

I was out of my normal routine with the sabbatical and the special message for Thanksgiving and then Luke preaching that good message from Hosea. During my trip to Israel I had worked on the beginning of Luke 14. Last week I was just sure that I had preached on the first eleven verses of Luke 14. Dawn Gould called and asked about it so I went to my computer to send her a copy. Well, it wasn't there. Only then did I realize I had skipped preaching it. So, we are going back to Luke 14:1-11.

¹ *One Sabbath, when he went to dine at the house of a ruler of the Pharisees, they were watching him carefully.* Luke 14:1 This is the fourth time in Luke that Jesus confronts the Sabbath regulations made by man (6:1-5ⁱ, 11ⁱⁱ; 13:10-17ⁱⁱⁱ). It is a major issue because it was so symbolic of how the religion of oral traditions had distorted the interpretation of God's Word (Mark 7:9^{iv}). We have the same problem in the Christian world today. Some denominations and sects distort the nature of God and the meaning of Scripture by overemphasizing one or two verses. Jesus wants people to understand the heart of God. He made it clear when He said, *"The Sabbath was made for man and not man for the Sabbath."* Mark 2:27 It isn't a day to consider how strict God is and how many rules He has placed on us. It is God's gift to us for rest to recover from the work week while worshipping God for all His goodness in our lives. At times Jesus intentionally confronted their distortions of God's Word by doing something they would see, but most of the time they seem to have laid traps to see if His compassion would break their rules. Jesus would not withhold compassion and didn't hesitate to display it regardless of what people thought. He would use the situations to teach the onlookers and to rebuke the religious leaders for their hard hearts.

The invitation to dine came from a ruler of the Pharisees. That probably means he was a member of the Sanhedrin, the religious authority over the land. Just as an interesting aside, the Sanhedrin has been reconstituted in the last few years. It is part of the difficulty in forming a new government in Israel. It will be interesting to see what will happen. It is my understanding that Gantz wants to isolate the ultra-orthodox, but Netanyahu wants to include them. They are on their way to a third election in February.

Why does Jesus keep going to dine with Pharisees who want to find fault with Him? I think it is because He even loves His enemies (Matthew 5:44^v). He loves them enough to tell them the truth in a jarring way that may break through the hardness of their hearts. They saw His controversial words and actions as an attack on them rather than the patient, goodness of God trying to correct them for their benefit.

Inviting Him on a Sabbath would have been unusual, as the food had to be prepared the day before. No cooking was allowed on the Sabbath (Exodus 35:3^{vi}). Jesus knew what He was getting into, but He always obeyed the Father. If the Father said to go, He would not hesitate to go (John 5:19^{vii}). We need to develop that sensitivity to the Spirit to hear and obey even when we know it is going to be uncomfortable to do so.

Let's try to get heaven's perspective on the scene. The Pharisees are like all groups of people. Some sincerely wanted to obey God. Others had different motivations such as the respect of men (Matthew 23:5^{viii}). They want to see if Jesus is going to violate what they understand to be the rules of religion. God wants to touch the hearts of the sincere Pharisees and convict those who are in it for personal gain. God sent His holy Son who is

one with Him into this group knowing their plot because He loves them and wants them to recognize that He is their Savior, the Messiah they are longing for.

² *And behold, there was a man before him who had dropsy.* Luke 14:2 Why was this man at the dinner with the Pharisees? He was planted in front of Jesus to see what Jesus would do. This condition is a swelling of the torso from fluid retention usually caused by an organ failure. He was very sick and could die. They were probably aware of the fact that Jesus healed people on the Sabbath (Luke 4:38,39^{ix}; Luke 6:6^x,10^{xi}). Most recently He had healed the bent over woman on the Sabbath (Luke 13:10-13^{xii}). Would he do it again in front of them? If He did, it would be a violation of their tradition that taught that on the Sabbath one can help the sick or injured only if it is life threatening. That is not in Scripture, but it was in their oral traditions on how to obey the Scriptures.

³ *And Jesus responded to the lawyers and Pharisees, saying, "Is it lawful to heal on the Sabbath, or not?"* Luke 14:3 There was a difference of opinion between the leading rabbis as to how far you could go to help a person on the Sabbath. Jesus kept bringing the issue up because it was a clear difference between their legalism and their love of God as well as their love for their fellow man made in God's image. Would they deny healing for this poor suffering man?

From my perspective, the whole thing is absurd. Here before them was Jesus, a man who can heal paralytics, the blind, the mute, and even raise the dead, something none of them had ever done or even witnessed, and they are complaining that it is done on the Sabbath! They should have been in awe. The man born blind whom Jesus healed in John chapter nine had such a perfect answer for them. ³¹ *We know that God does not listen to sinners, but if anyone is a worshiper of God and does his will, God listens to him.* ³² *Never since the world began has it been heard that anyone opened the eyes of a man born blind.* ³³ *If this man were not from God, he could do nothing.* John 9:31-33 Even though they believed healing a person born blind would be one of the signs of the Messiah, their wounded pride responded by throwing the man out.

John tells us that if we don't love our fellow man made in the image of God, how can we say we love God? (1 John 3:17^{xiii}) These men claimed to be the ultimate examples of obeying the Scriptures, yet some of them would have let the man with edema continue to suffer. None of *them* would have been able to heal him on any day. *JHWH Rapha!* The God who Heals was standing in front of them and they were trying to find fault with Him for being who He is!

Jesus brought them to a point of decision with a question. Is it lawful to heal on the Sabbath or not? Would they say yes or no? Would they qualify it and try to decide if the man was about to die or if he could survive another day? That gets to the point of being ridiculous. What if you say you think he might survive till the next morning and he doesn't make it? I think that's why none of them gave the traditional answer of it being alright to save the man's life if he was going to die.

⁴ *But they remained silent. Then he took him and healed him and sent him away.* Luke 14:4 Knowing that either way they answered was a problem for them, they stayed silent. Their answer would appear inhumane and even hypocritical, so silence was their only answer. That still appeared to be inhumane but perhaps not as blatantly so.

Jesus showed the compassion of God by healing the man and sending him on his way. The healed man didn't need to see what happened next. That was for the Pharisees.

The wonder of instant healing should have overwhelmed them all. God is Jehovah *Rapha*, the God who heals (Exodus 15:26^{xiv}). What went through their minds when the man's swelling suddenly vanished and his health returned? It would have made all but the hardest hearts open to what Jesus was to say next.

⁵ *And he said to them, "Which of you, having a son or an ox that has fallen into a well on a Sabbath day, will not immediately pull him out?"* Luke 14:5 Jesus applied the same type of reasoning He used with the healing of the bent woman: lesser to greater. In the case of the bent woman, the binding of Satan was compared to an animal tied up and in need of water. This time it was a matter of life and death, so Jesus used a life and death analogy of son or animal falling into a well. Some manuscripts say a donkey instead boy. If the original expression was a son, the father might be saving a life which was allowed. They could say it was to save a life, but perhaps the son could tread water or find a ledge to stand on until the Sabbath was over. The rescue of an animal was actually allowed under rabbinic law (SBK, 1:629; *Shabbath* 128b). And if you can rescue an animal, why can't your help a man who is in need of being rescued from illness (Matthew 12:12^{xv})?

Of course, they would *immediately* pull their son, or even an animal out. The use of the word *immediately* implies they wouldn't hesitate because it had to do with someone or thing they valued. If they would save an animal, then what about the potential death of a man? There was no need to fuss over the technicalities of whether the person was really going to die or if he could survive until Sabbath was over. That would be ridiculous and so unlike God who has compassion on us every day. The Pharisees knew they would pull the animal out or rescue their own son. If they argued the point, they would sound even more heartless than they'd already shown themselves to be.

When I was in Tiberius, I saw water running down the road on the Sabbath. Tiberius is a very religious city. We went out to eat that day. Restaurants can hire Gentile chefs for the Sabbath. When we came back and it was still running in a great stream. I told my wife, "I bet no one will fix it until after the Sabbath." In Israel water is very precious. Sure enough, the water ran until Sunday morning. I guess there were no Gentile plumbers available.

⁶ *And they could not reply to these things.* Luke 16:6 The original language implies there was nothing they could say. That's because Jesus had pointed out that their devotion to equality and ethics was in contrast with the oral traditions they held as equal to the Torah. He used their own rules of debate against them by using a lesser to greater argument. His reasoning was undeniable. Their oral laws even contradicted one another. But even worse, they misrepresented God.

⁷ *Now he told a parable to those who were invited, when he noticed how they chose the places of honor, saying to them,* ⁸ *"When you are invited by someone to a wedding feast, do not sit down in a place of honor, lest someone more distinguished than you be invited by him,"* ⁹ *and he who invited you both will come and say to you, 'Give your place to this person,' and then you will begin with shame to take the lowest place.* Luke 14:7-9 Jesus is on a roll. He continued confronting them over their pride. This is a parable regarding presumption based on Proverbs 25:6,7. ⁶ *Do not put yourself forward in the king's presence or stand in the place of the great,* ⁷ *for it is better to be told, "Come up here," than to be put lower in the presence of a noble.* Proverbs 25:6-7

The setting is a wedding feast. In small villages the entire village would be invited. The seats of honor were those closest to the groom. There were no name plaques

at the table as in modern receptions, so one would guess where they would fit in the order of honor. Jesus noticed some people raced to get the most honored seats. It was a perfect illustration of an eternal truth that Jesus was about to teach.

If you think you are more honored than others and take the seat of honor, you may be humiliated by the host asking you to take a lower seat so he can give yours to one more honored than you. You will not only be ashamed, but the next open seat may be much further down the table than you should have been placed.

The ultimate application of this lesson in humility is the heavenly wedding feast called the Marriage Supper of the Lamb. Those who humbly served the Lord in this life, exalting Him and not themselves will find that they are honored in heaven (James 4:6^{xvi}, 10^{xvii}; 1 Peter 5:5,6^{xxii}). They took a lower seat here, but they will have a seat of honor there. It is the nature of God to give what is due.

Time is probably our most precious commodity. When we see needs in the church, whether the building and property or lives of individuals, and we dismiss them thinking someone else will take care of it, we are missing out on heavenly rewards. The time we invest in meeting needs is going to be richly rewarded. If we could see the results of each way of spending time and compared the reward of each, we'd be shocked at our choices.

I'm not implying that we should never rest or have any form of entertainment. Rest is essential to a healthy life. I am saying we miss many opportunities to invest in heaven because our pride says someone else less important than I can take care of that need. My time is more valuable. Just saying it that way should be convicting.

¹⁰ But when you are invited, go and sit in the lowest place, so that when your host comes he may say to you, 'Friend, move up higher.' Then you will be honored in the presence of all who sit at table with you. Luke 14:10 Instead, you should sit in the lowest place. When the host sees you there, he will invite you to a higher place. Instead of being shamed for your presumption, you will be honored for your humility. Jesus then taught in verse 11 the truth behind the parable. Remember, this is a parable. He is using the wedding table as an illustration for our place in heaven. Those who exalt themselves will be humbled. Those who humble themselves will be exalted. It applies to all of life. The employer who notices someone who does whatever is needed regardless of his or her position, will be exalted as a loyal and faithful employee. The child of God who is willing to love the unlovely and minister to the least will be honored.

Consider Mother Theresa. We all know her name, but her mission was showing the love of Jesus to those who had no one to care for them as they were dying. Why is she known around the world? God honored her for her humble task (Proverbs 3:34^{xviii}).

There will be those in heaven whose names you never heard of and whose faithful lowly ministry you never saw. They will be exalted in heaven and honored to such an extent that you will wonder who they were and what they did. And when you find out that they were a janitor in High School who did their job as unto the Lord and were faithful in the little church they attended to do whatever was needed, the truth of this teaching will be quite clear. That is a real example of someone who influenced a dear friend of mine who served as an elder in this church.

There is an 80/20 principle that applies in business, sports, and even the church. Twenty percent of the people do eighty percent of the work. The same brothers help prepare men's breakfast and do the clean up nearly every time. They take the lowest spot serving others and they will be exalted (Matthew 20:28^{xix})! They don't do it to be

exalted. They just see the need and out of love for Jesus whom they serve by serving their brothers.

I think of people who influenced my life and helped me get on the right track. You wouldn't know their names. The main one was an elderly man who ministered in a Japanese hospital as a Christian chaplain leading the dying to salvation in Jesus. That is where I met him as I lay in a hospital bed, the only other Caucasian in the whole hospital. I will never forget the name of Dennis Turner. It isn't so much what he taught me about the Bible, as it was his faithful example of serving Jesus and his positive attitude. His denomination had abandoned him when his wife decided she was a lesbian and left the children with him. He raised them on his own and continued his ministry trusting God to provide. He showed me the love of Christ. He had no big prayer group behind him nor any newsletter for fundraising. He trusted God for all his needs. He had few possessions but helped those who were even less fortunate. What an example he was to me at a turning point in my life. He died in obscurity, with just his daughter caring for him. But I know when I get to heaven, I'll look for one of the most glorious servants of God.

There are people all around us who are at a turning point in their lives. Will you humble yourself and show them the love of Jesus? Will you take the lowest seat? He who is faithful in that which is least will be faithful in that which is much (Luke 16:10^{xx}). Will you listen and obey when the Holy Spirit nudges you to be the hands and feet of Jesus to the least of these (Matthew 25:40)? We don't do it to be exalted, but doing what Jesus prepared for us to do is exalting (Ephesians 2:10^{xxi}).

¹¹ For everyone who exalts himself will be humbled, and he who humbles himself will be exalted." Luke 14:11 Who believes this truth from the lips of Jesus? Well, I can tell you it is not many! Most politicians certainly don't. Few professional athletes do. Actors and actresses don't seem to. How about big business and tech firms? Have you ever seen an ad from a company looking for someone who will do whatever is needed and be a servant of all while promising a salary equivalent to those they serve? High church doesn't. The robes set the elite apart from the common person. TV evangelists with their special link to God don't believe it. But do we believe it? "God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble. Humble yourselves, therefore, under God's mighty hand, that He may lift you up in due time" (1 Peter 5:5,6^{xxii}).

Questions

- 1 Why was it important to confront Sabbath traditions?
- 2 Why did Jesus accept invitations from those trying to trap Him?
- 3 Why were they watching Him closely?
- 4 What name of God was Jesus demonstrating?
- 5 How did Jesus justify His action?
- 6 Why would He use one of their debate techniques?
- 7 What was Jesus suggestion based on?
- 8 How can we apply His suggestion?
- 9 What is the promise for those who do?
- 10 What will you take with you from this message?

ⁱ **Luke 6:1-5 (ESV)**

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?" 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?" ⁵ And he said to them, "The Son of Man is lord of the Sabbath."

ⁱⁱ **Luke 6:11 (ESV)**

¹¹ But they were filled with fury and discussed with one another what they might do to Jesus.

ⁱⁱⁱ **Luke 13:10-17 (ESV)**

¹⁰ Now he was teaching in one of the synagogues on the Sabbath. ¹¹ And behold, there was a woman who had had a disabling spirit for eighteen years. She was bent over and could not fully straighten herself. ¹² When Jesus saw her, he called her over and said to her, "Woman, you are freed from your disability." ¹³ And he laid his hands on her, and immediately she was made straight, and she glorified God. ¹⁴ But the ruler of the synagogue, indignant because Jesus had healed on the Sabbath, said to the people, "There are six days in which work ought to be done. Come on those days and be healed, and not on the Sabbath day." ¹⁵ Then the Lord answered him, "You hypocrites! Does not each of you on the Sabbath untie his ox or his donkey from the manger and lead it away to water it? ¹⁶ And ought not this woman, a daughter of Abraham whom Satan bound for eighteen years, be loosed from this bond on the Sabbath day?" ¹⁷ As he said these things, all his adversaries were put to shame, and all the people rejoiced at all the glorious things that were done by him.

^{iv} **Mark 7:9 (ESV)**

⁹ And he said to them, "You have a fine way of rejecting the commandment of God in order to establish your tradition!

^v **Matthew 5:44 (ESV)**

⁴⁴ But I say to you, Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you,

^{vi} **Exodus 35:3 (ESV)**

³ You shall kindle no fire in all your dwelling places on the Sabbath day."

^{vii} **John 5:19 (ESV)**

¹⁹ So Jesus said to them, "Truly, truly, I say to you, the Son can do nothing of his own accord, but only what he sees the Father doing. For whatever the Father does, that the Son does likewise.

^{viii} **Matthew 23:5 (ESV)**

⁵ They do all their deeds to be seen by others. For they make their phylacteries broad and their fringes long,

^{ix} **Luke 4:38-39 (ESV)**

³⁸ And he arose and left the synagogue and entered Simon's house. Now Simon's mother-in-law was ill with a high fever, and they appealed to him on her behalf. ³⁹ And he stood over her and rebuked the fever, and it left her, and immediately she rose and began to serve them.

^x **Luke 6:6 (ESV)**

⁶ On another Sabbath, he entered the synagogue and was teaching, and a man was there whose right hand was withered.

^{xi} **Luke 6:10 (ESV)**

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.

^{xii} **Luke 13:10-13 (ESV)**

¹⁰ Now he was teaching in one of the synagogues on the Sabbath. ¹¹ And behold, there was a woman who had had a disabling spirit for eighteen years. She was bent over and could not fully straighten herself. ¹² When Jesus saw her, he called her over and said to her, "Woman, you are freed from your disability." ¹³ And he laid his hands on her, and immediately she was made straight, and she glorified God.

^{xiii} **1 John 3:17 (ESV)**

¹⁷ But if anyone has the world's goods and sees his brother in need, yet closes his heart against him, how does God's love abide in him?

^{xiv} **Exodus 15:26 (ESV)**

²⁶ saying, "If you will diligently listen to the voice of the LORD your God, and do that which is right in his eyes, and give ear to his commandments and keep all his statutes, I will put none of the diseases on you that I put on the Egyptians, for I am the LORD, your healer."

^{xv} **Matthew 12:12 (ESV)**

¹² Of how much more value is a man than a sheep! So it is lawful to do good on the Sabbath.”

^{xvi} **James 4:6 (ESV)**

⁶ But he gives more grace. Therefore it says, “God opposes the proud, but gives grace to the humble.”

^{xvii} **James 4:10 (ESV)**

¹⁰ Humble yourselves before the Lord, and he will exalt you.

^{xviii} **Proverbs 3:34 (ESV)**

³⁴ Toward the scorners he is scornful, but to the humble he gives favor.

^{xix} **Matthew 20:28 (NET)**

²⁸ just as the Son of Man did not come to be served but to serve, and to give his life a ransom for many.”

^{xx} **Luke 16:10 (KJV)**

¹⁰ He that is faithful in that which is least is faithful also in much: and he that is unjust in the least is unjust also in much.

^{xxi} **Ephesians 2:10 (ESV)**

¹⁰ For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them.

^{xxii} **1 Peter 5:5-6 (ESV)**

⁵ Likewise, you who are younger, be subject to the elders. Clothe yourselves, all of you, with humility toward one another, for “God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble.” ⁶ Humble yourselves, therefore, under the mighty hand of God so that at the proper time he may exalt you,