

Priorities: Rules or Restoration - Afflicting the Comfortable and Comforting the Afflicted
Luke 6:1-16

Biblical Insights/Background

1. One Sabbath/walking through the grain fields: according to the Law it was lawful for you to pick heads from your neighbor's field but it was illegal to harvest on the Sabbath. Most probably, Jesus and his disciples were hungry and Jesus knew what they were doing was lawful. The Pharisees believed they were harvesting but how could they do that without proper tools?
2. Remember what David did (I Sam 21:1-6): he entered God's house and took the consecrated bread, eating what only the priests could eat, and he gave some to his companions. On both occasions Jesus and David godly men did forbidden things. It was also always lawful to do good and save life even on the Sabbath (Isaiah 58:6-7).
3. Verse 5: The Son of man is Lord of the Sabbath - Son of Man is Jesus' most common title for himself used 81 times in the gospels and never used by anyone but Jesus. In Daniel 7:13-14, the Son of Man is pictured as a heavenly figure who in the end times is entrusted by God with authority, glory and sovereign power. Jesus apparently used this title as a Messianic one. If Jesus saw himself as Messiah, he had the authority to overrule laws concerning the Sabbath, especially as interpreted by the Pharisees.
4. Healing on the Sabbath (vrs. 6-8): a healing story in the synagogue demonstrating Jesus' commitment to restoration rather than rule keeping, if those rules oppress and relegate those in need of healing to the margins of society. The Pharisees knew Jesus could heal, but would he do that on the Sabbath? Healing on the Sabbath was ok in Jewish tradition but only if a person's life was threatened.
5. Shriveled hand: is this man had leprosy, he would have been excluded from any association with others and lived outside the community. Jesus emphasized the God-given purpose of the sabbath which was a day made for people (spiritual, mental and physical restoration) Exodus 20:9-11. Jesus stands up in front of everyone to confront them all but they did not respond. Jesus deeply distressed and angry he said to the man, "Stretch out your hand" which he did and it was restored completely. Instead of people erupting with joy, the Pharisees go out and plot to kill Jesus.
6. Death plots: the decision to see Jesus dead was the result of several other incidents. Herodians were influential Jews supported Roman rule. Herodians joined the Pharisees in opposing Jesus because of the political implications on

the Jewish people. Notice how the opposition grows because they see Jesus forbidding worship of Caesar and leading the people astray - political charges.

7. Spent the night praying: apparently Jesus did this often before truly major decisions and actions.
8. Called his disciples: these men (inner circle) regularly followed him and were committed to his teaching and leadership. At least 72 men were included in his disciples since Jesus sent out many on an evangelistic campaign. The 12 had a special commission.

Questions for Discussion/Pondering

- A. When you were growing up, what rules did you think were stupid, unnecessary, restrictive, irrelevant? How do you view those rules now?
- B. Why do you suppose Jesus provoked the Pharisees on the Sabbath? He could have waited one day.
- C. What do you learn about the differences between Jesus and the formalized religion of his day? What are the implications for today?
- D. When have you felt the tension between obeying religious principles and doing what is necessary to help people through restoring them? What causes that tension?
- E. As you grow in your faith journey, are you becoming more committed to restoration and liberation for all, or more constrained by religious rules? Why and how?
- F. When is it appropriate and necessary to confront the "powers that rule" as Jesus did?
- G. If you see Jesus as the Messiah what does that mean for you?
- H. Does the ideal of keeping the Sabbath appeal to you? How?
- I. Are there those today who would like to see Jesus die or at least keep to himself? How about Jesus' followers?
- J. Do you ever spend long periods of prayer before making an important decision? How does that work for you?
- K. What are you commissioned to do?