



The Gospel According to Luke

Wk. 25 “Sabbath Controversies”

By Pastor Jody May

Jesus Is Lord of the Sabbath

6 On a Sabbath, while he was going through the grainfields, his disciples plucked and ate some heads of grain, rubbing them in their hands. **2** But some of the Pharisees said, “Why are you doing what is not lawful to do on the Sabbath?” **3** And Jesus answered them, “Have you not read what David did when he was hungry, he and those who were with him: **4** how he entered the house of God and took and ate the bread of the Presence, which is not lawful for any but the priests to eat, and also gave it to those with him?” **5** And he said to them, “The Son of Man is lord of the Sabbath.”

A Man with a Withered Hand

6 On another Sabbath, he entered the synagogue and was teaching, and a man was there whose right hand was withered. **7** And the scribes and the Pharisees watched him, to see whether he would heal on the Sabbath, so that they might find a reason to accuse him. **8** But he knew their thoughts, and he said to the man with the withered hand, “Come and stand here.” And he rose and stood there. **9** And Jesus said to them, “I ask you, is it lawful on the Sabbath to do good or to do harm, to save life or to destroy it?” **10** And after looking around at them all he said to him, “Stretch out your hand.” And he did so, and his hand was restored. **11** But they were filled with fury and discussed with one another what they might do to Jesus.

HEART or CONFLICT & CONVICTON

HEAD or CONFIDENCE:

HANDS or CONDUCT:

Illustration of Family Traditions growing up...

- Left overs on Weds. Night
- Going out for dinner on Friday nights
- Watching sports on the tube after working in the yard all morning on Saturday
- Boiling Green Peanuts on the weekend while watching football



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- Sunday afternoon naps, after looking at the adds, with the phone off the hook

What do all of these have in common? **They were all about resting after working.** These traditions are good but when they are made to be what one desires most in life, they become idols and idolatry has a tendency to distort how we should view other things in life. **We tend to stress over and figure out what we need to do for work in order to get the rest that we need. We become people caught in an insane cycle where we work so we can rest.**

You see, when I value down time, rest time, alone time, hobby time, piddlin time, under the guise of calling it **family time**, more than I do time spent with others showing them that they matter then it is probably safe to say that I have an idolatry problem. And if I have an idolatry problem where I value ‘me-time’ more than ‘we-time’ then I have probably strayed off into that dangerous place of working too much to get rest because I have become way too protective of it.

Let me propose, in the form of our **Main Point**, this morning a little challenge that we need to take to heart to what is found in the text this morning.

“Rituals/Traditions should never take precedent over Loving God and Loving your fellow man (neighbor).”

In today’s passage we are going to follow the flow of the story, determine what this battle of ceremonial tradition, in the form of the Sabbath, is all about, discover how Jesus thought about it and what is our calling in light of those findings. Our subpoints will follow that flow today in helping us see the main point.

1. Facing the Accusations and Threatening the Traditions

First let’s look at what Luke thinks is important. We notice that there are two different stories today, but they are both carrying the same theme taking place and talking about the sabbath. In the Hebrew, Sabbath is the



The Gospel According to Luke Wk. 25 “Sabbath Controversies” By Pastor Jody May

verb “*Shabat*” to ‘sit’ or ‘cease’ and the full translation of the Sabbath into English is to “Cease from doing work”. The Sabbath was a day to be devoted to ‘not doing work’. Luke is pointing at an issue that is created back before the church ever existed. You need to remember that when Luke is writing this letter it is so people will know that in their past, **the church’s past, that the Sabbath was debated and decided on.** You see his good friend, Paul the Apostle, fought with traditions, mostly inserted or stressed by Jews, that were always trying to add extra rules to Christianity and the Church. Sabbath keeping was one of them as in did the NT church have to observe Sabbath regulations as Judaism or the OT church. **The issue in the text that we see today is who gets to define the Sabbath, man or God?** For us that means we need to **grasp something** today upfront and that is when you leave you have to **deal with the idea** whether you shall **keep the Sabbath** and **how will you keep it** for neither Paul nor Jesus denied it.

In both accounts Luke points out that it is never an accidental affair when Jesus is accused of blasphemy. Luke shows that these guys had started tagging along and were watching for any mistake Jesus would make. By the way, that’s the Providence of God at work here, so that you know when we make **the claim that Jesus lived a perfect life, it was witnessed by His friends and enemies.** As a side point too, **PARENTS**, it is important to note that the **best lessons**, the best **form of discipleship**, is to **teach in the moment** as Jesus was teaching with His disciples. People learn the best in real-life situations, so please talk with your families, dads you especially, when you see Kingdom Truths in front of your eyes, teach them to your kids and they will not depart from them. **Real life is the best illustration you will ever have to teach your kids about God.**

Back to our accusations: The first accusation is that our Pharisee stalkers are walking with the boys and they notice that they pick the grain by the road, rub the chaff in their hands to get the kernels, and then eat them as they go. Now no big deal except this happens on the Sabbath, the last day of the week for them, Saturday to us.

... his disciples plucked and ate some heads of grain, rubbing them in their hands. ²But some of the Pharisees said, “Why are you doing what is not lawful to do on the Sabbath?”



The Gospel According to Luke Wk. 25 “Sabbath Controversies” By Pastor Jody May

The Sabbath was a time where you were not supposed to work but were to focus on God through your rest. All of your food prep for that day had to be done the day before because even that was not allowed. Traditions & Rituals had been added to the Sabbath to help people connect to God **(Examples of some of these rules)** but the tediousness of the traditions did 2 things:

- It made people mentally tired in trying to figure out how to go around sabbath rules &
- It made the Pharisees look so righteous because this was what they lived for!

So, when the disciples work to separate the chaff from the wheat it is considered a work of creation and therefore a sin. The question is a fair one even though it sounds ridiculous.

When in the second story we see them watching Jesus to see what he does, theologians believe that the way Luke wrote this was to mean they had set him up to do it.

⁶On another Sabbath, he entered the synagogue and was teaching, and a man was there whose right hand was withered. ⁷And the scribes and the Pharisees watched him, to see whether he would heal on the Sabbath, so that they might find a reason to accuse him.

They were waiting to see Jesus do a good thing, to blame Him for a bad thing, when the good thing He does can only be something empowered by a good God. To this point they have lost the ability to reason. Here's where the Pharisees landed and here's what was keeping them from seeing Jesus as their Messiah actually doing the right thing.

The more 'legality' one can add to one's life the more 'moral' one can become.

The secret to politics, change the law to fit what you do and like and you will become more powerful. Pharisees thought their holiness made them more like God and thus separated them from the lowly people. **The Truth is Jesus came as God in the flesh to associate with the sick and lowly to give them His power.** Today if you feel like you have been left behind



The Gospel According to Luke Wk. 25 “Sabbath Controversies” By Pastor Jody May

in political representation, don't fret, you're going to inherit everything anyway because your identity is in Christ not a politician.

The Pharisees had fallen into the trap that by their traditions they thought they had put God in a box, that they had figured out the Mosaic Law, and they had put in place boundaries for how to live to make themselves acceptable to God. This is such a natural thing for us to fall into.

(Illustration of the 35 and up crowd how we take seek to be respected because of the life we live) We need to be reminded of the words of Isaiah (Is. 64:6) again works for one's attempt at self-righteousness are like dirty rags to God.

Before we move on let me ask you this one question; Do you like to measure yourself against the people in this room and the people you do life with to show that you have made it in into God's good graces? If you answer yes then let's pray and work to stop adding legality to our hearts creating a false sense of morality, and let's put on Christ, (Rom. 13:14). If this has been your struggle lately then the Gospel can give you hope this morning.

When Rituals/Traditions take precedent over Loving God then it takes a loving God to break apart our traditions. So, let's see how Jesus begins to tear down our idols of legalistic traditions.

2. Jesus' Answers for Ritualistic Thinking

Now, even as we see the Pharisees working hard at trying to get Jesus in trouble the Lord is always gracious enough to correct them. Even though it did nothing for them liking our Lord it does benefit us to know how He challenged these accusations.

The first instance is a pretty straight answer provided for by Jewish history.

“Have you not read what David did when he was hungry, he and those who were with him: ⁴how he entered the house of God and took and ate the bread of the Presence, which is not lawful for any but the priests to eat, and also gave it to those with him?”



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The first answer here is in the story. Basically, David, the anointed King, but not crowned king yet, on the run from Saul the old king is in the need for food. So, he goes in, and forgive my translation, robs the communion plates to feed him and his men. It was Holy bread, that was a tradition, to set aside for God. The hero of Israel, the king was not indicted for his actions for everyone knows in that story, based on David’s judgment, that it was better to eat and live than obey tradition and die.

He relates to them this story because He’s comparing Himself to David, and then He elevates His position over the most loved king of all time.

⁵And he said to them, “The Son of Man is lord of the Sabbath.”

Remember that title “The Son of Man” it means deity from Daniel 7, it was Jesus favorite title He used for Himself and the third most used title for Jesus in the scriptures. 80something times out of 90 He called Himself that to show us He thought He was God. The second title is “Lord” Kýrios (kü'-rē-os) this is the second most title used for Jesus by the NT by the church. Jesus by making this claim in the Greek says **He owns it and by right can do with it whatever He wants.**

The gist of the **argument** here in the text is that the **Pharisees claimed the Sabbath is part of the 10 commandments obey our traditions Jesus!** Jesus says after I created the Heavens and the Earth, I instituted the Sabbath to help people rest, to see all was good, while I kept providing for them. **Jesus is beginning to redefine the Sabbath** or get it back to the **original stance.** Pharisees you have been making people work to find rest so that you can compare your work to theirs for your need of self-righteousness. I have come so that their work doesn’t bring them to rest **but now they can work out of the rest I provide.** People opted not for the garden I provided where everything worked in harmony, so I am **bringing what the Garden was to offer,** working out of rest. Jesus, literally, was with the disciples at that moment so that they could eat from His provision, especially on the Sabbath! This stayed with Pharisees, so I think that is why they tried to set him up in the next encounter.

⁸But he knew their thoughts, and he said to the man with the withered hand, “Come and stand here.” And he rose and stood there. ⁹And Jesus said to them, “I ask you, is it



The Gospel According to Luke Wk. 25 “Sabbath Controversies” By Pastor Jody May

lawful on the Sabbath to do good or to do harm, to save life or to destroy it?” ¹⁰ And after looking around at them all he said to him, “Stretch out your hand.” And he did so, and his hand was restored.

Again, the law supports doing good on the Sabbath, learning about God, administering emergency medicine, delivering babies and circumcision. All of these actions were to save and preserve life. Jesus being the Lord of the Sabbath, heals the man, and gives back his ‘right hand’, the hand that the Bible points out is the one you want, it is the one associated with work and usefulness. Jesus gives this man back his right hand to restore to him the ability to work for God, which now can be done out of gratitude for Jesus out of the right heart for the Lord of the Sabbath.

The Lord of the Sabbath continues to do this for His people even today. Every week we gather on the new Sabbath, which the tradition of gathering changed from a Saturday to Sunday over 2,000 years back because it was the day that Jesus was raised from the dead. In the picture of His resurrection Jesus shows that we can rest because He has done the work to bring us to God. No more traditions, no more trying to figure out how to add legality to our lives to make us **MORE MORAL**, no more defining who we are by how we are treated by another person. Jesus rose from the grave because He loved you, it was His right to do so, He has done away with the work we were supposed to do and has given you something better to enjoy!

So, again the main thrust of the passage:

“Rituals/Traditions should never take precedent over Loving God and Loving your fellow man (neighbor).”

Family today I warned you before you leave you have to make a choice. You can either choose to observe the Sabbath like the Pharisees and continue to work to find rest or you can embrace the Sabbath, celebrate it, and work out of it because Jesus brought rest to you. You can choose to keep making rules that become your idols that keep you from loving God and others but there is a warning in the text.

¹¹ But they were filled with fury and discussed with one another what they might do to Jesus.



The Gospel According to Luke Wk. 25 “Sabbath Controversies” By Pastor Jody May

Fury there in the Greek means madness, irrational, uncontrollable anger. The Pharisees were fit to be tied, *what they might do to Him* means the murder plans began, because Jesus had just denied them from their favorite tool in their self-righteous hunger and he had taken away the ability for them to look down on others. Listen here’s what that means for us.

The next time you are angered, frustrated with, disappointed in someone that doesn’t give you the respect you deserve you have got to let that go, or you will be stuck in the muck like the Pharisees being turned over to the fury that leads you to self-destructiveness.

In closing I want to offer some simple strategies, if you really want to work out of rest, then you have to practice it. So here are some suggestions to help us deal with this real struggle.

3. Living Sacrificially to Combat Traditional Thinking and Patterns

Practice Christian Traditions with joy and not with regret.

- **Read the Bible not to gain good things from God but pray and ask the Spirit to help you see the good in God even before you read.** (Don’t just read the Bible to get answers for life but read to see God first and then we practice response to our revelation of Him.)
- **Invite others into your home and make a new tradition of inviting people to your house to celebrate God together.** (Don’t look at your life as too busy to be hospitable to someone but view the purpose of life as to spend time with others glorifying God.)
- **Practice extending grace to those that anger you even when they don’t know they have upset you.** (Don’t think because you don’t say it to their face it’s ok.)
- **Practice giving your offering out of the beginning of your check not worrying how far the rest will go.** (Don’t view your life as barriers to giving but view your life as opportunities for God to show you He will supply you with what you need.)
- **Go out of your way not to necessarily accomplish everything you want to in a week but practice crashing your agenda to give to someone that needs help in this body and out.** (Don’t strive to live for



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the weekend, vacation, or that guarded family time, but remember the reality is we work out of the rest that Jesus provides so we will never run out of time to do the things He wants us to do and we will always have the rest we need to continue.)

PRAYER

COMMUNION

BENEDICTION

Go in the name of the Father that sent us the Lord of the Sabbath to redefine for us what does true rest look like.

Go in the name of the Son supplies rest from the work of self-righteous living.

Go in the name and power of the HS that will help us combat irrational anger against others while helping us develop the patterns of working out of Rest.

The 39 Prohibited Activities



The Gospel According to Luke Wk. 25 “Sabbath Controversies” By Pastor Jody May

As based on the Mishnah Tractate Shabbat 7:2, the 39 activities are:

Sowing	Beating wool	Flaying
Plowing	Dyeing wool	Tanning
Reaping	Spinning	Scraping hide
Binding sheaves	Weaving	Marking hides
Threshing	Making two loops	Cutting hide to shape
Winnowing	Weaving two threads	Writing two or more letters
Selecting	Separating two threads	Erasing two or more letters
Grinding	Tying	Building
Sifting	Untying	Demolishing
Kneading	Sewing stitches	Extinguishing a fire
Baking	Tearing	Kindling a fire
Shearing wool	Trapping	Putting the finishing touch on an object
Washing wool	Slaughtering	Transporting an object between a private domain and the public domain, or for a distance of 4 cubits within the public domain.

Groups

The 39 categories of activity prohibited on Shabbat can be divided into four groups.

The first 11 categories are activities required to bake bread.

The next 13 categories are activities required to make a garment.

The next 9 categories are activities required to make leather.

The final 6 categories are activities required to build a structure or building.