

Luke 6/1-11 (& 13/10-17, 14/1-6): JESUS IS LORD OF THE SABBATH

Only halfway through the second chapter of his ministry Jesus has his first brushes with the Pharisees and the teachers of (experts in) the law: at the healing of the paralytic (5/17-26), at Levi's post-conversion party (5/27-32), and when they subsequently complain that Jesus and his disciples don't fast (5/33-39).

Here are 2(4) more brushes with them, all about the Sabbath, because all occur on the Sabbath.

It is amazing how many times something like this happened on a Sabbath. Was it just that Jesus was doing what he did on every other day but on those days without incurring objection? Or did he deliberately do these things on a Sabbath to expose their hard hearts and teach truth – about the Sabbath, and revelation v religion?

THE DISCIPLES PICK CORN (Luke 6/1-5 || Mw 12/1-8, Mk 2/23-28]

v1 cf. OT gleaning laws, e.g. Dt 23/25: If you enter your neighbour's cornfield, you may pick the ears with your hands, but you must not put a sickle to his standing corn.
v2 "unlawful" only to man, not to God (not in Law, only in Rabbinical additions): religion is man-made rules.

Even when Jesus and his disciples are walking privately through the countryside, minding their own business, the Pharisees (the religious) are in attendance, monitoring them: religion always wants to find fault with others.

v3f "but even if it was (against the Law)... "Have you never read what David did when..." Scripture contains (and approves) examples of people doing what *is* (normally) against the law: under certain circumstances ("hungry and in need": Mk 2/25) what is normally unacceptable is acceptable – it is the natural and sensible thing to do (as here: "his disciples were hungry": Mw 12/1), it is against the letter but not the spirit of the law.

Mw 12/5ff: [v5] The priests that serve in the temple on the Sabbath desecrate the day (by working on the day) but are innocent because that service must be done – again, what would normally not be acceptable, under certain circumstances is. [v6] "Now one greater than the temple is here": in serving this 'one greater than the temple' on the Sabbath they are likewise innocent. [v7] The Pharisees had missed the whole heart of God behind the law (people not rules, mercy not ritual): religion condemns the innocent!

Mk 2/27: "The Sabbath was made for man, not man for the Sabbath." The law is given to protect and refresh man; man is not created to serve and illustrate the law.
v5 "[So] the Son of Man is Lord [even] of the Sabbath." [Mk] If David could do what he did, how much more does the Son of Man have the authority to overrule man-made laws re the Sabbath and properly interpret and apply the law God did give (v the Pharisees' interpretation of God's law). God *makes* the laws: he is not ruled by them. And he knows why he made them, what they are for; he determines what obedience to them means.

A MAN WITH A SHRIVELLED HAND (Luke 6/6-11 || Mw 12/9-14, Mk 3/1-6)

v7 How sad that to “heal on the Sabbath” would be “a reason to accuse” – only according to minds twisted and hearts hardened by the laws and legalism of religion, not according to Scripture or common sense (or even the natural goodness that unbelievers often have): religion looks for (always expects/wants to find) a reason to accuse, even when there is none.

v8 "knew what they were thinking" (cf. 5/22) – by discernment of people or gift of Spirit (not his divinity).

Jesus knew what they were thinking but still went for it. Far from shrink from a fight, Jesus provokes it! He is not going to deny blessing someone (or stop serving God) because of the expected hostile reaction. He is not intimidated into performing the miracle privately: in fact, he makes it as public as possible.

v9 Jesus takes the initiative, he goes on the offensive. He goes from enduring questions to asking questions.

It is surely lawful – indeed, right and praiseworthy – to do good or save life on any day, especially the Sabbath.

It is a rhetorical question – the answer is obvious. It is incredible that the Pharisees’ hearts are so hardened and minds so twisted by religion that they are not able/willing to see that.

Mw 12/11f: If your sheep falls into a pit on the Sabbath you will (rightly) lift it out. "How much more valuable is a man than a sheep! Therefore it is lawful to do good on the Sabbath."

v10a A pregnant pause! Jesus waited to see if anyone objected to his question or implied answer, to his unarguable reasoning, but no-one was bold enough to do so (or even to agree with him): "But they remained silent" (Mk 3/4). "He looked round at them in anger and, deeply distressed at their stubborn hearts..." (Mk 3/5): Jesus' reaction shows us how evil religion is – it would more readily kill (destroy) than save life!

v10b This time Jesus told the man to do something (v speak to body/sickness or lay on hands). Healing came as the man obeyed Jesus' instruction: "So he stretched it out and it was..." As with every healing so far, it was both immediate and total: "...completely restored, just as sound as the other" (Mw 12/13).

v11 How tragic that they could not recognize and rejoice in the wonderful thing that had happened, even if it was different to what they would have expected/done (cf. Christians and what God does in other churches!): religion says everybody must be, think, speak and do like us (is controlling, restrictive, arrogant and prejudiced) Because their rules/interpretations were not upheld but undermined, and because they lost face (their authority, prestige and pride were undermined along with their rules), and because they could not withstand Jesus' reasoning => unrighteous anger and persecution of truth/life and those bring who it.

Mk 3/6: "Then the Pharisees went out and began to plot with the Herodians how they might kill Jesus." Religion gives you the license to do evil and yet be convinced you're right and serving God's cause (cf. church in many times and places) – and causes you to partner with people you previously/otherwise thought were evil!

A WOMAN CRIPPLED BY A SPIRIT (Luke 13/10-17 – no parallels)

v10-12a Jesus didn't hesitate: he saw her, saw her suffering, and knew the Father wanted to deliver her. It is noteworthy that neither the woman nor anyone else asked or evidenced faith for healing: this was God's initiate.

v12b-13 This time Jesus declared healing, then laid on hands. But again, the healing was “immediate” and the result was praise.

v14 Unrighteous (because illegitimate) indignation. Too scared to confront Jesus: takes it out on the people.

v15f Strong words from Jesus! But true: they would help their animals on the Sabbath. How much more a person, an Israelite, who has suffered for so long – note Jesus' compassion, his motivation in this healing.

v17 God cannot help but humiliate those who cling to error and delight those who are open to receive truth.

God doesn't humiliate people? God does not humiliate people by intent (never his desire or design) but people who are determined to resist him cannot but be humiliated (effect v purpose).

A MAN SUFFERING FROM DROPSY (Luke 14/1-6 – no parallels)

v1-4 Almost a carbon copy! Religion casts its shadow in church, home and open country (3 'sets'). Despite their loathing of him, Jesus often ate in Pharisees homes (7/36, 11/37) – i.e. he was willing to eat with both 'ends' of the spectrum, tax collectors /sinners and Pharisees (those who erred in legalism or license). Again, Jesus doesn't shrink from a fight but provokes it. Again he asks a question – rhetorical to all but the Pharisees. Again his reasoning is simple and irresistible. Again they keep silent because theirs was a wrong answer – and they knew it! Again Jesus heals the man immediately and totally (this time with the laying on of hands).

v5 Jesus illustrates the rightness of his action by drawing an analogy: they would certainly rescue a person or animal from a well on the Sabbath – immediately. Again, they cannot contradict his reasoning.

Analysis

Religion & Religionists... (see next page; also Lk 11/37-54 et al)

Appeal

1. Live in liberty (v legalism or license); don't reduce living for God to rules (don't go back to religion); Ga 5/1.
2. Observing a/the Sabbath is important – for honouring God's rest on the seventh day of creation (Ex 20/8-11), for remembering God's deliverance of his people from slavery into rest (Dt 5/12-15) and because of the simple need for refreshment (Ex 23/12). But the Sabbath is made for us, not vv – for our rest and recreation, not our restriction and hardship.
3. Relieving people's suffering – doing good, saving life (giving water, setting free) – is infinitely more important than observing rules, regulations and procedures.
4. Let's pray for the sick – today and every day.

Gospel

Have you been trying to become righteous by effort (it may be sincere – but is always futile), to get saved by obeying rules / performing rituals, to earn God's love/acceptance by your good life/works?

You can't – only Jesus can do it for you (give you his righteousness) – believe on him.

RELIGION & RELIGIONISTS – as seen in Jesus' first brushes with the Pharisees:

Levi's conversion party

- Separate themselves from those they consider inferior/disqualified
- Conceal popular prejudice behind a spiritual cloak
- Are not able to enjoy a party
- Always compare, complain and criticize

Jesus questioned about fasting

- Reduce spiritual disciplines to inflexible rules
- Resent others getting away with less sacrifice than themselves
- Want to conform the gospel to their religious system
- Resist any change, and the new thing God is doing

The disciples pick corn

- Delight in adding man-made rules to God's law
- Make rules inflexible/absolute v sensible/general
- Man made to serve rules v Rules made to serve man
- Rules even bigger than God (God ruled by them)

A man with a shrivelled hand

- Are always looking for a reason to accuse
- Observing a rule more important than to do good, save life
- Believe they have the right to condemn those who break their rule

Are unable to celebrate God's person and work because their own pride and position is undermined