

# Sermon: Why All the Fuss?

Text: Luke 6:1-11

Gary L. Wackler

July 5, 2009

**Introduction:** This is not the first time Jesus would find himself in difficulty with the Jewish leaders of his time. This was only a prelude of the hatred they would demonstrate finally against Jesus. One must ask why Luke and the other synoptic writers include these two stories found in our text today. I believe Luke is trying to demonstrate that Jesus is the Lord of (over) the Sabbath. Jesus was redefining what “keeping the Law” meant. And finally Luke wanted both the church and the synagogue to know there is never a bad day to do good.

## I. Jesus Defines the Law’s Content (vv. 1-5).

**Luke 6:1-5 (NIV)** <sup>1</sup>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. <sup>2</sup>Some of the Pharisees asked, “Why are you doing what is unlawful on the Sabbath?” <sup>3</sup>Jesus answered them, “Have you never read what David did when he and his companions were hungry? <sup>4</sup>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.” <sup>5</sup>Then Jesus said to them, “The Son of Man is Lord of the Sabbath.”

**Verse 5** is a clear, albeit an early declaration, that Jesus is the Messiah, and as “Son of Man,” Lord of the Sabbath. He clearly had created the Law and could interpret it more accurately than anyone else. Jesus performs miracles on the Sabbath so the point could be made that the Sabbath was made for man to rest and enjoy as he worshipped God.

### A. Man-made rules were out-of-hand.

God’s Law was perfect as given to Moses, but it had been interpreted to mean much more than God had ever intended. The Sabbath had become a burden, not a blessing as God intended.

There was nothing illegal or wrong about eating grain from fields as one passed by using the hard paths that divided properties. In fact, there were allowances in Scripture.

**Deuteronomy 23:24-25 (NIV)** <sup>24</sup>If you enter your neighbor’s vineyard, you may eat all the grapes you want, but do not put any in your basket. <sup>25</sup>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.

**It is the idea of God supplying enough for the day like the manna in the OT and Jesus' prayer for daily bread in the NT.**

**So why do the Pharisees have such a problem? They said it was because it was the Sabbath. They had interpreted the 4th commandment in a very strict way.**

**The Bible said: [Exodus 20:8-10 \(NIV\)](#) <sup>8</sup>“Remember the Sabbath day by keeping it holy. <sup>9</sup>Six days you shall labor and do all your work, <sup>10</sup>but the seventh day is a Sabbath to the Lord your God. On it you shall not do any work, neither you, nor your son or daughter, nor your manservant or maidservant, nor your animals, nor the alien within your gates.**

**The Pharisees were saying that Jesus' disciples had done maybe as many as 4 types of work, all prohibited according to man's added rules. The Talmud gives us insight here:**

**“In case a woman rolls wheat to remove the husks, it is considered as sifting; if she rubs the heads of wheat, it is considered threshing; if she cleans off the side-adherences, it is sifting out fruit; if she bruises the ears, it is grinding; if she throws them up in her hand, it is winnowing.”**

**Now if that wasn't silly enough, there were also rules around the rules.**

**Alfred Edersheim tells us, “If a man wished to move a sheaf on his field, which of course implied labor, he had only to lay upon it a spoon that was in his common use, when, in order to remove the spoon, he might also remove the sheaf on which it lay.”**

**As silly as this seems this was deadly serious business. “The Mishnah (*oral tradition of the Law and its interpretation*) includes Sabbath desecration among the most heinous crimes for which a man was to be stoned.” - Edersheim, *Life and Times*, Vol. 2, p.52**

**Of course none of this silliness would go on today, right? Try changing the times of services on Sunday morning, try moving the communion table, try removing the flag(s), completely change the style of music or the order of service one Sunday.**

**Some churches have rules about their members not being allowed to smoke or drink alcohol, dance, watch TV, go to the movies, drive cars with white-wall tires.**

#### **B. Rules were never to violate human need.**

**To illustrate this point Jesus reminds the Pharisees about a story about David. He did it in a way that might have been making fun of their lack of understanding or even a rebuke. “Have you never read,” he said.**

Jesus tells the story of David how the rules seemed to have been suspended when he ate the Bread of the Presence that only the priests were permitted to eat. This presented the Pharisees with a dilemma. If they criticized Jesus, what would that indicate about David?

Maybe it was the fact David was the anointed king. Maybe it was because he was doing the Lord's work. After all the laws regarding work on the Sabbath seemed to have been suspended for the priests as they tended to their duties.

Maybe there were other exceptions or better yet an underlying principle to the Law. Matthew records Jesus saying: [Matthew 12:6 \(NIV\)](#) <sup>6</sup>I tell you that one greater than the temple is here.

Some of the religious leaders would tithe even plants and herbs and then neglect their obligation to family.

[Mark 7:11-13 \(NIV\)](#) <sup>11</sup>But you say that if a man says to his father or mother: 'Whatever help you might otherwise have received from me is Corban' (that is, a gift devoted to God), <sup>12</sup>then you no longer let him do anything for his father or mother. <sup>13</sup>Thus you nullify the word of God by your tradition that you have handed down. And you do many things like that."

James understood the practicality of faith and that doing what was right involved decisions as to how one might serve others.

[James 2:8 \(NIV\)](#) <sup>8</sup>If you really keep the royal law found in Scripture, "Love your neighbor as yourself," you are doing right.

[James 2:15-16 \(NIV\)](#) <sup>15</sup>Suppose a brother or sister is without clothes and daily food. <sup>16</sup>If one of you says to him, "Go, I wish you well; keep warm and well fed," but does nothing about his physical needs, what good is it?

You can't just say: I am sorry it is the Sabbath; come back tomorrow.

## II. Jesus Defines the Law's Intent (vv. 6-11).

[Luke 6:6-11 \(NIV\)](#) <sup>6</sup>On another Sabbath he went into the synagogue and was teaching, and a man was there whose right hand was shriveled. <sup>7</sup>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. <sup>8</sup>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. <sup>9</sup>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?"

<sup>10</sup>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. <sup>11</sup>But they were furious and began to discuss with one another what they might do to Jesus.

The Pharisees were looking to see if Jesus would break the Law. The word indicates they were watching Jesus carefully and with a sinister intent - out of the corner of their eyes. They were spying on him. They were trying to discredit the Master. Jesus’ agenda was clear. He wanted them to know that simply:

A. Observing the Law does not make a person good.

Later, the Apostle Paul came to realize that everything he had held dear as a Pharisee and a Jew was rubbish. Circumcision, dietary laws, even the Sabbath had been surpassed and fulfilled in his relationship with Jesus.

**Philippians 3:4-9 (NIV)** <sup>4</sup>though I myself have reasons for such confidence. If anyone else thinks he has reasons to put confidence in the flesh, I have more: <sup>5</sup>circumcised on the eighth day, of the people of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, a Hebrew of Hebrews; in regard to the law, a Pharisee; <sup>6</sup>as for zeal, persecuting the church; as for legalistic righteousness, faultless. <sup>7</sup>But whatever was to my profit I now consider loss for the sake of Christ. <sup>8</sup>What is more, I consider everything a loss compared to the surpassing greatness of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord, for whose sake I have lost all things. I consider them rubbish, that I may gain Christ <sup>9</sup>and be found in him, not having a righteousness of my own that comes from the law, but that which is through faith in Christ—the righteousness that comes from God and is by faith.

Jesus is more interested in a person’s heart and motive than anything else.

**Hosea 6:6 (NIV)** <sup>6</sup>For I desire mercy, not sacrifice, and acknowledgment of God rather than burnt offerings.

Following the law has never guaranteed righteousness. Man-made law has never produced or even necessarily reflected morality. In some settings it is illegal to share your faith. In some countries the Christian faith is illegal. It is against the law in some circumstances to spank your child. From the other perspective, it is legal in some situations to obtain an abortion, to marry a same-sex partner, to visit a prostitute, to euthanize someone. All of these would fly in the face of God’s desire for his creation. Legality and morality should never be equated when man is involved.

Jesus makes it clear in the Sermon on the Mount that it is the underlying heart and motive that makes a person righteous or not.

Being right with God is more than merely abstaining from activity. It is time that the Church be known more for what it is for than what it opposes.

## **B. There is never a bad time for doing good.**

Every day is a good day to do good for our great God! Every day is holy and should be devoted to God. Every opportunity should be taken to follow God. That is exactly what Jesus did on a Sabbath 2000 years ago. He saw a need and met it. And Luke says that the Pharisees were out of their minds with madness. They totally lost it and lost all control of themselves.

Mark (3:5), in his account of this story, says Jesus was angry. There was an important reason why Jesus healed on this Sabbath. “Jesus poses the issue so as to make inactivity before human need no real option at all. One will be *doing* something: to act is to do good (save life); to refuse to act is to do evil (destroy life).” - Craddock, Luke, p. 82

**Conclusion:** It seems to me that what God and others need from us is love not layers and layers of rules. People need grace not condemnation and ridicule. If we want to give people what they really need, provide them with an example of love and service. Share Jesus with them.

You want to live by Jesus’ rules?

**Romans 13:8-10 (NIV)** <sup>8</sup>Let no debt remain outstanding, except the continuing debt to love one another, for he who loves his fellowman has fulfilled the law. <sup>9</sup>The commandments, “Do not commit adultery,” “Do not murder,” “Do not steal,” “Do not covet,” and whatever other commandment there may be, are summed up in this one rule: “Love your neighbor as yourself.” <sup>10</sup>Love does no harm to its neighbor. Therefore love is the fulfillment of the law.

I hope you have experienced the love of God. If you have, you need to tell others. Deeds do not necessarily give glory to God by themselves, just like words ring hollow and insincere without acts of kindness. They should be wed together.

Over the years there has been a drift away from keeping time sacred for worship. I want to encourage you to follow the ancient pattern and law that provided time for God and him only. There is no good substitute for church attendance. I hope you will always both see and hear Jesus in this place among his people.

I know there may be many good reasons for missing opportunities for fellowship and worship, but I believe Billy Graham was onto something when he said: “Jesus tells us it is OK to help our ox out of the ditch on the Sabbath. But, if your ox gets in the ditch every Sabbath, you need to either get rid of the ox or fill up the ditch.”

Everyday is a Sabbath. The Psalmist said it best: **Psalms 118:24 (NIV)** <sup>24</sup>This is the day the LORD has made; let us rejoice and be glad in it.