



CAPITOL COMMISSION

We Must Deal with Jesus (Luke 6:6-11)

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This, the second of the Sabbath incidents recorded by the pen of Luke concludes the conflict accounts in this section of the Gospel. We have seen how Jesus, the new wine, will not fit into the old wineskins of the Sabbath that existed for the Jew in that day. The oppression and burden that had been laid on the backs of God's people by the religious leaders would be removed. The corrupt scaffolding of the old would be torn down to make way for the promised glorious New Covenant. However, this radical change would not happen without conflict, and as we have found in our accounts over and over again, Jesus was never one to shy away from standing up for divine truth. In this account, Jesus does the very thing that will push the religious leaders over the edge, they came to the Synagogue hoping for a reason to charge Jesus and he is more than willing to oblige them. We must remember that Jesus' action hastened his death, and for us, standing for Jesus includes a cost, it is not a decision without consequences. Yet, for the Christian, this world is not our home, and we are called to walk the path that Jesus walked, seeking in all things, to do the will of our Father in heaven.

Luke 6:6-11 - (6) On another Sabbath, he entered the synagogue and was teaching, and a man was there whose right hand was withered. (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. (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. (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?" (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. (11) But they were filled with fury and discussed with one another what they might do to Jesus.

STANDING IN OPPOSITION TO JESUS

He entered the synagogue and was teaching – As we have observed in previous accounts (cf. Luke 4:15, 16-30, 31-38), Jesus' normal Sabbath activity is that of teaching in the synagogue. Most scholars would place the development of the synagogue during the Babylonian Exile. Initially it meant the local gathering of Jews, and in time it came to mean the building where Jewish congregations met. The synagogue existed primarily as a place of education, prayer, worship, and fellowship. It was the local expression of Judaism, with the Temple being the national focal point.¹ In our text, Jesus arrives at the synagogue and is chosen as a visiting teacher to speak to those gathered. While this incident may have taken place several weeks later after declaring himself lord of the Sabbath, Luke inserts this scene for a purpose. It completes the teaching of Jesus on this important subject and allows us to understand the tipping point of this growing chasm between Jesus and the religious leaders. For us, we see Jesus' teaching ministry was the foundation

through which his actions were understood. What he says, he applied to himself as he lived out the truth in practical terms before all men.

And the scribes and Pharisees watched him...to accuse him – All parties are now represented in this conflict account. These religious leaders have taken their place; they are keeping a watchful eye on Jesus. The Greek word for "watched" is *pareterounto*, this watchfulness carries with it the character of spying.² Those who oppose Jesus have moved past being passive witnesses of his ministry. It has become personal; they are now actively engaged in seeking a reason to bring formal charges against this rebel teacher. They do not doubt that Jesus has the power to heal; this much is a proven fact. In their mind, they are now seeking to determine whether the power Jesus exerted was divine or demonic, as seen in Luke 11:15 when they accuse Jesus of driving out demons by Beelzebul, the prince of demons. At this point the line of demarcation is fixed, the Pharisees purpose was to insure the observance of the law according to their interpretation, while Jesus had come to "release the oppressed."³ What happens next is the inevitable result of truth clashing with error, light exposing the darkness, and Jesus claiming authority over the affairs of men.

"To see whether he would heal on the Sabbath" – The religious leaders had determined that if Jesus chooses to violate the traditions of the elders in this manner, his fate would be sealed. If only they could catch him flaunt his authority in this manner, he would not be able to talk his way out of this situation, no matter how great his standing as a teacher and healer. We must ask, why did the scribes and Pharisees think this would be an unassailable position? According to their traditions, the only possible reason the Sabbath could be broken in the matter of healing was for a life-threatening situation (Yoma 8:6). Luke's background as a physician is seen when he identifies the man with a withered "right" hand. This was the important hand and most likely kept him from continuing in his vocation. However, this would not constitute a reason in which the Sabbath could be violated. Jesus could have just as easily visited the man the following day to restore the use of his hand. Yet the lord of the Sabbath would not be prevented from saving life when able to do so, especially by a group of stiff-necked, hard-hearted legalists who fail to submit themselves to the authority of the Living Word.

APPLICATION:

The scribes and Pharisees take their place in opposition to Jesus. They have been walking this path for quite some time with the conflict continuing to escalate in each encounter. It is easy to demonize them for their rejection of Jesus, their unwillingness to see their need for a savior, and stubborn refusal to see beyond their legalism. In truth, they simply are a reflection of man's

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rebellion against a holy and righteous God. As we turn our gaze inward, we see the rebelliousness of our own hearts. We find people who seek to justify themselves through the works and accomplishments of their own hands. And if not now, we must remember that we were those who opposed Jesus, who found ourselves fighting against God himself, while being blind to that reality. The Christian stands not because he is better than others; but because he stands with Jesus. We have crossed over from death to life; we no longer see Jesus as inconsequential or a threat. He is all we want in this world, to know him, to love him, and to give ourselves so that he may be glorified.

JESUS WILL NOT COMPROMISE

But he knew their thoughts, and he said... "Come and stand here." – In a clear declaration of divinity, the Gospel writer lets us know that Jesus does not unwittingly heal this man's withered hand without understanding all that was at stake and the consequences of his actions. Jesus knew the wickedness of their thoughts, and how this choice to heal on the Sabbath would provide all the reason necessary for the religious establishment to make Jesus the most hated teacher in all of Israel. However, we find Jesus unwilling to allow this unspoken challenge by the religious leaders to remain. He takes the initiative by commanding the man with the withered hand to stand in the middle of the synagogue. Jesus not only has the power to perform the miraculous, but he is willing to defy those who would limit his ministry. Even though he was being watched, he healed without hesitation and made sure that what took place was not done in a corner.

"Is it lawful on the Sabbath to do good or to do harm, to save life or to destroy it?" – Jesus challenged the thoughts of those who opposed him. The ultimate issue was not about doing good or doing nothing, it was the difference between doing good and doing evil. James 4:7 tells us, *"So whoever knows the right thing to do and fails to do it, for him it is sin"*. Those who would keep Jesus from healing on the Sabbath are promoting sin, for they desire for Jesus to refrain from doing good. There is no neutral ground; in opposing Jesus, their actions sought the destruction of another.

APPLICATION:

Is it any wonder that Peter declares to Jesus in Matt 26:35, *"Even if I must die with you, I will not deny you!"* How amazing it must have been to have walked with the Son of God and seen his unflinching conviction in the midst of opposition. He feared no man, he was resolute in his purpose, and displayed a love and compassion that was unmatched in this broken world. Do not our hearts burn within us as we consider Jesus? Yet, the temptation can be

for us to corrupt this image of him. Does not Peter draw the sword in the garden to vanquish the foes of his beloved master? Yet Jesus responds, as only Jesus can, *"Put your sword back in its place. For all who draw the sword die by the sword. Do you not think I can appeal to my Father, and he will at once send me more than twelve legions of angels? But how then should the Scriptures be fulfilled, that it must be so?"* Are we itching for a fight, eager to draw the sword? Let us be like Jesus, let us be those who do not allow opposition to limit us from doing good and saving life. Let the forces of evil come and do what they may with us; for we will not be deterred, we will not retaliate, because we are simply following the example of our beloved master.

CROSSING THE POINT OF NO RETURN

But they were filled with fury and discussed...what they might do to Jesus. – Jesus certainly had a powerful effect on people and after this conflict he has become a threat. The religious leaders cannot believe the audacity of this man and realize he will not go away quietly. You can almost hear their discussion; how shocked they are because he chose to embarrass them in this manner. How disruptive he was to the Sabbath activities of the day. The arrogance of this man! How dare he question their understanding of the Sabbath and expect them to answer his irrelevant question? All that had been brewing in these conflict accounts has come to a head. What remains for them is what must be done. How should they deal with this out of control miracle-working troublemaker?

APPLICATION:

The hatred these religious leaders had for a man who had just cured the sufferings of another is quite amazing. They feel no empathy for the anguish this man endured, or see the blessing that had just been bestowed on him by Jesus. These men loved the rules and regulations they built around following God more than they loved God himself. When the Living God invaded our world, we find our love for him is now a reflection of how we deal with Jesus? What we decide will either catapult us toward God or away from him. There can be no middle ground because Jesus is not a good teacher among many, but he is God in flesh.

1 – Robert J. Utley, *"The Gospel According to Luke, Study Guide Commentary Series"* (Marshall: Bible Lessons International, 2004). Luke 6:6.

2 – Joel B. Green, *The Gospel of Luke* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1997). 255.

3 – Trent C. Butler, *"Holman New Testament Commentary"* (Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 2000). 91.