

Further up, Further in

Resources for Continued Study



LOOKOUT
MOUNTAIN
PRESBYTERIAN
CHURCH

"SABBATH: TRAGIC DISTORTION AND TRUE DESIGN"

For individual study or group discussion

DATE: February 06, 2022

SPEAKER: Joe/Brian

SERIES: Gospel of Luke

PASSAGE: Luke 6:1-11

As we consider today's passage, we note that the institution of the Sabbath day begins in Genesis 2, where God's presence fills his creation as he invites mankind to rest in the provision of his completed work (v. 2). But then sin enters into the world through the disobedience of Adam (Romans 5:12), and all of mankind enters into a cycle of suffering and struggling—a wilderness wandering like that of the early Israelites. Yet throughout Scripture, God in his mercy seeks to restore his seventh day rest back to humanity through a cycle of weekly sabbaths, yearly feasts, and a seven times seven years jubilee (Exodus 20:8-11; Leviticus 23 and 25) that points God's people to the ultimate "year of the Lord's favor" (Isaiah 61:2; Luke 4:19). The jubilee found its fulfillment in Jesus Christ (Luke 4:21), as you might recall from our previous studies in Luke and Isaiah.

By the onset of Christ's ministry, the Pharisees had utterly distorted God's intent for the Sabbath. Meant for refreshment and delight in God, it had become a burden and hardship.

- Describe how the Pharisees built their confidence on their own works. (cf. Luke 18:9-14)
- Luke records that the Pharisees had been watching Jesus (5:21, 30 and 6:2, 7). What do you notice about their responses (5:26; 6:11)?
- Why do you think they were watching Jesus and his disciples? What were they looking for?
- Why did Jesus compare David's actions in 1 Samuel 21 to those of his disciples? Which was more important to Jesus, meeting the fundamental need of hunger or performing ceremony?

As we seek to understand God's true design for the Sabbath, we pay particular attention to Jesus' claim, "The Son of Man is the lord of the Sabbath" (v. 5). What does he mean by this? Look back at Luke 4:16-21 when Jesus began his public ministry by announcing in the synagogue on the Sabbath that he is the fulfillment of the Isaiah 61 prophecy. When he states that God has anointed him to "proclaim the year of the Lord's favor," he is using the descriptor of jubilee, and he is essentially stating that the "ultimate Jubilee" or "the ultimate Sabbath" would come through him.

- Read the parallel account to today's passage in Matthew 12:1-8. Jesus quotes Hosea 6:6. If the Pharisees had followed this teaching, what would they have done differently?
- Read Micah 6:6-8, Isaiah 1:12-17, Psalm 51:17, and Amos 5:21-24. What embodies God's true design for Sabbath rest?

Later, Jesus will demonstrate that he is indeed "Lord of the Sabbath" through his resurrection. He rose again, not on the seventh day, but on the first day of the new week. Jesus' resurrection was the first day of the new Sabbath, fulfilling God's promise of a future rest through his Son (Hebrews 4:1-13). Even now while we are waiting for his return, Jesus invites us into his Sabbath rest when he calls us to "Come to me, all who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest" (Matthew 11:28).

Family Dinner Table

In the Luke 6 passage today, we see that the sin and pride in the hearts of men will always seek to distort what is holy. Consider this illustration from David Stain, a pastor at First Presbyterian Church in Jackson, Mississippi:

It is the year 1660 in the important little port of Dysart in the part of southeastern Scotland known as the Kingdom of Fife. On this occasion, the town is very quiet indeed; there's no one on the streets, almost no one around because today is the Sabbath day and nearly everyone in the town of Dysart is in church. But suppose on this particular Sunday you were late for church or maybe even resolved to play hooky that day. Well, then you would quickly discover the need for a great deal of caution. Because like many parishes in those days, the records of the acts of the session, the elder body for the parish church, indicate that they had appointed two elders to prowls the streets of Dysart during the worship service in order to catch anyone who failed to attend. In those days, actually, the elders were given some delegated civil power to enforce local law. And so if you were found breaking the Sabbath, you could be fined; they could even inflict corporal punishment. They would put you in the stocks in the town square.¹

- What is ironic about the actions of the elders in this story?
- Discuss ways we too can distort living out the Gospel with others.

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¹ Strain, David. "Lord of the Sabbath." First Presbyterian Church, Jackson, Mississippi, 15 July 2018, <https://fpjackson.org/resource-library/sermons/lord-of-the-sabbath-2/>.