

Message #22**Luke 6:1-11**

Dr. William Hendrickson, former professor of N.T. at Calvin Theological Seminary, once told the story of a pastor who woke up one Sunday morning and discovered that his home and driveway had been totally blocked by several huge snowdrifts.

His home was located relatively close to the church, however, he knew that there was no possible way that he could dig the car out and get to church on time. The church was located across an ice pond, so he decided the best thing to do was to put on a pair of ice skates and cross the pond.

Now apparently many of the members of the church lived in areas where they were able to get out and get to church and they arrived to church before the Pastor. One the way to church, one of the members spotted the Pastor skating across the pond and when he got to church he informed the board.

When the Pastor finally got to church, the board was furious because he had taken a joyride on ice skates across a pond on Sunday. The Pastor proceeded to explain that it was his only way to get to church and he figured in such brutal weather it was faster and safer to skate across the pond rather than walk. Well the board thought it over and decided not to make him the subject of public rebuke, as long as he would testify that he did not enjoy the skating trip across the pond.

To be sure, we are losing some of our sense of reverence for worship on the Lord's Day. The Apostle Paul predicted that as we near the coming of Jesus Christ, people who profess godliness, would be "lovers of pleasure more than lovers of God" (II Tim. 3:4). But how ridiculous it is for people to become so legalistic that they would actually be angered by the method their minister got to church in a blizzard.

Many years ago we taught a Bible study for five years in a home in Kalamazoo every Friday night. An older couple who attended it told me a story that one time he and his wife were headed home from church and decided to stop to get a bite to eat. They went into a nice, quiet restaurant and enjoyed their dinner, discussing the things of God, they had just heard. Later that afternoon, there was a knock at their door and there were a couple of board members. One of them had seen them pull into the restaurant and they tried to convince the couple they were in sin and this kind of thing would not be tolerated.

Not conforming to man-made regulations and rules has always bothered Pharisees. A Pharisee cannot stand it when his traditions are not followed. **For Pharisees, the authority is not the Bible; it is himself.** A Pharisee enjoys the power, he enjoys the attention, he wants the control. He is not really interested in the Biblical way; he is interested in his way. God totally detests the Pharisee.

Jesus Christ had many confrontations with Pharisees, and Dr. Luke goes right after that point. Jesus Christ would not give in to them and He did not back down from them. He was not about to concede to their man-made system of Pharisaical legalism. **The fact is, true Christlikeness will always antagonize and oppose religious Phariseism.** What we clearly see here is this:

JESUS CHRIST ANGERED THE PHARISEES BECAUSE HE WOULD NOT CONFORM TO THEIR MAN-MADE SABBATH DAY RULES AND RESTRICTIONS.

Jesus Christ would not play their religious games and He would not submit to their man-made codes and rules and that angered the Pharisees. Not only did Jesus Christ anger the Pharisees, they became hateful and hostile and wanted to destroy Him. Why? Why is it that they wanted to kill Him? Because Jesus Christ followed the Word of God and not them and their man-made rules.

This is a critical point to grasp. The key to this is knowing the Word of God and assessing religious activity in view of the Word of God.

In this passage there are two specific man-made Sabbath-Day violations that Christ became guilty and for which the Pharisees wanted Him dead:

MAN-MADE SABBATH DAY VIOLATION #1 – He ate out on the Sabbath Day. 6:1-5

The first thing Christ and His disciples did that really upset the Pharisees was to go out to eat on the Sabbath Day. They didn't even go to a restaurant; they went into a cornfield on a Sabbath Day to get something to eat (v. 1).

We are not sure what Sabbath this was. Some manuscripts would seem to suggest that this was some special Sabbath to the mind of the Pharisee. Pharisees are fanatical about their day observances. They even made some Sabbath's more important than others.

Now the Pharisees had come up with their own codes and lists about what one could and could not do on the Sabbath. Alfred Eidersheim, who has researched and written extensively on the subject, says, "no sane intellect would even consider all of the regulations" (*Life and Times of Jesus the Messiah*, p. 778). He believed one would need to be insane to try to follow all of their man-made codes.

What happened here is that Christ and His disciples were hungry. They had not been invited to anyone's home for dinner. They apparently did not have the ability or the availability to go to a nice restaurant, so they did what was perfectly legitimate and legal for a hungry wayfarer to do according to the O.T. law of God (Deut. 23:25); they went into a neighbor's field and picked some grain for food.

More than likely they were walking on some path that cut through grain fields and as they were walking, they picked some grain from the stalks by the edge of the field and were rubbing it in their hands to break it down so they could eat it.

The word “grain” (v. 1), is the Greek word from which we get our English word “stalk” (σταχυας). What this suggests is that they were picking some corn off the stalks and rubbing it in their hands so they could have something to eat.

Wouldn't you know some of the Pharisees were trailing Jesus and His disciples like a hound dog or some of their spies were trailing Him, and naturally they reported it to the Pharisees, who decided it was their religious job to confront it. These guys were watching Jesus Christ like a “hawk.” When they picked some grain on the Sabbath Day, they were not about to let that go.

There was absolutely nothing wrong with this in God's sight, however, this was a serious violation of Pharisaical rules and according to **verse 2**, they decided to confront Jesus Christ and His disciples for not following their rules.

The Jewish Talmud, which is the Jewish interpretation of the O.T. law, written somewhere near the days of Ezra (450-500 BC), taught that this act violated at least two Pharisaical laws: 1) Picking corn was equated with reaping corn on the Sabbath Day; 2) Rubbing corn was equated with sifting and threshing corn on the Sabbath Day.

The Mishnah, which is a collection and codification of Jewish rules and laws, which was a supplement to the O.T. from the 3rd-4th century B.C., which is considered to be the “official corpus” of Jewish oral law, came up with 39 rules that must be followed on the Sabbath Day.

I have examined those rules which cover four main areas: 1) Matters pertaining to Bread; 2) Matters pertaining to Garments; 3) Matters pertaining to Animal Hides; 4) Matters pertaining to construction.

For example, one of the rules in matters pertaining to construction was if your place caught on fire on the Sabbath Day, you were not to put it out, even if it meant your house or barn would burn down. The only thing you were allowed to do was to save a life. So if your house were on fire on the Sabbath Day, their rules were stand there and watch it burn.

When it came to picking some corn and eating it, these Pharisees considered this to be an act of work on the Sabbath Day. **The problem is there is no place in the Bible where God's law says it is a violation for one to eat something out in a field on the Sabbath Day. So what this turns out to be is not a violation of God's law or Word; it is a violation of a Pharisaical code, a man-made, man-invented rule.**

This is a critical lesson to learn about Phariseeism. Pharisees equate their opinions and rules and attitudes and lifestyle as being on the same scale as the Word of God.

The Pharisee equates himself and his righteousness rules as being equivalent with the Word of God. He elevates his views and opinions to the same level as the inspired Word of God.

Jesus Christ will clearly demonstrate that there is no violation of the true Word of God anywhere. But the Pharisees lose touch with Biblical reality and they actually think their traditions and rules and views are on the same level with that of the Word of God.

We are not far removed from this mindset today. I have known of Pharisees who say:

- 1) It is wrong to turn on the TV on Sunday.
- 2) It is wrong to eat out in a restaurant on Sunday.
- 3) It is wrong to let the children play outside on Sunday.
- 4) It is wrong to have a picnic on Sunday.
- 5) It is right to take a nap on Sunday.
- 6) It is right to eat pot roast on Sunday.
- 7) It is right to go for a drive in your car on Sunday, as long as you don't stop for gas.

There are so many problems with this kind of thinking. First, we don't worship God on the Sabbath Day, we worship on the first day of the week and we are free from the law. Second, there is no place in the Bible where it says you can't do those things.

In our old church north of Grand Rapids, there was an old retired Police officer that I really liked. I asked him how he came to faith in Jesus Christ. Grand Rapids was and is a very strict "Dutch-Reformed" area and it is steeped in Pharisaical legalism. Joe told me that he actually hated Christianity because as a police officer he was required to work on Sunday and the Reformed Pharisees opposed him and they actually told him that what he was doing was an abomination to God.

One day, Joe said he ran into the late Bible teacher, M. R. DeHaan, who at the time was pastor of Calvary Bible Church. Dr. DeHaan got talking with Joe and in the course of the conversation he told him that he was thankful that he was a police officer who worked on Sunday because if he didn't, the church would be afraid to collect offerings. That kind word based on true theology was the beginning of what ultimately led Joe to believe in Jesus Christ. Pharisaical legalism drove him away but the grace of God and truth of God brought him to Christ.

Well, Christ was not intimidated by these Pharisees who challenged Him and He gave them two rebukes:

Rebuke #1 - You Pharisees really don't read or know the Bible. **6:3-4**

Here is an important point to observe. Religious Pharisees really don't accurately read, study or know the Bible. What they study is their system of religion and its rules and laws and man-made dogmas.

In **verse 3**, Jesus really hits them and says haven't you read your Bible. This would cut them to the soul. What Jesus is actually saying here is you really don't know what you are talking about because you really don't know what the Bible actually says. In spite of all of your religious education and religious activity and self-righteous piety, the Pharisee does not accurately know the Bible and how to apply the Bible.

Then Jesus gets specific. He asks them have you ever read I Samuel? Have you ever read I Samuel 21:1-6 and 22:9-10? That was the place where David and his companions were very hungry and the priest gave him the bread to eat that only the Levitical priests were supposed to eat (Lev. 24:8-9). By using David and his companions, He is paralleling this story to Him and His disciples.

Actually that is an interesting text because when David asked for five loaves of bread, there were twelve loaves of bread, but David asked for five. Many suspect that this happened on the Sabbath Day because according to I Samuel 21:6, they had just removed the bread in order to put new bread on the table. It was typically changed once a week and according to rabbinic tradition, this bread was changed on the day of the Sabbath.

In using this illustration, Christ is really rebuking the Pharisees by saying God did not condemn the priests or David for violating a legitimate law of God and you Pharisees are condemning us for violating a law invented by men.

Pharisees are rigid and take a rigid approach to everything. For example, when a Pharisee reads "you shall not murder," Pharisees often use that verse as a basis for saying you should not serve in the military or even defend yourself if someone is trying to kill you. They are rigid legalists who don't understand the truth of the whole counsel of God.

This is the way Pharisees operate. They have their Bible and they talk about things and have their theological discussions, but they don't really know the Bible. They don't really know God's truth, they invent their own.

Rebuke #2 - You Pharisees really do not know the identity of Jesus Christ. **6:5**

Now I am sure some of these Pharisees are saying, who do you think you are to compare yourself to David? Jesus said I am way above David. Jesus Christ identifies Himself as "the Son of man." This is a Daniel Messianic deity title clearly given to the God/man (Dan. 7:13-14). This title not only establishes that Jesus Christ is God, but He is also the one who will one day take over the world and reign over all peoples and nations.

Jesus said to the Pharisees, you have no right to open your mouth because I am God and I am "Lord of the Sabbath." In other words, Jesus Christ is not regulated by their Sabbath day rules; the Sabbath Day is regulated by Him. Jesus Christ is who the Sabbath Day is all about. He is the One to whom worship was to be given.

This verse clearly establishes that Jesus Christ is the “Ancient of Days.” He is God!

Pharisees not only reject the authority of the Word of God, but they also reject the authority of Jesus Christ. Jesus Christ is not the Lord of a Pharisee’s life; the Pharisee is the Lord of his own life.

MAN-MADE SABBATH DAY VIOLATION #2 – He healed on the Sabbath Day. 6:6-11

Once again, Christ does something on a different Sabbath Day that infuriated the Pharisees. Christ did not back down from these Sabbath Day controversies.

Verse 6 clearly indicates that Christ did not back away from these people. He was in their synagogues and He was teaching the truth. That was primarily His ministry, preaching and teaching. The word “teaching” indicates this was not just random sharing; He was giving some form of systematic instruction.

On this specific Sabbath Day, Jesus spotted a man with a “withered” hand, which means it was shrunken because of some disease. Luke pointed out it was the man’s right hand that had been shrunken by a disease (G. Abbott-Smith, *Greek Lexicon*, p. 308).

According to **verse 7**, those Scribes and Pharisees were watching Him like a hawk. They were watching Him “closely.” They were trying to get something on Him so they could bring some legal charge against Him.

Dr. Luke was a medical doctor and he knew of some of the crazy medical things these guys had invented. According to the Pharisaical “code of medicine” (which indicates they had their hands in practically every area of life) it was legal to help someone on the Sabbath Day if it were a matter of life and death. Eidersheim said if a wall were to fall on a person on the Sabbath Day, you could dig them out and if you discovered they were alive you could keep on digging. But if you discovered they were dead, you had to leave the Body until the Sabbath day was over.

Well these Pharisees were in the synagogue and they saw this man with a withered hand and they were watching Christ to see what He would do.

Verse 8 says Christ knew what they were thinking; He is God. So He specifically knows what they are thinking and He specifically acts right in front of them. He was not intimidated by these religious frauds and He was not about to back down from them. These were dangerous religious vipers and Christ knew it. These guys are secretive, but Christ is right out in the open. So Christ said to the man to get up and come forward and the man did.

According to **verse 9**, Jesus asked a question to the Pharisees: “Is it lawful to do good or to do harm on the Sabbath Day; to save a life or destroy it? What Christ is really asking here is “Is it lawful on the Sabbath Day to do what I want to do for this man - heal him or to do what you want to do to Me - kill Me.” Christ knew their thoughts and He knew what they wanted to do.

Pharisees are hypocrites. They can go to church with hate and malice in their hearts because someone does not conform to their man-made rules. They can hate a person because they get some of the attention. Pharisees go to services, they give offerings, they sing hymns, they pray and they listen; but in their hearts there is nothing but hatred.

Verse 10 says that Christ looked at every one of them. He looked them straight in the eyes and then He asked the man to stretch out his hand, which he did and he was healed. This man was touched by Jesus Christ on the Sabbath Day and when Jesus asked him to do something on the Sabbath Day, he did it. That man responded to Jesus Christ and not to the rules of the Pharisees.

Verse 11 says the Pharisees were filled with rage and they started plotting to kill Jesus Christ.

This church will not be a comfortable place for Pharisees because frankly we won't follow their man-made rules and traditions. Our goal is to carefully and accurately understand the whole counsel of God.

Jesus Christ came to save sinners. In order to be saved from your sins, you need Jesus Christ in your life. Invite Him into your life and you will be saved.