

The Church of the Servant King *Survey of the Bible Series – Luke*

Luke 6

SB_LK6_Jesus Heals, Chooses the Twelve and Teaches

Jesus is Lord of the Sabbath (6:1-5)

Jesus' treatment of the Sabbath with a focus upon one's true attitude and relationship toward the heavenly Father was one of the primary points of contention between Him and the Pharisees. Every Jew recognized the Sabbath as the sign of the Mosaic covenant (Ex 20:8-11; 31:12-18). To do anything on the Sabbath that might be considered a desecration of the Sabbath was tantamount to flaunting one's disobedience to the entire Law of Moses (Num 15:30-36). Israel took this very seriously since obedience to the laws concerning the Sabbath was the basis for blessing in Israel.

The problem became the distorted perception of the Law and its purpose by non-spiritual Israel. The problem centered upon the authority of Rabbinic tradition versus the authority of what God Himself had placed in the Mosaic Law. The Law forbid reaping for profit on the Sabbath (Ex 34:21), but it allowed for grain to be picked to eat immediately (Deut 23:25). Therefore, the disciples were not breaking God's law.¹

The event to which Jesus refers in verses 3-4 is recorded in 1 Samuel 21:1-6 and the regulations concerning the consecrated bread are found in Leviticus 24:5-9. It is very likely that David and his men ate the shewbread on the Sabbath since 1 Samuel 21:5-6 sounds as if the consecrated bread had just been changed. Both David and his men ate what should only have been eaten by the priests and did so after lying to the priest about their mission.

Note that Jesus makes nothing of David's deceit. Jesus' point is that the Scriptures did not condemn David for his action; therefore the legalism of the Pharisees is not consistent with Scripture. Also, Jesus uses this example of an apparent or perceived violation of the Sabbath in the life of David as if to say that He is at least as special as David.

The parallel in Jesus' teaching was clear. In the interest of survival David and his companions were allowed to be above the Law with the priest's blessing. Christ and His companions were also above the man-made law that the Pharisees proclaimed.

Another parallel implicit in Jesus' teaching should not be missed. David, as God's anointed, was being hounded by the forces of a dying dynasty—the dynasty of Saul. Jesus was God's new Anointed One who was being hounded by the forces of a dying dynasty (cf. Luke 5:39). The ultimate conclusion was that Jesus **is Lord of the Sabbath**, that is, He has authority even over matters of the Law.²

Jesus' Healing of a Man on the Sabbath (6:6-11)

Jesus' reply to the Pharisees was in effect asking the Pharisees if the Sabbath was a day for evil activity – like their evil intentions in questioning Him – or for honoring God – like His healing which pointed to Who He was. No mention is made of the faith of the man who experienced the healing. That is not the issue in this healing. The issue is the Pharisee's distortion of the purpose of the Law as illustrated by the distortions regarding the Sabbath. In the

¹ For a good example of Talmudic tradition, see J. Dwight Pentecost, *The Words and Works of Jesus Christ* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Zondervan, 1981), 164-165.

² Walvoord, John F., and Zuck, Roy B., *The Bible Knowledge Commentary* (Wheaton, Illinois: Scripture Press Publications, Inc., 1985), 219.

gospel narratives, the Sabbath-controversy pericopes have a coherent theme, i.e. the dispute is not over the legality of various Sabbath activities, but over Jesus' authority. The Sabbath conflicts are not the cause of the plotting, but its occasion. Therefore, Sabbath disputes were not mentioned at Jesus' trials since in themselves they were never the real issue. The real issue at Jesus' trial was His claim to be the Sabbath's Lord.

Jesus performed no "work" on the Sabbath—He simply spoke a few words and a hand was completely restored. He humiliated the religious leaders and healed the man all at the same time without even breaking the Pharisees' law. It is no wonder that the religious establishment was **furious** and sought a way to get rid of Him.³

Jesus Calls the Twelve (6:12-16)

It is likely that Jesus chose twelve to serve as an analogy to the twelve tribes of Israel (see *Expositors Bible Commentary*, p. 236). As such they would point to the eschatological renewal of Israel during the Messianic reign of Christ. Eventually, they would become the Twelve apostles to the Church. A comparison of the list of the Twelve is as follows:

Matthew 10:2-4	Mark 3:16-19	Luke 6:13-16	Acts 1:13
Simon Peter	Simon Peter	Simon Peter	Simon Peter
Andrew	James	Andrew	John
James	John	James	James
John	Andrew	John	Andrew
Philip	Philip	Philip	Philip
Bartholomew	Bartholomew	Bartholomew	Thomas
Thomas	Matthew	Matthew	Bartholomew
Matthew	Thomas	Thomas	Matthew
James, son of Alphaeus	James, son of Alphaeus	James, son of Alphaeus	James, son of Alphaeus
Thaddaeus	Thaddaeus	Simon the Zealot	Simon the Zealot
Simon the Cananaean	Simon the Cananaean	Judas, brother of James	Judas, brother of James
Judas Iscariot	Judas Iscariot	Judas Iscariot	[vacant]

Some observations regarding this list would include the following points:

- Peter is always first and Judas Iscariot is always last.
- Matthew uses "first" in connection with Peter, but Matthew did not mean that Peter was the first convert. More than likely Andrew or John was the first convert. "First" as used by Matthew most likely means first or more prominent among equals (see *Expositor's Bible Commentary*, p. 237).
- The first four members of each list are two pairs of brothers.
- In each list, there are three groups of four, each group headed by Peter, Philip, and James the son of Alphaeus. But within each group the order varies.
- Mark in Mark 6:7 indicates that the men were sent out two by two. This perhaps accounts for the pairing in Matthew 10:2-4.
- Apparently, Simon the Canaanite is the same as Simon the Zealot.
- Thaddaeus is another name for Judas the brother of James who would later become the first apostolic martyr (Acts 12:2).

Simon the Zealot (or Simon the Cananaean) was most likely a nationalist, i.e. a strong upholder of Jewish traditions and religion. Some decades later they became a principal cause of the Jewish War in which Rome destroyed Jerusalem in 70 A.D. The name probably reveals Simon's past political and religious associations.

³ Ibid. See also Pentecost, *Words and Works*, 167 for an excellent analysis of the controversy that existed among the Jews as to what medications were allowable on the Sabbath.

Luke's Record of Jesus' Sermon on the Mount (6:17-49)

The multitudes are present at the beginning of the Sermon and at the end of the Sermon on the Mount. Evidently, Jesus pulled away from the multitudes so that He could instruct His disciples. However, as He taught His disciples, the crowds began to gather around Him and His disciples again.

The Sermon on the Mount was not given as the way of salvation for the lost, but as the way of life for true children of the kingdom. It was instruction for those who had responded to Jesus' invitation to repent. In this Sermon (as on other occasions), Jesus presented the attitudes and attributes that would characterize those who were viewed by God as ready to enter the kingdom. Most likely, the disciples were confused along with the rest of the Jews as to the true nature of righteousness and God's kingdom. When they thought of a Messiah and a kingdom, they had a different perception than that presented by Jesus.

In this address, Jesus clarified both the heart of the Law and the nature of the spiritual life in God's kingdom. The Sermon showed how a person who is in right relationship to God should conduct his life. It demonstrates the standards that God requires of His people within the context of a Jewish nation. It is distinctly Jewish, yet due to the fact that certain spiritual truths are common to all dispensations of history, there are similarities with Church Age principles.

The Beatitudes (6:20-23)

The only standard of righteousness that the disciples knew was that laid down by the Scribes and Pharisees. However, the standards that Jesus taught in the Beatitudes seemed at variance with what the Jews saw in everyday life in Israel. The Pharisees were concerned with external qualities, but Jesus was teaching on internal matters. The qualities that Jesus mentioned could not be the product of Pharisaic righteousness.

The sermon recorded in Luke is a shorter version than Matthew's version even though in both, Jesus is addressing His disciples. However, in Luke, the parts that would be of particular concern or interest to Jews has been eliminated, e.g. the inheritance of the earth (Matt 5:5). This is consistent with the purpose of Luke and Matthew, i.e. Luke's Gentile emphasis and Matthew's Jewish emphasis. Only to the Jewish race is there a promise of a kingdom on earth. Only to the Jewish race is the land a part of their inheritance promised in the Abrahamic, Palestinian, and Davidic Covenants. Anyone possessing these qualities would have stood out in a crowd otherwise looking for a conquering Messiah and kingdom.

The teaching contained in the Beatitudes express a fulfillment of Isaiah 61:1-3 and they express both the entrance requirements for the Kingdom and the associated blessings of the Messianic Age. In effect, Jesus is teaching that certain attitudes and behaviors are to characterize those who are to enter the Kingdom that He is offering (4:17, 23). Jesus came to fulfill all of the Law and the Prophets to include Isaiah 61:1-3.

A brief analysis of some of the terms and phrases used in verses 20-23:

- "Blessed" refers to being approved or accepted
- Luke uses only the word "poor" whereas Matthew uses the phrase poor in spirit. Matthew was emphasizing that the "poor" refers to those who have acknowledged their spiritual unworthiness before God and their utter dependence upon him. It refers to those who have acknowledged that by themselves they can achieve nothing including the merit to enter the kingdom. Luke was emphasizing the fact that indeed these followers of Jesus were physically poor. Luke has already mentioned that those who follow Jesus left everything (5:11, 28). However, Luke emphasizes the fact that they need to focus upon their eternal riches to be had in the "kingdom of God."

- Since Luke mentioned only the poor, some have tried to make a case that Matthew spiritualized Jesus' concern for the economically destitute. While there is concern for the economically poor, the emphasis in both the Old and New Testament is upon one's spiritual status. Jesus is certainly not teaching that every poor person will have a part in the kingdom.
- Both the Hebrew and Greek words for poor refer to those who because of material poverty and social distress have confidence only in God (e.g. Psa 37:14; 40:17; 69:28-29, 32-33; Prov 16:19; 29:23; Isa 61:1). [The *Expositor's Bible Commentary* – Matthew, Mark, Luke, 131] Far from conferring spiritual advantage, wealth and privilege entail great spiritual peril (Matt 6:24; 19:23-24). "The emperor Julian the Apostate (332-63) is reputed to have said with vicious irony that he wanted to confiscate Christians' property so that they might all become poor and enter the kingdom of heaven. On the other hand, the wealthy too easily dismiss Jesus' teaching about poverty here and elsewhere (see on 6:24) as merely attitudinal and confuse their hoarding with good stewardship." [The *Expositor's Bible Commentary* – Matthew, Mark, Luke, 132]
- These first two beatitudes deliberately allude to the messianic blessing of Isaiah 61:1-3 and thereby confirm them as eschatological and messianic.
- Those who are "hated", "excluded", and "reviled" refer to the persecution that the faithful follower of Christ and proclaimer of the Gospel will face in the midst of a world that has Satan as its ruler (see John 15:18-25). These Age of Israel believers would be subject to persecution just the prophets of Israel before them had been (v. 23). The Church Age believer who faithfully proclaims the Gospel of Jesus Christ will also experience persecution (see Acts 14:22; 2 Tim 3:12; 1 Peter 4:13-14).

Jesus Pronounces Woes (6:24-26)

In these verses, Jesus is contrasting those who had given up everything to follow Christ (vv. 20-23) with those who had refused to give up anything (see 18:18-23).

These were the rich, the well-fed, the ones who laugh, who were popular. They did not understand the gravity of the situation which confronted them. They refused to follow the One who could bring them into the kingdom and therefore Jesus pronounced woes on them. These woes were the exact reversal of their temporal benefits. And they are the exact opposites of the blessings and rewards of Jesus' followers, cited in 6:20-23.⁴

Jesus Teaches His Disciples to Love Their Enemies (6:27-36)

This passage is directed toward those who were being persecuted for having followed Jesus. The issue here is how to handle persecution directly related to following Jesus. Jesus is not teaching principles related to how the believer is to deal with breach of contract situations in business, fraudulent misrepresentation, criminal actions against the believer, or how a nation is to deal with other nations. He is teaching His followers how to handle the persecution from the religious group.

The phrase "hate your enemy" (Matt 5:43) is not found in any Hebrew Scripture. Jesus was simply recognizing the presence of certain distortions of OT Scripture such as Lev 19:18 among some of the religious leaders. This view was present within the Qumran community and probably represented the view of other groups with similar positions.

Jesus Teaches His Disciples to Not Judge (6:37-42)

We must remember that in these verses, Jesus is teaching His disciples. The verb *krino* (*krino*) has a wide range of meanings, e.g. judge in a judicial sense, condemn, or discern. The

⁴ Walvoord, *Bible Knowledge Commentary*, 220.

context does not warrant an application to the law courts since Jesus is not teaching about judicial proceedings. Yet, Jesus is not forbidding them to practice of any kind of judgment at all. Such an interpretation would create a foolish naivete to be practiced by the disciples.

The moral distinctions included in this Sermon require that decisive judgments be made by the disciples. For instance, Jesus teaches that they can remove a “speck” from their brother’s eye, but only after they have removed the beam from their own eye. Furthermore, Jesus commands them in Matthew 7:6 to distinguish between dogs and swine and to beware of false prophets in verse 15. Such activities require that judgment (discernment) be exercised.

Instead of teaching that the disciples should never judge, Jesus was teaching that they should judge righteously (see John 7:24). Such a principle is certainly consistent with Paul’s teaching to the Church Age believer found in such passages as 1 Corinthians 5:3-5; Galatians 1:8-9; and Philippians 3:2 as well as other passages such as 1 John 4:1 where the believer is exhorted to exercise discernment. Furthermore, without such an understanding of the believer’s responsibility to judge righteously, contradictions between the passages just cited and Romans 14:10-13 and James 4:11-12 inevitably arise.

The principle: Be discerning without arrogance or presumptuousness. Be discerning with an attitude of humility recognizing your own position before the Lord.

Focus on Matthew 7:6: To what did Jesus refer when He said “do not give what is holy?” What was holy? Answer: that which has been holy in Matthew is the gospel of the kingdom. So this instruction forbids proclaiming the gospel to certain persons designated as dogs and pigs. Instead of trampling the gospel under foot, everything must be sold in pursuit of it (13:45-46). Verse 6 is not a directive against evangelizing the Gentiles or unbelievers. Rather, it is a reference to those who have given clear evidence of rejecting the gospel with vicious scorn and a hardened heart, i.e. those who are blatant enemies of the gospel. An example of this type of rejection from an enemy of the gospel was Herod Antipas, who heard John gladly, but then beheaded him.

Later, when Christ stood before Herod, he said nothing. Jesus later repeated similar teaching to the disciples in 10:14 and 15:14. We find a similar principle in Proverbs 9:8 – “Do not correct a scoffer, lest he hate you; rebuke a wise man, and he will love you.”

The same principle holds true for the Church Age believer as found in such passages as Acts 13:44-51; 18:5-6; 28:17-28; Titus 3:10-11. The difference is that the truth that is rejected is not the gospel of the kingdom, it is the gospel of Jesus Christ.

Jesus Teaches His Disciples to Build upon the Rock (6:46-49)

In this pericope, Jesus continues His teaching regarding false teachers and claimants to the right to enter the kingdom. The disaster by analogy is the day of judgment associated with the 2nd Advent of Christ. The storm to which Jesus refers in His metaphor is eschatological and a reference to “that Day” (Matt 7:22). See Isaiah 28:16-17 and Ezekiel 13:10-13 for similar phraseology. The wise man is the disciple of humility who incorporates Jesus teaching into practice and thereby prepares himself for entry into the Kingdom. Unlike the religious leaders of Jesus’ day, Jesus taught based upon His Own authority and not the authority of others. Jesus is the One Who grants admission into the Kingdom.