

Sunday, April 16, 2023 | Onward

Week 1 | Luke 6:1-5 | "The Lord of the Sabbath"

Before diving back into Luke, let's do a quick 5-min review of everything we've covered.

In *Go Tell It on The Mountain*, we explored the Christmas story as told by Luke. In that six-week study, we learned that Luke was a doctor-turned-evangelists who wrote to a friend named Theophilus to give him assurance about Christ. Namely, God worked through people like John the Baptist, Mary, and other faithful Jews to prepare the way for the Jewish Messiah.

In *Onward*, and over nine weeks, we looked at a bunch of Jesus's firsts: his first steps, his first run-in with temptation, his first sermon, his first disciples, his first parable, and so on. And through exploring these beginning bits of the Lord's earthly ministry, we slowly learned that Jesus was not only popular but also controversial. He could draw a crowd with his teaching and miracles, but he also hung out with sinners! He even called a tax collector, of all people, to be one of his disciples! The Lord, right out of the gate, was a divisive character.

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Today, we'll resume our study of Luke's gospel account with a series called "Everyday Disciple." In it, we'll explore a part of Luke's writing that gives us a peek into the day-to-day activities of Jesus' ministry. And, in doing so, we'll discover what it means to be like Jesus in everyday life.

The term "sabbath," literally means "to cease," and it referred to a 24-hour period (from sundown on Friday to sunset on Saturday) in which the Jewish people would stop working. And even though a day off is standard today, in ancient times, to purposefully not do work was a revolutionary idea. And it was so unique that only the Jews were known to do it. As such, the Sabbath eventually became *the* trademark characteristic of Israelite culture.

By the time of Jesus, the Jews had put such an emphasis on the Sabbath that it became a yardstick with which they could gauge how righteous they (or others) were. It is remarkable how many times Jesus appeared to break the Sabbath. It was as if he was purposefully trying to trigger those around him. But why? Luke has the answer for us.

Using the Sabbath, Jesus does three things:

- i. **Jesus "breaks" some Sabbath regulations (6:1-2).**

**READ:** Luke 6:1-2 (ESV)

<sup>1</sup> On a Sabbath, while he was going through the grainfields, his disciples plucked and ate some heads of grain, rubbing them in their hands. <sup>2</sup> But some of the Pharisees said, “Why are you doing what is not lawful to do on the Sabbath?”

As mentioned in the introduction, the Sabbath became a yardstick with which Jews could gauge how righteous they (or others) were. As such, something initially intended as a gift to humanity became a burden by the first century. This was due in no small part to the fact that the Jews took the relatively few explicit commands regarding the Sabbath and expanded them to **39 different rules**.<sup>1</sup> Of these regulations, an Israelite was, among other things, prohibited from carrying their own children, loosening knots, and even writing more than one letter.<sup>2</sup>

In fact, taking into account first-century Jewish understanding of the Sabbath, the disciples “broke” the Sabbath **in four different ways**. By plucking the grain, they would’ve been charged with harvesting, and their single act of rubbing the grain between their fingers would’ve been condemned as threshing, winnowing, and grinding.<sup>3</sup>

And while we’ll address whether or not some law had been broken, it is worth pointing out how something as benign as eating a snack was being challenged by the Pharisees. It makes us wonder, “How closely were these religious leaders watching Jesus and the disciples?”

## ii. Jesus corrects some Sabbath misunderstandings (6:3-4).

**READ:** Luke 6:3-4 (ESV)

<sup>3</sup> And Jesus answered them, “Have you not read what David did when he was hungry, he and those who were with him: <sup>4</sup> 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?”

Unlike the Pharisees, who claimed there was a breach of the law yet did not say which rule was broken, Jesus turned to the Scriptures to defend himself and his disciples. And we can tell that the Lord is irritated by how he begins by saying, “Have you not read....” Another way of saying that is, “I thought you knew your Bibles.”

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<sup>1</sup> Bock, Darrell L., *Luke 1:1-9:50*, The Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament, (Grand Rapids, MI; Baker Academic, 1994), p. 523.

<sup>2</sup> Edwards, James R., *The Gospel According to Luke*, The Pillar New Testament Commentary, (Grand Rapids, MI; Eerdmans Publishing, 2015), p. 177.

<sup>3</sup> Green, Joel B., *The Gospel of Luke*, The New International Commentary on the New Testament, (Grand Rapids, MI; Eerdmans Publishing, 1997), p. 253.

The Lord reminds the Pharisees of an incident that took place in the life of David from 1 Sam. 21. David, in an effort to save his life, was on the run from Saul. Because he left in haste, he didn't take any provisions for his journey, and so, after a while, he and his traveling companions became hungry. Being not far from the Tabernacle, he goes in and asks the high priest, Ahimelech, to give him five loaves of bread. The priests gave him the bread, and David went on his way.

Now, considering we're not Jews, Jesus' selection of this story might strike us as random and disconnected from the scene. However, as every Israelite knew, this bread was not ordinary but extraordinary. Only the priests were allowed to eat this bread. Jesus even reminds the Pharisees of this fact even though it was doubtful they needed reminding. Jesus, apparently, was trying to be as condescending as possible.

Anyways, Jesus's point is at once made clear. Although technically not allowed to eat the bread of Presence, David ate it and was not condemned for it. Not even the high priest, who should've stopped David, passed judgment. Why? Because "human need takes priority over ceremonial law."<sup>4</sup> Likewise, as that passage relates to the disciples, though they weren't starved like David, they hungered. What they did was nothing more than meet a legitimate physical need. They did not harvest an entire field. They picked a few crops to satisfy their hunger.

### iii. **Jesus reveals the author of the Sabbath (6:5).**

**READ:** Luke 6:5 (ESV)

<sup>5</sup> And he said to them, "[The Son of Man is lord of the Sabbath.](#)"

Though Jesus's scriptural quotation should've been sufficient to dispel doubts about whether or not the disciples broke the Sabbath, Jesus takes it a step further. He gives further proof to validate his actions by claiming that he (referring to himself as the "Son of Man") was the "lord of the Sabbath." In other words, Jesus said he was the maker, archetype, or author of the Sabbath.

The problem with this claim was that, in the O.T., the one who installed the Sabbath was God. So, to claim ownership of the Sabbath, as Jesus does here, is a claim to the divine station. Essentially, Jesus' mic-drop moment was that he could do whatever he wanted on the Sabbath. It was *his* day!

### **So, what's the takeaway?**

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<sup>4</sup> Youngblood, Ronald F., *1-2 Samuel*, The Expositor's Bible Commentary, Volume 3, Revised Edition, (Grand Rapids, MI; Zondervan, 2009), p. 214.

The Lord of the Sabbath invites his followers to rest in his presence.

**READ:** Matthew 11:28-30 (ESV)

<sup>28</sup> Come to me, all who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. <sup>29</sup> Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. <sup>30</sup> For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light.”

## Video Description

Everyday Disciple | Week 1 | "The Lord of the Sabbath"

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Pastor's manuscript can be found here: