

Luke has strung together a series of accounts of Jesus' authority. From the time of the rejection of that authority in Nazareth, one demonstration of His authority followed another (4:30). He commanded unclean spirits to leave (4:36, 41). He could order nature, such as the fish filling the nets (5:5-7). His touch could make a man who was full of leprosy whole (5:13). He showed He could forgive sins by healing a paralytic (5:24). He could even turn a despised and sinful tax collector into a disciple (5:27,28). Now Luke gives accounts of Jesus' self-disclosure in the titles with which He refers to Himself.

³³ *And they said to him, "The disciples of John fast often and offer prayers, and so do the disciples of the Pharisees, but yours eat and drink."* Luke 5:33 Allow me to ask this like we might ask it today. "Jesus, you aren't anything like either John the Baptist or the Pharisees and their disciples. You are breaking the mold. Instead of being austere and religious by fasting and praying all the time, you mix it up with everyone, and it seems like you and the disciples are having a good ole time eating and drinking. You do these miracles and say astounding things, but then you don't act religious at all. How could anyone believe you are the Messiah when you don't act religious?"

Jesus' response was shocking. ³⁴ *And Jesus said to them, "Can you make wedding guests fast while the bridegroom is with them?"* Luke 5:34 Weddings in Jesus' day involved a week-long celebration. In smaller villages everyone stopped to celebrate. The host would provide wine and food for the entire week. It was like the whole town went on a vacation of celebration.. He is declaring that He is the bridegroom and His followers are the guests. That is radical because **Isaiah uses an analogy of the bridegroom in the Old Testament as God!** ^{5b} ... *as the bridegroom rejoices over the bride, so shall your God rejoice over you.* Isaiah 62:5b The husband of Israel is the Lord God (Isaiah 54:5ⁱ). The prophet Hosea spoke of the coming betrothal (Hosea 2:19,20ⁱⁱ). Jesus was boldly declaring His oneness with the Father and His impending union with the bride.

³⁵ *The days will come when the bridegroom is taken away from them, and then they will fast in those days.* Luke 5:35 We could see this verse in two different ways. It may refer to the time between the crucifixion and resurrection. The disciples would have been so distraught that they couldn't eat. Their hearts were so broken I don't think they thought of food. All their expectations seemed to be dashed. Even though He had warned them (9:44ⁱⁱⁱ), they couldn't imagine the horror of what had taken place. They were completely dejected and wondering where to turn.

The other way of looking at this is that it refers to the time after the ascension, and certainly we do fast now to seek God's will. We fast to keep our eyes off the things of this world and to stay focused on Jesus. In the sermon on the mount Jesus didn't teach, "If you fast..." but rather "*when* you fast..." (Matthew 6:16^{iv}).

³⁶ *He also told them a parable: "No one tears a piece from a new garment and puts it on an old garment. If he does, he will tear the new, and the piece from the new will not match the old."* Luke 5:36 The parable is one in which a new piece (unshrunk) of material is sown to patch old material - the new shrinks and tears away from the old making a larger tear. In both parables the idea is that you can't patch the old but if you do so it only makes things worse. What Jesus is referring to by old and new. It seems that Luke makes it clear in 16:16. ¹⁶ *"The Law and the Prophets were until John; since then the good news of the kingdom of God is preached, and everyone forces his way into it."*

The old is the scribes' interpretation of the Law and the Prophets, living under the oral and Levitical Law. The New is the Kingdom of God that is arriving in Jesus. The next verse in Luke 16 goes on to say that it is easier for heaven and earth to pass away than for one jot of the Law to be void (Luke 16:17^v). Put the two concepts together and you have the truth that all the Law and Prophets are about Jesus and the coming kingdom. You can't just take some of Jesus' teaching and tack it onto the old interpretations. You would violate the meaning of both. We must see Jesus as the fulfillment of the Old Covenant. He is the seed of the woman who crushes the head of Satan (Genesis 3:15). He is the one who bears our sins (Isaiah 53:5). He is the light to the Gentiles (Isaiah 49:6). The Law was our guardian to bring us to Christ (Galatians 3:24^{vi}). The old showed us how much we need a Savior and promised His coming to make us His own.

³⁷ And no one puts new wine into old wineskins. If he does, the new wine will burst the skins and it will be spilled, and the skins will be destroyed. ³⁸ But new wine must be put into fresh wineskins. Luke 5:37,38 Jesus further illustrated this thought with the parable of new wine in old wineskins. New wine expands as it ferments. Old skins have already expanded and hardened. They will break under the pressure of the fermentation and you waste both the wine and the skin. The idea is the same. You can't mix them without ruining both. The old covenant led us to Jesus. The new is ushering us into the kingdom and the fullness of the Holy Spirit (24:49^{vii}). We don't throw out the old skin or the old cloth, we just apply it differently recognizing its limits. The old could not save us or bring us the fullness of the Spirit, but it does point us to Jesus (John 14:18-20^{viii}).

Jesus had just been confronted about the joy and freedom He and the disciples had to seek out the lost, mixing with them to point them to salvation. The old did not mingle. They kept separate for the sake of purity and obedience. They did not have the power of the Holy Spirit and would soon backslide into idolatry when they mingled with other cultures. Jesus and the disciples could mix it up with the tax collectors because Jesus was full of the Spirit and set the example for the disciples. Instead of the tax collectors making Jesus' disciples into tax collectors, the disciples were drawing the tax collectors to new life in Jesus.

Pharisees were old wineskins. They would become the Judaizers in the church as they tried to put the requirements of the Law on the Gentile converts. They missed the point that righteousness does not come by obedience to the Law but by the righteousness of Christ which is ours when we place our faith in Him (Romans 3:21,22^{ix}).

³⁹ And no one after drinking old wine desires new, for he says, 'The old is good.' Luke 5:39 Jesus added another interesting observation. Those who are familiar with aged wine prefer it to new wine. The Pharisees loved the oral laws and religious routines. They don't like this taste of mingling with sinners and pointing them to righteousness through faith. They would rather have the pride of fasting and obeying details of the law to appear holy. They do not compare the two or even try the new. They are satisfied. But the old is meant to bring dissatisfaction so that we would see our sin and our need for the Savior.

How can we apply this? First, see the old fulfilled in the new. A number of denominations try to patch the old with the new. They want to bring in some of the Old Testament laws, just the ones they choose, for you cannot do them all in this age. There is no temple or priesthood. Some will just choose the Sabbath law, only they don't use the Biblical definition. Others choose food laws. Paul makes it clear that if you try to please God with the Law you must fulfill it all. Only Jesus could do that (Romans 10:4,5^x).

Another way we might apply it is trying to fix our old way of life with just a patch of Christianity. Some people think if they just stop swearing, or if they just stop excessive drinking, or whatever they see as their main and obvious sin they would then please God. Entering the kingdom is a whole new life, not a patch. It is being born-again (John 3:3). Some people say they are born-again, but their life is no different from before. Entering the kingdom means you have a King and yield to His will in everything. We'll see that in the following passage. **In this kingdom, the King doesn't just give you rules. He comes and lives in you and shows you who He created you to be.** He takes over every area of your life (Galatians 2:20^{xi}). You can still choose to disobey, but you won't want to. If you do, you feel terrible about it because you love your new King because He loves you and gave His life for you (Titus 2:14^{xii}). You can't pour this new wine of the Spirit into an old wineskin of your old way of selfish living. We must become a new creations in Christ, and let Him transform us (2 Corinthians 5:17^{xiii})!

¹ On a Sabbath, while he was going through the grainfields, his disciples plucked and ate some heads of grain, rubbing them in their hands ² But some of the Pharisees said, "Why are you doing what is not lawful to do on the Sabbath?" Luke 6:1,2 In 4:18-19 we read of Jesus declaring that His mission was to preach good news to the poor, proclaim freedom to prisoners, recovery of sight for the blind, release the oppressed, proclaiming the year of God's favor. God's grace had stepped into the world in the body of Jesus. The rest of chapters four and five were about Jesus demonstrating that mission of mercy by setting a man free from demon possession, healing all who came to his door with a touch, cleansing a leper, forgiving and healing the paralytic let down through the roof, calling a tax collector to follow Him, and then eating with sinners. That same mercy is seen in this passage as applied to the hunger of man (Micah 6:8^{xiv}).

The Law forbade harvesting or winnowing of grain on the Sabbath, but the Law did allow for the poor to take from any field by hand what they needed for their hunger (Deuteronomy 23:25^{xv}). There is a clash of the laws and it had to be determined which is most important (John 7:23^{xvi}). Is rest for worship on the Sabbath more important than man's physical need for food? How important to God is man's physical hunger? They had to decide based on Scriptural precedence.

³ And Jesus answered them, "Have you not read what David did when he was hungry, he and those who were with him: ⁴ 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?" Luke 6:3,4 Jesus gave an illustration from Scripture to show how important our physical needs are to God. Only the priests were allowed to eat the bread of the Presence after it was used in the tabernacle as it was holy to the Lord (Leviticus 24:9). But when David and his men were fleeing Saul, they ate that sacred bread (1 Samuel 21:3-6^{xvii}). God did not smite them. He protected them from King Saul. This Scriptural precedence revealed God's heart, His priorities. God cares more about our physical need than a severe interpretation of the Law. They weren't doing what God had forbidden. They weren't working for money on the Sabbath or avoiding rest to worship. They were simply hungry. The prophet Hosea declared that God wanted mercy more than sacrifice (Hosea 6:6^{xviii}). The Pharisees had it backward (Matthew 12:6-7^{xix}). They put sacrifice above mercy. Don't allow needed rules override God's heart of mercy.

⁵ And he said to them, "The Son of Man is lord of the Sabbath." Luke 6:5 Another shocking revelation! The sabbath is a day to worship Him. Once again, He alludes to the

fact that He is God! The disciples were following the Lord of the Sabbath. They were keeping the sabbath in a better way than the Pharisees ever did. The Pharisees were keeping religious rules. The disciples were resting in the Lord of the Sabbath. **We find rest yoked to Him. (Matthew 11:28^{xx}) His yoke is easy and light. It is not a burden or wearisome. The Sabbath today is resting in Jesus (John 15:4^{xxi}). He is our Sabbath rest! (Hebrews 4:9-11^{xxii})** In these last two paragraphs we have seen Jesus declare that He is the bridegroom and the Lord of the Sabbath. Both titles proclaim His deity!

⁶ On another Sabbath, he entered the synagogue and was teaching, and a man was there whose right hand was withered. Luke 6:6 Luke tells another account of a Sabbath confrontation in the Capernaum synagogue to clarify the point that was just made about mercy being of higher importance than religious demands. In the congregation was a man whose right hand had atrophied, probably due to a severed nerve or tendons.

⁷ And 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. Luke 6:7 Scribes and Pharisees had set a trap to bring an accusation against Jesus. They were using the man disabled man as bait. All the people in Capernaum were healed previously, so this man would have been brought in from another area. Why were they so eager to accuse Jesus? He was different. He drew great crowds. He could do things like healing that they had never done. In their minds, He is stealing the spiritual admiration of the people away from them. Not only that but He also rejected some of their beloved traditions.

⁸ 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. Luke 6:8 Did He know because He is God or by His intuition or by experience or by the Holy Spirit? I think it is important that we reject the idea that Jesus knew things because He is God. If that was the case, we could not follow His example. Luke has been careful to say that Jesus grew in wisdom and stature (2:52^{xxiii}), just like any human would grow and learn. Wisdom could read the faces and the setting. Why have all these scribes and Pharisees shown up in Capernaum? Why is this man with the withered hand who had never been there before now here along with them? How receptive have they been in the past? And with the help of the Holy Spirit, Jesus knew their thoughts.

Jesus called the man to come and stand before everyone. The man was about to become a sermon illustration. Even more than that, he would serve as a rebuke to those who brought him. They had no concern for his physical condition which greatly hindered him from making a living. They just wanted to put Jesus down to exalt themselves.

⁹ 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?" Luke 6:9 Jesus once again teaches with a question. He is asking about a basic principle. Is the Sabbath a time to do good or harm, to save life or destroy it? Isaiah had clearly answered this when addressing fasting. He rebuked the people for exploiting their workers while they were fasting. He pointed out that religious actions not accompanied with helping those in need, providing food to the hungry and clothing and shelter to those who have none, were merely hypocrisy (Isaiah 58:3-7^{xxiv}). The answer to Jesus' question was obvious. God cares about mankind's needs and expects us to be merciful as He is toward us.

¹⁰ And after looking around at them all he said to him, "Stretch out your hand." And he did so, and his hand was restored. Luke 6:10 Jesus would not be intimidated. Having asked the teaching question, He looked at them all as if waiting for an answer.

Mark tells us that He looked on them with anger, grieved for the hardness of their hearts (Mark 3:5^{xxv}). The option was either to save or to destroy. Jesus told the man to do what he could not do. "Stretch out your hand." It took faith in the words and power of Jesus to heal to make an effort. The man did as Jesus commanded. Imagine the amazement as the hand filled out with muscle and began to be fully functional again. The crowd had to be overcome with the wonder and power of God. And the message was that God cares about you as an individual! He is merciful. Mercy trumps worship rules (James 2:13^{xxvi})!

The Pharisees plan had backfired. They had been given a chance to respond to Jesus and tell Him why He should not heal, but the way the question was posed cut through the fog and showed the real issue. The people were drawn even more to Jesus and His teaching. And upon seeing this wonder the scribes and Pharisees repented of their hard hearts. No, but that is what should have happened. ¹¹ *But they were filled with fury and discussed with one another what they might do to Jesus.* Luke 6:11 Their response shows just how hardened their hearts had become. Instead of awe and wonder they were furious and even discussed how they could get to Jesus. The word Luke used to describe them literally means "filled with madness". *Anoia* describes the absence of mind. They were so furious they couldn't think straight (John 15:18,19^{xxvii}).

We wonder how those who persecute believers could be so full of hatred when all we do is try to share the love of Jesus. I read a New York times article about a recent Christian martyr. The author made those who murdered him the heroes because they prevented the missionary from spreading infectious disease and changing their primitive way of life. Did the author really care about the people on that island? Did the author know the missionary carried infectious disease? Probably not. The whole point of the article was to make the missionary the bad guy and the murder justifiable. What that author and others like him won't acknowledge is that so much of what we enjoy came from the influence of Christianity that transformed society.

We've seen Jesus in our passage today. He's our bridegroom. He's our Sabbath rest. And He cares about our condition. He has shown us that His loving grace is greater than religious rules. When no one else cares, you can know your bridegroom does. Be merciful even as your Father in heaven is merciful (6:36^{xxviii}).

Questions

- 1 What had Luke shown us in the preceding passages?
- 2 What shocking analogy did Jesus use for Himself?
- 3 What did the cloth and wineskin parable represent?
- 4 How did Jesus answer the accusation of harvesting on the Sabbath?
- 5 Why was His answer authoritative?
- 6 What was the shocking title He gave Himself?
- 7 What is the Sabbath to us today?
- 8 What trap was set for Jesus in the synagogue?
- 9 Why did Jesus question refute their traditions?
- 10 Why were the Pharisees so furious?

ⁱ Isaiah 54:5 (ESV)

⁵ For your Maker is your husband, the LORD of hosts is his name; and the Holy One of Israel is your Redeemer, the God of the whole earth he is called.

ii Hosea 2:19-20 (ESV)

¹⁹ And I will betroth you to me forever. I will betroth you to me in righteousness and in justice, in steadfast love and in mercy. ²⁰ I will betroth you to me in faithfulness. And you shall know the LORD.

iii Luke 9:44 (ESV)

⁴⁴ "Let these words sink into your ears: The Son of Man is about to be delivered into the hands of men."

iv Matthew 6:16 (ESV)

¹⁶ "And when you fast, do not look gloomy like the hypocrites, for they disfigure their faces that their fasting may be seen by others. Truly, I say to you, they have received their reward.

v Luke 16:17 (ESV)

¹⁷ But it is easier for heaven and earth to pass away than for one dot of the Law to become void.

vi Galatians 3:24 (ESV)

²⁴ So then, the law was our guardian until Christ came, in order that we might be justified by faith.

vii Luke 24:49 (ESV)

⁴⁹ And behold, I am sending the promise of my Father upon you. But stay in the city until you are clothed with power from on high."

viii John 14:18-20 (ESV)

¹⁸ "I will not leave you as orphans; I will come to you. ¹⁹ Yet a little while and the world will see me no more, but you will see me. Because I live, you also will live. ²⁰ In that day you will know that I am in my Father, and you in me, and I in you.

ix Romans 3:21-22 (ESV)

²¹ But now the righteousness of God has been manifested apart from the law, although the Law and the Prophets bear witness to it— ²² the righteousness of God through faith in Jesus Christ for all who believe. For there is no distinction:

x Romans 10:4-5 (ESV)

⁴ For Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to everyone who believes. ⁵ For Moses writes about the righteousness that is based on the law, that the person who does the commandments shall live by them.

xi Galatians 2:20 (ESV)

²⁰ I have been crucified with Christ. It is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me. And the life I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me.

xii Titus 2:14 (ESV)

¹⁴ who gave himself for us to redeem us from all lawlessness and to purify for himself a people for his own possession who are zealous for good works.

xiii 2 Corinthians 5:17 (ESV)

¹⁷ Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. The old has passed away; behold, the new has come.

xiv Micah 6:8 (ESV)

⁸ He has told you, O man, what is good; and what does the LORD require of you but to do justice, and to love kindness, and to walk humbly with your God?

xv Deuteronomy 23:25 (ESV)

²⁵ If you go into your neighbor's standing grain, you may pluck the ears with your hand, but you shall not put a sickle to your neighbor's standing grain.

xvi John 7:23 (ESV)

²³ If on the Sabbath a man receives circumcision, so that the law of Moses may not be broken, are you angry with me because on the Sabbath I made a man's whole body well?

xvii 1 Samuel 21:3-6 (ESV)

³ Now then, what do you have on hand? Give me five loaves of bread, or whatever is here."

⁴ And 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."

⁵ And David answered the priest, "Truly women have been kept from us as always when I go on an expedition. The vessels of the young men are holy even when it is an ordinary journey. How much more today will their vessels be holy?"

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.

xviii Hosea 6:6 (ESV)

⁶ For I desire steadfast love and not sacrifice, the knowledge of God rather than burnt offerings.

xix Matthew 12:6-7 (ESV)

⁶ I tell you, something greater than the temple is here. ⁷ And if you had known what this means, 'I desire mercy, and not sacrifice,' you would not have condemned the guiltless.

^{xx} Matthew 11:28 (ESV)

²⁸ Come to me, all who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.

^{xxi} John 15:4 (ESV)

⁴ Abide in me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit by itself, unless it abides in the vine, neither can you, unless you abide in me.

^{xxii} Hebrews 4:9-11 (ESV)

⁹ So then, there remains a Sabbath rest for the people of God, ¹⁰ for whoever has entered God's rest has also rested from his works as God did from his. ¹¹ Let us therefore strive to enter that rest, so that no one may fall by the same sort of disobedience.

^{xxiii} Luke 2:52 (ESV)

⁵² And Jesus increased in wisdom and in stature and in favor with God and man.

^{xxiv} Isaiah 58:3-7 (ESV)

³ 'Why have we fasted, and you see it not? Why have we humbled ourselves, and you take no knowledge of it?' Behold, in the day of your fast you seek your own pleasure, and oppress all your workers. ⁴ Behold, you fast only to quarrel and to fight and to hit with a wicked fist. Fasting like yours this day will not make your voice to be heard on high. ⁵ Is such the fast that I choose, a day for a person to humble himself? Is it to bow down his head like a reed, and to spread sackcloth and ashes under him? Will you call this a fast, and a day acceptable to the LORD? ⁶ 'Is not this the fast that I choose: to loose the bonds of wickedness, to undo the straps of the yoke, to let the oppressed go free, and to break every yoke? ⁷ Is it not to share your bread with the hungry and bring the homeless poor into your house; when you see the naked, to cover him, and not to hide yourself from your own flesh?

^{xxv} Mark 3:5 (ESV)

⁵ And he looked around at them with anger, grieved at their hardness of heart, and said to the man, "Stretch out your hand." He stretched it out, and his hand was restored.

^{xxvi} James 2:13 (ESV)

¹³ For judgment is without mercy to one who has shown no mercy. Mercy triumphs over judgment.

^{xxvii} John 15:18-19 (ESV) ¹⁸ "If the world hates you, know that it has hated me before it hated you. ¹⁹ If you were of the world, the world would love you as its own; but because you are not of the world, but I chose you out of the world, therefore the world hates you.

^{xxviii} Luke 6:36 (ESV)

³⁶ Be merciful, even as your Father is merciful.