

“Lord of the Sabbath”

(Luke 6:1-11)

[also found in Matthew 12:1-14 and Mark 2:23-3:6]

Introduction

- As is the case today, there were many false religions in Jesus’ day. Specifically, under the teaching and leadership of the scribes and Pharisees, Judaism had regressed into a man-made religious system of shameless hypocrisy and heartless legalism. They had attempted to create a system of rules and traditions that would make them appear spiritually righteous; in a vain attempt to earn or secure God’s saving grace. However, while they may have been successful in creating the illusion of righteousness on the outside, they utterly failed to become truly righteous on the inside. True righteousness comes only from the transforming grace of God, and that comes only through faith in His Son Jesus Christ. Any religion that proposes a righteousness that can be earned or acquired through human achievement is a false and heretical religion – the religion of legalism.
- Legalism is the religion of human achievement (Christianity is the only religion of divine accomplishment). Essentially, legalism is the self-righteous it is the attempt to gain or maintain salvation based on the keeping or observing of man-made religious laws or traditions. It is not trying to live a righteous or holy life; it is thinking that by doing so you are earning or securing God’s saving grace. Legalism distorts, perverts, and violates the Gospel by attempting to corrupt salvation by God’s grace through faith alone into a man-made system of self-righteous and religious works.

Eph 2:4-5 ~ “But God, being rich in mercy, because of the great love with which he loved us, ⁵even when we were dead in our trespasses, made us alive together with Christ – by grace you have been saved”

Eph 2:8-10 ~ “For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God, ⁹not a result of works, so that no one may boast. ¹⁰For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them.”
(Gal.2:16; Tit.3:5; 2Tim.1:9)

- Legalism is a diabolical enemy of God’s grace. The Pharisees in Jesus’ day had hypocritically perfected the religion of legalism. They had exchanged the heart of a loving and worshipful relationship with God, for a heartless religion of rules and regulations apart from God. They sought to establish a means of earning God’s grace – and ultimately their salvation – through religious works, traditions and habits. Their attempts to accomplish this resulted in a heartless, joyless and godless religion (see Matt.6:1-2, 5, 7-8, 16)

Matt 23:1-7 ~ “Then Jesus said to the crowds and to his disciples, ²“The scribes and the Pharisees sit on Moses’ seat, ³so do and observe whatever they tell you, but not the works they do. For they preach, but do not practice. ⁴They tie up heavy burdens, hard to bear, and lay them on people’s shoulders, but they themselves are not willing to move them with their finger. ⁵They do all their deeds to be seen by others. For they make their phylacteries broad and their fringes long, ⁶and they love the place of honor at feasts and the best seats in the synagogues ⁷and greetings in the marketplaces and being called rabbi by others.”

Matt 23:13, 15 ~ “But woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you shut the kingdom of heaven in people’s faces. For you neither enter yourselves nor allow those who would enter to go in. ... ¹⁵Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you travel across sea and land to make a single proselyte, and when he becomes a proselyte, you make him twice as much a child of hell as yourselves.”

Matt 23:23-24 ~ “Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you tithe mint and dill and cumin, and have neglected the weightier matters of the law: justice and mercy and faithfulness. These you ought to have done, without neglecting the others. ²⁴You blind guides, straining out a gnat and swallowing a camel!”

Matt 15:7-9 ~ “You hypocrites! Well did Isaiah prophesy of you, when he said: ⁸‘This people honors me with their lips, but their heart is far from me; ⁹in vain do they worship me, teaching as doctrines the commandments of men.’” (see Is.29:13)

- Under the Pharisees, Judaism had become a merciless, oppressive, self-serving (self-promoting), hypocritical, and heartless religion. The Sabbath, therefore, no longer served any purpose to enhance their internal relationship with God but now only served to burden themselves with external rules and rituals. They had completely lost sight of God’s command to “*remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy*” (Ex.20:8), and focused exclusively on their legalistic traditions and man-made religious practices.
- ✓ **Illust:** The Judaizers of Paul’s [Jesus’] day were more concerned with religious rules and regulations than they were about their personal relationship with God. They had turned the laws of God (which primarily were intended to reveal God’s character, and God’s heart for His children) into a heartless form of strict, man-made, legalistic religion (a list of all the things you could and could not do).

For example, Jewish law originally came from the Ten Commandments. When you look at the Ten Commandments what you will notice is that they are general and broad principles serving as simple guidelines to govern the faithful believer in how they were to live before a loving and holy God. However, the Jews were not content with these simple and direct commands. They believed that the Ten Commandments should be used to govern every area of a person’s life with precise and narrow application. Therefore, they gathered a group of men to interpret the law of God – specifically the Ten Commandments – and extract from that law a list of rules and regulations that would be used to govern the actions of all people. The result of this study and interpretation came to be known as the “oral law.” Later, during the time of Jesus, this oral law was written down, and this written form of the oral law is called the “Mishnah” (the English version of the Mishnah is over 800pgs). The scribes and the scholars wrote commentaries on the Mishnah, and those commentaries are called the “Talmud” (the Jerusalem Talmud now has twelve printed volumes). Therefore, for the Jew in Paul’s [Jesus’] day, life was terribly regulated and systematized. They had sacrificed their relationship with God for the religion of man. [taken from sermon Love Over Legalism, by Glen Schaumloeffel, 7/24/05]

- The reality of the Pharisees’ oppressively legalistic religion is evident in the passage that we will be looking at today. Always on the prowl, the religious leaders followed Jesus hoping to find some way of discrediting Him before the people and hoping to find some “reason” to kill Him. They resented Jesus’ popularity, feared His authority, and hated His message. Their hostility against Jesus seemingly grew each and every day, until eventually they succeeded in murdering Jesus by having Him crucified on a cross – although this “success” would not have been possible if God had not already sovereignly determined that Jesus would die for the sins of all who would ever believe (see Is.53; Acts 2:22-24).
- In Luke 6:1-12, we find the Pharisees again spying on Jesus and His disciples looking for a reason to accuse Him. As we study this passage, it can be helpful to divide these verses into five distinct parts, but it is important to keep in mind that each part further exposes the heresy of legalism, as well as the veracity of the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

Luke 6:1-11 ~ “On a Sabbath, while he was going through the grainfields, his disciples plucked and ate some heads of grain, rubbing them in their hands. ²But some of the Pharisees said, ‘Why are you doing what is not lawful to do on the Sabbath?’ ³And Jesus answered them, ‘Have you not read what David did when he was hungry, he and those who were with him: ⁴how 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?’ ⁵And he said to them, ‘The Son of Man is lord of the Sabbath.’”

⁶On another Sabbath, he entered the synagogue and was teaching, and a man was there whose right hand was withered. ⁷And 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. ⁸But he knew their thoughts, and he said to the man with the withered hand, ‘Come and stand here.’ And he rose and stood there. ⁹And 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?’”

¹⁰And after looking around at them all he said to him, ‘Stretch out your hand.’ And he did so, and his hand was restored. ¹¹But they were filled with fury and discussed with one another what they might do to Jesus.”

1. The Incident (vs.1)

- Like little vindictive and jealous spies, the Pharisees followed Jesus as He made His way through the towns preaching, teaching and performing many miraculous signs. On one particular “*Sabbath*” (vs.1) day, they thought they finally caught Jesus “*while he was going through the grainfields*” (vs.1). They noticed that Jesus’ “*disciples plucked and ate some heads of grain, rubbing them in their hands*” (vs.1). Matthew’s Gospel explains that they “*were hungry*” (Matt.12:1).
- This may not seem like that big of a deal to us today, because it isn’t. But for the Pharisees it was huge. For, in their legalistic religious of self-righteousness, picking grain constituted work – which was forbidden to do on the Sabbath. On this we must be clear: picking grain on the Sabbath was against the Pharisees’ man-made legalistic religion, but actually not against the commands of God:
Deut 23:24-25 ~ “If you go into your neighbor’s vineyard, you may eat your fill of grapes, as many as you wish, but you shall not put any in your bag. ²⁵If 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.”
Matt 15:7-9 ~ “You hypocrites! Well did Isaiah prophesy of you, when he said: ⁸‘This people honors me with their lips, but their heart is far from me; ⁹in vain do they worship me, teaching as doctrines the commandments of men.’” (see Is.29:13)
- Harvesting grain, or reaping, on the Sabbath was explicitly forbidden as it was considered work (see Ex.34:21), but clearly the disciples were not harvesting. They were simply satisfying their hunger while on their journey – something that God had given a provision for (and made a distinction between) in His law.

2. The Indictment (vs.2)

- Thinking that they had just caught Jesus (His disciples) “red-handed”, “*some of the Pharisees said, ‘Why are you doing what is not lawful to do on the Sabbath?’*” (vs.2). While the Pharisees’ accusation was false, it had enough of the appearance of truth to seem Biblical (lawful). God indeed commanded the Sabbath day, the seventh day (from sunset on Friday evening to sunset on Saturday evening), to be a day of rest (the Hebrew word for Sabbath means “cessation”):
Ex 20:8-11 ~ “Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy. ⁹Six days you shall labor, and do all your work, ¹⁰but the seventh day is a Sabbath to the LORD your God. On it you shall not do any work, you, or your son, or your daughter, your male servant, or your female servant, or your livestock, or the sojourner who is within your gates. ¹¹For in six days the LORD made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that is in them, and rested on the seventh day. Therefore the LORD blessed the Sabbath day and made it holy.”
- However, as the Lord had also made clear, the Sabbath was established as a day to remember the Lord (specifically, His creating for six-days and resting on the seventh; see Gen.2:2-3), and was sign of His covenant between Himself and Israel.
Ex 31:12-17 ~ “And the LORD said to Moses, ¹³‘You are to speak to the people of Israel and say, ‘Above all you shall keep my Sabbaths, for this is a sign between me and you throughout your generations, that you may know that I, the LORD, sanctify you. ¹⁴ou shall keep the Sabbath, because it is holy for you. Everyone who profanes it shall be put to death. Whoever does any work on it, that soul shall be cut off from among his people. ¹⁵Six days shall work be done, but the seventh day is a Sabbath of solemn rest, holy to the LORD. Whoever does any work on the Sabbath day shall be put to death.

¹⁶Therefore the people of Israel shall keep the Sabbath, observing the Sabbath throughout their generations, as a covenant forever. ¹⁷It is a sign forever between me and the people of Israel that in six days the LORD made heaven and earth, and on the seventh day he rested and was refreshed.'”

➤ This “4th Commandment” was intended to provide the Israelites with a day of rest in order for them to remember, and worship, God as God. Clearly, God did not intend the Sabbath to be an oppressive day of religious legalism. Rather, He commanded that the Israelites “*remember the Sabbath day*” in order to give them a day to rest, remember and revere God. As Jesus later explained to the Pharisees, “*The Sabbath was made for man not man for the Sabbath*” (Mk.2:27). Meaning, man was not created to honor the Sabbath but the Sabbath was created for man to honor God.

Unfortunately, the Jews felt compelled to turn God’s gracious command to rest, remembrance and reverence into a detailed and oppressive list of rules and regulations. This not only distorted God’s intention for the Sabbath, but it misrepresented the Sabbath as a legalistic means of obtaining or preserving God’s grace.

✓ Illust: “One section alone of the Talmud, the major compilation of Jewish tradition, has twenty-four chapters listing Sabbath laws. One law specified that the basic limit for travel was 3,000 feet from one’s house; but various exceptions were provided. If you had placed some food within 3,000 feet of your house, you could go there to eat it; and because the food was considered an extension of the house, you could then go another 3,000 feet beyond the food. If a rope were placed across an adjoining street or alley, the building on the other side, as well as the alley between, could be considered part of your house. ...

Under Sabbath regulations, a Jew could not carry a load heavier than a dried fig; but if an object weighed half that amount he could carry it twice. Eating restrictions were among the most detailed and extensive. You could eat nothing larger than an olive; and even if you tasted half an olive, found it to be rotten and spit it out, that half was considered to have been eaten as far as the allowance was concerned.

Throwing an object into the air with one hand and catching it with the other was prohibited. If the Sabbath overtook you as you reached for some food, the food was to be dropped before drawing your arm back, lest you be guilty of carrying a burden.

Tailors did not carry a needle with them on the Sabbath for fear they might be tempted to mend a garment and thereby perform work. Nothing could be bought or sold, and clothing could not be dyed or washed. A letter could not be dispatched, even if by the hand of a Gentile. No fire could be lit or extinguished – including fire for a lamp – although a fire already lit could be used within certain limits. ...

Baths could not be taken for fear some of the water might spill onto the floor and “wash” it. Chairs could not be moved because dragging them might make a furrow in the ground, and a woman was not to look in a mirror lest she see a gray hair and be tempted to pull it out. You could carry ink enough to draw only two letters of the alphabet, and false teeth could not be worn because they exceeded the weight limit for burdens.

According to those hair-splitting regulations, a Jew could not pull off even a handful of grain to eat on the Sabbath unless he was starving-which, of course, is often a difficult thing to determine and would be cause for considerable differences of opinion. If a person became ill on the Sabbath, only enough treatment could be given to keep him alive. Treatment to make him improve was declared to be work, and therefore forbidden. To determine just how much food, medicine, or bandaging would be necessary to keep a person alive-and no more-was itself an impossible burden.

...

The Sabbath was anything but a time of rest. It had become a time of oppressive frustration and anxiety” (MacArthur, John F., *The MacArthur New Testament Commentary: Matthew*; 12:1).

➤ It is important to note that – no matter how sincere and righteous they may sound – the Pharisees were not primarily concerned about Jesus’ disciples breaking (or appearing to break) God’s law concerning the Sabbath. As we have seen, Jesus clearly rebuked the Pharisees for “*leav[ing] the commandment of God and hold[ing] to the tradition of men*” (Mk.7:8). In John’s Gospel, we read that Jesus described the Pharisees as being “*of this world*” (Jn.8:23), “*slave[s] to sin,*” (Jn.8:34), wanting to “*kill*” Him, (Jn.8:37), children of the devil, (Jn.8:44), and unbelievers (8:45).

Matt 23:27-28 ~ “Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you are like whitewashed tombs, which outwardly appear beautiful, but within are full of dead people’s bones and all uncleanness. ²⁸So you also outwardly appear righteous to others, but within you are full of hypocrisy and lawlessness. ... ³³You serpents, you brood of vipers, how are you to escape being sentenced to hell?”

➤ Notice that Jesus did not give the Pharisees and teachers of the law any recognition, credit or praise for their religious effort or spiritual sincerity. To Him, their legalistic religion was anything but commendable or honorable. Knowing their hearts, Jesus condemned their heartless and self-righteous religion of human achievement as hypocritical, abominable and utterly damnable. Although the Pharisees were serious about their religion and their traditions, they were not serious about God or His commands. Not only was Jesus not impressed with their religious effort, but He passionately spoke out against it and against them.

3. The Instruction (vs.3-5)

➤ The look on the Pharisees’ faces when Jesus said, “*Have you not read...*” (vs.3) must have been very conspicuous as they would have heard Jesus essentially charge them with not knowing, understanding or even reading the Scriptures. Referring to 1 Samuel 21:1-9, Jesus explained that even (soon-to-be) King David, not to mention the high priest, understood that the command to remember the Sabbath was not intended to be a command that restricted the Jews from good deeds on the Sabbath: “*... Have you not read what David did when he was hungry, he and those who were with him: ⁴how 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?*” (vs.3-4).

As Jesus affirmed, and made clear, it was right for David to eat the consecrated bread which was lawful for only the priests to eat (as well as for the priest to give it to him to eat). It was also appropriate, and lawful, for David to give some to his companions to eat as well.

When David was fleeing from King Saul, who wanted to kill him, he arrived at the City of Nob with some of his faithful men. Entering the tabernacle alone, he told Ahimelech, the high priest, that he was in the service of the king and needed bread for he and his men [Mark refers to Abiathar, Ahimelech’s son, as the high priest possibly because Ahimelech died shortly after this incident (see 1Sam.22:19-20)]. Ahimelech knew that David was God’s true anointed. The only bread on hand was the 12 loaves of bread placed before the presence of the Lord on a table within the Holy Place. This “shew bread” symbolized the constant fellowship that the people of Israel had with their God as well as the reality that God was their source of food, fellowship, and life. Each Sabbath, the 12 old loaves were replaced with fresh loaves, and eaten only by the priest. This was to teach Israel the holiness of God as well as the sanctity of those whom he chose to minister to him. However, Ahimelech looked ahead to the day when David would take his rightful place as king of Israel, and deemed it was right to feed God’s anointed and his men so they would be physically able to accomplish the mission on which God had sent them.

➤ Jesus was using this incident as an example illustrating His point that “*The Son of Man is lord of the Sabbath*” (vs.5). In Mark’s Gospel we read that Jesus also stated that “*The Sabbath was made for man, not man for the Sabbath*” (Mk.2:25). The Pharisees had completely misunderstood and misapplied the meaning of the Sabbath. The Sabbath was not meant to be an oppressive day filled with rules, but a day to rest in and remember God.

Ultimately, the purpose of the Sabbath was not to put us on the couch, but to point us to Christ. It was a sign to the Israelites of the promised rest to come which is now fulfilled in Christ. God meant the Sabbath to be a day that draws His people back to Him – as a sign that points to the Sabbath rest to come for eternity (see Heb.4).

Today, without being legalistic, we need to prioritize Sunday as the day of worship to the Lord (Acts 2:42; 20:7; Heb.10:24-25). We should not only attend church when it's easy or convenient. We need this "day of rest" to re-center and re-commit our lives on God – to worship God; to confess and repent of sin; to free ourselves from the distractions, deceptions, and seductions of this world; to be edified and convicted by the Word of God; and to fellowship with other believers.

➤ In his parallel account of this narrative, Matthew adds that Jesus gave yet another example to further verify His point:

Matt 12:5-8 ~ "Or have you not read in the Law how on the Sabbath the priests in the temple profane the Sabbath and are guiltless? ⁶I tell you, something greater than the temple is here. ⁷And if you had known what this means, 'I desire mercy, and not sacrifice,' you would not have condemned the guiltless. ⁸For the Son of Man is lord of the Sabbath." (Hos.6:6)

Clearly, the priests "*profane the Sabbath*" by working very hard on the Sabbath. Yet, Jesus confirms they are innocent of any wrongdoing because they are serving the Lord on that day. The Pharisees had distorted the real meaning of the Sabbath, and by doing so they completely perverted the real purpose of God's command. Consequently, they had exchanged the commands of God for their own self-righteous tradition, and failed to see that Christ is "Lord even of the Sabbath" (vs.28).

➤ The command to keep the Sabbath is not repeated in the New Testament, under the new covenant of Christ. In fact, the apostle Paul clearly instructs the believer at Colossae not to be enslaved to the ceremonial laws of the Old Covenant, but to recognize they "*a shadow of the things to come, but the substance belongs to Christ*":

Col 2:16-17 ~ "Therefore let no one pass judgment on you in questions of food and drink, or with regard to a festival or a new moon or a Sabbath. ¹⁷These are a shadow of the things to come, but the substance belongs to Christ." (see Gal.4:10-11)

➤ Nowhere in the New Testament are believers commanded to observe the Sabbath. In fact, we know the early church gathered together on the "*first day of the week*" (i.e., Sunday; Acts 20:7; see 1Cor.16:2). Thus, we see that the New Testament church did not hold to the ceremonial laws of the Old Testament since they were under the New Covenant of Christ and not the Old Covenant of the Law.

4. The Illustration (vs.6-10)

➤ Although we cannot be sure how much time had passed between Jesus' instruction to the Pharisees (Lk.6:3-5) and His entering "*the synagogue*" "*on another Sabbath*" (Lk.6:6), we can be sure that His words were still resonating in their minds: "*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*" (vs.7). There was "*a man ... there whose right hand was withered*" (vs.6), and the Pharisees asked Jesus: "*Is it lawful to heal on the Sabbath?*" (Matt.12:10). This was intended to be yet another trap for Jesus, using the man with a withered hand as bait.

➤ Seemingly without hesitation, Jesus ("*[knowing] their thoughts*" vs.8), "*said to the man with the withered hand, 'Come and stand here.'*" *And he rose and stood there*" (vs.8). The tension must have been palpable. People knew that Jesus could heal any disease or deforming – even demon possession – the question now was would He heal this man on the Sabbath. The Pharisees were probably excited for another opportunity to discredit Jesus.

Everyone knew that the man's hand was "*withered*" (vs.6, 8; *xēros*; shrunken or dried up) with some kind of incurable paralysis (e.g., "*dry*" (Lk.23:31); "*dry land*", Heb.11:29).

- Knowing full well that the Pharisees were trying to trap Him, *“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?’”* (vs.9). Mark recorded that *“they were silent”* (3:4). Although His question seemed easy enough (and it was), the Pharisees knew that Jesus had used their trap against them. If they said it was lawful *“to do good”* or *“to save a life”* on the Sabbath, they could not accuse of wrongdoing. If, however, they said it was lawful *“to do harm”* or *“to destroy [life]”* they knew they would contradict the teachings of the Old Testament. Jesus put their traditions up against God’s commands, and they (hypocritically) would not choose between the two.
- In Mark’s Gospel we read that Jesus *“looked around at them with anger [orgē], grieved [synlypeomai] at their hardness [pōrosis] of heart [kardia]”* (3:5). They were so steeped in their legalistic religion that they had no mercy or compassion – no love of God, no love for God – in their hearts. They were very religious and utterly unsaved. And those they converted to their self-righteous religion were equally condemned. Almost every explicit reference in the Gospels of Jesus’ anger (e.g., not Jn.2:15) was toward those who were a hindrance or barrier to others from coming to Him.
- The Gospel of Matthew again provides us with further information as to what Jesus said that day:

Matt 12:11-12 ~ “He said to them, ‘Which one of you who has a sheep, if it falls into a pit on the Sabbath, will not take hold of it and lift it out? ¹²Of how much more value is a man than a sheep! So it is lawful to do good on the Sabbath.’”
- Luke simply recorded that *“after looking around at them all he said to him, ‘Stretch out your hand.’ And he did so, and his hand was restored”* (vs.10). While it is unclear exactly what infirmity or deformity this man had, it is abundantly clear that after Jesus commanded the man to *“Stretch out”* his hand and once he did it was completely *“restored”* (*apokathistēmi*; vs.10). Matthew put it this way: *“And the man stretched it out, and it was restored, healthy like the other”* (12:13). Again, Jesus shows Himself to be the Messiah, the one and only Son of God (see Jn.9:33). This amazing miracle was not only evidence of Jesus being the Savior sent from God, but also clearly displayed His teaching that it was lawful to heal on the Sabbath.

James 2:12-17 ~ “So speak and so act as those who are to be judged under the law of liberty. ¹³For judgment is without mercy to one who has shown no mercy. Mercy triumphs over judgment. ¹⁴What good is it, my brothers, if someone says he has faith but does not have works? Can that faith save him? ¹⁵If a brother or sister is poorly clothed and lacking in daily food, ¹⁶and one of you says to them, ‘Go in peace, be warmed and filled,’ without giving them the things needed for the body, what good is that? ¹⁷So also faith by itself, if it does not have works, is dead.” (see Hos.6:6)
- In pursuit of their self-centered, hypocritical, and self-righteous religion, the Pharisees had turned things so upside down that they thought it was unlawful to heal a man on the Sabbath, but they would think nothing of lifting their sheep out of a pit on the Sabbath. Once again, it is clear to see that they failed (or refused) to see that God desires *“mercy, and not sacrifice”* (Matt.12:7) – that it is lawful, before the eyes of God, *“to do good on the Sabbath”* (Matt.12:12).

5. The Insurrection (vs.11)

- A person might think that after Jesus’ biblical and rational teaching, and His demonstration of divine miraculous healing power, that the everyone would fall on the knees in worship before Him. But that definitely was not the case: *“But they were filled with fury and discussed with one another what they might do to Jesus”* (vs.11). The religious leaders were enraged by Jesus’ teaching and His miracle. The Greek word (*anoia*) translated *“fury”* (vs.11) could literally be translated “madness” or “folly” (2Tim.3:9). The Pharisees were so livid at what Jesus did and what He said that it was as if they had become insane. In their mind Jesus had trampled their religious traditions, accused them of being hypocrites, and deliberately broke their religious rules by healing a man on the Sabbath. They were livid with Jesus!

➤ In their incensed madness, the Pharisees “*discussed with one another what they might do to Jesus*” (vs.11). In the hardness of their hearts, they would not admit that they were wrong; they would not humble themselves and repent of their sin. Instead of worshipping and following Jesus as Lord, they were determined to kill Him.

Mark 3:6 ~ “The Pharisees went out and immediately held counsel with the Herodians against him, how to destroy [*apollymi*] him.” (also Matt.12:14; see Jn.12:9-10)

Luke 6:9 ~ “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 [*apollymi*] it?’”

Luke 4:34 ~ “Ha! What have you to do with us, Jesus of Nazareth? Have you come to destroy [*apollymi*] us? I know who you are – the Holy One of God.”

Luke 8:24 ~ “And they went and woke him, saying, ‘Master, Master, we are perishing [*apollymi*]!’ And he awoke and rebuked the wind and the raging waves, and they ceased, and there was a calm.”

John 3:16 ~ “For God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish [*apollymi*] but have eternal life.”

➤ It is interesting to note the difference between Jesus’ anger (Mk.3:5) and the anger of the Pharisees (Lk.6:11). Jesus’ anger was the expression of the righteous anger of God against sin, but the Pharisees’ anger was the sinful anger against the righteousness of God. They would not let go of the albatross of their Pharisaical religion (see Lk.5:39). In fact, they were so filled with self-righteous hypocrisy and hateful pride that they responded to Jesus’ miracle, and His message, with an overwhelming desire to murder Him.

Conclusion

➤ Luke 5:11 raises for us a good question: What are we to do with Jesus? Those who cling to their self-righteous religion abhor Jesus for they do not think they have a need for a Savior. To them, Jesus is an affront to their spiritual narcissism. His demands for humility and repentance, and His declaration to be the only way to salvation, offended their religious pride. They are outraged by the Gospel that saves by God’s grace alone through faith alone in Christ alone. Ultimately, their hatred of and hostility toward Christ compelled them to have Him killed.

✓ Illust: Dr. Donald Grey Barnhouse of the Tenth Presbyterian Church in Philadelphia. Knowing that there were people in the audience who were not believers, he would often close his sermons by saying in his great, booming voice, “Dear God, may all who don’t know you as Lord and Savior have no rest until they rest in thee!”

➤ Those who truly believe in Jesus as the Christ – as the one and only Son of God and one and only Savior from God – respond by repenting of their sins and following Jesus as their Lord. True believers have a supreme and sacred love for Christ, and the worship Him as their only God – giving Him all the praise for every good thing that is in them and every good thing that comes from them. They want no part of any self-righteous (legalistic) religion, spiritual narcissism, or performance-based Christianity.

1 Cor 1:30-31 ~ “And because of [God] you are in Christ Jesus, who became to us wisdom from God, righteousness and sanctification and redemption,³¹ so that, as it is written, ‘Let the one who boasts, boast in the Lord.’” (see Gal.6:13-15; Eph.2:9)