



Sermon-Based Study Guide
Good Shepherd Presbyterian Church

Luke 6.1-11 | January 28, 2018

Prepared by Rev. Paul T. White
paul@gspc.org | 562/493.2553 x116

I. Introduction to this Study

This week we continue our series in the Gospel of Luke, *Who Is This Man?* This study will consider the question, "Who is this man who redefines the rules?"

II. Connecting with One Another

When is the last time you disobeyed a rule or a law? What was the context? Was it justified in your mind? Why?

III. Study the Text

- a. Our passage is the tail end of a section that gives examples of controversies Jesus encountered with religious leaders. Starting in Luke 5.17 and continuing through 6.11, Luke records four issues the religious leaders have with Jesus: forgiving sins, socializing with tax collectors and sinners, fasting, and Sabbath observance.

How do these controversies suggest Jesus felt about the "rules" of the day?

- b. Read Luke 6.1-5. It was not unlawful to pluck the ears of grain from a neighbor's field. What was unlawful was to work on the Sabbath, and both reaping (picking the grain) and threshing (rubbing it in the hands to get to the kernel) were considered work.

How does Jesus respond to the Pharisees' question? (The story he tells is from 1 Samuel 21.1-6.) What motivated David and his men and, presumably, Jesus' disciples to break the law?

- c. What is Jesus claiming when he states, "The Son of Man is Lord of the Sabbath?"
- d. The Pharisees often get a bad rap, but we should be careful not to lump them all together as narrow-minded and legalistic. That would be like saying that because some clergy have abused their positions of power, all clergy are guilty. The Pharisees were committed to the law of Moses, understanding it as the means of honoring and connecting with God. Unfortunately the law wasn't always clear. They were to "honor the Sabbath and keep it holy." Okay. What did that mean in practical terms? The Pharisees, scribes, and teachers of the law had to figure that out and communicate what should or should not be done in various circumstances. They were interpreters, and often their interpretations (rules) became a burden.

How can Christians today stay committed to obedience to God's word without becoming legalistic? Give examples.

- e. Read Luke 6.6-11. The Pharisees had also interpreted that healing was a form of work and, therefore, was not lawful on the Sabbath. Later rabbinic tradition allowed healing on the Sabbath if it was a life-threatening condition, but this man's condition was chronic, not life-threatening.

What are the religious leaders hoping Jesus will do? What does Jesus do? How do they react?

- f. Luke adds the detail that the disabled hand is the *right* hand. The right hand was normally used for work, gesturing and greeting. The left hand was used for chores of bodily hygiene and was, therefore, not presented in public. Scholar Alan Culpepper notes: *The man had lost the use of his good hand, presumably forcing him to use his left hand in public, thereby adding shame to his physical disability.*

What aspects of this man's life does Jesus restore by this healing?

- g. Read again Jesus' question to the religious leaders in verse 9. In what ways does this question highlight what the Sabbath should be focused upon?

The implication is that if "doing good" and "saving life" are ignored, it is the same as "doing evil" and "destroying life." What common excuse does this override?

- h. Go back and read Luke 4.16-21. What does Jesus state his mission to be? Thus far in Luke, how have you seen his commitment to this mission influence his speech and action?

IV. Reflect

- a. These two Sabbath stories highlight the competing values of Duty to meet human need and Duty to observe religious tradition. Which side is Jesus on? How are we like the religious leaders in this story? For instance, how do you respond on a Sunday morning when someone arrives on the church campus looking for help?
- b. Christians often ignore the command to "Remember the Sabbath day by keeping it holy." (Exodus 20.8) How can we—who live in a very different culture today—adhere to this command while still acknowledging Jesus as "Lord over the Sabbath"? What place does keeping the Sabbath have in today's world? What deeper principle might the command be getting at?
- c. What does it mean to you to "do good" or to "save life"? Where in your life might God be calling you to act?

V. Pray

- a. Pray that God would give Good Shepherd and its leaders the wisdom to balance orthodoxy (right thinking) with orthopraxy (right acting). Pray that we would have the mind of Christ and be a body that acts for Christ.
- b. Ask God each day this week how you can "do good" and "save life," and to keep your eyes and heart open to the opportunities that arise.
- c. Pray for those impacted by the terrible flu virus this winter.