

## Lord of the Sabbath, Part 2

Luke 6:1-5

November 27th, 2016

There in Luke Chapter 6 follow along as I read in Luke 6:1 through 11. "On a Sabbath, while he," that is Jesus, "was going through the grain fields, his disciples plucked and ate some heads of grain, rubbing them in their hands. But some of the Pharisees said, 'Why are you doing what is not lawful to do on the Sabbath?' Jesus answered them, 'Have you not 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 bread of the presence, which is not lawful for any but the priests to eat. And he also gave it to those with him.' And he said to them, 'The Son of man is Lord of the Sabbath.' On another Sabbath he entered the synagogue and was, was teaching and a man was there whose right hand was withered.

"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. But he knew their thoughts and said to the man with a withered hand, 'Come and stand here,' and he arose and stood there, 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?' After looking around at them all, he said to him, 'Stretch out your hand.' And he did so and his hand was restored. But they were filled with fury and discussed with one another what they might do to Jesus."

That section I just read from versus 6 to 11, we're going to cover next week. We're going to focus though on this Sabbath offense, this unlawful act of plucking heads of grain, rubbing them between their fingers and eating on the Sabbath. Something that the Pharisees said was not lawful. In verse five, it ends that first section, saying, "The Son of Man is Lord of the Sabbath." That is the key teaching of this passage. And it's going to be the subject of both the controversies that Luke describes here. His disciples were gleaning grain on the Sabbath. You might not think it was such a big deal, but it was. Jesus himself healed on the Sabbath an even bigger deal.

Right in the presence of the Pharisees and all of that together provoked the Pharisees, as it says there, "To fury." If you can believe it? It shouldn't have bothered them. Shouldn't have bothered them at all. If they had been able to embrace Jesus' earlier message, you can look back at Luke 5:24 that he is "The Son of Man." And if they had embraced that, they would have been well prepared for this, here, an assertion of his lordship over the Sabbath day as well.

Jesus claimed to possess authority to forgive sins. On that occasion, Luke chapter 5, he demonstrated his power to heal, repeatedly. But these are the prerogatives and power of God himself, and as the Son of Man, he possessed them, very clear. So it shouldn't surprise anyone that Jesus possessed authority to exercise lordship over the Sabbath day as well. But since the religious establishment didn't accept his earlier claim that he is the Son of Man, didn't accept his claim to be authoritative. They weren't likely to accept this claim either that he's Lord of the Sabbath.

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We looked last week at John Chapter 5. This controversy we see in Luke 6 actually started earlier in Jerusalem. Jesus in Jerusalem healed a man who'd been paralyzed for 38 years, and he commanded him, and it was, by the way, it was on the Sabbath day. He said, "Get up, take your bed and walk." Religious leaders confronted that man for carrying what we called an unlawful burden on the Sabbath day. It was heavier than what? A dried fig, right? So it was too heavy. You can't carry that and transport it from one place to another in public. When they questioned the man a bit, they found out it was Jesus who gave that unlawful command about carrying an unlawful burden.

The ensuing confrontation between Jesus and the Jews there, it resulted not in Jesus backing down at all. He doubled down in fact on his claims of divine authority and divine prerogative. It says in John Chapter 5 verses 16 to 17, "The Jews were persecuting Jesus, because he was doing these things on the Sabbath. Jesus answered them, he said, 'My father is working until now. And I am working.'" That is, the father is working even on the Sabbath, and I'm working on the Sabbath as well. He angered them even further when he said in verse 18.

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Jews, it says, an Jews, "The Jews were seeking all the more to kill him because not only was he breaking the Sabbath, but he was an, even calling God his own father, making himself equal with God." So they got the point. They understood the import or the impact of his words. "My father is working until now and I am working." He was putting himself on the same level as God the Father.

The problem with the Jewish leadership, as we said last week. It's not that they took the Sabbath too seriously. The problem is that they took themselves too seriously. They had no sense of humility about themselves, let alone mercy and compassion toward other people. When it came to matters of the law. They failed to see God's compassion, his mercy, all through the Old Testament Scriptures.

It says nothing about God, says everything about them, says everything about their hearts. Even though this confrontation here in Luke Chapter 6 is about Jesus' assertion of lordship over the Sabbath day. And how that offended these self-

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designated Lords of the Sabbath. It's not as if the Sabbath day was unimportant to God, it was.

For those of us who tend to judge the Pharisees for maybe being too concerned about treating the Sabbath day as holy. The truth is that we need to get the log out of our own evangelical eye first, right? Because we have not been treating the Sabbath day as holy, we've not been treating Sundays as holy. If we get that log out of our eye, we can see more clearly to judge ourselves and even to judge these Pharisees.

Many of us have been raised in a church environment in which we haven't treated this principle, Sabbath worship as holy at all. The one day of rest in seven principle, that predates the law of Moses. So this is not a law thing. This is another principle of creation, just like the distinction between male and female, just like the institution of marriage itself. Many of us evangelicals, we've been profaning the Lord's day all our lives, like the rest of the culture, doing whatever we want to do on the Sabbath days, on Sundays.

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These days we've been very concerned, rightly concerned to resist the culture, to protect the gender binary of male and female, to protect the sanctity of marriage, that's exactly right. Those were exactly the right stances, positions to take, but since those very truths are based upon what God did during Creation week, shouldn't we be just as concerned to insist on everything that we see written in Creation week? Shouldn't we also practice the principle of Sabbath rest?

Shouldn't we also protect and insist upon a literal interpretation of creation that is defining a day biblically, taking the Bible's timetables, and all that it says and all that it covers, literally? Why do we pick and choose? Listen, the more faithful we are to all of God's word. Treating as holy the Scripture as a whole and all of its constituent parts, including the principle of Sabbath rest. The better we will be able to discern the heart of God on every matter to put his truth into practice in our lives.

He is holy, yes, he's merciful as well. He's compassionate, yes, also exacting in his justice. We don't want

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to elevate the one to the diminishment or the detriment of the other. We need to keep everything that God says about himself, about his ways, about his heart, in proper alignment biblically. Again, as I said, the problem with the Jewish leadership is not that they took the Sabbath day too seriously. They just took themselves too seriously.

We need to take note. We don't want to elevate any of our own traditions to the level of biblical authority like they did. We don't want to promote ourselves to the level of Sabbath lords over anybody's consciences. There is one who governs and commands our conscience and it's the Lord Jesus Christ. In their first encounter with the true and the only Lord of the Sabbath, which was at that feast in Jerusalem, John 5. The Jews were so blinded by their pride they were unable to see Jesus for who he really is.

God truly is his father, and therefore he's completely justified, number, one in claiming equality with God and number two, in determining, determining what is and what is not lawful to do on the Sabbath day, is he not? So, these Pharisees they



were fueled with self-righteous anger. The Jewish leaders pursued Jesus not just there in Jerusalem, but they followed him back to Galilee, to his ministry in Galilee. He's all the way up there in Galilee.

They followed him. He's up there ministering with his disciples, and they caught up with him, on one particular Sabbath day. As he's walking with his disciples through the grain fields of Israel. Look again at verses 1-3. This is the first point that we covered last week called an unjustified accusation, an unjustified accusation. It says, "On a Sabbath while he was going through the grain fields, his disciples plucked and ate some heads of grain, rubbing them in their hands. But some of the Pharisees said, 'Why are you doing what is not lawful to do on the Sabbath?' And Jesus answered them, 'Have you not read?'" Stop there.

This is a confrontation about authority; about authority, not about what is or is not okay to do on the Sabbath. Jesus' reply goes deeper than arguing about lawful gleaning. He goes directly to the word. He goes directly to the foundational issue

of authority and he appeals to the only right standard of judgment, which is God's revealed word, the Scripture. As we noted, the Jewish leaders had raised the authority of their oral traditions up to the level of sacred Scripture.

We talked about that last time, about how the Jewish Talmud, it's like a commentary on the Mishna, which is a collection of Jewish oral tradition. Alfred Edersheim says that the "Talmud contains not less than 24 chapters." In which, he says quote, "Matters are seriously discussed as a vital religious importance, which one would scarcely imagine a sane intellect would seriously entertain." End quote. He's right, but entertain they did.

They studied these things assiduously, diligently, tirelessly, rabbis would lecture their students and disciples on the various prohibitions and traditions, train them to be experts in minutiae. I don't mean this to be derogatory at all, but just by way of illustration, you can think of them like tax attorneys today.

Experts in IRS tax code, which is constantly being added to and changed so it can be adaptable to a changing world, changing technology, changing business parameters and all of that. Then, that's why people hire. That's why they need tax attorneys today. Why they pay their exorbitantly high fees, because the minutiae is so perplexing to all of us. And studying it and keeping up with it, is so exhausting.

Edersheim draws attention to an anecdote written in the Talmud, commending a certain rabbi who spent no less than two and a half years in the study of only one of those 24 chapters. Can you imagine that? It's like studying the IRS tax code, one item in the tax code for 2 1/2 years. You might be tempted to even commend the diligence of these rabbis and scribes and Pharisees, if, if that system had not become such a powerful tool to enslave the masses, to assert human lordship over God's Sabbath, to take a day of rest and manipulate it into a day of slavery.

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Listen, when all the religious authorities of Judaism were elevating expertise in the opinions of rabbinical scholars, what do you think the students, the disciples are going to be inclined to pursue? If that's the standard, if that's what everybody around you is saying is important as a young student, as a young disciple, that's what you're going to follow. It's a self-reinforcing, self-perpetuating system that's elevating human authority, putting it on par with biblical authority. We've seen that before, right?

That is the fundamental error of fallen humanity and all false religion, to take the opinions of men and elevate them to the level of God's Word, giving equal weight, often even greater weight to the changing opinions of men as fallible creatures and making it more important than the infallible, immutable creator God. That is the key error, and that's what Jesus drew them too. That's what he wanted to call their attention to. He asked them a question that bypassed the controversy about tradition. Dealt instead with what the Bible actually had to teach about lawful and unlawful Sabbath day behavior.

It doesn't grant the Pharisees their starting assumption, that the oral tradition carries the same weight of biblical authority. Instead, he challenged that assumption straight off, directing the conversation back to the Scripture. "Have you not read?" They had read, they just hadn't observed carefully, and that's what we're going to try to do this morning. As we get into our second point and see how Jesus answered their challenge from Scripture using an unparalleled illustration.

An unparalleled illustration; that's the second point in your outline. Look at verses 3 and 4. "Jesus answered them, 'Have you not 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 bread of the presence, which is not lawful for any but the priests to eat, and also gave it to those with him?'" To get a better view of that story, as I said, the Pharisees, the scribes, they had all read this story. They were very familiar with it.

I would want to wager that you're probably not as familiar with that story as they were, but we do have a written word, so

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let's go back to 1 Samuel, Chapter 21, 1 Samuel 21. I'm assuming you're not as fresh on that illustration as they were. But we can look back at the story for ourselves in 1 Samuel 21. Jesus defended his disciple's actions on the Sabbath. And he used an illustration from early on in David's career at this point in David's life, he had been anointed by the prophet Samuel. King Saul is still on the throne. And if you've read 1 Samuel lately, you know that David's good character in 1 Samuel, it painted a vivid contrast with Saul's bad character.

Saul became more jealous. The kingdom became more dangerous for David. That's where we enter the story with David on the run. Saul wants David dead. It had been confirmed by Saul's son Jonathan, and so David left that area right away. He traveled north to Nob, no time to gather provisions for himself and for his men. Time is of the essence, and David is fleeing for his life.

Let's start reading there in 1 Samuel 21:1, "Then David came to Nob, to Ahimelech the priest. And Ahimelech came to meet David, trembling, and said to him, 'Why are you alone, and no

one with you?' David said to Ahimelech the priest, 'The king has charged me with a matter and said to me, 'Let no one know anything of the matter about which I send you, and with which I have charged you.'" Is that true? Did Saul send David? No, that was a lie. David told a lie and we need to acknowledge that right here in Scripture. David told a lie. We understand why David was wanting here to protect Ahimelech by keeping him in the dark. He figured that if Ahimelech was to be questioned by Saul's men, which was going to be very likely, then he'd be safe. He could, he could plead ignorance. Ahimelech could tell Saul in good conscience, he was simply exercising loyalty to the Crown, supporting Saul's interests after all. And you may know that that didn't work.

David's lie, which was meant to protect Ahimelech ended up making him vulnerable. Giving him no warning whatsoever about the murderous Saul who came to interrogate him. Just a little bit later, Saul committed the infamous crime as you may know, in the next chapter of slaughtering the priests at Nob. Little truth from David would have been helpful. Rather than trying to manipulate the situation with a lie, but it happened.

Let's keep reading, end of verse 2, David said to Ahimelech. "I've made an appointment with the young men for such and such a place." He's talking about his men that he has waiting for him. "Now then, what do you have on hand? Give me five loaves of bread, or whatever's here. The priest answered David, 'I have no common bread on hand, but there is holy bread. If the young men have kept themselves from women.'" Stop there for a moment.

It's interesting at this point that Ahimelech offers David the holy bread. But only if, only if the young men are ceremonially pure. So what is this holy bread? He's talking about the bread that Jesus mentioned, he called it the bread of the presence. It was the bread that was laid out before the Lord every single week inside the holy place of the Tabernacle, was also called the show bread, or the bread of the presence, because it was laid out in the presence of God.

In Exodus 25:30, God said, "You shall set the bread of the presence on the table before me regularly." And, in fact weekly. Every Sabbath, the priest would replace those old loaves. Get



rid of them, with a new set of 12 freshly baked loaves. Now, don't imagine the kind of loaves that you buy from the grocery store from King Supers or Safeway or Trader Joe's. Wherever you go, these loaves were big, they were huge. According to Leviticus 24:5, the priests were to prepare these loaves using, as it says there, "Fine flour and bake 12 loaves from it; two tenths of an ephah shall be in each loaf."

You know how much that is? When's the last time you checked your tables of weights and measures that are in the back of your Bible? Never, I didn't think so. Same, same with me, I had to look it up. One ephah is 20.8 quarts. Now that's a lot okay, which means 2/10 of an ephah is just over 4 quarts, that is, 4 quarts of fine flour in every single loaf of bread. I heard some gasps from some ladies in the, in the congregation that, that's a pretty big loaf, isn't it? Pretty hefty loaf of bread, about 5 pounds each. Five pounds, they're to make twelve of these 5 pounds loaves, which is, 12X5 anyone? 60 pounds of bread. So when they put it on a table, it's a pretty sturdy table.

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I looked at one loaf of Trader Joe's wheat bread we have at home. One serving is 34 grams and they're about 20 servings per loaf, which makes each loaf of Trader Joe's wheat bread about 1.5 pounds each, okay? I didn't even think it was much that much. It's really light stuff. It would take 40 loaves of Trader Joe's wheat bread to equal the amount that was baked and presented to the Lord each and every week. Just to give you an idea of the amount of bread here. You'd be filling your trunk every single week with that bread, and then you'd be putting that before the Lord.

Leviticus 24:6 instructed the priest to take those 12 loaves "and to set them in two piles, so six in a pile on the table of pure gold before the Lord. You shall put frankincense on each pile, that it may go with the bread as a memorial portion as a food offering to the Lord. Every Sabbath day Aaron shall arrange it before the Lord regularly; it is from the people of Israel as a covenant forever."

Obviously, the bread is not put there to feed Israel's God. The pagans feed their gods, not Israel. This is to be as it says

there, a memorial portion. It causes them to remember something. Alright, so one loaf for each tribe. Every single week of the year to remind Israel that it is God who provides Israel with bread. It wasn't just a symbolic reminder either. It was also a source of practical provision for the priesthood. As Leviticus 24:9 says God cared for Israel's priests this way, "It shall be for Aaron and his sons, they shall eat it in a holy place, since it is for them a most holy portion out of the Lord's food offerings, a perpetual due."

So this is the way God prepared for and cared for his priests. Plenty of bread to sustain the priests, 12 loaves every week. The Lord provided the flour by causing the fields of Israel to be fruitful and abundant. And then he moved upon the hearts of Israel's farmers to bring grain offerings to the Tabernacle. It's a wonderful reminder of God's provision, his practical sustenance of the priests, who served before the Lord all for the sake of Israel.

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Only the priests were allowed to eat the bread, nobody else. Jesus even acknowledged that in Luke 6:4 that only the priests are authorized to consume holy bread. It's an indisputable fact. But notice, look again what Ahimelech said, 1 Samuel 21:4, "I have no common bread on hand, but there is holy bread, if the young men have kept themselves from women." Now Ahimelech is obviously making an exception there, isn't he? Was he authorized to do that? It clearly, it said in Leviticus 24, only he and the other priests are to eat of this bread. But he's making an exception.

How is he justified in allowing David and his men to partake of the priestly bread? This holy bread, if they've met this condition of keeping themselves from women? Nothing in the law of Moses would allow Ahimelech to make this exception, but we do discover an important clue right here in this account. Look ahead at verse 7 and notice that by God's design, it says there, "A certain man of the servants of Saul was there that day, he, detained before the Lord, his name was Doeg the Edomite, the chief of Saul's herdsman."

"Detained before the Lord." It's not that he was in handcuffs and in the jail, in the Tabernacle. It's likely a reference to the fact that he was held up. He was there on the Sabbath day, and so as a convert to Israel's religion in the employment of Saul, he was not allowed to travel on the Sabbath. So there he is, detained before the Lord. Now turn the page to chapter 22 verses 9 and 10.

God had arranged for Doeg the Edomite to witness this encounter between Ahimelech and David at the temple that day. When Saul arrived, Doeg told Saul what he saw. He saw it, at a bit of a distance. He didn't hear the whole conversation, but he informed Saul playing the role of an informant here, Doeg told Saul, "I saw the son of Jesse coming to Nob to Ahimelech, the son of Ahitub, and he acquired of the Lord for him and gave him provisions and gave him the sword of Goliath the Philistine."

Stop there, this, it's a vital piece of information, isn't it? That before giving David provisions, before putting the sword of Goliath in his hand, Doeg told Saul that Ahimelech

first, "Inquired of the Lord for him." What does that mean? It means he prayed. It means the Ahimelech sought the Lord about this matter. He asked God what to do. It wasn't Ahimelech who thought up this proviso, not on his own anyway, it was the Lord, who revealed to Ahimelech they can have the holy bread. If the young men have kept themselves from women.

Might seem like a strange condition placed upon their ability to partake of the bread, but it's actually very consistent with the law about partaking of holy things. The law about holy things, to abstain from marital relations was a mark of ceremonial purity and preparation to partake in holy things. They separated from normal activities in preparation for communing with the holy.

Goes back to Exodus 19:15, when God told Moses to prepare Israel to receive the law, the Ten Commandments, "He said to the people, 'Be ready for the third day.'" Don't go near a woman, that is don't have normal marital relations. So he revealed it, in Leviticus 15 he said there is an uncleanness that comes about

in marital relations, ceremonially so. So it's vital before drawing near to the holy, that men abstain from that.

So continuing back in 1 Samuel 21:5 go back to there. "David answered the priests," tr, er, answer the priests, "Truly, women have been kept from us as always, when I go out on expedition. The vessels," that is the bodies, "of the young men are holy when it is an ordinary journey. How much more today will their vessels be holy?" David's referring to the fact as he told Ahimelech that he was on an urgent mission at the King's command.

David is reference to today, it indicates it's a Sabbath day. It's a day of ceremonial purity anyway. So his men are certainly gonna be pure for the Sabbath day, but they're also going to be pure because they're on an expedition with him. Next verse says, 1 Samuel 21:6. "So the priest gave him the holy bread. For there was no bread there, but the bread of the presence which is removed from before the Lord, to be replaced by hot bread on the day it is taken away."

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Text draws attention to replacing last week's bread with hot, fresh loaves in accord with Leviticus 24:8. That happened on the Sabbath. That's in accord with rabbinic tradition as well. David's arrival was on the Sabbath. That means he's traveling on the Sabbath. That means he's doing Saul's business on the Sabbath. And he's then provisioned with the holy bread on the Sabbath.

Now let's go back to Luke 6. Let's, we've just made, gotten familiar, familiar with the story. This unparalleled illustration here. Let's see in Luke 6 how Jesus is driving them here to point three in your outline, an unavoidable implication, an unavoidable implication. We might say this is an inescapable conclusion.

So third and final point in our outline, verse 5 an unavoidable implication. Or you might prefer an inescapable conclusion. Jesus' illustration here, as we stop to think about it and we make good observations from the text, as we think about it and learn what we can learn from it, it's gonna drive us to the very conclusion in verse 5 that Jesus gave them, that



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"The Son of Man is Lord of the Sabbath." And you might wonder how did we get from 1 Samuel 21, David before the priests, he's eating holy bread and connect that to the Son of Man is Lord of the Sabbath? How do these two connect? Why does the one drive us to the other conclusion? It's a fair question.

In a few minutes you're going to see that the conclusion is a necessary implication really of the story Jesus referred to. We're going to make some good observations together. Okay, that's why I said you need to have your thinking caps on this morning. If the Pharisees had spent more time thinking carefully about the Scripture. Rather than making a list of prohibited Sabbath day activities, they would have a whole lot wiser to make good judgments here.

They would have been less likely to condemn Jesus' disciples for eating heads of grain on the Sabbath day. So that's what we're gonna do. We're gonna go back to Scripture, make some good observations. First, first observation, they should have observed Ahimelech's compassion. They should have

observed Ahimelech's compassion, priestly compassion for David and his men.

Notice in verse 3 that Jesus really draws attention to that, he points out what David did when he was hungry. He was hungry, he and those who were with him. Wouldn't a sense, just a common human sense of compassion? A concern to care for the needs of hungry men. Wouldn't that help the Pharisees see and learn from Ahimelech's immediate response? Rather than condemn David, Ahimelech tried to find a way to meet the need. He inquired of the Lord, he asked, Is it okay to give David the holy bread?

No mention here of Ahimelech being reluctant. No mention of him as a priest chiding David or rebuking him for traveling on the Sabbath. There's no, no moralizing going on. You know David, you oughtn't to be traveling, running around on the Sabbath day because the Lord blesses those who honor the Sabbath, with giving them provision for the journey. You just pray and God will give manna from heaven. There's none of that going on here.

Ahimelech sees himself as the means of that provision. He sees himself as the, as the one who's going to provide for David, as part of the solution. Not just there to condemn him for the problem. He tried to meet the need. Just an immediate reaction from Ahimelech to have compassion, to be accommodating and while Luke doesn't show us, that Jesus is making that point explicitly here in our text because he's got something else in mind, which we're going to get to.

Jesus did make that very point in Matthew, in Mark, those two gospels tell us that Jesus did highlight this principle. This higher principle of mercy when it came to meeting needs on the Sabbath. Jot down Matthew 12:7. Matthew 12:7, Jesus rebuked the Pharisees. He said, "If you had known what this means, I desire mercy and not sacrifice. You would have not condemned the guiltless."

Jesus here, even though David has traveled on the Sabbath, he's eaten the holy bread, he says he's guiltless. Jesus made a judgment here. Jot down Mark 2:27, Mark 2:27. "Jesus said to

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them, the Sabbath was made for man, not man for the Sabbath." You Pharisees have this turned upside down. You think the Sabbath is there to bind men. No, it's meant to give them rest. Man wasn't made for the Sabbath. Sabbath was made for man, it's a gift to man.

I don't wanna go too far here, but if we think about ourselves for a moment. We can all get, tend to get our priorities out of, out of order. Can't we, just like the Pharisees? Mercy can often be neglected for the sake of our busy schedule. We got stuff to do, I got, I gotta get to church. I gotta teach Bible study. I can't help you. You ever been guilty of that? We busy ourselves so much sometimes that there's no time to notice other people.

Sometimes we prioritize our families and neglect the widows and the orphans in our midst. You can't do that. We need to have a com, this principle of compassion and mercy and care for other people that causes us to look beyond our immediate obligations, our immediate duties, our immediate schedules to Look around to see others. Sometimes we even provide spiritual reasons for

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avoiding something that really deep down inside we don't want to do. No, sorry I can't meet that need. I'm sorry, I just, just gonna be too weak from fasting all day.

Too involved in intercessory prayer, to help you move. Yeah, sounds pretty spiritual, doesn't it? It's like the Pharisees before us, we can be guilty of following the same patterns of hypocrisy in our lives. Same kind of cold heartedness as them. So don't be too quick to cast stones at the Pharisees. How often we do the same things? The principle of Sabbath observance is the normal governing principle for the week. But every once in a while, the providence of God intervenes and brings an interruption to our regularly scheduled program.

Feeding a group of hungry men, that's also a very important principle, should not be neglected. And these were not just any group, any ordinary group of hungry men. These are the king's men. These are led by David, one of Israel's greatest military leaders, which brings us to a second observation, we need to make about that story. The Pharisees should have observed

Ahimelech's deference, his deference. Notice how Jesus summarized what happened in verse four.

Look at it in verse four, he says there, that David's actions are very proactive. They're even almost aggressive. Look at the verbs: he entered, he took, he ate and he gave. Ahimelech is not the subject of those verbs is he? But that's what we read in 1 Samuel 21. Here, Jesus portrays David as doing these things. He pictures David, not Ahimelech as acting with absolute authority here. It's not exactly how the story sounded in 1 Samuel, right?

First Samuel 21:6 it clearly says, "The priest gave him the holy bread." So which is it? Did David take the bread, as Jesus said? Or did Ahimelech give it to him, as we read in God's word, 1 Samuel 21? Who's right, Jesus or God? You wanna write, wanna vote? The answer is yes, satisfy your, [grunt], don't do that to me. Ahimelech gave it, it's true, he saw David's need.

He considered the exigencies of David's urgent business. His obvious need for provisions to fulfill his mission. And he

stopped and he decided to inquire of the Lord. He got on his knees. By acquiescing here to David's needs Ahimelech is really deferring to the king. He sees David as an emissary of King Saul, thinking King Saul sent David on a mission and he's rightly concerned to submit to the will of the king, and that is a very important point here, since it shows the priesthood deferring to the anointed king rather than the other way around.

Ahimelech deferred to the royal will, he made way for the King's business. Isn't that interesting? Why weren't the Pharisees willing to do that? Why were the Pharisees so knee jerk blinded by that principle? They had lost sight of royal prerogatives in the 1st century. King Herod was on the throne. He's an Idumaeen; he's a mixed breed.

He has no legitimate claim to Israel's throne, so the Jewish leaders had been absolutely dismissive of his leadership. They saw him as a puppet of Rome, which he was. They become accustomed to thinking them, of themselves as the only legitimate leadership in the land. It's like people saying, Donald Trump is not my president. Oh yes, he is. If he's the

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president and you live in this country, you pay taxes and he is your president.

Just like if Hillary Clinton were voted into office. And by the way, if the recount proves that she's, just kidding. But if, but if she were in office, yeah, she'd be our president, wouldn't she? And we owe her deference and submission. But here they think of themselves as the only leadership in the land. The only legitimate leadership. So when Jesus arrives on the scene, they're predisposed to rejecting his royal claims. They're predisposed to resisting his royal prerogatives.

They're instantaneously, instinctively rebellious and they're rejecting Jesus royal assertions out of hand. They don't even have an ear to listen to it. So Jesus stops for a minute and he reasserts his royal prerogative, when he goes back to that story. It's a bit subtle, but it is no coincidence that Jesus chose this illustration involving David, and Jesus has clearly made David not Ahimelech, but David the subject of those verbs. He entered the House of God, he took, he ate the bread of the presence, and he also gave it to those with him.



David, not Ahimelech, is in the driver seat of the narrative. It's exactly the way Jesus wants it read and understood. So David represents the royal prerogative. He represents the will of the rightful anointed King of Israel and as the anointed King of Israel, though not ruling, King Saul is still ruling, but David is next. He acts with regal authority, and the priest is there deferring to that authority. David requested bread, Ahimelech inquired of the Lord and God granted the exception.

As the son of David, born in the House of David, Jesus is in that royal line, isn't he? And when Jesus was anointed, it was, it was not with oil. It was not by a human prophet. Jesus was anointed by God, with the Holy Spirit of God. Jesus, here he comes on the scene possessing more authority than David. He has every right to exercise his royal prerogatives on the Sabbath day, and that brings us to a third observation. They should have observed Ahimelech's compassion.

They should have observed his deference to royal authority. Ceremonial prohibitions need to make way for the principle of mercy in the face of need. Ceremonial prohibitions need to make way for the principle of submission to authority in the presence of the king. And now that Jesus, the son of David, the Son of Man, the Messiah. He's standing before them. Will they submit to him? Or will they not?

Here's a third observation. They should have observed the bread of the presence, the bread of the presence. Again, there is no better illustration that Jesus could have chosen in all the Old Testament to paint the picture that Jesus wanted the Pharisees to see at this particular moment. Think about the setting of the scene. Jesus and his disciples, where are they walking?

They're in the midst of Israel's grain fields. What do grain fields say to you as you look out to them? They say bread. They say food. They say provision, do they not? Same thing here, there in verse 3, Jesus referred to David's concern not just about his own hunger, but also those who are with him. Then

again, in verse 4, Jesus mentions that David ate the bread and he also, did what? He gave it to those who were with him.

Jesus is pointing out how David was taking care of his men. He is the one who took care of them, provided for their needs, who satisfied their hunger. Parallel is clear. Like David before him, Jesus is concerned to care for his own men. To satisfy the hunger of his disciples. They were out on an important mission, not a made up one as if coming from King Saul or not even one to flee from Saul's fury and anger, they're with Jesus.

They're with the anointed Messiah of Israel on his mission. How much greater is his mission than David's before him, or any supposed mission of King Saul? It's infinitely greater, infinitely, profoundly more important. Notice in verse 4 that Jesus refers to the bread of the presence. That, as we said, that bread is a symbolic representation of God's provision for his people. All 12 tribes, tribes of Israel. One large loaf for each tribe every single week of the year, and Israel needed to remember to always be aware that it is God who provides for their bread, not them.

He's the one who causes the grain to grow. He is the one who satisfies their hunger and that symbol served a very practical purpose as well, to take care of the priest's hunger. The grain came to the temple from the fields of Israel. Israel sowed those seeds of grain in fields that they had plowed, but it was God who created both seed and field. He caused the seed to germinate, to grow, to become fruitful, productive.

Israel had worked by reaping, threshing, winnowing, sifting, grounding, sifting in a sieve to make sure the flour, get the flour ready for the bread. Then that dough had been prepared and kneaded, and then baked into the loaves, all of that was a visible, tangible demonstration of God's good kind provision for his people. Now here's Jesus, the Son of God, passing through the grain fields that he himself created. He is the one now who's provided these kernels of grain to satisfy his hungry disciples.

He is responsible for the kernel and the flour that comes into the temple. It's grain from these fields that would one day

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become loaves, one day set before the presence of the holy one of Israel. And here he is, the holy one of Israel himself, God Incarnate the very bread of the presence and the presence himself. He's no longer confined to the Holy of Holies, sitting on a table. He's now walking through the grain fields of Israel, actively providing for his people, his disciples.

How appropriate, right? An unpar, paralleled illustration here, drives to an inescapable conclusion that this one, is the Lord of the Sabbath. Israel may have worked those fields six days a week. But it's the Lord who makes the crops grow. As the Lord of the Sabbath, he's also the one who commands their rest. And he'll take care of the fields growing on the Sabbath as well. If they'll only rest.

Here's another mark of Jesus' incomparable wisdom. He really turned the Pharisees standard of judgment back on themselves, didn't he? Because by condemning Jesus and his men, the Pharisees found themselves in a very awkward position of condemning King David too. Their standard of judgment would have even gone further, would have condemned the whole priesthood,

starting with Ahimelech and then the whole priesthood as well as being corrupt, giving David holy Bread. So by condemning Jesus and his disciples, their, Jesus draws out the implication. They're condemning the throne of Israel, the priesthood of Israel as well.

Had David transgressed the ceremonial law? Yes, he had, no doubt, he'd given his men holy bread to eat. But it was God who allowed Ahimelech to make that exception to the ceremonial law. As we already pointed out, Matthew 12:7. "If you had known what this means, I desire mercy, not sacrifice, you would have not condemned," What? "The guiltless." No guilt even though he transgressed the ceremonial law.

Only the Pharisee's standard condemned David and his men. Jesus exonerated them. Where the Pharisee's standard condemned Ahimelech and the priesthood, Jesus demonstrated the divine prerogative to provide an exception. So Jesus exonerated Ahimelech as well. By carrying those conclusions forward, he just exonerated his disciples. What gave him the right to make such a pronouncement? He had every right, he had the only right,

because verse 5 says, "he's the Lord of the Sabbath and he is the Son of Man."

The very first concept in the sentence. Jesus, actually, when he spoke it, in verse 5, he put this at the very front of the sentence, in the original, for emphasis and the chief emphasis here is on lordship. Jesus confronts the Pharisees here with his absolute sovereignty. "Lord of the Sabbath is the Son of Man." That's how it reads. He has absolute sovereignty.

He has unqualified authority, and he, notice, he just pronounces it, he doesn't try to prove it to them. He doesn't argue about it, he simply asserts it, says it, makes a clear, unambiguous statement and then leaves them to wrestle with it. His absolute lordship implies Sabbath prerogative too. The phrase "Of the Sabbath" it's in the middle of the sentence, "Lord, he is" and then "The Son of Man" is at the end of the sentence. So it's "Lord, he is of the Sabbath, the Son of Man."

So his lordship, it commands the Sabbath itself. He's the one who commands it, protects it, he defines the meaning of the

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Sabbath, and he prescribes our rest for the Sabbath as well. Far from abrogating the Sabbath, far from diminishing the value of the Sabbath rest. Jesus cares deeply that his people honor the Sabbath. That principle, that one day of rest in seven: principle and treat it as holy.

For us, as we said, it's the principle of the Sabbath, which we observe on Sunday the Lord's Day, not on Saturday, the original Sabbath. The Lord of the Sabbath is concerned that we observe it. That we treat it as holy because it's of great, great benefit to us. Jesus' absolute lordship in general, his Sabbath lordship in particular, all of that is a function of his identity as the Son of Man. Remember we talked about that a number of weeks back.

It's the Son of Man who's Lord over the Sabbath. The Son of Man is one who is like us in every way except for sin, except for the sin nature. The Son of Man knows us because he's human. He knows our needs. He knows the rest that we need. It's his perfect humanity that makes him such a sympathetic high priest. Such an empathetic Lord of the Sabbath and listen folks, we need



rest. We need rest physically. We need it spiritually. We see that illustrated throughout Jesus Ministry as he protected his disciples from overwork.

On one occasion, he said to his disciples in Mark Chapter 6 verse 31, "Come away by yourselves to a desolate place and rest awhile. For many were coming and going, and they had no leisure even to eat." Jesus said that's not good. You need to rest. It's not just about resting physically. We need spiritual rest and refreshment as well, which is what we find in the worship of God in close intimacy with Jesus Christ.

Some people say I need to rest so they go home and turn on the TV or they get on the computer and start surfing the Internet or whatever they do. And you know what? That actually doesn't cause you to rest. It causes you to be [ugh], agitated, especially if you're watching the news. You know what true rest is for a Christian? Every Christian I've talked to, they describe true rest as spending time in the word of God and in prayer.

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Unburdening their hearts in prayer to the Lord, reading God's word and letting his word renew their minds and refresh their hearts, transform their lives. That's what every true Christian would describe as the perfect rest. It's true, you know what? That's what Jesus won for us by his perfect life of obedience. We've studied that title before. As I said, "The Son of Man," it refers to Jesus' role as the representative head of the human race.

He not only fulfilled Sabbath obedience on our behalf, he fulfilled all obedience on our behalf and he won for us a perfect and final and unending rest. We already said last week how, we're all guilty of violating the Sabbath. We're all guilty of so many sins and offenses against God's holiness. We don't treat him as we should. We're so flippant sometimes, so carnal, so profane. But you know what? Jesus never was. He always was perfect in his observation of the Sabbath principle of rest, he was always perfect in every act of obedience.

You know why he did that? He did that for you, that for me. His perfect sacrifice on the cross wiped away every sin and his

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perfect obedience covers us in perfect righteousness. That's the point in Hebrews. Hebrews 4:9-10, "There remains a Sabbath rest for the people of God. Whoever has entered God's rest, has also rested from his works as God did from his." When was that? Creation week, the eternal rest is what Jesus invites us to enjoy in the presence of the triune God, as he said in Matthew 11:28, "Come to me all who labor and are heavy laden and I will give you rest."

Listen, far from being the burden that the Pharisees turned it into. Far from being a, the burden that many legalizers today in our society, you know the groups that are out there, they use the Old Testament like a stick to beat you with, to show you how you're not truly God's people, you are, you're, you're not one of them, you're not part of their group. you're not doing all the laws like they do it.

Look far from being that kind of a burden, far from being a stick to beat us with, the Sabbath day was to be a blessing to mankind. Jesus came to restore that rest. He came to free Israel from that prison that they were in of over zealous regulation,

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from the tyranny of these so-called Lords who, they didn't honor the Sabbath either; they corrupted it, turned into a burden rather than protecting it as a rest. So here comes the Lord of the Sabbath to wrestle it away from them, and to reassert his lordship over the Sabbath. As the Lord of the Sabbath Jesus instructed us, his church, to enjoy that principle of the one day in seven rest. We observe it on Sunday rather than Saturday, why? Because that is the day that Jesus rose from the dead. Winning for us a perfect and final and never ending Sabbath rest. Let's pray.

Heavenly father, we acknowledge your goodness, your kindness in giving us the principle of the Sabbath rest. We acknowledge your kindness to us in Christ Jesus. To give us an eternal rest from all of our labors. I think every single one of us in here can acknowledge the, the feeling of being tired, whether it's physically or spiritually or otherwise. We just, we need rest. We don't find it in this life. We don't find it with any of the distractions that the world provides. We don't find it in any of the recreations. We don't find it in any activity or lack of activity in this world, we find it in you.