

Lord of the Sabbath, Part 4

Luke 6:1-5

Now let's go back to Luke 6. We've just gotten familiar with the story. This unparalleled illustration here. Let's see in Luke 6 how Jesus is driving them here to point three, an unavoidable implication, an unavoidable implication. We might say this is an inescapable conclusion. So third and final point, verse 5 an unavoidable implication. Or you might prefer an inescapable conclusion.

Jesus' illustration here, as we stop to think about it and we make good observations from the text, as we think about it and learn what we can learn from it, it's gonna drive us to the very conclusion in verse 5 that Jesus gave them, that "The Son of Man is Lord of the Sabbath." And you might wonder how did we get from 1 Samuel 21, David before the priests, he's eating holy bread and connect that to the Son of Man is Lord of the Sabbath? How do these two connect? Why does the one drive us to the other conclusion? It's a fair question.

In a few minutes you're going to see that the conclusion is a necessary implication really of the story Jesus referred to. We're going to make some good observations together. Okay, that's why I said you need to have your thinking caps on. If the Pharisees had spent more time thinking carefully about the Scripture. Rather than making a list of prohibited Sabbath day activities, they would have a whole lot wiser to make good judgments here.

They would have been less likely to condemn Jesus' disciples for eating heads of grain on the Sabbath day. So that's what we're gonna do. We're gonna go back to Scripture, make some good observations. First, first observation, they should have observed Ahimelech's compassion. They should have observed Ahimelech's compassion, priestly compassion for David and his men.

Notice in verse 3 that Jesus really draws attention to that, he points out what David did when he was hungry. He was hungry, he and those who were with him. Wouldn't a sense, just a

common human sense of compassion? A concern to care for the needs of hungry men. Wouldn't that help the Pharisees see and learn from Ahimelech's immediate response? Rather than condemn David, Ahimelech tried to find a way to meet the need. He inquired of the Lord, he asked, is it okay to give David the holy bread?

No mention here of Ahimelech being reluctant. No mention of him as a priest chiding David or rebuking him for traveling on the Sabbath. There's no, no moralizing going on. You know David, you oughtn't to be traveling, running around on the Sabbath day because the Lord blesses those who honor the Sabbath, with giving them provision for the journey. You just pray and God will give manna from heaven. There's none of that going on here.

Ahimelech sees himself as the means of that provision. He sees himself as the, as the one who's going to provide for David, as part of the solution. Not just there to condemn him for the problem. He tried to meet the need. Just an immediate reaction from Ahimelech to have compassion, to be accommodating and while Luke doesn't show us, that Jesus is making that point

explicitly here in our text because he's got something else in mind, which we're going to get to.

Jesus did make that very point in Matthew, in Mark, those two gospels tell us that Jesus did highlight this principle. This higher principle of mercy when it came to meeting needs on the Sabbath. Jot down Matthew 12:7. Matthew 12:7, Jesus rebuked the Pharisees. He said, "If you had known what this means, I desire mercy and not sacrifice. You would have not condemned the guiltless."

Jesus here, even though David has traveled on the Sabbath, he's eaten the holy bread, he says he's guiltless. Jesus made a judgment here. Jot down Mark 2:27, Mark 2:27. "Jesus said to them, the Sabbath was made for man, not man for the Sabbath." You Pharisees have this turned upside down. You think the Sabbath is there to bind men. No, it's meant to give them rest. Man wasn't made for the Sabbath. Sabbath was made for man, it's a gift to man.

I don't wanna go too far here, but if we think about ourselves for a moment. We can all get, tend to get our priorities out of, out of order. Can't we, just like the Pharisees? Mercy can often be neglected for the sake of our busy schedule. We got stuff to do, I got, I gotta get to church. I gotta teach Bible study. I can't help you. You ever been guilty of that? We busy ourselves so much sometimes that there's no time to notice other people.

Sometimes we prioritize our families and neglect the widows and the orphans in our midst. You can't do that. We need to have a com, this principle of compassion and mercy and care for other people that causes us to look beyond our immediate obligations, our immediate duties, our immediate schedules to Look around to see others. Sometimes we even provide spiritual reasons for avoiding something that really deep down inside we don't want to do. No, sorry I can't meet that need. I'm sorry, I just, just gonna be too weak from fasting all day.

Too involved in intercessory prayer, to help you move. Yeah, sounds pretty spiritual, doesn't it? It's like the Pharisees before us, we can be guilty of following the same

patterns of hypocrisy in our lives. Same kind of cold heartedness as them. So don't be too quick to cast stones at the Pharisees. How often we do the same things? The principle of Sabbath observance is the normal governing principle for the week. But every once in a while, the providence of God intervenes and brings an interruption to our regularly scheduled program.

Feeding a group of hungry men, that's also a very important principle, should not be neglected. And these were not just any group, any ordinary group of hungry men. These are the king's men. These are led by David, one of Israel's greatest military leaders, which brings us to a second observation, we need to make about that story. The Pharisees should have observed Ahimelech's deference, his deference. Notice how Jesus summarized what happened in verse four.

Look at it in verse four, he says there, that David's actions are very proactive. They're even almost aggressive. Look at the verbs: he entered, he took, he ate and he gave. Ahimelech is not the subject of those verbs is he? But that's what we read in 1 Samuel 21. Here, Jesus portrays David as doing these

things. He pictures David, not Ahimelech as acting with absolute authority here. It's not exactly how the story sounded in 1 Samuel, right?

First Samuel 21:6 it clearly says, "The priest gave him the holy bread." So which is it? Did David take the bread, as Jesus said? Or did Ahimelech give it to him, as we read in God's word, 1 Samuel 21? Who's right, Jesus or God? You wanna write, wanna vote? The answer is yes, satisfy your, [grunt], don't do that to me. Ahimelech gave it, it's true, he saw David's need.

He considered the exigencies of David's urgent business. His obvious need for provisions to fulfill his mission. And he stopped and he decided to inquire of the Lord. He got on his knees. By acquiescing here to David's needs Ahimelech is really deferring to the king. He sees David as an emissary of King Saul, thinking King Saul sent David on a mission and he's rightly concerned to submit to the will of the king, and that is a very important point here, since it shows the priesthood deferring to the anointed king rather than the other way around.

Ahimelech deferred to the royal will, he made way for the King's business. Isn't that interesting? Why weren't the Pharisees willing to do that? Why were the Pharisees so knee jerk blinded by that principle? They had lost sight of royal prerogatives in the 1st century. King Herod was on the throne. He's an Idumaeen; he's a mixed breed.

He has no legitimate claim to Israel's throne, so the Jewish leaders had been absolutely dismissive of his leadership. They saw him as a puppet of Rome, which he was. They become accustomed to thinking them, of themselves as the only legitimate leadership in the land. It's like people saying, Donald Trump is not my president. Oh yes, he is. If he's the president and you live in this country, you pay taxes and he is your president.

Just like if Hillary Clinton were voted into office. And by the way, if the recount proves that she's, just kidding. But if, but if she were in office, yeah, she'd be our president, wouldn't she? And we owe her deference and submission. But here they think of themselves as the only leadership in the land. The only legitimate leadership. So when Jesus arrives on the scene,



they're predisposed to rejecting his royal claims. They're predisposed to resisting his royal prerogatives.

They're instantaneously, instinctively rebellious and they're rejecting Jesus royal assertions out of hand. They don't even have an ear to listen to it. So Jesus stops for a minute and he reasserts his royal prerogative, when he goes back to that story. It's a bit subtle, but it is no coincidence that Jesus chose this illustration involving David, and Jesus has clearly made David not Ahimelech, but David the subject of those verbs. He entered the House of God, he took, he ate the bread of the presence, and he also gave it to those with him.

David, not Ahimelech, is in the driver seat of the narrative. It's exactly the way Jesus wants it read and understood. So David represents the royal prerogative. He represents the will of the rightful anointed King of Israel and as the anointed King of Israel, though not ruling, King Saul is still ruling, but David is next. He acts with regal authority, and the priest is there deferring to that authority. David requested bread, Ahimelech inquired of the Lord and God granted the exception.

As the son of David, born in the House of David, Jesus is in that royal line, isn't he? And when Jesus was anointed, it was, it was not with oil. It was not by a human prophet. Jesus was anointed by God, with the Holy Spirit of God. Jesus, here he comes on the scene possessing more authority than David. He has every right to exercise his royal prerogatives on the Sabbath day, and that brings us to a third observation. They should have observed Ahimelech's compassion.

They should have observed his deference to royal authority. Ceremonial prohibitions need to make way for the principle of mercy in the face of need. Ceremonial prohibitions need to make way for the principle of submission to authority in the presence of the king. And now that Jesus, the son of David, the Son of Man, the Messiah. He's standing before them. Will they submit to him? Or will they not?

Here's a third observation. They should have observed the bread of the presence, the bread of the presence. Again, there is no better illustration that Jesus could have chosen in all

the Old Testament to paint the picture that Jesus wanted the Pharisees to see at this particular moment. Think about the setting of the scene. Jesus and his disciples, where are they walking?

They're in the midst of Israel's grain fields. What do grain fields say to you as you look out to them? They say bread. They say food. They say provision, do they not? Same thing here, there in verse 3, Jesus referred to David's concern not just about his own hunger, but also those who are with him. Then again, in verse 4, Jesus mentions that David ate the bread and he also, did what? He gave it to those who were with him.

Jesus is pointing out how David was taking care of his men. He is the one who took care of them, provided for their needs, who satisfied their hunger. Parallel is clear. Like David before him, Jesus is concerned to care for his own men. To satisfy the hunger of his disciples. They were out on an important mission, not a made up one as if coming from King Saul or not even one to flee from Saul's fury and anger, they're with Jesus.

They're with the anointed Messiah of Israel on his mission. How much greater is his mission than David's before him, or any supposed mission of King Saul? It's infinitely greater, infinitely, profoundly more important. Notice in verse 4 that Jesus refers to the bread of the presence. As we said, that bread is a symbolic representation of God's provision for his people. All 12 tribe, tribes of Israel. One large loaf for each tribe every single week of the year, and Israel needed to remember to always be aware that it is God who provides for their bread, not them.

He's the one who causes the grain to grow. He is the one who satisfies their hunger and that symbol served a very practical purpose as well, to take care of the priest's hunger. The grain came to the temple from the fields of Israel. Israel sowed those seeds of grain in fields that they had plowed, but it was God who created both seed and field. He caused the seed to germinate, to grow, to become fruitful, productive.

Israel had worked by reaping, threshing, winnowing, sifting, grounding, sifting in a sieve to make sure the flour, get the flour ready for the bread. Then that dough had been

prepared and kneaded, and then baked into the loaves, all of that was a visible, tangible demonstration of God's good kind provision for his people. Now here's Jesus, the Son of God, passing through the grain fields that he himself created. He is the one now who's provided these kernels of grain to satisfy his hungry disciples.

He is responsible for the kernel and the flour that comes into the temple. It's grain from these fields that would one day become loaves, one day set before the presence of the holy one of Israel. And here he is, the holy one of Israel himself, God Incarnate the very bread of the presence and the presence himself. He's no longer confined to the Holy of Holies, sitting on a table. He's now walking through the grain fields of Israel, actively providing for his people, his disciples.

How appropriate, right? An unpar, paralleled illustration here, drives to an inescapable conclusion that this one, is the Lord of the Sabbath. Israel may have worked those fields six days a week. But it's the Lord who makes the crops grow. As the Lord of the Sabbath, he's also the one who commands their rest.

And he'll take care of the fields growing on the Sabbath as well. If they'll only rest.

Here's another mark of Jesus' incomparable wisdom. He really turned the Pharisees standard of judgment back on themselves, didn't he? Because by condemning Jesus and his men, the Pharisees found themselves in a very awkward position of condemning King David too. Their standard of judgment would have even gone further, would have condemned the whole priesthood, starting with Ahimelech and then the whole priesthood as well as being corrupt, giving David holy Bread. So by condemning Jesus and his disciples, their, Jesus draws out the implication. They're condemning the throne of Israel, the priesthood of Israel as well.

Had David transgressed the ceremonial law? Yes, he had, no doubt, he'd given his men holy bread to eat. But it was God who allowed Ahimelech to make that exception to the ceremonial law. As we already pointed out, Matthew 12:7. "If you had known what this means, I desire mercy, not sacrifice, you would have not condemned," What? "The guiltless." No guilt even though he transgressed the ceremonial law.

Only the Pharisee's standard condemned David and his men. Jesus exonerated them. Where the Pharisee's standard condemned Ahimelech and the priesthood, Jesus demonstrated the divine prerogative to provide an exception. So Jesus exonerated Ahimelech as well. By carrying those conclusions forward, he just exonerated his disciples. What gave him the right to make such a pronouncement? He had every right, he had the only right, because verse 5 says, "he's the Lord of the Sabbath and he is the Son of Man."

The very first concept in the sentence. Jesus, actually, when he spoke it, in verse 5, he put this at the very front of the sentence, in the original, for emphasis and the chief emphasis here is on lordship. Jesus confronts the Pharisees here with his absolute sovereignty. "Lord of the Sabbath is the Son of Man." That's how it reads. He has absolute sovereignty.

He has unqualified authority, and he, notice, he just pronounces it, he doesn't try to prove it to them. He doesn't argue about it, he simply asserts it, says it, makes a clear,

unambiguous statement and then leaves them to wrestle with it. His absolute lordship implies Sabbath prerogative too. The phrase "Of the Sabbath" it's in the middle of the sentence, "Lord, he is" and then "The Son of Man" is at the end of the sentence. So it's "Lord, he is of the Sabbath, the Son of Man."

So his lordship, it commands the Sabbath itself. He's the one who commands it, protects it, he defines the meaning of the Sabbath, and he prescribes our rest for the Sabbath as well. Far from abrogating the Sabbath, far from diminishing the value of the Sabbath rest. Jesus cares deeply that his people honor the Sabbath. That principle, that one day of rest in seven: principle and treat it as holy.

For us, as we said, it's the principle of the Sabbath, which we observe on Sunday the Lord's Day, not on Saturday, the original Sabbath. The Lord of the Sabbath is concerned that we observe it. That we treat it as holy because it's of great, great benefit to us. Jesus' absolute lordship in general, his Sabbath lordship in particular, all of that is a function of his identity as the Son of Man. Remember we talked about that a number of weeks back.



It's the Son of Man who's Lord over the Sabbath. The Son of Man is one who is like us in every way except for sin, except for the sin nature. The Son of Man knows us because he's human. He knows our needs. He knows the rest that we need. It's his perfect humanity that makes him such a sympathetic high priest. Such an empathetic Lord of the Sabbath and listen folks, we need rest. We need rest physically. We need it spiritually. We see that illustrated throughout Jesus Ministry as he protected his disciples from overwork.

On one occasion, he said to his disciples in Mark Chapter 6 verse 31, "Come away by yourselves to a desolate place and rest awhile. For many were coming and going, and they had no leisure even to eat." Jesus said that's not good. You need to rest. It's not just about resting physically. We need spiritual rest and refreshment as well, which is what we find in the worship of God in close intimacy with Jesus Christ.

Some people say I need to rest so they go home and turn on the TV or they get on the computer and start surfing the

Internet or whatever they do. And you know what? That actually doesn't cause you to rest. It causes you to be [ugh], agitated, especially if you're watching the news. You know what true rest is for a Christian? Every Christian I've talked to, they describe true rest as spending time in the word of God and in prayer.

Unburdening their hearts in prayer to the Lord, reading God's word and letting his word renew their minds and refresh their hearts, transform their lives. That's what every true Christian would describe as the perfect rest. It's true, you know what? That's what Jesus won for us by his perfect life of obedience. We've studied that title before. As I said, "The Son of Man," it refers to Jesus' role as the representative head of the human race.

He not only fulfilled Sabbath obedience on our behalf, he fulfilled all obedience on our behalf and he won for us a perfect and final and unending rest. We already said how we're all guilty of violating the Sabbath. We're all guilty of so many sins and offenses against God's holiness. We don't treat him as we should. We're so flippant sometimes, so carnal, so profane.

But you know what? Jesus never was. He always was perfect in his observation of the Sabbath principle of rest, he was always perfect in every act of obedience.

You know why he did that? He did that for you, that for me. His perfect sacrifice on the cross wiped away every sin and his perfect obedience covers us in perfect righteousness. That's the point in Hebrews. Hebrews 4:9-10, "There remains a Sabbath rest for the people of God. Whoever has entered God's rest, has also rested from his works as God did from his." When was that? Creation week, the eternal rest is what Jesus invites us to enjoy in the presence of the triune God, as he said in Matthew 11:28, "Come to me all who labor and are heavy laden and I will give you rest."

Listen, far from being the burden that the Pharisees turned it into. Far from being a, the burden that many legalizers today in our society, you know the groups that are out there, they use the Old Testament like a stick to beat you with, to show you how you're not truly God's people, you are, you're, you're not one of them, you're not part of their group. you're not doing all the laws like they do it.

Look far from being that kind of a burden, far from being a stick to beat us with, the Sabbath day was to be a blessing to mankind. Jesus came to restore that rest. He came to free Israel from that prison that they were in of over zealous regulation, from the tyranny of these so-called Lords who, they didn't honor the Sabbath either; they corrupted it, turned into a burden rather than protecting it as a rest. So here comes the Lord of the Sabbath to wrestle it away from them, and to reassert his lordship over the Sabbath. As the Lord of the Sabbath Jesus instructed us, his church, to enjoy that principle of the one day in seven rest. We observe it on Sunday rather than Saturday, why? Because that is the day that Jesus rose from the dead. Winning for us a perfect and final and never ending Sabbath rest. Let's pray.

Heavenly father, we acknowledge your goodness, your kindness in giving us the principle of the Sabbath rest. We acknowledge your kindness to us in Christ Jesus. To give us an eternal rest from all of our labors. I think every single one of us in here can acknowledge the, the feeling of being tired, whether it's physically or spiritually or otherwise. We just, we

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need rest. We don't find it in this life. We don't find it with any of the distractions that the world provides. We don't find it in any of the recreations. We don't find it in any activity or lack of activity in this world, we find it in you.