we find the Scribes and Pharisees trying to catch him in a violation of the Sabbath Law... ⁶And it came to pass also on another Sabbath, that he entered into the synagogue and taught: and there was a man whose right hand was withered. ⁷And the scribes and Pharisees **watched him**, whether he would heal on the Sabbath day; **that they might find an accusation against him.**

It is obvious by Luke’s account, that these men had it out for Jesus... It was already settled in their mind, he was GUILTY! All they were looking for was something to charge him with. Luke makes it clear, that these men were lying in wait, trying to catch him in a Sabbath day violation, so they could have him put to death. Seeing this man come into the synagogue with a withered hand, and given the fact that it was common for Jesus to heal all those with infirmities, they watched him to see what he would do.

Even though Luke doesn’t record it, we are told in Matthew’s account of this same event, that they actually instigated the healing, by asking him was it right to heal on the Sabbath...

(*Matthew 12*) ¹⁰And, behold, there was a man which had his hand withered. And **they asked him**, saying, ***Is it lawful to heal on the Sabbath days?*** “*that they might accuse him.*”

This is not a legitimate question in the sense that they wanted to discuss with him whether it was right or not to heal someone on the Sabbath. In their mind, there was no question, it was wrong! Reason being, they considered the “*Treatment of sickness*” as work, and no work was to be done on the Sabbath. Notice, what Matthew adds at the end of the question... “*that they might accuse him.*” A statement that speaks to the “*Intent*” of their question. It was a question aimed at *provoking him* to heal the man on the Sabbath. They only asked him the question, in hopes that he would answer “*Yes*,” giving them “*just cause*” to bring

him before the council on the charges of violating the Sabbath. So we see, this is not a legitimate question, this was what you might call, a “*loaded question*,” a trap...

(Luke 6:8) Even though Luke doesn't mention they asked the question, Luke does say that Jesus was well aware of what they were up to... ⁸*But he knew their thoughts*... Knowing what they were up to, he calls the gentleman with the withered hand to make his way forward. When he arrives, standing before Jesus, he uses the situation for his advantage. He turns it around on them, and answers their question in such a way, that *they become the accused!* With the man with the withered hand standing before them, Jesus says,

⁹*I will ask you one thing; Is it lawful on the sabbath days to do good, or to do evil? to save life, or to destroy it?*

I love how Jesus turns this around on these men... Here he masterfully takes their loaded question, and turns it around and uses it on them. “*I ask you...*” is another way to say, “*You tell me...*”

“You tell me...is it lawful to do good on the Sabbath day, or should we do evil? What is the right thing to do, good or evil? Should we help someone in need, or turn them away?”

The way Jesus asks this question is in a way that suggests if you don't do the good, then you'd automatically be doing the wrong. That is to say, by not doing what you should do, you would not be doing what is right. Take for example, if someone came to your door, asking for food because they were hungry, and rather than give them something to eat, you turned them away. *Tell me, what would you consider that to be, right or wrong?* Absolutely... I don't think anyone here would disagree that to turn away someone who came to you for something to eat, is just plain wrong.

“You tell me...is it wrong to do good on the Sabbath...Is it wrong to help someone in need?”

In Mark's account, he tells us that no one said a word... “*But they all held their peace...*” They all kept quiet, no one would answer. The reason is clear, they knew if they said that it was right to do good on the Sabbath, that they would be confirming that Jesus would be just in helping this man. On the other hand, if they said that it was wrong to do good on the Sabbath, then they would appear as cold hearted, evil men (*Which they were*). So given they were up in their own trap, they took the fifth...

(Mt. 12:11) In Matthew's account, to make his point clear, Jesus offers up a hypothetical situation...

¹¹*And he said unto them, What man shall there be among you, that shall have one sheep, and if it fall into a pit on the sabbath day, will he not lay hold on it, and lift it out?*

Let's say you had only one sheep, and it fell into a pit on the Sabbath, is there anyone of you who wouldn't reach down and help it out?

Given the question required them to answer, only if they would not do it, and the fact that no one answered, the consensus is, that everyone affirmed they would help the sheep out of the pit. Having established that all of them would help the helpless animal, he asks them one final question...

¹²*How much then is a man better than a sheep? ...Bam...he's got them... By their own admittance, they have affirmed that not only would it be right to help a man who is in need on the Sabbath, it would be wrong not to. If you'd help a sheep out of a pit, (which is but an animal) you'd help a man who is suffering...right?*

Remember their question...*Is it lawful to heal on the Sabbath days?*

The answer...**(Mt. 12:12b)** ...*Wherefore it is lawful to do well on the Sabbath days.* Given that we all agree that it would only be right to help an animal in need on the Sabbath, and we all agree that a man is of much more value than an animal...then it only stands to reason that the answer is YES! Yes, it is lawful to heal on the Sabbath day!

¹³Then saith he to the man, *Stretch forth thine hand.* And he stretched it forth; and it was restored whole, like as the other.

Interesting story, but... What's the point? And what does this have to do with us?

Well, for one, it warns us of the fact, that if we're not careful, we too can become so legalistic, and so dogmatic about certain things, that we too can become cold and indifferent to the needs of others. We might think by our strict adherence to the letter of the Law, that we are "godly." When the truth of the matter is, we are anything but godly. We are never more godly than when we show love and compassion to those in need.

Listen; in no way am I saying that we are to compromise God's commandments! Anybody that knows me at all knows that I am not saying that! My point is, we need *to understand* his commandments! The point here is that the Pharisees and the Scribes did not understand the Sabbath Day commandment! The day was to be a day of rest and leisure, one of blessing, one to honor God. But as a result of their lack of understanding, and the fact they implemented man made restriction after restriction, the day became a day of immense burden! They had turned the Sabbath into something it was never meant to be... a *burden*.

And the commandment to, *Remember the Sabbath Day, to keep it holy*... carried much more meaning than simply being a day to cease from working... there was a far greater spiritual meaning behind it. Remember what he said in Exodus 31...

¹²And the LORD spake unto Moses, saying, ¹³Speak thou also unto the children of Israel, saying, Verily my Sabbaths ye shall keep: for it is a sign between me and you throughout your generations; that ye may know that I am the LORD that doth sanctify you.

There he says it is a "Sign"... **What is a sign, and what does a sign do?** A sign points to something else! Given that, what was the "Sign of the Sabbath?" By their observance of this day, week after week, in essence they would be preaching the gospel of Jesus Christ. What do you mean preacher? It would be a constant reminder of the coming day of rest! The Sabbath day was a picture of the coming day of rest that Christ would bring at his coming...

(Colossians 2) ¹⁶Let no man therefore judge you in meat, or in drink, or in respect of an holyday, or of the new moon, or of the sabbath days: ¹⁷Which are a shadow of things to come; but the body is of Christ.

A shadow speaks of only the image of the thing... Here Paul declares that Christ was the actual fulfillment of the image, that being the Sabbath... Understand that, makes what Jesus said here in verse 5 take on a whole new meaning...

He is the Lord of the Sabbath; He is the Lord of the Rest! Every week, they would be anticipating the coming day of rest, speaking of the rest that the Lord Jesus came to give! It was a picture of the gospel of Jesus Christ, and to what he would accomplish on the cross. On Friday, when Jesus was crucified, 3 hours before Sabbath was to begin, Jesus cried, "*It is finished!*" The work is complete... The Sabbath was a constant reminder of the coming day of rest! It pictured the time when the Law would be done away with, along with the "WORKS" thereof. The fact that anyone who "worked" on this day was put to death, was to send the message, that no one is saved by works... works was clearly associated with death!

Through the cross, Christ has removed the yoke of bondage, setting us free from the Law, ushering in the True Sabbath, the true day of rest... Through Christ, by Grace, we have entered into "REST." (*Mt 11, Come unto me...*)