

## I. Two Sabbath events

(Luke 6:1-11) 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. 2 Some of the Pharisees asked, "Why are you doing what is unlawful on the Sabbath?"

3 Jesus answered them, "Have you never read what David did when he and his companions were hungry? 4 He entered the house of God, and taking the consecrated bread, he ate what is lawful only for priests to eat. And he also gave some to his companions."

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

A. Harvesting and threshing were violations of the Sabbath. However, it's surely hyper-technical to say it's wrong to prepare a handful of kernels. Sabbath was for rest, and these were hardly tiring activities — eating a steak would be more work.

B. In fact, in this case, the Law of Moses specifically approves this kind of harvesting— they weren't stealing,

(Deu 23:24-25) If you enter your neighbor's vineyard, you may eat all the grapes you want, but do not put any in your basket. 25 If you enter your neighbor's grainfield, you may pick kernels with your hands, but you must not put a sickle to his standing grain.

C. But Jesus doesn't question the validity of the rule. He questions the use of rules meant to help men to hurt men.

D. "Son of Man" is from Daniel 7:13 and it refers to the Messiah—but it literally just means a man.

(Dan 7:13-14) "In my vision at night I looked, and there before me was one like a **son of man**, coming with the clouds of heaven. He approached the Ancient of Days and was led into his presence. 14 He was given authority, glory and sovereign power; all peoples, nations and men of every language worshiped him. His dominion is an everlasting dominion that will not pass away, and his kingdom is one that will never be destroyed."

E. Jesus' point is that rules admit of implied exceptions. David could eat the showbread because of necessity. He was on a mission from God and needed to eat to carry on.

6 On another Sabbath he went into the synagogue and was teaching, and a man was there whose right hand was shriveled. 7 The

Pharisees and the teachers of the law were looking for a reason to accuse Jesus, so they watched him closely to see if he would heal on the Sabbath. *8* But Jesus knew what they were thinking and said to the man with the shriveled hand, "Get up and stand in front of everyone." So he got up and stood there.

*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?"

*10* He looked around at them all, and then said to the man, "Stretch out your hand." He did so, and his hand was completely restored. *11* But they were furious and began to discuss with one another what they might do to Jesus.

F. Healing was also considered a Sabbath violation. But it wasn't work for Jesus. He didn't need the rest. And Sabbath was never meant to be a burden on man.

G. Why did the Pharisees and teachers get angry? What would make them feel this way? They couldn't tell him not to heal, as the people wouldn't respect such an order, but he was threatening their position and credibility.

H. Hence, their power was more important to them than seeing people healed — but in their minds, they were standing for important, long-established practices, even the will of God. How can we tell when we are making the same mistake?

I. What do these stories tell us about God?

1. People are more important than rules
2. God will grant exceptions for needs greater than the need the rule was made to satisfy.
3. God expects us to do what's truly most important. When our understanding of the rules get in the way what's right, we do what's right.
4. God is not sitting in heaven looking to catch us in a mistake. Rather, he is looking to make exceptions so that what is really important can get done. In reality, we are all saved by an exception from the rule demanding damnation for sinners. God would hardly sacrifice his Son for us and then look for ways to defeat our efforts to please him.

J. Ultimately, this is an important lesson in hermeneutics. Jesus could have argued from a technical standpoint—it's not that much work!—but he argued based on the underlying purpose of the laws.

K. He declared himself "Lord of the Sabbath," not because he was exempt from its requirements (how could he be perfect and violate the Sabbath commands?)—but because as part of the Godhead he WROTE the Ten Commandments.

L. His point is this: You can't understand the laws until you understand the Lawgiver. If you don't know the heart of Jesus, you don't understand the heart of the laws. Laws have purposes and must be interpreted in light of their purposes.

M. But the purpose of a law is merely the intent of God in making the law—and the laws are never tests. Rather, the laws are made FOR man, not to trap man.

## II. The 12

(Luke 6:12-16) One of those days Jesus went out to a mountainside to pray, and spent the night praying to God. *13* When morning came, he called his disciples to him and chose twelve of them, whom he also designated apostles: *14* Simon (whom he named Peter), his brother Andrew, James, John, Philip, Bartholomew, *15* Matthew, Thomas, James son of Alphaeus, Simon who was called the Zealot, *16* Judas son of James, and Judas Iscariot, who became a traitor.

- A. Notice the importance Jesus places on prayer. More important than sleep.
- B. What does “apostle” mean?
  - 1. Ambassador
- C. Why call these men “ambassadors”?
  - 1. The Kingdom is a new nation, separate from all others
  - 2. Their task was to take the good news from the Kingdom to the other nations
- D. Why spend all night in prayer?
  - 1. He needed to get this choice right
  - 2. Jesus' work would fail if he chose the wrong men—history of the world depends on picking the right men
  - 3. He surely knew the significance of picking Judah. He had to spend years with Judas knowing of his betrayal and what it would lead to.
- E. Why just pick 12? Why not 100? There's a limit on our ability to get close to people. We can only train so many at a time.
- F. Notice how Jesus' choices are not the choices we would have made.

## III. The Sermon on the Plain - setting

A. I don't really care if this is the same sermon as in Matthew. Luke did not intend for his book to be studied by comparing to other Gospels. It was written as a stand-alone work. We lose something when we try to reassemble the Gospels.

(Luke 6:17-19) He went down with them and stood on a level place. A large crowd of his disciples was there and a great number of people from all over Judea, from Jerusalem, and from the coast of Tyre and Sidon, 18 who had come to hear him and to be healed of their diseases. Those troubled by evil spirits were cured, 19 and **the people all tried to touch him, because power was coming from him and healing them all.**

B. Interesting description of what his healing power was like in v. 19

C. I'm sure he had their attention

D. Imagine, in a world where medicine was primitive and largely ineffective, how excited people would be to see their loved ones healed.

E. People traveled from great distances—multiple days journeys for those who were very sick

F. Why was Jesus healing by letting them touch him? Some of these people likely had TB or polio or other horrible, highly contagious diseases. Why not heal from a distance?

#### IV. The Beatitudes

(Luke 6:20-21) Looking at his disciples, he said: "Blessed are you who are poor, for yours is the kingdom of God. 21 Blessed are you who hunger now, for you will be satisfied. Blessed are you who weep now, for you will laugh.

A. We seem to prefer quoting the Matthew version—poor in spirit, hunger and thirst after righteousness. Why do we prefer the spiritual version to the physical one?

B. How was this prophecy to be fulfilled?

C. Why does Jesus lead with this?

D. Or is Jesus' intending to be understood spiritually. Is Matthew more accurate?

E. What does this say about the Kingdom (church)? How is the church to fulfill this message?

F. There is relatively little hunger in American society and it's unheard of for people to die of starvation.

G. In an hour, at minimum wage, you can earn enough for a day's supply of food for one. But this wasn't true in the First Century. The poor generally had to work a full day to make enough to buy the next day's meals. The ability of the common man to have a substantial surplus over the necessities of life is a recent historical event—maybe just the last two centuries in the Western world.

H. Outside the West, many make only a \$1.00 a day or even \$1.00 per month. Poverty in the Third World is measured by how many days it takes to make \$1.00.

I. There was no middle class in the First Century. Most were either rich or very poor. And the rich often had slaves, making it hard for the free poor to find work.

J. There was no social safety net. No Medicaid or welfare or Social Security. Although, among the Jews, private charity was widely practiced due to the commands of Moses.

K. Poverty and slavery was not associated with race, education, or intelligence. Rather, it largely depended on whether your parents were poor. The ability of the clever or hardworking to get ahead was quite rare until the founding of America, where land was available to anyone willing to work it, education was widely available, and aristocracy was eliminated.

L. What we call “poor” today is quite different from the First Century.

M. What does James say about the poor? (James was the brother of Jesus)

(James 2:5-6) Listen, my dear brothers: Has not God chosen those who are poor in the eyes of the world to be rich in faith and to inherit the kingdom he promised those who love him? 6 But you have insulted the poor. Is it not the rich who are exploiting you? Are they not the ones who are dragging you into court?

N. By and large, the early church was made up of the poor and even slaves. The wealthy and slave owners sometimes were also converted, and they weren't required to surrender all their possessions, but the church was overwhelmingly poor.

(Luke 6:22-23) “Blessed are you when men hate you, when they exclude you and insult you and reject your name as evil, because of the Son of Man.

23 "Rejoice in that day and leap for joy, because great is your reward in heaven. For that is how their fathers treated the prophets.

O. Why would people react this way to his disciples? Was Jesus talking particularly about the Roman persecution?

P. The prophets, accordingly to Jewish history, were martyred.

(Luke 6:24-26) "But woe to you who are rich, for you have already received your comfort. 25 Woe to you who are well fed now, for you will go hungry. Woe to you who laugh now, for you will mourn and weep. 26 Woe to you when all men speak well of you, for that is how their fathers treated the false prophets.

Q. Interesting how Jesus explicitly negates what he'd said earlier. Why?

R. When were these prophecies fulfilled?

S. The false prophets were treated well. After all, they prophesied falsely to gain approval of the king or receive pay. Why else lie?

T. Notice that Jesus is quite explicit in teaching a social element of the gospel. He doesn't lead with personal salvation, but with a better life on earth. In the Kingdom, people will be fed.

U. This was an age when it took most of a day to earn one day's food. There was very little leisure activity for most. Rather, life was all about earning one's "daily bread." Therefore, food scarcity was a common problem and Jesus was talking terms that spoke to his audience.

V. Is it a contradiction for us to be commanded to have a good reputation and then be told to celebrate when we are spoken of badly? How can God's Kingdom be served by our being spoken ill of?

## V. Love

(Luke 6:27-28) "But I tell you who hear me: Love your enemies, do good to those who hate you, 28 bless those who curse you, pray for those who mistreat you.

A. Anyone can love those who love back. Only by the power of God can we love those who hate us.

B. Who are our enemies? [make a list on the board]

C. How do we love them? How do we pray for them? What do we pray for?

D. Compare to the American system:

1. Democracy — vote for whoever will give you what you want. Vote to serve your own interests.

2. Capitalism — greed is good. It's about profits, not helping people.

3. Judicial system — the advocacy system — argue your case and let the other side worry about the other side

E. Our system is very Darwinian and leads to awful results when not alloyed with Christian principles.

F. Consider this. In modern economic theory, it's assumed that competition will bring the fairest price. Therefore, even though someone in Cambodia is making 12 cents a day making your shoes, their lives are improved because they were doing even worse before they were hired by the shoemaker.

G. But it's usually the case that for a dime more a shoe, the worker could be paid \$1.00 an hour (that's just 10 shoes an hour using modern machinery). Would you pay \$99.10 rather than \$99.00 so the shoemaker could make \$1.00 an hour?

H. For some products, the difference is a penny!

I. In England, many once paid a dime more for a cup of "fair trade" coffee so the farmers in Central America will make \$2.00 an hour, rather than \$1.00 (\$4,000 per year rather than \$2,000). The stores had coffee for sale at both prices, and most chose the higher price.

J. However, on investigation, it was learned that more than 90% of the dime went to profit. Less than a penny per cup was needed to double the Central American farmer's income! And so, the coffee shops began to sell fair wage coffee for the same price as the other! Chapter 2 of *The Undercover Economist* tells the story.

K. Why don't American consumers, noted for their charity and compassion, make this happen more often?

L. And why don't businesses pay better wages without being made to by consumers?

1. Because business is so caught up in a capitalistic mindset it never occurs to them that anyone would care a dime's worth for some stranger's well being.
2. Because we don't think about such things. To us, it's just a product.
3. We don't really care that much for foreigners.
4. Because many consumers wouldn't trust the business to really pay a better wage.

(Luke 6:29-30) "If someone strikes you on one cheek, turn to him the other also. If someone takes your cloak, do not stop him from taking your tunic. 30 Give to everyone who asks you, and if anyone takes what belongs to you, do not demand it back.

M. Strike on the cheek is an insult.

N. Tunic was exempted from creditors claims by the law.

O. The Law required that loans be made

(Deu 15:7-11) If there is a poor man among your brothers in any of the towns of the land that the LORD your God is giving you, do not be hardhearted or tightfisted toward your poor brother. 8 Rather be openhanded and freely lend him whatever he needs. 9 Be careful not to harbor this wicked thought: "The seventh year, the year for canceling debts, is near," so that you do not show ill will toward your needy brother and give him nothing. He may then appeal to the LORD against you, and you will be found guilty of sin. 10 Give generously to him and do so without a grudging heart; then because of this the LORD your God will bless you in all your work and in everything you put your hand to. 11 There will always be poor people in the land. Therefore I command you to be openhanded toward your brothers and toward the poor and needy in your land.

P. It's unlikely that Jesus meant us to encourage wrongdoers or to be enablers for sin.

(Luke 6:31) "Do to others as you would have them do to you.

Q. The command is "do," which is unique in Christianity. There's a duty to serve others, to provide for their needs.

R. "Do" is not "think" or "feel." Our doctrine and our emotions matter, but they matter only if they lead to actions.

(1 John 3:16-18) This is how we know what love is: Jesus Christ laid down his life for us. And we ought to lay down our lives for our brothers. 17 If anyone has material possessions and sees his brother in need but has no pity on him, how can the love of God be in him? 18 Dear children, let us not love with words or tongue but with actions and in truth.

S. Jesus explains why—

(Luke 6:32-35) "If you love those who love you, what credit is that to you? Even 'sinners' love those who love them. 33 And if you do good to those who are good to you, what credit is that to you? Even 'sinners' do that. 34 And if you lend to those from whom you expect repayment, what credit is that to you? Even 'sinners' lend to 'sinners,' expecting to be repaid in full. 35 But love your enemies, do good to them, and lend to them without expecting to get anything back. Then your reward will be great, and you will be sons of the Most High, because he is kind to the ungrateful and wicked.

T. This is a critical passage, as it shows what Jesus means. We have to do things that don't make sense from a worldly perspective.

## **VI. Mercy**

(Luke 6:36-37) Be merciful, just as your Father is merciful. 37  
"Do not judge, and you will not be judged. Do not condemn, and you will not be condemned. Forgive, and you will be forgiven.

A. We are to be like God, generous and ready to forgive. We sometimes think God is reluctant to forgive, that he'll only forgive if we use the right magic words or ask many times or ask the right way. Jesus says to forgive generously—don't even judge and condemn—because this is how God is.

(Luke 6:38) Give, and it will be given to you. A good measure, pressed down, shaken together and running over, will be poured into your lap. For with the measure you use, it will be measured to you."

B. Notice, this is not just giving to your church, but giving to people in need. If your church doesn't help those in need, you may just be giving for yourself, and it may not count for much.