

Ambush on the Sabbath, Part 2

Luke 6:6-11

The spirit of the law, the heart of God himself, is this: God wants his people to actively seek to do good. To be aggressive in showing mercy and compassion for others in need. Beloved, I wish that our church would be known for being, you know, that's a church that it's aggressive in showing mercy. I mean, if you've got a need, you can't hide it from that church. Man, they are after you. Wouldn't that be awesome?

That's what God would have. That's what Jesus is after here. That's what he illustrated next, as he takes action. We've seen the situation. We've seen the interrogation, a third point; the action. Jesus fired two bullets from his rifle. Asking two well aimed, deeply penetrating questions. What was the response there? You see it written? I don't either. They didn't respond. They were silent. Neither the religious leaders nor anyone else in the synagogue that day dared to respond to Jesus questions of interrogation.

And so, in verse 10, Jesus spoke to the man, but only after looking around at them all. Jesus gave the entire room, and particularly those religious leaders, he gave them plenty of time to respond. He gave'm plenty of time, by looking around, all around the room. Gave'm plenty of time to give a rebuttal to explain the lawfulness of this delay in compassion.

We understand here why the crowd didn't respond. I mean, after all, they feel like they're sitting on the sidelines. It's okay. I'm just watching this little debate take place. It's awesome. I like to have a sideline seat, because I can judge without actually getting involved. Nah. They're accountable for what they are seeing; they're accountable for what they're hearing, for what they're about to witness, though they don't know it exactly, they're in the game.

Everybody who observes Jesus and hears his teaching is accountable for what he says. What he does. Who he is. For the religious leaders, though, the fact that they didn't answer, unforgivable. It's a clear mark of their utter condemnation that

they kept their mouths shut. This is nothing less than self-incrimination on their part. They are the ones, after all who are accusing Jesus, in their minds, even in their speech.

Another gospel shows that they actually verbally asked the question. They're the ones accusing him of unlawfulness on the Sabbath, and so they've, if they had anything to say, this is the time to say it. Nah, they prefer to keep their criticisms quiet for the time being.

At their heart, they're cowards. They didn't dare expose their thoughts. Their hidden reasonings to public scrutiny, because if they did, their sinful thinking would be revealed in their cold, and unloving, and unmerciful hearts. All that would be fully exposed, if they truly dared to answer, and get into this debate with Jesus.

As Edwards rightly says, "The religious authorities are not only willing to tolerate the lamentable condition of another human being, but to use it as leverage against Jesus." Can you imagine? It's Pretty ugly, isn't it? That level of hardness of

heart is, it's really hard to imagine this, especially if you lived in that day, especially if you knew these guys personally. I'm sure all these men were good, moral, upstanding, family-oriented guys. They're grandfathers. They got grandchildren running around their legs, and they're picking them up, and hugging them, and kissing them. They're generous. They give to their community. They're strong financial backers of the synagogue. They're contributors to the good of the community and society.

They're guys you'd like to have live next door to you. They'd be men that you look up to. That you respect in the community. But hidden beyond all that, is something that only Jesus can see. Down in the depths of their hearts, there lurked a monstrous pride, and seeped out, here, in this utter lack of concern, to see this poor man whole again. To actually use him as bait to entrap Jesus. It's unbelievable.

They want to prey upon the sorrow of this man. Use him as bait to trap him, rather than begging Jesus, heal him. Utterly shocking that these men, seeming pillars of the Jewish community, could have hearts that Philip Ryken rightly

identified as loveless, merciless, and cruel. But that's exactly what it is.

When Luke describes Jesus looking around here. It's, it's, rather tame in comparison to what Mark tells us. Mark tells us in Mark 3:5, that "Jesus looked around at them with anger, grieved at their hardness of heart." And you can see why. He's seeing the pillars of the community, the respected members, that everybody looks to, and everybody follows, and everybody says, Oh yeah, those are the guys to follow. That's the way you live your life. That's what you do. And he's looking. He's just grieved at that. Why are you following them?

No matter how pleasant and kind, false religion appears on the surface, God knows the heart. What he sees is not pleasant, at all. It's grievous, insidious, malicious, cruel, and that is not an overstatement. Their murderous intent is going to become even more apparent in a moment. But for now, let's just turn the page just a little bit and look at this from a different angle. Because what we really want to rejoice in, as believers here, is the part of the story that shows this compassionate righteous course of action, that Jesus takes, on this particular Sabbath.

"Jesus," as, Ryken says, "does not use people for ulterior purposes." He saw this man as a man. He saw this man, as a man in need. He cared. He had compassion. Look at verse 10 again. "After looking around at them all," and he's got that dealt with, he said to the man, he said to him, "stretch out your hand. He did so, and his hand was restored." It's brief.

But this interplay between Jesus and this unnamed man with a withered hand is absolutely beautiful. This guy's come to Jesus. He believes Jesus has the power, the will to heal him. You know how hard it is for someone with a deformity to stand up in public? To be made the center of attention and expressly for the purpose, not of hiding the deformity, but of revealing it.

In a crowded synagogue, in the presence of all these visiting dignitaries, people of honor, the presence of this famous teacher and healer, this man's tendency would have been to retract his withered hand. To hide it in the folds of his robe. You didn't want people looking at it.

Many Jews, at this time, would have considered this guys' condition to be the judgment of God. A withered right hand must mean that, I mean, God could have withered his left hand, right? But it's his right hand, so it must have been because of some serious hidden sin, and God is exposing it by judging him with this malady. Sin's bad enough that God wants him kept from working effectively. Humbled down to begging. Whoa, must be something really, really bad. That's how they thought.

But this man, verse 8, when Jesus said, "Come stand here." He pushed past that stigma. He pushed past the sense of public embarrassment and shame to obey the voice of Jesus Christ. Beloved, that's what we all have to do, isn't it? We gotta despise the shame and come humbly before the cross. When Jesus commands, we obey. We don't care what people think.

This guy's in the middle of a crowded synagogue. He, had, does not care, because there's one commanding his conscience. The man obeyed again, in verse 10, when Jesus said, "Stretch out your hand." The tense of the command there directed him to, stretch it out all the way, full length. Been a long time since he'd done that. Perhaps his whole lifetime, since he'd stretched

out that shriveled hand. He'd been accustomed, as I said, to keeping it hidden within the folds of his garment. So, to take it out, to reveal that hand, and to stretch it out, is, here, an act of faith.

He trusted Jesus here and in faith he obeyed. And in one of the Bible's many understatement that says, "he did so and his hand was restored." Wouldn't you like, a little bit more detail? Some kind of like CGI effect, that we could see as this thing's kind of coming to life again? Be really cool, but doesn't tell us that. Because we're not supposed to focus on that complete and total restoration, to the normal condition, normal function, normal usefulness.

We're not supposed to just focus on the miracle itself, but what the miracle meant. And I love it, but even though this man here is called up to the front. He's placed in the middle. He isn't standing there exposed and alone, is he? Jesus stood with him. He's not alone. And he's not exposed either. In his shame, Jesus covered his former shame with healing grace. It's the way it is for us. When Jesus asked those two questions,

verse 9, he not only put the scribes and the Pharisees in a corner, but he cornered himself as well.

Jesus had only one way to go in this situation, in this ambush, and it's forward. So, by healing this man on the Sabbath, right under the noses of the Jewish leadership, Jesus knew that it would lead to his own demise physically. These guys are not going to be happy, and Jesus knows that. He knows what's going to happen, that this does not bode well for his physical safety later on.

We know from verse 11, they're completely resolved to destroy him, but Jesus does not hesitate. Jesus does not equivocate. He doesn't pull back. He doesn't hedge his bets. He doesn't attempt to find some kind of acceptable compromise here. He's bold. He's fearless. He's courageous. Not for his own sake, but for our sake. As one commentator put it, "Jesus tied his fate to that of the man with a shriveled hand. The Lord of the Sabbath gave a command. The man responded in obedient faith."

And that meant that Jesus and this man, you know what, they're linked together now. They are inseparable, they are united, they are of one mind. Here is faith and the one who provides. They're together right here in the company of this hostile crowd. Even under the malicious scrutiny of the religious hypocrites, this man is not afraid. He's in the company of Jesus. Psalm 23:5, that's what it means when it says, "You prepare a table before me in the presence of my enemies."

Who sits down in the middle of danger, surrounded by the Taliban and sits down and has a little bit of a banquet? Nobody. You wanna take care of the threat first and then you eat. So confident was David in Psalm 23, that the Lord was his shepherd, and so confident is this man in the presence of his great shepherd. No wounded sheep has need to fear. Look, we need to stop and reflect on that. Very important point, devotional point for us to ponder.

When we go back to what Jesus told his hometown crowd in the synagogue in Nazareth, remember? Remember what he said on that day, was fulfilled in their hearing. It was that text from Isaiah 61:1 and 2, "God has sent me, Jesus said. To proclaim

liberty to the captives and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty those who are oppressed, and to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor." Remember after he read that he rolled up the scroll, he gave it back to the attendant, sat down and said, "That scripture has been fulfilled in your hearing." He came to proclaim liberty, but also to set at liberty the captives, the blind, and the oppressed.

In this text, here, we find out more fully what that meant for him. Jesus' commitment to heal them: Captives, the blind, the oppressed. That meant it would cost him his very life. Jesus is in very real, very literal danger for healing this man. He knew that, even when he did it. We can see, here, still very early in his earthly ministry, the foreshadowing of Jesus' ultimate demise by linking himself to this man and, get this, by linking himself to us, he's entered into our suffering. He has fulfilled the punishment due for our sins by dying on the cross. That's how he came to proclaim and perform healing, to heal his people from their sins.

Beloved, because he tied his fate to ours, he's absorbed the very wrath of God himself. He has taken the punishment that

we deserve. We are forgiven, because he's committed to this union. Not only that, but because he tied himself to us, we are eternally privileged to be united with him forever. We will receive the just reward that he earned, not that we earned, but that he earned, because of his faithful total obedience to the father. Isn't that fantastic? That is the very definition of grace.

Well, Jesus' action, his interrogation exposed something very ugly in the Pharisees. It was that the religion and their hearts devoid of love. They're the chief watchdogs and guard dogs of this false religion, that's paraded itself and presented itself as true religion. It's not true. Jesus blows the lid off of that.

Notice how they react, fourth point: the reaction. This is verse 11. Sad and perplexing words here. They were filled with fury. Discussed with one another what they might do to Jesus. If you look back at the first question Jesus asked them in verse 9, he said, "Is it lawful on the Sabbath to do good or too do harm?" That question is directed really, you might say, to the

whole synagogue, but also to them, but it's, it's, talking about the deformed man. He's at the center of that question.

But the second question, "Is it lawful on the Sabbath to save life or to destroy it?" That question is more properly aimed directly at the murderous hearts of the scribes and the Pharisees. It's another irony, isn't it? It's ironic that they're, here they are, and they're predetermined to condemn Jesus for violating the Sabbath day by working.

It's hard to identify at what point Jesus actually exerted himself in work. Commanding the man to stretch forth his arm. But nonetheless, I mean, this guy's the one who did the work, right? He stretched his hand. Jesus is going to be condemned for working. Okay. They want to condemn him though, so they can do away with him. And so they do that and while he shows his heart, his desire to save a life on the Sabbath; right here, their hearts are revealed, as well.

They are ready to destroy a life, his life, and they're doing it on the Sabbath. Just a little bit ironic, isn't it? And

more to the point, it is the very essence of religious hypocrisy that they condemn others for doing what they themselves do. Here they are with murderous intent and they're determined to find evidence to destroy his life. And they're doing so on the Sabbath, the holy day. Ironic, hypocritical, but that is the blindness of false religion and all their chief exponents.

Notice it says there, "They're filled with fury." Filled is a word, it's referring to being gripped by. They're under the influence of, totally given over to the control of their fury. The word translated, fury, is the word, *anoia*. *Anoia*. I know it sounds like annoyed, but I don't think the etymology is actually connected. Could be. But *anoia*, it's the word for mind, which is *nous*. And then an alpha privative that's prefixed to the front of it literally, not *minous*, not mind. They're out of their mind, basically. It's a word that's translated usually as foolishness. Here, in this context, it's showing these guys are foolish, not just, being fools and frivolous, but fools with anger.

They're seething with rage and perhaps a better term would be to translate this, madness. Because in this context, it

really gets to the point. They've departed from their senses here. They're swept up in an irrational anger. Why is that? Because, based on the evidence that they're here compiling, to condemn Jesus and his ministry.

Here it is. I'm just gonna briefly summarize the evidence against Jesus that they had in their minds. Number one, he ignored, studied rabbis to violate oral tradition that he might do good on the Sabbath. Evidence number one: Guilty. Number two, he touched lepers and he communed with tax collectors and sinners. Okay, number two he's guilty of that, too, isn't he? Number three, he had the audacity to exercise a divine prerogative by forgiving sins. Guilty as charged on all three counts.

The evidence that they'd seen here, on this basis they wanna kill him. They don't wanna understand him. They don't wanna figure it out. They don't wanna say, hey, where have I gone wrong in my thinking? Kill him. And everything they had come to believe about him was sealed in their very presence when Jesus healed this man with a withered hand. They found all of this sufficient, not to worship him, as they should. But to

justify their own wicked intent to destroy him, and the plot is hatched on the Sabbath. It's an irony of grave proportions. It's proof that the religious authorities were truly *anoia*, out of their minds.

So, in situation, the interrogation, the, the action and reaction we see to Jesus here, the Son of Man, as he is exercising his prerogatives on the Sabbath day, as lord of the Sabbath, that's what we see. We see that Jesus is a dividing line. He's received one way by those who are humble of heart. Who recognize their own sin and grieve over their sin. When they come to Jesus in this condition and they say, I want to identify with you, and I will stand in public, exposed to the mocking world. I'll stand with you because being with you, I'm never alone. And being with you, I am never ashamed. And being with you, I'm never exposed, but I'm covered. That's the heart of every believer.

But he's a dividing line because the very same Jesus that melts the wax, it hardens the clay, doesn't it? So, this very same Jesus that melts the believing heart, he also hardens the heart of the outwardly pious, but the truly impious. He hardens

the Pharisee's heart, the, the wicked heart. The religious heart that takes pride in position, and honor, and respect, and title.

So, we bring this little series to a close. This section of scripture to a close. I just want to take a few minutes to consider the implications for us to today. On this issue of the Sabbath, we've been talking about the fact that Jesus did not abrogate the Sabbath, that he's lord over it. He cares very deeply about the Sabbath and otherwise he wouldn't take the position in the honor title as Lord of the Sabbath.

So, the fifth and final point: It's important how we think about, the, how the Lord of the Sabbath would command our behavior on this day, his day, which we now rightly call the Lord's Day. Number five: The implications. What are the implications for us Christians living 2000 years after these events? Half a world away. No longer under the law of Moses, but now under the law of Christ.

First, I think we need to honor the Sabbath principle by honoring the Lord's Day. At the most obvious, most basic level,

it means we need to prioritize church attendance by attending church regularly. Why is that important? Because our savior has been given the honor of being called Lord of the Sabbath, and it's our joy to honor him by honoring his Sabbath day principle on the Lord's Day.

Sabbath, as we said, goes all the way back to creation week. Finishes off the six days of creation work, with a day of rest. God set that day apart not because he needed a break, because he knew we did. He wants it to be for our good, for our rest, and that we should treat this day as holy. Commanded Israel about it, on the Sabbath day, for them to observe it.

And so, we look back to Israel, and we see the pattern there, and we say, hey, it was very important for Israel. In fact, God told the prophet Ezekiel he wanted Israel to, quote, "keep my Sabbaths holy," that they may be a, "that they may be a sign," that is the Sabbaths may be a sign, "between me and you, and that you may know that I, the Lord, am your God."

God wants us to know him by observing this principle, and so by regularly attending worship, we learn. That's what this is about. We learn about our God. We learn about who he is. We learn what he's like. We study him, and we rejoice, and we worship. So that means you just need to order your week in such a way that you're ready for Sunday. Don't be out too late on Saturday nights. Get good sleep. Make sure your family's ready.

You moms, maybe even make sure that the kids' clothes are all set out for the next day, or teach them to do that. Order your life in such a way that you're not packing everything into the weekend. Busying yourself with so many things that you neglect the Sabbath day or the Sabbath principle. Manage your work. Your responsibilities in such a way that Sundays are priority. Clear the deck for the Lord's Day, Hebrews 10:25 says, "We're not to neglect meeting together," as is, "as is the habit of some, but we're to be encouraging one another all the more as you see, the day drawing near."

And you all say to me, hey, we're, Travis, we're here. Why are you preaching to the choir here? I get it. Okay, so here's your charge, if you know someone who's not attending church

regularly, go out and get them. Get'em in here. I see a few empty seats left and Rod, can we put out more chairs? We can put out more chairs. Get'em here. They need to hear this teaching from the word of God, every single week, because they need to worship God. They need to know the Lord.

So, encourage them back into regular church attendance. Talk about him to, or talk not, not, about them, that would be gossip. Don't do that on the Sabbath day either. Talk to them about, why it's so important to get back into church. So, they can know the Lord. So, they can learn the word of God with the saints of God. Serve the body of Christ. So that's one implication. Observe the Sabbath day. Keep it holy or the Lord's Day, Sunday.

Here's another. Second, know that the priority of the Sabbath day, it is important. It is to be kept as holy, but it is not an inviolable moral law that can never ever, ever, be set aside. That is to say, if you don't attend church once, one Sunday, because of whatever reason. You're not in violation. We're not going to come after you with a troop of elders and temple guards coming down your, breaking down your door,

grabbing you out of bed, where you are slumbering peacefully, because you're sick. And rip you out of your rest. Not gonna do that.

It's not an inviolable moral law, and that's what Jesus said when, or meant when he said, "The Sabbath was made for man, not the man for the Sabbath." It's to be honored as a holy day. But there are times when we can't absolutely be at rest on the Lord's Day, right? After all, God continues to work on the Sabbath day as well. And Jesus pointed to his Father's continuing activity on that Sabbath day, as justification for his healing on the Sabbath day.

Even in a more dubious situation, that Jesus brought up about David, with Ahimelech, the priest. Jesus recognized an exception that was made for David, and yet David remained guiltless. Jesus told the Pharisees, Matthew 12:5, and his version of this account, "Have you not read in the law how on the Sabbath the priests in the temple profane the Sabbath and are guiltless?"

So, if the priests of old worked on the Sabbath day and they're guiltless, I guess you could put pastors today, who work on the Lord's Day, likewise without guilt, right? I think that would include everyone who does church work on Sundays, whether they're paid for it or not. Sunday school, people, who, do, doing worship, and all that makes sense. There are other, they're works of necessity that have to do with the ordering of the worship in the Lord's Day. Works of necessity that are permitted.

Other works as well, permitted on the Sabbath Day. Law enforcement falls into that category and immediately comes to mind and always comes to mind. Military service, same thing. You might include a certain emergency services, as well. Romans 13:6 called the civil authorities ministers of God, which acknowledges, among other things, that these folks can work to keep us safe, so we can worship on Sundays. Amen.

The confession we've posted on our website refers to these folks as civil magistrates. The confession freely admits it's lawful and good for Christians to accept and execute that office, and they do so for the sake of maintaining justice and

peace, which is for our sakes. We could wish the criminals didn't commit crimes on Sundays, thereby violating the Lord's Day. But Sabbath observance for them, they've sadly already transgressed other barriers by becoming criminals.

It's part of the bargain. They said, okay, I'm gonna be a criminal with my life, so, yeah, I'm gonna have to let the Sabbath go. So, they don't feel bound in their consciences about doing crimes while we're in church. Well, we're going to give thanks for God providing law enforcement personnel, who protect us and keep us safe, while we're here in church. We're not gonna be pious about, hey, why don't you get shifts off on the Sabbath? I mean praise God if they can get shifts on the Sabbath or shifts off on the Sabbath, that's awesome. Look, don't condemn.

Third, in addition to prioritizing the Lord's Day for worship. Make sure that you are also committed to doing good and mercy. As we said here, as we see Jesus doing, do it aggressively. Find ways to show mercy. Find ways to minister to other people. Do not be self-centered. That is a clear violation

of a Sabbath principle. It's a clear violation of what we see here.

Jesus didn't say, you know, it's the Sabbath day of rest. I don't wanna expend a bunch of power by healing your hand. Can you come back? I mean Monday. Come on. No. Got football to watch. You know, just turn off the football game and go help somebody. Right? Don't hide out in a holy enclave, avoiding people in need. Look out for those who need help. Your help, not somebody else's help. Your help.

I like how Phillip Ryken said this when he wrote, "Some Christians are like the Pharisees." I've been guilty of that before, haven't you? "Always looking for some religiously justifiable way to avoid getting involved in other people's problems. They secretly think that people who have a drug addiction, or get an abortion, end up in prison, join the gay lifestyle, or contract aids are getting what they deserve, and therefore, that they themselves are off the hook, as far as getting personally involved."

But Christ calls us to have a heart of compassion. And as the Lord of the Sabbath, he's given us a day to show mercy. A day for helping people in need. You see people who are struggling because of their own sins and you look down your nose and say, I'm not gonna help that. I mean, you know I'm just enabling. You know they got themselves into that condition, because after all they're criminals or whatever.

Now they got themselves in their condition because they're in the same condition that you are; sinner in need of grace. We need to look for opportunities to serve other people. Proverbs 3:28 says, "Do not say to your neighbor, go come again tomorrow. I'll give it to you, when you have it with you." You, like Jesus, who because he possessed the power to heal his neighbor, he healed his neighbor. The more we're like him, the more we'll be on the lookout for people in need, showing mercy, compassion, taking care of needs, ministering to others, encouraging, showing kindness.

Not only are those activities allowed on the Sabbath day or the Lord's Day, they're the true spirit of Sabbath rest. Treat the Sabbath day as holy. Don't condemn people who work on

the Sabbath out of necessity. Do acts of mercy. That is how we submit to Jesus the Lord of the Sabbath, Amen. Let's pray.

Heavenly Father, thank you for clear teaching from this passage of scripture about your concern on the Sabbath. We do want to give ourselves, heart and soul, mind and body to following Jesus in this matter. He is remarkable, able to do things that none of us can do, but at the same time, he lays down an example, that we would follow in his steps.

We admit, every single one of us here, admits freely that we have not treated your day as holy. We haven't honored it as we should. We've been taught from a young age that it's not really that important. We're no longer under the law and so we don't, we don't take those principles from the law as important. We don't think about them very carefully.

And we confess our sin to you, father, and just ask you would forgive us. But we ask, also, that you would strengthen us. Empower us to truly understand, and obey, and live according to the principle of this Sabbath rest. That we would treat it as

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holy and attend to the services of the church, and attend to the ministry of the church, and give ourselves wholly and completely and cheerfully to it.