

Grace to You :: *Unleashing God's Truth, One Verse at a Time*

Jesus: The Divine Truth-Teller

Scripture: Luke 6:1-5

Code: 42-69

We have the privilege this morning of returning to our ongoing study of the Gospel of Luke and chapter 6. We go from incident to incident in the life of Jesus at this point in the gospel of Luke, culminating, of course, in His death and His resurrection. We are only in the sixth chapter of Luke, the longest gospel of the four, in terms of words. Twenty-four chapters, a lot to go, we're just at the very beginning of Luke, but already the bitterness, the hostility, the resentment, the animosity and the hatred of Jesus is escalating severely.

We began the gospel of Luke with so much joy. Angelic announcements, angelic hosts praising God and saying, "Glory to God in the highest," for the birth of the Messiah. Shepherds, Joseph and Mary, Elizabeth, Zacharias, Simeon, Anna, the old folks in the temple who were part of the Jewish remnant waiting and waiting for the long-expected Jesus who finally came. The gospel began with such hope as do the other gospels. But it didn't take long for the realization to set in that there would be a severe conflict and that Jesus would generate deadly hostility.

Admittedly, the response to His ministry at first was positive. Back in chapter 4 verse 15 we read, "And He began teaching in the synagogues and was praised by all." And in verse 42 of that same fourth chapter, : "When day came, He departed and went to a lonely place and the multitudes were searching for Him and came to Him and tried to keep Him from going away from them." He was in tremendous demand. They had never heard anybody like Him. They had never seen anybody like Him. No one had ever done the miracles that He had done of healing, the casting out of demons. No one had ever spoken the way He spoke. And the crowds wanted Him all the time.

Even in chapter 5 and verse 26 it says, "The whole crowd was seized with astonishment and began glorifying God. They were filled with awe, or fear, saying, 'We have seen remarkable things today.'" There was a tremendous explosion of popularity on the part of Jesus at first, at first. Even the religious leaders who had a lot at stake because they were in power, religious power and political power and influence, even they at the beginning were curious. Chapter 5 verse 17, He was teaching and there were Pharisees and teachers of the law sitting there who had come from every village of Galilee and Judea and from Jerusalem. He was starting to attract, of course, not only the crowds but the religious leaders who came to hear His message and to see the wonders that He worked, the healings and the casting out of demons. I guess we could say it all began with a lot of hope. It all began with a lot of enthusiasm.

But it didn't take very long to turn. In fact, by the time we come into chapter 6, the hostility has reached a severe level. And even by this time, the Jewish leaders, the Pharisees and the scribes who were really the architects of Judaism who were viewed as the leaders, who were the reigning theologians, they viewed Jesus as the most dangerous person alive, the severest threat to their religion and their religious position and power. And frankly, they were exactly right. They were exactly right. He was the most powerful teacher the world ever saw, or ever will see. And He was attacking them. He was attacking their religion. I suppose you could say He was attacking what some would say was the best part of them. He wasn't attacking the prostitutes and He wasn't attacking the tax collectors, He wasn't attacking the riff-raff of society. In fact, just the opposite. He seemed to be drawn to those people and attacked the religious nobility. And He not only attacked them but He attacked them at the foundations of their religious system as well as at the level of their own false spirituality. And His attack was relentless.

And there's a very important message for us in this, as we shall see. We live in a day when the reigning view is tolerance, isn't it? And that if you're a real Christian, you're going to manifest tolerance. And today when we hear the word "ecumenical, or ecumenism," which is a word that simply means "getting everybody together," and the mood of the day is tolerance and ecumenism and let's find what we have in common and we'll all get together for the sake of morality and for the sake of righteousness and for the sake of quote/unquote "the Kingdom of God."

Jesus took the very opposite approach. Jesus didn't attack the immorality of His society in particular. Obviously He was concerned about sin and He called sinners to repentance. But Jesus attacked the religious establishment because they were the damners of souls cause they offered people the false solution, the deceptive lie, the ultimate delusion that God is pleased with you when He's not. And so He attacked that system. And every time there was a point of conflict He exacerbated it. It was almost as if every time He made a wound, He poured salt in it. It started from the very beginning to be so. The message in chapter 4 recorded that He gave in His own hometown of Nazareth in His own synagogue where He had grown up as a boy that was still attended by family and friends, the message there was that the whole system of Judaism was out of touch with the purposes of God because Jesus said, "I came to fulfill Isaiah 61, I came to the poor, prisoners, blind and oppressed, I didn't come to the spiritual elite, I didn't come to the self-righteous, the spiritually proud, the people who are trying to merit righteousness with God and accomplish that by their works. I didn't come for those people. I came for the poor, prisoners, blind and oppressed, the downcast, the outcast, the people who know they're spiritually bankrupt and so forth. And in so doing, He so infuriated the self-righteous people sitting in that synagogue who had owned the religion of Judaism, orchestrated by the rabbis and the Pharisees, infuriated them to such a degree that even the synagogue in His own hometown, before the day was over, they tried to kill Him by throwing Him off a cliff. He assaulted that system because that system needed to be assaulted. And it's going to get worse.

And it wasn't just general. It wasn't that He just spoke in generalities about what was wrong with the system. When He had an occasion to meet with Pharisees or scribes who were the leaders of that system, He confronted them face to face. It was really intolerable for Jesus to attack the system, it was even more intolerable for Him to attack them. But that's what He did because they were the purveyors of that system.

Why did Jesus do that? Listen to what I say. Because divine truth was more important than anything else. Did you hear that? That may be the most profound thing I've ever said. Divine truth is more important than anything else. And you know why Jesus always escalated the conflict? Because He always spoke the truth. If I ever do end up on Larry King or some other program like that, and somebody says to me, "Will Mormons go to heaven?" I will say, "No." If they say, "Will the Jews go to heaven? Reject Jesus as Messiah?" I will say "No." Do I want to start a fight? No. Do I want to be resented? No. Do I want to tell the truth? Yes. That's the issue.

Jesus didn't escalate the conflict by being insensitive. He didn't escalate the conflict by being ungracious. The conflict escalated of itself because He spoke the truth. That's the issue. And every time there was conflict, instead of trying to relieve the tension, instead of trying to lower the hostility or ease the conflict, He escalated it. He advanced it. He agitated it, increased it by always being absolutely truthful. And as I said in our last study, the gospel is incompatible with error in any form. Is that not so? When the Pharisees come to Jesus and say, "Why are You doing this? This is not according to our law." He could say, "Oh, we're really sorry. We didn't really want to offend you. Maybe we could create an organization called the National Conference on the Gospel and Judaism and we could meet and we could find common ground." He didn't do that. He didn't do that. There wasn't any common ground because you had the truth and you had error and there is no common ground. It isn't that you want to pick a fight for the sake of a fight. It isn't that you want to be ungracious for the sake of being ungracious. It isn't that you're some kind of self-styled Messiah who wants somehow to become a martyr. It's not that at all, it's the truth matters more than anything else and if you always say the truth in every situation, the truth will have the effect of exposing everything else as error and people who are in that error aren't happy about that. That's the bottom line. And Jesus was compelled by the truth. And when conflict occurred, He went immediately to the truth and took it to another level so that there was this continual escalation of their hostility.

In the last number of months I've been doing a lot of thinking in my own mind and I'm living this with our Lord as I study all of this and I'm trying in my own mind to come to the appropriate place for me and for us in this generation. It's not hard to identify where we need to be. Where we need to be is always speak the truth.

I understand that has immense implications in a day when tolerance has become the mode that is acceptable. Jesus knew that the gospel was incompatible with any other form of religion. He knew

that the truth was incompatible with error. And so He continued to elevate the truth and therefore escalate the conflict with error. And I think the Pharisees and scribes were probably insulted by Jesus because obviously Jesus had divine power. There was no way to...there was no way to deny His miracles. I mean, just couldn't deny them, He banished disease from Palestine. He...they were there when He healed the paralyzed man who came down through the roof, as we saw in chapter 5. There's no way to deny those miracles. They were all over the place, happening at a massive level. There was no way to deny that He was casting out demons. There was no way to deny that He was the most profound speaker of truth that had ever been heard by anybody. There was no way to deny that He had divine power. So His claims to be the Messiah, the Son of God, etc., might have been believable but there was a problem that I am sure irritated the socks off the Pharisees, if they wore socks. Maybe I should say He irritated the sandals off the Pharisees. And it was that when Jesus, this Messiah, this man of God chose His official authoritative representatives, we call them the disciples or the apostles, He didn't choose a Pharisee and He didn't choose a scribe. In fact He chose a bunch of no-name nobodies from up in Galilee who weren't even educated, fishermen and of all abominations, a tax collector, and a lot of other common people.

He didn't say, "You know, I'm coming into Israel to hold some evangelistic crusades and I need to form a committee of folks. I'm going to take some Pharisees, and some Sadducees and some scribes, we're going to involve them." Not going to happen...not going to happen. I don't think they liked that too well. But there was no possibility of an alliance, absolutely impossible. What fellowship has light with...with darkness? What concord has Christ with Satan?

Now the text before us, chapter 6, gets to the heart of this conflict and the heart of it surrounds the Sabbath...the Sabbath, because Judaism at that time has, I suppose, as its anchor Sabbath observance, that routine, every seventh-day, every Saturday from sundown Friday to sundown Saturday, that is the anchor, that is the touchstone of Judaism. And what you have in the beginning of chapter 6 is Jesus complete disdain for their observance of the Sabbath. He doesn't say, "You know, it's really nice for you guys to do that, I certainly applaud your devotion." He shows nothing but disdain for it and this is really hitting them at the very core of their system because, for the most part, self-righteousness and trying to earn your salvation by your works came down to how you observed the regulations of the Sabbath. If you did all the Sabbath stuff, you had earned your righteousness. And so, if Jesus is truly going to attack their system, He has to attack their Sabbath structure.

They were wrong about the Sabbath and Jesus was concerned about the truth. And so the truth He literally dropped like a bomb in the middle of their Sabbath mentality. You see, what Jesus was doing, you see this all through this, He was forcing people to choose. He didn't come in and say, "You know, we're going to preach the gospel but we're going to get all these various religions together and, you know, you kind of...we all kind of have a lot in common." Jesus came in and said, "Here's the truth, this is the truth, this alone is the truth, everything else is a lie, make your choice. You choose the gospel of Jesus Christ, the gospel of humility, the gospel of repentance, the gospel of

grace, the gospel of faith and not spiritual pride, self-righteousness, merit and works." Which is what Judaism was and it's what every religion in the world is, except the truth of Christianity. And Jesus was constantly drawing a big, thick line...Choose this or choose that...Here's the truth, and that's the lie.

And the choice is still the same...still the same. If you're going to preach the gospel faithfully, the gospel is singular, it is exclusive. It doesn't mingle or mix with anything, as we learned at the end of chapter 5, didn't we? You can't bring the gospel in like a new piece of garment and sew it in to old Judaism. You can't bring the gospel like new wine and put it into the old wineskins of Judaism. You can't mingle the truth with error. You can't mingle the gospel of grace and faith, a gospel of humility and repentance with a religion of spiritual pride, self-righteousness, merit and works, which is what every other religion in the world is under any name, including the Judaism of the time of Jesus.

Now the Jews took the Sabbath very, very seriously. Not just at the time of Jesus, they really had inherited an accumulated tradition that had been sort of accumulating for centuries. And the Sabbath day had become literally a collection point for complex restrictions that had been mounting and mounting and mounting and mounting as rabbis made regulations and they interpreted them and they reinterpreted and reinterpreted and reinterpreted until finally this accumulation of things made the seventh day, listen, the worse day of the week. It was repressive. It was ridiculously strict. And Jesus wanted to show the difference between that and the true heart of God.

Now we come in to this Sabbath controversy in verse 1, "It came about that on a Sabbath<' some texts say "a second Sabbath," we don't know exactly what that means. It may not be the original text, it could be the second Sabbath of a given month, but in any case it doesn't make any difference. "It came about on a certain Sabbath." Now we are introduced into Jesus' attitude toward the Sabbath. The word Sabbaton is the Greek word for Sabbath. Sabbaton, the root of Sabbaton means to cease, a "b" or a double beta in the middle can add an intensification. So this is some kind of complete cessation. Sabbath means to completely cease. The word was used to describe the seventh-day command.

Go back to Exodus 20, for a moment, I'm not going to take a lot of time with this, I'm just going to read you this and it's important that you know it. Back in the Ten Commandments, God instituted the Sabbath law. I want you to see how clear it is and how simple it is. Here's the Sabbath day. Verse 9, Exodus 20, "Six days you labor and do all your work. The seventh day is the Sabbath of the Lord your God, in it you shall not do any work, you or your son or your daughter, your male, your female servant, your cattle, your sojourner who stays with you." That's the end.

So what is God's Sabbath law? Don't work. That was it. Don't work. That sounds good, right? Take a day off, refresh your body, refresh your spirit, refresh your relationships in the family, enjoy the creation, go out and see what God has made. Take a walk. Go to the...to the shore, take a swim.

Do whatever you want, just don't work. This is a day of restoration, of recreation. That's all God ever said about it. Just rest. It was a complete cessation.

And by the way, although God rested from His creation on the seventh day in Genesis, He didn't command man to do that until the law of Moses. And seventh-day rest was one of the Ten Commandments. It was ceremonial, rather than moral and thus it is not repeated in the New Testament because it wasn't a part of moral law. But it was just a general gift from God to Israel and I think it's a very wise thing in general, beyond even the nation Israel, although God didn't require it before and doesn't require it in the New Testament. Take a day off, enjoy. And in the development of Sabbath they began to use it as a day of worship. But then their religion became so external, so hypocritical and so superficial that they began to look for ways that they could earn their salvation with God by filling that day with all kinds of rules and regulations that if you kept you would please God and earn salvation. None of which are biblical.

It finally became the most painful day of the week. People hated it. It was a day of tremendous restriction. Let me just give you a little of the...the things that fit into Sabbath law and I can't give you all of it. For example, in the Talmud there are 24 chapters of Sabbath laws required...24 chapters. And one rabbi says the Talmud spent two and a half years in the study of one of those 24 trying to figure out all of its ramifications. It was a ridiculously complex system by which you could earn your salvation by maintaining all these strictures.

And what were they? Well, you could travel no more than 3,000 feet from home. Unless on Friday before the Sabbath you had planted food at the 3,000 foot point and then you could go 3,000 more because you constituted that point as a home because your food was there. Now if you lived down a long narrow street and you might have been a few hundred feet down from the end of the street or the end of the alley, you could take a piece of wood and put it across the end of the street or alley or you could take a piece of rope and put it across the end of the alley, or you could take a piece of wire and string it across the end of the alley and that would, in the eyes of God, turn it into a doorway and you could consider that the front door of your house so you could go 3,000 feet from there.

You could lift up certain things and put down certain things only from certain places. You could lift up something from a public place and put it into a private place, or from a private place and put it into a public place. You could lift up things from a wide place and put them into a narrow place, you could put things in a free place... You say, "What is that?" I don't know because you have chapter after chapter of rabbis with endless discussion as to what it means. You couldn't carry anything on your person that weighed more than a dried fig. There goes your wallet and certainly there goes your purse. But you could carry half a fig two times on the Sabbath.

You couldn't eat any of the forbidden. There were all kinds of food forbidden on the Sabbath. You couldn't eat any forbidden food larger than an olive. And if you put an olive in your mouth and spit it

out because it was bad, the Talmud said you couldn't replace it with a good one because your palate had tasted the flavor of the first one.

Now remember, your salvation depends on this. This is how the people thought. You're pleasing God. If you threw an object in the air, you could catch it with this hand that you threw it with, but if you caught it with the other hand, it was sin because there's less work in doing that than...that.

If you were in one place and your arm stretched to reach for food and the Sabbath overtook you, you had to drop the food rather than bring back your arm or you had carried the burden and sinned. A tailor couldn't carry his needle. A scribe couldn't carry his pen. A pupil couldn't carry his books. You couldn't even examine your clothes before you put them on, lest in the examining, meaning kind of brushing and shaking, you killed an insect. Wool couldn't be died. Nothing could be sold or bought or washed. A letter could not be sent even with a heathen. No fire could be lit. No fire could be put out. Cold water could be poured on warm, but warm couldn't be poured on cold. An egg couldn't be boiled even if you buried it in the hot sand, which is how they would boil an egg in the desert. You couldn't take a bath for fear that the water would flow off you and wash the floor. You couldn't move a chair since it might make a rut and that would be too much like plowing. Women could not look in a mirror or put on any jewelry. If she were to find a white hair, she had to resist the temptation to pull it out.

When it came to grain and food, the laws are just staggering. You could have no more grain than a lamb's mouth full. That's the max amount you could pick. You couldn't leave a radish in the salt because it would make a pickle. The laws go on endlessly about wine, about honey, about milk, about spitting, about getting dirt off your clothes. You could have enough ink to write two Hebrew letters. You could carry enough wax to fill a small hole somewhere. You could stick a wad in your ear if you had an earache, but you couldn't put on false teeth. And this is how it goes, 24 chapters of this.

The following 39 are forbidden things. And here's the list from Alfred Edersheim, *The Life and Times of Jesus the Messiah*, a classic work on the history of the people of Israel. They are forbidden: sowing, plowing, reaping, binding sheaves, threshing, winnowing, sifting, grinding, sifting in a sieve, kneading, baking, shearing the wool, washing it, beating it, dying it, spinning, putting it on the weaver's beam, making two threads, weaving two threads, separating two threads, making a knot, undoing a knot, sewing two stitches, catching deer, killing, skinning, salting, preparing its skin, scraping off its hair, cutting it up, writing two letters, scraping in order to write two letters, building, pulling down, extinguishing the fire, lighting the fire, beating with the hammer and carrying one thing from one place to another.

Now what kind of a fun day is that? This is supposed to be the rest and you can't even sort out the stuff you have to not do. Jesus said this to the Jews in Matthew 11, He said, "Come unto Me all you

that labor and are...what?...heavy laden." This was an oppressive life. "And I will give you rest. Take My yoke and learn of Me, for My yoke is easy and My burden is...what?..." As He was comparing Himself with this ridiculous Sabbath stuff that the people were convinced was what earned their salvation, rituals and ceremonies and regulations, ad infinitum, ad nauseam. The Jews were dead serious about this.

It still hangs around today in modern Israel. If you've been over to the land and you get away from the Arab sector where you tend to tour and you get into the Jewish sector where the Jewish...the Israeli people live, those that are orthodox, and you see in America, New York City, for example, they eat only leftover food and drink day-old coffee cause they can't prepare anything, cook anything. The buildings, the apartment buildings in New York City and other cities have what they call a Sabbath elevator that has no buttons on it. It just goes up, hits every floor and goes down and hits every floor so that you don't have to push a button, that's work. And they have Sabbath timers in the houses that turn the lights on and turn the lights off on the Sabbath because they can't start a fire or turn one out. This is ridiculous. But this was the heart of their religion, the Sabbath was the staple of their system.

Now let's turn to the text. "It came about that on a certain Sabbath He was passing through some grain fields and His disciples were picking and eating the heads of grain, rubbing them in their hands." Oh-oh, He was going through some grain fields, literally in the Greek sown fields, probably wheat or barley. The grain was ripe, probably means it was spring or summer. In the Jordan Valley, usually the grain ripens in April and east of there in August. And so harvest was perhaps near, the fields were full of grain ripened. And basically the way you traveled in the land was through the fields. The fields were laid out in long narrow strips and between them, between the rows, were paths and that's how people went places. Roads were not always distinguishable from fields because the paths went right through the fields and that's how people went from one place to another. And there had been a wonderful provision that God made in the Old Testament, Deuteronomy 23:25, it's a great thing to know.

This is what God said, "When you enter your neighbor's standing grain, you're going through his field, there you may pluck the heads with your hand but you shall not put a sickle in your neighbor's standing grain." You can't go over and harvest his crop and haul it off. But when you're walking through his field, if you're hungry you can pop off whatever you can get in your hand. You can rub it together and when you rub it together it takes the outside shell off and you can blow away the chaff and what you have is the grain and you can get some nourishment. You can do that. God's law provided for a wonderful way in which the people of Israel could enjoy the blessing of the land without necessarily owning the crop. And that's exactly what the disciples were doing, they were doing what God had provided them to do in that wonderful provision of Deuteronomy 23:25. It says they were going through the fields, the disciples were hungry along with Jesus, they were picking, eating the grain, rubbing them in their hands.

Verse 2, "But some of the Pharisees," what? Where did they come from? Well somewhere inside 3,000 feet, unless they were doing a tag-team deal, I don't know how that works. But they're always going to be around and they're dogging the steps of Jesus and they're looking for anyway they can indict Him and discredit Him. Some of the Pharisees said, "Why do You do what is not lawful on the Sabbath?"

Now let me ask you a question. Did the Sabbath law of Exodus 20 say anything about this? Absolutely nothing, it just said "Enjoy your day off, worship the Lord, honor Him, make it holy to Him, enjoy Him and enjoy the day and rest." It didn't say anything about this. Oh, but they had this system and there they were with their constant scrutiny looking for any way to get rid of Jesus. This is very serious stuff and according to the Talmud it says, "In case a woman rolls wheat, rolls it to remove the husks, it is sifting and if she rubs the heads of wheat, it is threshing, and if she cleans off the shell it is sifting, and if she bruises, I guess they would call it, somehow the ear, it is grinding. And if she throws it in her hand, it is winnowing. You can't do that on the Sabbath. And the rabbis said that reaping and grinding grain can only be done to something the size of one dried fig or less. Anymore produces guilt.

Some of the Pharisees said, "Why do You...plural, You-meaning Jesus and the disciples...why do You violate this?" Well they had violated a lot of those rules. They had been reaping, threshing, sifting, grinding, winnowing and preparing food. The real question of the Pharisees is, "Why do You have such utter disdain for our religion? You know we're here." It isn't that they jumped out behind a bush...from behind a bush, why do You do this? Why do you so flagrantly do this? That's the real question. Why do You have such disdain for our religion? Why do You challenge our religion?

And as always, Jesus' response is perfect. "Jesus answering them said, 'Have you not even read...'" and there's a bit of sarcasm there, exposing their ignorance. They knew the story He was about to tell but they never understood its meaning. They were great knowing the story but not the meaning. "Have you not even read what David did when he was hungry, he and those who were with him? How he entered the house of God and took and ate the consecrated bread which is not lawful for any to eat except the priests alone and gave it to his companions?"

Wow, what's that all about? Well let me give it to you quickly. Listen carefully, it's really a fascinating story. Back in the twenty-fourth chapter of Leviticus, don't turn to it, just write it down if you want that information. Leviticus 24 verses 5 to 9, God laid down some things for the tabernacle, right? Certain things in the tabernacle, one of the things that God wanted in the tabernacle was a golden table...golden table in the holy place. And on the golden table was the shewbread. Have you ever heard that? Or as it's called, "the bread of the presence." And it was a symbol and God said in that section, "Every Sabbath bring in twelve loaves of hot bread and line them up in two rows of six on the table before the Lord, symbolic of the fact that you know that God is the source of your bread, that

God is your provider. And you need to do that every week, every week, every week as a continual recognition that God is your bread provider."

And, according to Leviticus 24, "The old bread that comes off can be eaten only by the priests because it has been consecrated to God, so it can't just be treated like common bread, can't be sold or just given to any common person because it has special consecrated significance. Only the priests can eat it."

Now you say, "Who wants seven-day-old bread anyway?" Well, this is that kind of flat bread and without preservatives it becomes a cracker in a dry climate and it's edible. So they would eat it and that was the provision.

Well in 1 Samuel 21, you can jot that down and read the story, the first six verses, 1 Samuel 21, and there's a lot of things in this story that Jesus doesn't deal with but He just deals with this one aspect of it, in the story David lied, created all kinds of problems, but the Lord doesn't deal with that. What is germane to His story is this, 1 Samuel 21, David is being chased by Saul. David has been the anointed king, he's going to replace Saul. Saul wants to kill him, right? You know the story.

So David is running from a place called Gibeah and he's running away. He's got a few guys with him, his friends, trying to escape from Saul. They come down to a place called Nob...Nob. Verse 3 says, you've maybe not even read what David did when he was hungry, he gets down to Nob. Nob is a mile outside Jerusalem. It's really right on the edge of Jerusalem. It's where the tabernacle was. David gets down there. And he's hungry. And those that are with him are hungry. And he goes to the tabernacle. And there's a priest there, his name is Ahimelech, Ahimelech. Apparently Abiathar was the high priest of that time, Mark makes reference to that. But Ahimelech was the priest that David ran into and he says to this priest, and 1 Samuel 21 records it, "I need some bread, I'm hungry." And he is the king even though he's not yet taken his throne and these men are with him, "I'm hungry, my men need bread," and he says, "I need five loaves of bread." And in 1 Samuel 21:4 we read this, "And the priest answered David and said, 'There is no common bread on hand.'" We don't...this is not a bakery, we don't have any bread here. "But he said, 'There's holy bread...there's holy bread, if only the young men have kept themselves from women.'" He wanted to make sure that they were clean. And so he said there's this holy bread, the shewbread, the bread of the presence. It may well have been a Sabbath and the new bread had been put there and the old bread taken off. And David said, "Yes, the men are clean and we're hungry." And in verse 6 of 1 Samuel 21, "The priest gave him consecrated bread." Well there was no bread there but the bread of the presence which was removed from before the Lord in order to put hot bread in its place, so the old bread that came off the priest said, "Sure, take it and eat."

What's the point? The point is this, mercy and compassion is far more important than ceremony, far more important than ritual. Frankly, that was an indictment of the whole system of Judaism, the

whole Sabbath system was oppressive, merciless, void of compassion, grace, kindness. As we shall see in the next passage, they get irritated at Jesus because He healed somebody on the Sabbath. It was like the Sabbath was supposed to be the most painful day of the week. They missed the whole point.

Well, verse 4, David entered the house of God, and took and ate the consecrated bread, the shewbread, the bread of presence. Which is not lawful for any to eat except the priest alone and he gave it to his companions and God never even reprimanded him for that. That priest, that Ahimelech understood that hunger and mercy toward somebody who's hungry and compassion and kindness and goodness is more important than ceremony. The Pharisees didn't get that. They didn't get it at all. They were all about the shallow superficial and ceremonial. If David could be allowed by a priest to violate a divine regulation maybe on a Sabbath, then the disciples could be allowed by the Son of God to violate, listen, an unbiblical regulation...a stupid regulation that you couldn't take a little grain and rub it in your hands and eat.

Just as a footnote to this. You meet people today who say they are Sabbatarian, and I always wonder whether they're Sabbatarians like Exodus 20, or whether they're Sabbatarians like some kind of non-biblical accumulated Judaism. The day was meant for rest. The day was meant for relaxation, refreshment, recreation. The day was meant to look at the wonders of God's glory and to worship Him. The day was meant for meeting needs and showing mercy and showing compassion. And ceremony and ritual is never to be burdensome.

David was allowed to violate a divine law to fulfill the truest law of mercy. Certainly Jesus and His disciples could violate a human law to fulfill the true law of mercy. And then Jesus dropped the bomb. At this point He could have said, "Oh, I'm sorry we offended you guys, please forgive us." He didn't. Verse 5, "And He was saying to them, 'The Son of Man is Lord of the Sabbath.'" You say, "What does that mean?" Here it is. Guys, you aren't in charge of the Sabbath, I am. I'm in charge of it.

I would love to see the expression on their faces. This is what I say about the way He escalated things. The Greek order is this...The Lord of the Sabbath is the Son of Man...whom He had claimed to be back in chapter 5 verse 24 and is a messianic title drawn from Daniel 7:13. The greater than David, He said, "I am the Lord of the Sabbath, I will interpret the will of God on the Sabbath, I will interpret the law of God. I will interpret the Word of God. I will tell you what God means by what He says. I will tell you what the Sabbath is to be and what it's not to be. You are not in charge of the Sabbath, I am."

Wow. You don't rule the Sabbath, you don't set the standards, I do. Jesus is the great interpreter of God's law. He's the great interpreter of God's Word. He's the great interpreter of God's will. And, beloved, I say it to you, you can never ever understand the Old Testament law without the New Testament interpretation of that law by Christ and the apostles who wrote the words that Christ

wanted them to write to interpret the truth. Jesus is the interpreter of God's will, God's law and God's Word.

Mark tells us that He also said, "Man was not made for the Sabbath, but the Sabbath was made for man." The point being, you weren't designed to somehow conform to some impossible rules, but rather the day was made for you for your benefit, for your blessing, for your joy, for your fulfillment, for your rest and for mercy and for compassion and for doing good. He could have reminded them of Micah 6:8, "What does God require of You but to do justice, to love kindness, to walk humbly with your God." They didn't have any of that; no kindness, no mercy, no compassion.

Jesus indicts them in Matthew 23 in that diatribe against the leaders when He...He says about them that they bind on people burdens impossible to bear, Matthew 23:4 and they give them no help carrying them. The legalists knew nothing about grace. The Lord offered only grace. They knew nothing about humility. He came only to the humble. They thought they were righteous and therefore they were the enemies of true righteousness.

To live as a Christian is to live with a God who is merciful. Hebrews 4:16 says, "Let us therefore draw near with confidence to the throne of grace that we may receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need." Jesus said, "I don't care what your religious system says, you're not in charge of the truth. I don't care how you interpret Scripture, you're not the interpreter, I am...I am Lord of the Sabbath." And in so saying that He was saying, "I am the Lord of the truth, the true meaning of Sabbath, the true meaning of rest, the true meaning of worship and all that the Law of God describes."

To live as a Christian then is to live under the lordship of Christ, isn't it? There is no compatibility between a system of self-righteousness, spiritual pride, merit and works by whatever name and the true gospel of repentance, humility, grace and faith. They're utterly incompatible. And so, of necessity we always, if we speak the truth, escalate the conflict with error, do we not? But for the sake of the glory of God and for the sake of the eternal souls of men, we speak the truth.

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