

Luke 6A

- In Chap 5, Luke began to show the growing conflict between Jesus and the religious leaders of his day
 - That conflict began essentially with Jesus challenging the Pharisees authority among the people
 - Jesus – and His teaching and healing – grabbed the imagination of the people and the Pharisees immediately recognized the threat He posed to their control and authority
- At the conclusions of Chap 5 Jesus effectively declared their religious system to be worn out and ready for replacement – that the two could never mix
 - So, naturally they have now targeted Him and His ministry, and they have begun – in a very disorganized and almost desperate way – to bring Him down in the eyes of the people
 - Chap 6 continues to show the almost comical way the Pharisees were intent on discrediting Jesus
 - They tried to catch Him violating their religious rules
 - They hadn't noticed that Jesus had already declared that their man-made rules weren't worth following in the first place
 - The Pharisees thought that catching violating their rules would diminish Him in the eyes of the people, but since the people hate the rules too, Jesus gained fame for standing up to the religious leaders

[Luke 6:1](#) ¶ Now it happened that He was passing through *some* grainfields on a Sabbath; and His disciples were picking the heads of grain, rubbing them in their hands, and eating *the grain*.

[Luke 6:2](#) But some of the Pharisees said, "Why do you do what is not lawful on the Sabbath?"

[Luke 6:3](#) And Jesus answering them said, "Have you not even read what David did when he was hungry, he and those who were with him,

[Luke 6:4](#) how he entered the house of God, and took and ate the consecrated bread which is not lawful for any to eat except the priests alone, and gave it to his companions?"

[Luke 6:5](#) And He was saying to them, "The Son of Man is Lord of the Sabbath."

- From the scene Luke and the other gospel writers paint for us, we know Jesus and his 12 apostles were moving from place to place on a Saturday – the Jewish Sabbath
 - Specifically, they were moving through a grain field, likely a barley field, where the grain had grown to waist high and was ready for harvest
 - Obviously the disciples were hungry, so they had began to pluck heads of grain and rub them between their hands to remove the husks and then eat the grain – fast food
 - Under the Jewish Law, it was permissible for a man to remove heads of grain and eat them without being considered a thief

[Deut. 23:24](#) ¶ “When you enter your neighbor’s vineyard, then you may eat grapes until you are fully satisfied, but you shall not put any in your basket.

[Deut. 23:25](#) ¶ “When you enter your neighbor’s standing grain, then you may pluck the heads with your hand, but you shall not wield a sickle in your neighbor’s standing grain.

- The concept expressed here in the law is straightforward enough
 - A man can take a small amount of another man’s produce for the benefit of a quick meal, but once he starts collecting the produce in larger quantities, he’s stealing
 - The law said nothing however about such an activity being outlawed on the Sabbath – it was never connected to the Sabbath at all
 - That came from the Pharisees
 - Remember I said last week that the Pharisees had taken the law given by God and had made it even more restrictive as a means of controlling and consolidating their power over the people
 - The more restrictive the law became, the more hopeless the people felt
 - The farther they felt from God and the more they looked to their spiritual leaders to rescue them and offer them hope that God would approve their pitiful efforts to keep the law
 - It was control through fear and guilt and it was entirely based on works

- In this case, the Pharisees consider the apostles taking of the grain as a form of work
 - They consider the gleaning of the heads of grain as harvesting,
 - And they consider the rubbing of the grain in their hands as threshing
 - And they the consider the separating of the husks from the seed as winnowing
 - They considered the eating to be storing grain
 - In other words, the apostles were performing farming on the Sabbath, and that was a violation of the God's command not to do work on the Sabbath

Because of these rules, some Pharisees would not walk on the grass on the Sabbath day. If someone asked such a rabbi, "What is wrong with walking on the grass on the Sabbath day," his answer would be, "Nothing. It is permissible to walk on the grass on the Sabbath day." However, there is a problem. What looks only like a grassy field might have one stalk of wheat growing wild in it. A person walking through the field of grass might inadvertently step on that one stalk of wheat, separate the wheat from its stalk, and become guilty of reaping on the Sabbath day. Furthermore, if his foot came down and twisted the wheat just enough to separate the wheat from the chaff, he would be guilty of threshing on the Sabbath day. If he continued to walk, the outer hem of his garment might cause just enough breeze to blow the chaff away, and he would be guilty of winnowing on the Sabbath day. Finally, once the person had gone, a bird or rodent might see the exposed piece of wheat and swallow it, causing him to be guilty of storing the wheat on the Sabbath day.

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- So the Pharisees try to use that to accuse Jesus
 - Wouldn't you agree that this is – at best – desperate measure?
 - It was in that day even as it would be for us today

- Before we move on to Jesus response, I want you to consider something important from those first few verses
 - Rules never promote righteousness; they reveal unrighteousness
 - And that's how the Pharisees were using them here
 - The Pharisees were trying to find a way to reveal Jesus' unrighteousness
 - Rules are tools for accusation
 - They can never be a means to making men better
 - The speed limit doesn't make good drives
 - Did the 10 commandments make men holy?
 - To a certain extent, rules restrain sin
 - But sin restrained isn't the same as sin eliminated

[Matt. 5:20](#) ¶ "For I say to you that unless your righteousness surpasses *that* of the scribes and Pharisees, you will not enter the kingdom of heaven.

[Matt. 5:21](#) ¶ "You have heard that the ancients were told, 'YOU SHALL NOT COMMIT MURDER' and 'Whoever commits murder shall be liable to the court.'

[Matt. 5:22](#) "But I say to you that everyone who is angry with his brother shall be guilty before the court;

[Matt. 5:27](#) ¶ "You have heard that it was said, 'YOU SHALL NOT COMMIT ADULTERY';

[Matt. 5:28](#) but I say to you that everyone who looks at a woman with lust for her has already committed adultery with her in his heart.

- The Pharisees took the Law of God and twisted it and added to it so they could find even more ways to examine men's lives looking for sin
 - And they thought that the more rules the more righteousness
 - But in reality, the more rules, the more sin was revealed
 - So ironically, what they thought they were eliminating, they were merely magnifying
 - These rules didn't increase love – love for God or love for men

- They don't teach righteousness, forgiveness, mercy, charity or any of the things God says His children should demonstrate
- And they certainly couldn't make men holy and righteous and perfect before God
- They could only serve one purpose – to accuse men by
 - To point out mistakes, to bring guilt and judgment
 - And that is always the purpose of rules or laws
 - This is what Paul teaches in Romans 3

[Rom. 3:19](#) ¶ Now we know that whatever the Law says, it speaks to those who are under the Law, so that every mouth may be closed and all the world may become accountable to God;

[Rom. 3:20](#) because by the works of the Law no flesh will be justified in His sight; for through the Law *comes* the knowledge of sin.

- The Law like any other set of rules can never produce righteousness, it merely reveals unrighteousness
 - And the Pharisees are using their rules in the same way here
 - We need to always be careful to ensure that as we set out rules for behavior, we never become tempted to see them as a means to righteousness
 - Rather they merely help remind us of where we are yet still sinful
- But moving on, we understand the first part of the story easily enough, however it's Jesus' response that may cause us to ponder a bit
 - Jesus makes reference to a story involving King David in the temple, a story recorded in 1Sam 21
 - As you might expect, we need to give a moment to understanding Jesus' reference

[1Sam. 21:1](#) ¶ Then David came to Nob to Ahimelech the priest; and Ahimelech came trembling to meet David and said to him, "Why are you alone and no one with you?"

[1Sam. 21:2](#) David said to Ahimelech the priest, "The king has commissioned me with a matter and has said to me, 'Let no one know anything about the matter on which I am sending you and with which I have commissioned you; and I have directed the young men to a certain place.'

[1Sam. 21:3](#) "Now therefore, what do you have on hand? Give me five loaves of bread, or whatever can be found."

[1Sam. 21:4](#) The priest answered David and said, "There is no ordinary bread on hand, but there is consecrated bread; if only the young men have kept themselves from women."

[1Sam. 21:5](#) David answered the priest and said to him, "Surely women have been kept from us as previously when I set out and the vessels of the young men were holy, though it was an ordinary journey; how much more then today will their vessels *be holy?*"

[1Sam. 21:6](#) So the priest gave him consecrated *bread*; for there was no bread there but the bread of the Presence which was removed from before the LORD, in order to put hot bread *in its place* when it was taken away.

- David has been anointed by the prophet Samuel as the next king, but the current King Saul is trying to kill David to prevent him from taking Saul's throne
 - David is the captain of Saul's army,
 - Arrives at the tabernacle with a few of his men
 - Tells the priest that he is on a mission from the king
 - Saul sent "troops" elsewhere
 - A lie. The king didn't send him...He's running from the king,
 - David often had trouble with the truth
 - David has come for refuge and to obtain provisions
 - He asks the priest for food for him
 - The priest says that all that was available was the showbread
 - Showbread was set out by the priests once a week on Sabbath
 - It remained there until it was replaced, then the priests ate it
- So David asks for the bread to eat
 - This was not an option according to the Pharisees' rules
 - The Law didn't prohibit it though,

- The only thing the priest was concerned with was whether the men had been with women, which would have made them ritually unclean
- David assures the priests that the men were holy today, not defiled
- So the priest allows them to eat the bread
 - Jesus uses this situation to draw an analogy to His own actions
- Consider David's situation
 - He was trying to honor God's anointed even as he was being persecuted by him
 - He was running to save his life
 - He had needs and he came to the priests for sanctuary, to satisfy his hunger
- Now the priest had a choice:
 - The law didn't prohibit giving the bread, though the leader's rules did
 - But the account in 1 Samuel never condemns the priests actions, as Jesus says
 - Obviously, his compassion for David was the right thing to do, despite the man-made rules to the contrary
 - Rather than observe man's precepts, the priests honored God's anointed king
 - The priest was showing his love for God and his neighbor by honoring the Lord's anointed, even if it meant dispensing with man-made rules

- If we defining godliness in terms of hard fast rules, we inevitably lose our focus on what it means to follow Christ
 - We aren't called to follow laws, but rather a law giver
 - Who has written His laws on our hearts
 - For where a law will fail, the Spirit will not
 - In fact, sometimes showing love and obedience to the God requires that we ignore some man-made rules in favor of the higher commandments of loving God and our neighbor
- We do this today
 - For example, if we were walking down a street and came upon a house that was on fire, flames coming out of the roof at one end of the house
 - We run up to the opposite end of the house and look in the windows
 - Amid the smoke we make out the shape of a baby laying in a crib crying
 - Immediately, we pick up a rock and throw it through the window, breaking out the glass
 - We enter the house, take the baby and rescuing it from the flames
 - The baby is having trouble breathing so we take it to the hospital
- Technically, we have violated at least three serious laws
 - We have commitment vandalism
 - We have committed breaking and entering
 - And we have committed kidnapping
 - But no prosecutor in the world would press those charges against us because the greater good of saving the baby's life would have justified our actions under the law

- The law was intended to ensure that citizens demonstrate considerate and respectful behavior among each other, looking out for the common good –
 - so the end was the common good, and the means to that end is out laws
 - But when we find that achieving the common good (like saving the baby) requires that we go against the means that were set forth to achieve that end, we are justified by the law
- And it is the same for God's law
 - Consider this example from the history of Israel in 2Chron 30
 - The King of Israel, Hezekiah, was trying to reunite the Northern kingdom of Israel with the Southern Kingdom of Judah
 - Most of the north was apostate, and to a lesser extent so was the south
 - It's been years since anyone in Israel has followed the law and performed the ceremonies prescribed by the law
 - Even the practice of the Passover had been forgotten
 - Then in Chap 30 Hezekiah calls the men of the north and south to return to the temple and repent and seek the Lord again
- Some of the people of Israel and Judah responded to Hezekiah's call, and they assembled to observe the Passover
 - However, it had been so long since they observed the law, no one in the assembly was ritually clean
 - No one had performed the cleansing required by the law, no one had made the necessary sacrifices
 - Yet it was time for the Passover celebration
 - What would they do? Miss the Passover because they hadn't met all the requirements of the law?
 - Here's what happened:

[2Chr. 30:17](#) For *there were* many in the assembly who had not consecrated themselves; therefore, the Levites *were* over the slaughter of the Passover *lambs* for everyone who *was* unclean, in order to consecrate *them* to the LORD.

[2Chr. 30:18](#) For a multitude of the people, *even* many from Ephraim and Manasseh, Issachar and Zebulun, had not purified themselves, yet they ate the Passover otherwise than prescribed. For Hezekiah prayed for them, saying, "May the good LORD pardon

[2Chr. 30:19](#) everyone who prepares his heart to seek God, the LORD God of his fathers, though not according to the purification *rules* of the sanctuary."

[2Chr. 30:20](#) So the LORD heard Hezekiah and healed the people.

- The lesson here should be obvious to us all
 - God was much more interested in their faith response
 - The obedience to repent and return to Him
 - Their willingness to submit to the requirements for observing the Passover – a picture of the Lord's coming sacrifice – was what God wanted in the first place
 - So He pardoned them for not having met all the other provisions of the law and healed them
 - Here's the lesson
 - The rules were not the point to God...it was the heart of obedience that matter
 - And the rules were merely meant to direct behavior in keeping with a faithful heart
 - And since the right were already demonstrating faith in their behavior, denying them the opportunity to worship in the feast because of the rules would have meant the rules were working against God's purpose

- And so Jesus tells of David's experience to make a comparison for the Pharisees
 - And the comparison was this:
 - If God was willing to overlook David's violation of some minor Pharisaical law when his actions otherwise showed his desire to obey God...
 - Then how much more should the Pharisees overlook Christ's ignoring their man-made rules – rules that had no purpose other than to restrict men and make life more difficult
 - Remember, Jesus and the disciples weren't even violating the law - they were violating rules that the Pharisees had put in place – they were man made rules
- But when Jesus says that the Son of God is Lord of the Sabbath in verse 5, he takes His argument one step further
 - The Sabbath was a rule given by God to men as a picture of Christ, something we studied all the way back in Genesis
 - So therefore, it's a rule for men – not for God
 - God is not bound by a Sabbath that He gave explicitly for men
 - So though his actions were not in violation of the Sabbath, it wouldn't have mattered if they were
- But if you sensed there was a larger issue at work here...
 - Larger than merely the principle that rules are means to an end and not the end itself
 - Bigger even than the principle that God does not need to follow rules set for men...then you're right
 - And the second story on the Sabbath given by Luke gives us the opportunity to completely understand the issue here

[Luke 6:6](#) ¶ On another Sabbath He entered the synagogue and was teaching; and there was a man there whose right hand was withered.

[Luke 6:7](#) The scribes and the Pharisees were watching Him closely to see if He healed on the Sabbath, so that they might find *reason* to accuse Him.

[Luke 6:8](#) But He knew what they were thinking, and He said to the man with the withered hand, "Get up and come forward!" And he got up and came forward.

[Luke 6:9](#) And Jesus said to them, "I ask you, is it lawful to do good or to do harm on the Sabbath, to save a life or to destroy it?"

[Luke 6:10](#) After looking around at them all, He said to him, "Stretch out your hand!" And he did so; and his hand was restored.

[Luke 6:11](#) But they themselves were filled with rage, and discussed together what they might do to Jesus.

- This incident comes on some later Sabbath, so Luke is combining the two events for us so we can appreciate how they fit together
- Having gained a reputation for disrupting the Sabbath, Jesus has remained a target especially on the Sabbath
 - In fact, the Pharisees have taken to watching Jesus' every move
 - On this day, they were concerned with the possibility he might heal on the Sabbath
 - This will give you an idea of how completely warped the Pharisees' rules had become
 - They saw a supernatural and miraculous act like healing a paralytic man as somehow going contrary to God's law
 - Nevermind that the healing itself must have come from God Himself – it was a violation of God's law
 - So they stood ready to accuse Him
- Notice the scriptures say Jesus knew what they were thinking, so He decides to deal with them – not to avoid the conflict
 - He looks around the synagogue and sees a man with a withered hand
 - It was probably a birth defect – the word for withered literally means dry, as in dry up, useless
 - He calls the man up to the front, and by now Jesus' reputation is such that everyone naturally expects that he has called the man in order to heal him
 - Which is exactly what the Pharisees were waiting for
- But Jesus is going to use the moment to make a larger point, the same point being made in the earlier experience in the barley field

- He asks the Pharisees does the law compel people to do good or to do bad on the Sabbath? To save a life or to destroy it?
 - Matt adds the question of what would they do if their sheep fell into a well on the Sabbath
 - Of course, they would rescue it and not think another thing of it
 - The need to save the life of a lamb would be more important than remaining still on the Sabbath
- Of course, the Pharisees don't answer, because they will not concede to Jesus' point
 - And of course they couldn't answer Jesus without supporting him
 - If they answer that it's always correct to do what's right on the Sabbath, they would have given him a green light to heal
 - And they were trying to stop him from healing
- I said earlier that rules can never create righteousness
 - They merely give opportunities to make accusations
 - And that's the larger issue here and in the previous account concerning the Sabbath
- The Pharisees had made their endless rules a measure of righteousness in two ways
 - First, the Pharisees had set themselves up within society as an example of righteousness – the rules were their proof that they knew and followed the way of righteousness
 - But the it was a rigged game...the fix was in
 - These men set the rules and then they were the judges as well
 - And they spent their time teaching the need to follow the rules then tried to catch everyone breaking the rules

- The Pharisees had established a system of righteousness that pleased them, that gave them honor and made everyone else's life miserable
 - It's why we call it works...it's hard work
 - And yet being the hypocrites they were, Jesus rightly points out that anyone of them would have done right for themselves – rescuing a lost sheep for example – though they would condemn Jesus for healing a person
- So the Pharisees weren't interested in showing mercy or training people to live for God
 - The rules enabled them to discredit anyone they wished
 - They wanted to discredit anyone who threatened their power and control
- But James gives us the true measure of Now Jesus asks them if doing right or doing wrong was preferable on the Sabbath
 - The obvious answer is that doing right was the correct thing to do on the Sabbath

[James 2:12](#) So speak and so act as those who are to be judged by *the* law of liberty.

[James 2:13](#) For judgment *will be* merciless to one who has shown no mercy; mercy triumphs over judgment.

[James 2:14](#) ¶ What use is it, my brethren, if someone says he has faith but he has no works? Can that faith save him?

[James 2:15](#) If a brother or sister is without clothing and in need of daily food,

[James 2:16](#) and one of you says to them, "Go in peace, be warmed and be filled," and yet you do not give them what is necessary for *their* body, what use is that?

- This is what Jesus was trying to contend with in the Pharisees
 - They were all judgment – according to their own rules, not God's
 - And they had no room for mercy
 - And James rightly says that this is indicative of those who have no faith – merely their works
- Then Jesus skillfully throws the whole situation in the face of the Pharisees
 - He commands the man to stretch out his hand and it is healed

- Jesus does nothing but speak, so he can't be accused of breaking the Pharisee's senseless rules
- Yet He demonstrates the need to do good, to show mercy and not the serve man-made rules
- You have to know that this stunned the audience, embarrassed the Pharisees, and as we see, the Pharisees were infuriated
 - The other Gospel authors mention that this is the point where the Pharisees decided to kill Jesus
- It's easy to see the Pharisees as distant figures completely unlike ourselves
 - We should be careful to examine whether we are pursuing Christ by Faith or are we pursuing God by works according to our own rules
 - You'll know the difference by whether you seek to compare yourself to others on the basis of how well they measure up to your rules
 - But our call is to the law of liberty...
 - Doing good at all times regardless of the rules
 - Showing mercy rather than judgment