

Ambush on the Sabbath

Luke 6:6-11

December 4, 2016

We've been reading about Jesus. He and his disciples have been shadowed by the Jewish leadership. All the while, he's demonstrating his power, his strength, his might, his healing, his concern for people, his mercy. Jesus' ministry has attracted the attention of the religious authorities in Jerusalem. The scribes and the Pharisees, they went out from Jerusalem and Judea to go to Galilee, in that more rural area: Galilee of the Gentiles.

They went out to observe for themselves, this Jesus in his ministry, and they didn't, didn't really like what they found. From one perspective, it's really hard to understand why. Jesus has been healing diseases. He's been casting out demons. He's been cleansing lepers. He's been healing paralytics. And most

importantly, he's been forgiving sinners. What is not to like about that?

What we're seeing here, is the prediction of old Mr. Simeon taking shape. This is the beginning of what Simeon told Mary at the temple when Jesus was just that little child of Bethlehem in her arms. She's holding baby Jesus in her arms in the temple environment, in Luke 2:34, and Simeon tells her, "Behold, this child is appointed for the fall and rising of many in Israel, and for a sign that is opposed," and a sword will pierce through your own soul also, "so that the thoughts from many hearts may be revealed."

It was hard to see, at that time, as Mary's holding this tender child in her arms. A newborn baby. Hard to see how that child could be responsible for all of that. "That the thoughts of many hearts would be revealed." Whenever Jesus is truly revealed. When the truth about him, his ministry, his true words, are made manifest, when his message is clear and unambiguous, Jesus becomes a dividing line.

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Those who embrace him and his words, well, they rejoice. They are raised up. They're encouraged in hope. But those who reject him. They resist. They reject. They oppose. They oppress. They pursue. We're watching that very thing happen. It's in motion right here, in Luke chapter 6, with these religious leaders. The thoughts from their hearts are being revealed here in our text. As Jesus is executing a divine ministry directed from heaven itself, religious leaders don't like it. That is what is revealing their hearts. They're being exposed.

And from this point on, from this point forward, in Luke's Gospel, there is no masking their false religion. We know it's nature. We know the truth about it. They are hypocrites to the core. Though they parade worship. Though they parade religiosity. They are using an external form of religion to hide a murderous heart of selfish ambition and greed. We're going to see that here in the text this morning.

Look at Luke 6 starting in verse 6. We've covered 1 to 5 in a couple of weeks. Now we're going to look at Luke 6:6 through 11. "On another Sabbath, he entered the synagogue and 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 he said, to the man with the withered hand, ‘Come and stand here.’ And he rose 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?’ And after looking around at them all he said to the 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.”

We're going to jump right into the outline, for the first point this morning, printed there in your bulletin. Let's look at the situation. The situation, verse 6, tells us this happened on another Sabbath. That is a different one from the one we went through in verses 1 to 5. We don't know the time frame exactly between the two Sabbaths. How much time separates the Sabbath and verses 1 to 5, and then this one that starts in verse 6, likely just a few weeks or so. Jesus and his disciples may have

even returned to Capernaum, on this occasion, from a period of itinerant ministry.

And the next events that we see coming in Luke 6, the naming of the Twelve, the Sermon on the Mount, all of that takes place in and around the Sea of Galilee, and very close proximity to Capernaum. So, the scribes and the Pharisees, they show up on this occasion because they really knew exactly where to find Jesus. They show up there. They're a bit of a, a troop of inquisition, and they want to see him for themselves. But they have an evil motive in their heart.

Once again, we find Jesus in the synagogue. He's doing that which it defines his ministry. Which describes his ministry. He is teaching. Jesus is a consummate teacher. It says, "On another Sabbath there, he entered the synagogue, he was teaching. A man was there whose right hand was withered, the scribes and the Pharisees, they watched him. They're sitting there listening to the teaching and they're watching him to see whether he would heal on the Sabbath, so they might find a reason to accuse him."

We just need to note here that not everyone who comes to church is interested in the teaching, right? Not everybody who comes to church, is, has the same heart that you do. Some come in the church doors with ulterior motives. It was true then. It remains true to this day.

Here are the scribes and Pharisees seated in the synagogue, and no doubt they are seated in positions of honor and authority. They are visiting Jewish dignitaries, and so they would have been given the best seats. And yet, from their honored position, they're relatively uninterested. We might say remarkably uninterested in what Jesus really has to say. They're not listening to the truth of his teaching. They're only listening out, for an occasion to accuse him.

That's the first of a number of ironies in this story. And here they are sitting in positions of honor. It's because of their spiritual authority that they're put in those positions. Their only real interest is in the honor of that position, though. Not in the true source of spiritual authority. And the

true source of spiritual authority was standing right in front of them. Not only that, but what he was teaching was the source of authority. They were uninterested in that. They're interested in honor, in title, in power, in influence.

What's Jesus teaching? Like we've said before, he's teaching from the law and the prophets. He's expounding the word of God. The first five verses, that we went through in this chapter, that gives really a hint, of Jesus, what Jesus' teaching must have been like, incredibly insightful. He made profound observations of the text illuminating what was clearly written on the page. But what is hidden from us, because we are sometimes so dull of seeing, and hard of hearing, and hard of heart. It's difficult for us.

For him, no sin clouding his judgment, no weakness in his mental faculties, and so his observations of the text, his explanations must have been perfect. He exposed the true meaning of the text. He helped people see how the Bible is really meant to be applied to our lives. Showed people the true implications

of Scripture. Unleashed its power. That's what we tried to spend time doing last week.

Jesus had merely summarized an account from 1 Samuel 21. There in verses 3 and 4, but then he boldly asserted, going directly from that summary, he boldly asserted, in verse 5, an implication of that teaching that, the son of man is the Lord of the Sabbath. For us, we're like that's incredible, how, how did he get from 1 Samuel 21 to his Lordship over the Sabbath? How did those two things connect?

And we had to sort of reverse engineer what he said. Taking his summary and conclusion back into 1 Samuel 21, and understand how he got from there to here. Incredible power of insight into the word of God that he had. Think about it. To sit in his very presence. To, to, listen to him actually teach with your own ears. That would be nothing short of mind-blowing. We find evidence of that kind of reaction all through the gospels.

Matthew concluded the Sermon on the Mount with this summary. He recorded the reaction of the audience. He said this,

"When Jesus finished these sayings," The sermon on the mount, by the way, which we're going to get to Luke's version in just, well, a little while. But he said, "when Jesus finished these sayings, the crowds were astonished at his teaching. For he was teaching them as one who had authority, and not as their scribes."

So, you can imagine for the Pharisees who listened to Jesus on this occasion, and particularly for the scribes, the profundity of Jesus insight had to grate on their every last nerve of pride. There they were, sitting in seats of honor, listening to Jesus teach. And by the way, he's just a young man at this point in his early 30s. But his expositions of Scripture were crisp. They were clear, unencumbered with all the rabbinical citation, expert opinion. All these traditions just bold and plain elucidation of the text.

They'd spent their lives studying the word of God and come to the conclusions he had. They hadn't been able to make the observations he had. Rather than bow humbly before the authority of this unparalleled teacher, or at the very least, to

acknowledge, that what he taught was true. Bow humbly before the word itself. Their hearts were bent in a more sinister direction. Incredible hardness of heart, here.

They have no interest in hearing Jesus. No interest in hearing even the scripture that he was teaching, which they said that they honored. That is the way with religious hypocrites. They only love the honor. They only love positions of influence. They love what religion gives them. They have no interest in submitting themselves to the standard of authority that's above them. Luke wants us to see that, right off the bat. He doesn't waste any time. But he exposes us to the heart of Jesus opponents, because he wants us to see something else. He doesn't want us just to see their heart. He wants to see how Jesus handles what is really, a set up here.

Here, it's as if they're trying to ambush Jesus, and we're going to see how Jesus handles himself in this bit of conflict. How he really turns this ambush on its head. Turns the table on his opponents. So here he is, Jesus, in a crowded synagogue, he's engaged, as he always is, in teaching the word of God. He's

being watched carefully, like a hawk, by his opponents. Luke presents the situation in some pretty mild non emotive terms.

Here he says, "A man was there, whose right hand was withered." That's it. Term withered in the ESV or literally means dry, as, as, if without fluids. It's like it's shrunken. You might consider a grape and then a, a, raisin. You know it's shrunken. It's shriveled. It's deformed. And it's lying useless on the end of his arm, paralyzed. As far as we can tell here, there's no indication that it's a life-threatening deformity. He is there after all, listening, but Luke does give us a detail that should elicit just a little bit of our sympathy. It was his right hand that was deformed. None of the other gospel writers' points that out. But remember, Luke is a physician. It's a profession in which it's very important to tell right from left, especially when it comes to surgery or amputation.

The right side, though, is a favored side in those days based on right side dominance. That's pretty predominant among human beings. Right hand dominant, right eye dominant. It's an important factor when you're organizing say a fighting force.

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You wanna put all your right-handed people, right eye dominant people in one part, and you wanna put your left-handed people in another platoon.

When you're organizing a work crew. Any other situation in a pre-technological world, right-hand, left-hand division is important and the right side was favored in this society. It symbolized the position of honor. To sit at the right hand of someone in authority meant you were sitting in an honored place. And you'll note that that's where we always find Jesus pictured, as sitting right now, at the right hand of the Father. Symbolizes for us that Jesus is the strength of the Father. He's on the father's dominant side. He is what you might call the business end of the Father's will.

So, to be without strength on the right side, this man's ability to work, to earn a living, very likely his wage-earning capability was significantly hindered. So, to restore his right hand, it very likely meant restoring the man to gainful employment. So, not only would healing his hand remove a social stigma that he felt every time people saw that hand. But in a

very practical way, it could mean restoring his opportunity to provide for his family.

It was sad to have a paralyzed hand, but as we said, it was by no means a life-threatening disability, at least as far as we know, right? He could use his left hand to beg for food, or so the Pharisees thought. And that's the very point on which Jesus here is tested. Would he heal a non-life-threatening condition on the Sabbath? Because engaging in medical work like straightening out deformed limbs and such, it was universally recognized, in that day, as a clear violation of the principle of the Sabbath.

It was a non-life-threatening issue, so his healing could wait. Honor the Sabbath. Don't heal that guy. Wait. But he's begging with his left hand. It's okay. God's day is more important; onto the Sabbath, that's the accepted view. Rabbinical tradition had been reinforcing this attitude for a long, long time. One commentator notes, "Sabbath regulations could be overridden only in cases of endangerment to life.

Otherwise, the various schools of Judaism were agreed that the Sabbath must be fully upheld.”

First aid was deemed permissible to prevent an injury from worsening, but efforts toward a cure were regarded as work, that must await the passing of Sabbath. A withered hand was non-life-threatening and thus did not qualify as an exception to Sabbath rules. Rabbinic tradition, in fact, forbade quote “straightening a deformed body or setting a broken limb on the Sabbath,” end quote. Interesting.

The scribes and the Pharisees watched him, verse 7, to see whether he was going to perform this healing. Which is an unlawful work on the Sabbath. Watched him. It's a mild expression there. It's a mild way, really, of translating that verb *paratereo*, which actually is stronger than just watched him. They watched him very closely. They watched him intently. They observed him very carefully.

But at the same time, this hints at an insidiousness here. It's a malicious observation, but it's a watching out of the

corner of the eye. It's not staring him down. It's, watch, watching surreptitiously, to kind of pretend like you're looking in one direction, but seeing is he gonna do it? Is he gonna do it? They're literally, these scribes and Pharisees, religious leaders, here, they're lying-in wait for him.

It's like they're waiting for an unsuspecting victim to walk into their trap as we read earlier, David was facing in Psalm 57. They want him to walk into an ambush that they've constructed here. Which is inescapable, and they're acting with stealth, craftiness. They're hidden behind rocks and they're looking up. Is he gonna do it? Intending to do him harm.

There are times when small military units have to patrol in some pretty nasty territory. They can sometimes find themselves ambushed by the enemy. They're cut off in a good ambush. They're cut off from going right or left. They're cut off even from returning in the way they came in. And sometimes the only way out of an ambush is to go through the ambush. So, the squad stands up, in bravery. Stand up in a line. They present a unified front. They point their weapons at the

ambushing enemy, and they start firing their weapons at the enemy, as they walk toward the enemy. For them it is kill or be killed. Jesus is facing such a situation here.

Penned in by the enemy. What's he gonna do? Some commentators have even suggested that this ambush, that the scribes and Pharisees planted here. They, they, they, think that the man was planted. This man with the withered hand is a plant in the synagogue, because they know that Jesus is gonna do what he always does. He's gonna have that dreadful compassion that violates Sabbath lawfulness. You know he's not gonna hesitate to heal a withered hand. They got him. I'm not sure if that's provable one way or another. It's an interesting thought, though.

If it's true, it takes their deviousness up another notch. Doesn't it? But it's enough to know here that Jesus is walking into a situation that's been set up. And whether we consider this as set up by human design or not, we do know that God set this up, didn't he? He providentially brought this man with a

deformed hand into the synagogue that day. Because God had a point to make, about the Sabbath.

It is God's will here for Jesus to show everyone what true Sabbath observation looks like. That it is a day for rest. And a day for performing acts of mercy. And in an ironic reversal here, God intended to turn this ambush around and to expose these hypocrites for who they really are, as everyone can see their hearts on display. For his part, Jesus, he simply saw a need. He's compelled here by a compassion to heal. He knows their hearts. He goes forward anyway. And before healing the man, Jesus went on the offensive. He spotted that ambush. He saw it. He rose up and took aim at his opponents.

And that takes us to our second point, which we will call, the interrogation. The interrogation, verse 8. But he knew their thoughts. They didn't count on that. "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." First, notice the difference, here, between Jesus' way of operating and their way of operating.

Notice the difference between true leaders and false leaders. Jesus is bold. He's confident. He's outspoken. He's up front. Religious leaders here, they're devious. They're hidden. They keep everything bottled up. They don't tell you what they really think. They'll talk about it in dark corners, oh, but not in your presence.

Look at the word, thoughts, there. It's the word, *dialogismos*. It's talking about their internal reasonings. It's talking about hidden thoughts. These men are sneaky, and their motives are hidden. Their conversations are held in secret. Private meetings held far from the public eye. Their actions in public, they look pious, right? They look gentle, peaceful, mild, but they're furtive and stealthy. Jesus, by what he does here, totally blows the lid off of their stealth, when he tells the man, "Stand up."

Literally, Jesus said to the man, "Come and stand here." He's right in the middle. Right in the midst of the people. Says literally, come and stand in the midst, right in the middle. And

the, the, scribes and the Pharisees don't know it yet, but they're little ambush has not only failed, but they're about to be the victims of another ambush coming right at them. They're about to receive two well placed, well targeted rounds, fired at them.

Jesus is now ambushing them, and he's gonna use compassion. He's going to use the healing of deformity. Which in God's army is called, overwhelming the enemy with superior firepower. They have no idea what's about to hit them. I believe, in contrast to some commentators, who have suggested that this man's involved in a plot to trap Jesus here. I don't believe that. I, I, believe this poor man has come to hear Jesus. I believe he's come to receive healing.

If you wanted, if he was part of the plot, when he's exposed, he would have probably just run out of the synagogue. I think he came that day hoping to find mercy. There's actually a very early tradition that tells us that the man was a stone mason and he'd been reduced to begging, for want of the use of his right hand. It's probably impossible to confirm the

legitimacy of that story, but it does show a prevalent, and a very early view, that this man was, in no way conspiring with the Pharisees here. But he's there in good faith.

I think the text bears that out. There was never a lack of people who sought healing from Jesus. The Pharisees knew that, so they spotted a needy soul, followed him into the synagogue, took their seats, and watched. Sat back patiently. They watched, they waited, and they were ready to pounce at the first hint of Jesus, unrestrained compassion and mercy, to break out and to heal. Ah, but on the Sabbath.

Jesus, could he have catered to their Sabbath traditions here? Could he have just restrained his compassion, just for, just for a few hours? Maybe do it later. I mean, he didn't need to, need to perform a Sabbath healing, did he? Couldn't he have just healed a little bit later? Nothing obligated him to heal this man right there and then. Was he truly trapped in an ambush that he couldn't get out of except by healing the man? What do you think? I've set it up in a way that you know the answer.

Okay, look at verse 9, again. Jesus stops teaching. He knows the thoughts of the scribes and the Pharisees, and he takes note of this pitiable condition of this man, withered right hand, and instead of waiting until the lesson is over, he stopped. He called the man to stand up, come forward, stand in the middle of the synagogue. Every eye is on him. People know something is about to happen, so they're watching intently. Looking at Jesus. Looking at this man. They're waiting. What's gonna happen? You can cut the tension here with a knife, and Jesus said to them.

Notice he says to them, plural. All of them. I ask you. Plural. "Is it lawful on the Sabbath to do good or to do harm, to save life or to destroy it?" Is it lawful? Is it lawful? Jesus is not here talking about the scripture. He's not asking is it biblical. Is this in accord with the law of Moses or the teachings of the prophets? He's asking if their laws, if their oral traditions, those human additions to those so-called elucidations to the scripture, are they going to make room for the true intent of the Sabbath or not?

Will their definition of lawfulness allow them to use the Sabbath for the good of mankind? To provide for physical rest and spiritual refreshment. Will their lawfulness allow them to save a life? What's more in keeping with true lawfulness; to heal this man or to let him wait until tomorrow. By asking the question that way, he's just cornered his critics. It's a brilliant question. Polarizing contrast. Is it good or is it evil? Is it lawful to save or to destroy?

He doesn't leave them any wiggle room here whatsoever. No shades of gray, stark black and white. You think, wow, waiting a few hours to heal the guy, is that really harm? Is it really evil? Is it really destroying his life? It's called antithetical thinking, here. It's looking at the world through a lens of contrast. Through a lens of thesis and antithesis. Notice how often the Bible calls us to think that way. Were to separate between the clean and the unclean, between the righteous and the righteous, between the holy and the profane, between truth and error, between light and darkness.

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We're called to put all of humanity in one box or another, aren't we? Categories of redeemed or unredeemed, saved or lost, children of God or children of wrath, saints or sinners. The more we grow in Christ, the more we see the world in those stark terms. And that's exactly the way our lord thought of the world and thought of people. As we see throughout his life and ministry, and by this very question, he thinks of the world in terms of contrast.

"Is it lawful on the Sabbath to do good or to do harm, to save life, or to destroy it?" He's asking at the very least: Why delay healing this man, if I can do good right now? Even more than that, the nature of his penetrating question consists, as one commentator put it, "in representing good omitted, as evil committed." That's an interesting way to put it, isn't it? A good omitted is really an evil committed. Is there biblical justification for that? Yes, there is. To heal on the spot is to do good. To delay healing him, at this particular moment, is to do harm or to do evil. There's no guarantee on tomorrow. You don't presume that he's gonna be around at tomorrow. Heal him now.

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Frederik Godet poses the question that becomes immediately to our minds. It may be asked, Could he not have put off the care, the cure until the next day? Could he not have done that? To this question he would have given the same answer as to any one of us. Tomorrow belongs only to God. Only today belongs to me. Do you think like that? I know sometimes I don't. I asked the question, is there biblical justification for this view. For thinking like this, that if you're able to show mercy now, you should show mercy now.

Jesus looked back to a principle of Solomon, Proverbs 3:28, "Do not say to your neighbor, 'Go and come again and tomorrow I will give it.' when you have it with you." Jesus had it with him. He had what none of us had. He had the supernatural power to heal his neighbor right then and there. And so, not only was, it, it was appropriate, but it was right. Notice the difference? It's not just acceptable, it's righteous for him to do that act, right then and there.

The epistle of James says it, this way. James 4:17, "Whoever knows the right thing to do and fails to do it, for him

it is a sin." So, we ask, was Jesus truly boxed in, in this situation? Absolutely he was. For him, he's committed to righteousness. For him, he is not gonna sin. So, it's not enough to simply go around and try to avoid doing harm. It's not okay to postpone showing mercy.

The spirit of the law, the heart of God himself, is this: God wants his people to actively seek to do good. To be aggressive in showing mercy and compassion for others in need. Beloved, I wish that our church would be known for being, you know, that's a church that it's aggressive in showing mercy. I mean, if you've got a need, you can't hide it from that church. Man, they are after you. Wouldn't that be awesome?

That's what God would have. That's what Jesus is after here. That's what he illustrated next, as he takes action. We've seen the situation. We've seen the interrogation, a third point; the action. Jesus fired two bullets from his rifle. Asking two well aimed, deeply penetrating questions. What was the response there? You see it written? I don't either. They didn't respond. They were silent. Neither the religious leaders nor anyone else

in the synagogue that day dared to respond to Jesus questions of interrogation.

And so, in verse 10, Jesus spoke to the man, but only after looking around at them all. Jesus gave the entire room, and particularly those religious leaders, he gave them plenty of time to respond. He gave'm plenty of time, by looking around, all around the room. Gave'm plenty of time to give a rebuttal to explain the lawfulness of this delay in compassion.

We, no, no, we understand here why the crowd didn't respond. I mean, after all, they feel like they're sitting on the sidelines. It's okay. I'm just watching this little debate take place. It's awesome. I like to have a sideline seat, because I can judge without actually getting involved. Nah. They're accountable for what they are seeing; they're accountable for what they're hearing, for what they're about to witness, though they don't know it exactly, they're in the game.

Everybody who observes Jesus and hears his teaching is accountable for what he says, what he does, who he is. For the

religious leaders, though, the fact that they didn't answer, unforgivable. It's a clear mark of their utter condemnation that they kept their mouths shut. This is nothing less than self-incrimination on their part. They are the ones, after all who are accusing Jesus, in their minds, even in their speech.

Another gospel shows that they actually verbally asked the question. They're the ones accusing him of unlawfulness on the Sabbath, and so they've, if they had anything to say, this is the time to say it. Nah, they prefer to keep their criticisms quiet for the time being.

At their heart, they're cowards. They didn't dare expose their thoughts. Their hidden reasonings to public scrutiny, because if they did, their sinful thinking would be revealed in their cold, and unloving, and unmerciful hearts. All that would be fully exposed, if they truly dared to answer, and get into this debate with Jesus.

As Edwards rightly says, "The religious authorities are not only willing to tolerate the lamentable condition of another

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human being, but to use it as leverage against Jesus." Can you imagine? It's pretty ugly, isn't it? That level of hardness of heart is, it's really hard to imagine this, especially if you lived in that day, especially if you knew these guys personally. I'm sure all these men were good, moral, upstanding, family-oriented guys. They're grandfathers. They got grandchildren running around their legs, and they're picking them up, and hugging them, and kissing them. They're generous. They give to their community. They're strong financial backers of the synagogue. They're contributors to the good of the community and society.

They're guys you'd like to have live next door to you. They'd be men that you look up to. That you respect in the community. But hidden beyond all that, is something that only Jesus can see. Down in the depths of their hearts, there lurked a monstrous pride, and seeped out, here, in this utter lack of concern, to see this poor man whole again. To actually use him as bait to entrap Jesus. It's unbelievable.

They want to prey upon the sorrow of this man. Use him as bait to trap him, rather than begging Jesus, heal him. Utterly shocking that these men, seeming pillars of the Jewish community, could have hearts that Philip Ryken rightly identified as loveless, merciless, and cruel. But that's exactly what it is.

When Luke describes Jesus looking around here. It's, it's, rather tame in comparison to what Mark tells us. Mark tells us in Mark 3:5, that "Jesus looked around at them with anger, grieved at their hardness of heart." And you can see why. He's seeing the pillars of the community, the respected members, that everybody looks to, and everybody follows, and everybody says, Oh yeah, those are the guys to follow. That's the way you live your life. That's what you do. And he's looking. He's just grieved at that. Why are you following them?

No matter how pleasant and kind, false religion appears on the surface, God knows the heart. What he sees is not pleasant, at all. It's grievous, insidious, malicious, cruel, and that is not an overstatement. Their murderous intent is going to become

even more apparent in a moment. But for now, let's just turn the page just a little bit and look at this from a different angle. Because what we really want to rejoice in, as believers here, is the part of the story that shows this compassionate righteous course of action, that Jesus takes, on this particular Sabbath.

"Jesus," as, Ryken says, "does not use people for ulterior purposes." He saw this man as a man. He saw this man, as a man in need. He cared. He had compassion. Look at verse 10 again. "After looking around at them all," and he's got that dealt with, he said to the man, he said to him, "stretch out your hand. He did so, and his hand was restored." It's brief.

But this interplay between Jesus and this unnamed man with a withered hand is absolutely beautiful. This guy's come to Jesus. He believes Jesus has the power, the will to heal him. You know how hard it is for someone with a deformity to stand up in public? To be made the center of attention and expressly for the purpose, not of hiding the deformity, but of revealing it.

In a crowded synagogue, in the presence of all these visiting dignitaries, people of honor, the presence of this famous teacher and healer, this man's tendency would have been to retract his withered hand. To hide it in the folds of his robe. You didn't want people looking at it.

Many Jews, at this time, would have considered this guys' condition to be the judgment of God. A withered right hand must mean that, I mean, God could have withered his left hand, right? But it's his right hand, so it must have been because of some serious hidden sin, and God is exposing it by judging him with this malady. Sin's bad enough that God wants him kept from working effectively. Humbled down to begging. Whoo, must be something really, really bad. That's how they thought.

But this man, verse 8, when Jesus said, "Come stand here." He pushed past that stigma. He pushed past the sense of public embarrassment and shame to obey the voice of Jesus Christ. Beloved, that's what we all have to do, isn't it? We gotta despise the shame and come humbly before the cross. When Jesus commands, we obey. We don't care what people think.

This guy's in the middle of a crowded synagogue. He, had, does not care, because there's one commanding his conscience. The man obeyed again, in verse 10, when Jesus said, "Stretch out your hand." The tense of the command there directed him to, stretch it out all the way, full length. Been a long time since he'd done that. Perhaps his whole lifetime, since he'd stretched out that shriveled hand. He'd been accustomed, as I said, to keeping it hidden within the folds of his garment. So, to take it out, to reveal that hand, and to stretch it out, is, here, an act of faith.

He trusted Jesus here and in faith he obeyed. And in one of the Bible's many understatement that says, "he did so and his hand was restored." Wouldn't you like, a little bit more detail? Some kind of like CGI effect, that we could see as this thing's kind of coming to life again? Be really cool, but doesn't tell us that. Because we're not supposed to focus on that complete and total restoration, to the normal condition, normal function, normal usefulness.

We're not supposed to just focus on the miracle itself, but what the miracle meant. And I love it, but even though this man here is called up to the front. He's placed in the middle. He isn't standing there exposed and alone, is he? Jesus stood with him. He's not alone. And he's not exposed either. In his shame, Jesus covered his former shame with healing grace. It's the way it is for us. When Jesus asked those two questions, verse 9, he not only put the scribes and the Pharisees in a corner, but he cornered himself as well.

Jesus had only one way to go in this situation, in this ambush, and it's forward. So, by healing this man on the Sabbath, right under the noses of the Jewish leadership, Jesus knew that it would lead to his own demise physically. These guys are not going to be happy, and Jesus knows that. He knows what's going to happen, that this does not bode well for his physical safety later on.

We know from verse 11, they're completely resolved to destroy him, but Jesus does not hesitate. Jesus does not equivocate. He doesn't pull back. He doesn't hedge his bets. He

doesn't attempt to find some kind of acceptable compromise here. He's bold. He's fearless. He's courageous. Not for his own sake, but for our sake. As one commentator put it, "Jesus tied his fate to that of the man with a shriveled hand. The Lord of the Sabbath gave a command. The man responded in obedient faith."

And that meant that Jesus and this man, you know what, they're linked together now. They are inseparable, they are united, they are of one mind. Here is faith and the one who provides. They're together right here in the company of this hostile crowd. Even under the malicious scrutiny of the religious hypocrites, this man is not afraid. He's in the company of Jesus. Psalm 23:5, that's what it means when it says, "You prepare a table before me in the presence of my enemies."

Who sits down in the middle of danger, surrounded by the Taliban and sits down and has a little bit of a banquet? Nobody. You wanna take care of the threat first and then you eat. So confident was David in Psalm 23, that the Lord was his shepherd, and so confident is this man in the presence of his great shepherd. No wounded sheep has need to fear. Look, we need to

stop and reflect on that. Very important point, devotional point for us to ponder.

When we go back to what Jesus told his hometown crowd in the synagogue in Nazareth, remember? Remember what he said on that day, was fulfilled in their hearing. It was that text from Isaiah 61:1 and 2, "God has sent me, Jesus said. To proclaim liberty to the captives and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty those who are oppressed, and to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor." Remember after he read that he rolled up the scroll, he gave it back to the attendant, sat down and said, "That scripture has been fulfilled in your hearing." He came to proclaim liberty, but also to set at liberty the captives, the blind, and the oppressed.

In this text, here, we find out more fully what that meant for him. Jesus' commitment to heal them: Captives, the blind, the oppressed. That meant it would cost him his very life. Jesus is in very real, very literal danger for healing this man. He knew that, even when he did it. We can see, here, still very early in his earthly ministry, the foreshadowing of Jesus'

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ultimate demise by linking himself to this man and, get this, by linking himself to us, he's entered into our suffering. He has fulfilled the punishment due for our sins by dying on the cross. That's how he came to proclaim and perform healing, to heal his people from their sins.

Beloved, because he tied his fate to ours, he's absorbed the very wrath of God himself. He has taken the punishment that we deserve. We are forgiven, because he's committed to this union. Not only that, but because he tied himself to us, we are eternally privileged to be united with him forever. We will receive the just reward that he earned, not that we earned, but that he earned, because of his faithful total obedience to the father. Isn't that fantastic? That is the very definition of grace.

Well, Jesus' action, his interrogation exposed something very ugly in the Pharisees. It was that the religion and their hearts devoid of love. They're the chief watchdogs and guard dogs of this false religion, that's paraded itself and presented

itself as true religion. It's not true. Jesus blows the lid off of that.

Notice how they react, fourth point: the reaction. This is verse 11. Sad and perplexing words here. They were filled with fury. Discussed with one another what they might do to Jesus. If you look back at the first question Jesus asked them in verse 9, he said, "Is it lawful on the Sabbath to do good or too do harm?" That question is directed really, you might say, to the whole synagogue, but also to them, but it's, it's, talking about the deformed man. He's at the center of that question.

But the second question, "Is it lawful on the Sabbath to save life or to destroy it?" That question is more properly aimed directly at the murderous hearts of the scribes and the Pharisees. It's another irony, isn't it? It's ironic that they're, here they are, and they're predetermined to condemn Jesus for violating the Sabbath day by working.

It's hard to identify at what point Jesus actually exerted himself in work. Commanding the man to stretch forth his arm.

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But nonetheless, I mean, this guy's the one who did the work, right? He stretched his hand. Jesus is going to be condemned for working. Okay. They want to condemn him though, so they can do away with him. And so they do that and while he shows his heart, his desire to save a life on the Sabbath; right here, their hearts are revealed, as well.

They are ready to destroy a life, his life, and they're doing it on the Sabbath. Just a little bit ironic, isn't it? And more to the point, it is the very essence of religious hypocrisy that they condemn others for doing what they themselves do. Here they are with murderous intent and they're determined to find evidence to destroy his life. And they're doing so on the Sabbath, the holy day. Ironic, hypocritical, but that is the blindness of false religion and all their chief exponents.

Notice it says there, "They're filled with fury." Filled is a word, it's referring to being gripped by. They're under the influence of, totally given over to the control of their fury. The word translated, fury, is the word, *anoia*. *Anoia*. I know it sounds like annoyed, but I don't think the etymology is actually

connected. Could be. But *anoia*, it's the word for mind, which is *nous*. And then an alpha privative that's prefixed to the front of it literally, not *minous*, not mind. They're out of their mind, basically. It's a word that's translated usually as foolishness. Here, in this context, it's showing these guys are foolish, not just, being fools and frivolous, but fools with anger.

They're seething with rage and perhaps a better term would be to translate this, madness. Because in this context, it really gets to the point. They've departed from their senses here. They're swept up in an irrational anger. Why is that? Because, based on the evidence that they're here compiling, to condemn Jesus and his ministry. Here it is.

I'm just gonna briefly summarize the evidence against Jesus that they had in their minds. Number one, he ignored, studied rabbis to violate oral tradition that he might do good on the Sabbath. Evidence number one: Guilty. Number two, he touched lepers and he communed with tax collectors and sinners. Okay, number two he's guilty of that, too, isn't he? Number

three, he had the audacity to exercise a divine prerogative by forgiving sins. Guilty as charged on all three counts.

The evidence that they'd seen here, on this basis they wanna kill him. They don't wanna understand him. They don't wanna figure it out. They don't wanna say, hey, where have I gone wrong in my thinking? Kill him. And everything they had come to believe about him was sealed in their very presence when Jesus healed this man with a withered hand. They found all of this sufficient, not to worship him, as they should. But to justify their own wicked intent to destroy him, and the plot is hatched on the Sabbath. It's an irony of grave proportions. It's proof that the religious authorities were truly *anoia*, out of their minds.

So, in situation, the interrogation, the, the action and reaction we see to Jesus here, the son of man, as he is exercising his prerogatives on the Sabbath day, as lord of the Sabbath, that's what we see. We see that Jesus is a dividing line. He's received one way by those who are humble of heart. Who recognize their own sin and grieve over their sin. When they

come to Jesus in this condition and they say, I want to identify with you, and I will stand in public, exposed to the mocking world. I'll stand with you because being with you, I'm never alone. And being with you, I am never ashamed. And being with you, I'm never exposed, but I'm covered. That's the heart of every believer.

But he's a dividing line because the very same Jesus that melts the wax, it hardens the clay, doesn't it? So, this very same Jesus that melts the believing heart, he also hardens the heart of the outwardly pious, but the truly impious. He hardens the Pharisee's heart, the, the, wicked heart. The religious heart that takes pride in position, and honor, and respect, and title.

So, we bring this little series to a close. This section of scripture to a close. I just want to take a few minutes to consider the implications for us to today. On this issue of the Sabbath, we've been talking about the fact that Jesus did not abrogate the Sabbath, that he's lord over it. He cares very

deeply about the Sabbath and otherwise, he wouldn't take the position in the honor title as Lord of the Sabbath.

So, the fifth and final point in your outline. It's important how we think about, the, how the Lord of the Sabbath would command our behavior on this day, his day, which we now rightly call the Lord's Day.

Number five in your outline, the implications. What are the implications for us Christians living 2000 years after these events? Half a world away. No longer under the law of Moses, but now under the law of Christ. First, I think we need to honor the Sabbath principle by honoring the Lord's Day.

At the most obvious, most basic level, it means we need to prioritize church attendance by attending church regularly. Why is that important? Because our savior has been given the honor of being called Lord of the Sabbath, and it's our joy to honor him by honoring his Sabbath day principle on the Lord's Day.

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Sabbath, as we said, goes all the way back to creation week. Finishes off the six days of creation work, with a day of rest. God set that day apart not because he needed a break, because he knew we did. He wants it to be for our good, for our rest, and that we should treat this day as holy. Commanded Israel about it, on the Sabbath day, for them to observe it.

And so, we look back to Israel, and we see the pattern there, and we say, hey, it was very important for Israel. In fact, God told the prophet Ezekiel he wanted Israel to, quote, "keep my Sabbaths holy," that they may be a, "that they may be a sign," that is the Sabbaths may be a sign, "between me and you, and that you may know that I, the Lord, am your God."

God wants us to know him by observing this principle, and so by regularly attending worship, we learn. That's what this is about. We learn about our God. We learn about who he is. We learn what he's like. We study him, and we rejoice, and we worship. So that means you just need to order your week in such a way that you're ready for Sunday. Don't be out too late on Saturday nights. Get good sleep. Make sure your family's ready.

You moms, maybe even make sure that the kids' clothes are all set out for the next day, or teach them to do that. Order your life in such a way that you're not packing everything into the weekend. Busying yourself with so many things that you neglect the Sabbath day or the Sabbath principle. Manage your work. Your responsibilities in such a way that Sundays are priority. Clear the deck for the Lord's Day, Hebrews 10:25 says, "We're not to neglect meeting together," as is, "as is the habit of some, but we're to be encouraging one another all the more as you see, the day drawing near."

And you all say to me, hey, we're, Travis, we're here. Why are you preaching to the choir here? I get it. Okay, so here's your charge, if you know someone who's not attending church regularly, go out and get them. Get'em in here. I see a few empty seats left and Rod, can we put out more chairs? We can put out more chairs. Get'em here. They need to hear this teaching from the word of God, every single week, because they need to worship God. They need to know the Lord.

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So, encourage them back into regular church attendance. Talk about him to, or talk not, not, about them, that would be gossip. Don't do that on the Sabbath day either. Talk to them about, why it's so important to get back into church. So, they can know the Lord. So, they can learn the word of God with the saints of God. Serve the body of Christ. So that's one implication. Observe the Sabbath day. Keep it holy or the Lord's Day, Sunday.

Here's another. Second, know that the priority of the Sabbath day, it is important. It is to be kept as holy, but it is not an inviolable moral law that can never ever, ever, be set aside. That is to say, if you don't attend church once, one Sunday, because of whatever reason. You're not in violation. We're not going to come after you with a troop of elders and temple guards coming down your, breaking down your door, grabbing you out of bed, where you are slumbering peacefully, because you're sick. And rip you out of your rest. Not gonna do that.

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It's not an inviolable moral law, and that's what Jesus said when, or meant when he said, "The Sabbath was made for man, not the man for the Sabbath." It's to be honored as a holy day. But there are times when we can't absolutely be at rest on the Lord's Day, right? After all, God continues to work on the Sabbath day as well. And Jesus pointed to his Father's continuing activity on that Sabbath day, as justification for his healing on the Sabbath day.

Even in a more dubious situation, that Jesus brought up about David, with Ahimelech, the priest. Jesus recognized an exception that was made for David, and yet David remained guiltless. Jesus told the Pharisees, Matthew 12:5, and his version of this account, "Have you not read in the law how on the Sabbath the priests in the temple profane the Sabbath and are guiltless?"

So, if the priests of old worked on the Sabbath day and they're guiltless, I guess you could put pastors today, who work on the Lord's Day, likewise without guilt, right? I think that would include everyone who does church work on Sundays, whether

they're paid for it or not. Sunday school, people, who, do, doing worship, and all that makes sense. There are other, they're works of necessity that have to do with the ordering of the worship in the Lord's Day. Works of necessity that are permitted.

Other works as well, permitted on the Sabbath Day. Law enforcement falls into that category and immediately comes to mind and always comes to mind. Military service, same thing. You might include a certain emergency services, as well. Romans 13:6 called the civil authorities ministers of God, which acknowledges, among other things, that these folks can work to keep us safe, so we can worship on Sundays. Amen.

The confession we've posted on our website refers to these folks as civil magistrates. The confession freely admits it's lawful and good for Christians to accept and execute that office, and they do so for the sake of maintaining justice and peace, which is for our sakes. We could wish the criminals didn't commit crimes on Sundays, thereby violating the Lord's

Day. But Sabbath observance for them, they've sadly already transgressed other barriers by becoming criminals.

It's part of the bargain. They said, okay, I'm gonna be a criminal with my life, so, yeah, I'm gonna have to let the Sabbath go. So, they don't feel bound in their consciences about doing crimes while we're in church. Well, we're going to give thanks for God providing law enforcement personnel, who protect us and keep us safe, while we're here in church. We're not gonna be pious about, hey, why don't you get shifts off on the Sabbath? I mean praise God if they can get shifts on the Sabbath or shifts off on the Sabbath, that's awesome. Look, don't condemn.

Third, in addition to prioritizing the Lord's Day for worship. Make sure that you are also committed to doing good and mercy. As we said here, as we see Jesus doing, do it aggressively. Find ways to show mercy. Find ways to minister to other people. Do not be self-centered. That is a clear violation of a Sabbath principle. It's a clear violation of what we see here.

Jesus didn't say, you know, it's the Sabbath day of rest. I don't wanna expend a bunch of power by healing your hand. Can you come back? I mean Monday. Come on. No. Got football to watch. You know, just turn off the football game and go help somebody. Right? Don't hide out in a holy enclave, avoiding people in need. Look out for those who need help. Your help, not somebody else's help. Your help.

I like how Phillip Ryken said this when he wrote, "Some Christians are like the Pharisees." I've been guilty of that before, haven't you? "Always looking for some religiously justifiable way to avoid getting involved in other people's problems. They secretly think that people who have a drug addiction, or get an abortion, end up in prison, join the gay lifestyle, or contract aids are getting what they deserve, and therefore, that they themselves are off the hook, as far as getting personally involved."

But Christ calls us to have a heart of compassion. And as the Lord of the Sabbath, he's given us a day to show mercy. A

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day for helping people in need. You see people who are struggling because of their own sins and you look down your nose and say, I'm not gonna help that. I mean, you know I'm just enabling. You know they got themselves into that condition, because after all they're criminals or whatever.

Now they got themselves in their condition because they're in the same condition that you are; sinner in need of grace. We need to look for opportunities to serve other people. Proverbs 3:28 says, "Do not say to your neighbor, go come again tomorrow. I'll give it to you, when you have it with you." You, like Jesus, who because he possessed the power to heal his neighbor, he healed his neighbor. The more we're like him, the more we'll be on the lookout for people in need, showing mercy, compassion, taking care of needs, ministering to others, encouraging, showing kindness.

Not only are those activities allowed on the Sabbath day or the Lord's Day, they're the true spirit of Sabbath rest. Treat the Sabbath day as holy. Don't condemn people who work on

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the Sabbath out of necessity. Do acts of mercy. That is how we submit to Jesus the Lord of the Sabbath, Amen. Let's pray.

Heavenly Father, thank you for clear teaching from this passage of scripture about your concern on the Sabbath. We do want to give ourselves, heart and soul, mind and body to following Jesus in this matter. He is remarkable, able to do things that none of us can do, but at the same time, he lays down an example, that we would follow in his steps.

We admit, every single one of us here, admits freely that we have not treated your day as holy. We haven't honored it as we should. We've been taught from a young age that it's not really that important. We're no longer under the law and so we don't, we don't take those principles from the law as important. We don't think about them very carefully.

And we confess our sin to you, father, and just ask you would forgive us. But we ask, also, that you would strengthen us. Empower us to truly understand, and obey, and live according to the principle of this Sabbath rest. That we would treat it as

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holy and attend to the services of the church, and attend to the ministry of the church, and give ourselves wholly and completely and cheerfully to it.