

Lord of the Sabbath

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Preacher: Paul Dudley

- [0 : 00] This is the evening service at Holy Trinity on the 12th of May 2002. The preacher is Paul Dudley.
- His sermon is entitled Lord of the Sabbath and is based on Luke chapter 6 verses 1 to 11.
- Good evening. We're beginning a nine part series on Luke 6 and 7 and I have the privilege of preaching the first two tonight and next week.
- In these chapters 6 and 7 we're going to see some great teaching of Jesus. We're going to see some of his miracles. We're going to see some questions that are raised about Jesus. Who is this man?
- Who is he? Right at the very beginning of Luke we're told that the writer writes this account very carefully.
- [1 : 03] I decided after investigating everything carefully from the very first to write an orderly account for you, most excellent Philipus, so that you may know the truth concerning the things about which you have been instructed, that you may know the truth about the things that you've heard.
- I pray at the end of Luke 6 and 7 that you'll learn more about the truth of Jesus. In light of that, why don't we begin in prayer. Father, we do indeed thank you that you have spoken to us, that you have revealed your truth, and that we have it recorded here in the Bible.
- Father, we pray that you'll help us to hear what you are saying to us by your Holy Spirit, that we may know the truth and be certain of it, and that we may live lives that please you in everything that we do.
- Amen. I can see some hearts stirring there.
- Hey? Hand of those who know what tune that is from. What movie? One of the greatest of all time movies. In fact, it would have to be my favourite.
- [2 : 25] Someone want to call it out please? Chariots of Fire. I was only 10 years old when this film came out in 1981.
- 10 years old. But I knew the quality of this film. What a great film. If you haven't seen Chariots of Fire, you must see it.
- It is fantastic. The music, of which we just heard a little bit of, actually won an Oscar for being the best scorecard. And it's about a sprinter.
- Britain's sprinter, Eric Liddell. A great sprinter. His race? The 100 metres. He was good. He was very fast.
- But he was a Christian as well. A very fine Christian. Well, he was picked in the 1924 Olympics and off he went to Paris.
- [3 : 26] Only to find when he arrived that his 100 metre race that he was picked for was on Sunday. The Sabbath. His holy day.
- And he told the management, I'm sorry you brought me all the way over here, but I cannot race. For it's the Sabbath. Can you imagine that?

Doing all that training, getting all the way over there, going over on boat, getting there, and then saying, sorry, I'm not going to race. It's the Sabbath. The great thing we see through the film is that there is another Briton there, another British athlete.

And he was picked in the 400 metres and also the hurdles. He comes up with a great idea. He said, look, I've got my race to hurdles. I'll race the hurdles. But Eric can run my 400 metre race.

Eric's never trained for the 400 metre race. I don't know if you've ever run a 400 metre race and compared it to a 100 metre race. It's four times as long. But it is very difficult, the 400 metre race.

[4 : 35] And then you have this great scene of Eric Liddell in the movie, Down on the Blocks for the 400 metre race. And the gun goes off when he's running around the track.

And it all slows down. And then you have one of the ugliest runners you have ever seen as he starts flying out like this. He didn't have a particularly nice running style, I must say.

But he won. He won the 400 metre race. For me as a young Christian who did a lot of running and a lot of racing, I loved that movie.

It was a great movie. But the question is, is it right to do sport on Sunday? On a Sabbath? A holy day of rest.

My uncle, my uncle as I was growing up, told us that he never got the Sunday paper because that was working. It was forcing other people to work.

[5 : 32] And that was wrong. It was not right that people should be working in the shops on a Sunday. So he refused to buy the paper. And for that fact, he refused to buy anything on the Sunday.

Michelle's next door neighbour, Michelle's my wife, as she was growing up, their next door neighbour, because it was Sunday, they drove very slowly. This is a bit of a problem if you got caught behind them.

But they were not to be deterred. The funny thing was, one Sunday, the two girls went back to university. They lived at Bega. The girls were in Sydney, which is normally about a good six, seven hour drive.

And the girls forgot their pillows on the Sunday. So the father thought he would catch up doing 60 kilometres an hour. He never got there.

He arrived in Sydney, gave the pillows and then drove all the way back again. Is it right to drive, should we be driving slowly on a Sunday? Yet I have a friend during college who was not allowed to become an American Presbyterian.

[6 : 45] He wanted to be ordained in the Presbyterian church in America. But when they asked him the question whether he took a Sabbath, he took a day off, he said that Christians should not, well, were not obligated to observe a weekly Sabbath.

Because of that, they didn't allow him to be a Presbyterian minister. It's a very tricky issue. I don't know if you ever stopped to think about it. I mean, what did you do today? Did you drive at the speed limit or do you get a little bit slower because it's a Sunday?

Did you go and buy something today? I had my paper delivered today. It's a very difficult issue. In fact, in Sydney, back in 1995, the Sydney diocese decided to do a bit of investigation on this and they got a whole lot of brainiacs together and they said, look, I want you to go together and try and work out this issue of the Sabbath.

And after five years of investigation, they came back with little to say. All they could say was they agreed to disagree.

Five years. There's a committee report about it if you want to go and read about it. Well, our passage today picks up on this fact of what is lawful to do on a Sabbath?

[8 : 03] What is right to do on a Sabbath? It picks up this theme. But while it doesn't answer it directly, what it does tell us, it tells us more about Jesus and his relationship to the Sabbath.

And that is very important. So you might like to have your Bibles open as we start. We're going to be looking at Luke chapter 6, page 837. The opening scene here in chapter 6, verse 1 is a very innocent scene.

There's Jesus and the disciples casually walking through some fields, some grain fields. And they get their hands and they grab hold of some of the grain that's there.

They grab hold of it and then they rub it together in their hands to get the grain out from the husk. Then when they've got the grain, they then eat it. Cook it or, I don't know, it doesn't tell us whether they cooked it or not, but they've eaten it, done something with the grain that they've got.

Now, that's the opening scene. But in verse 2, we see there the Pharisees. All of a sudden, they appear.

[9 : 14] Now, I don't know if they're hiding in the fields, you know, just sort of popping up their little heads every now and then. I think he's over there, you know. It doesn't tell us why the Pharisees were following Jesus or how they actually came about to see all this.

But it tells us in verse 2 that they were there. But some of the Pharisees said, why are you doing what is not lawful on the Sabbath? The Pharisees question Jesus and the disciples.

Why have you done this? Now, to help explain this, we're going to have to get a bit of background understanding of why the Pharisees have asked this question. You see, it's not a question that they've actually gone and taken some of the grain.

That's not the problem. Because in Deuteronomy, we see that it's okay to glean some from the fields as you're walking through. That's okay to take a little bit of the grain for those, for the poor, for those who couldn't feed themselves.

There's no problems about that. That's not the issue that the Pharisees are worried about. The issue that they're worried about, as we see in verse 1, right at the very beginning, on one Sabbath.

[10 : 22] It's the fact that they were working on a Sabbath. Now, if we're going to understand working on a Sabbath, we need to understand it from what the Bible has to say. Now, the Sabbath commands that we find in Exodus and Deuteronomy, right back in the beginning of the Old Testament, let me read one of them.

This is from Exodus. It comes from the Ten Commandments. It's the fourth of the Ten Commandments. Remember the Sabbath day and keep it holy. Six days you shall labour and do your work, but the seventh day is a Sabbath to the Lord your God.

You shall not do any work, you, your son or your daughter, your male or female slave, your livestock or your male, your livestock or your alien resident in your towns.

For in six days the Lord made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that is in them, but rested the seventh day. Therefore, the Lord blessed the seventh day and consecrated it.

Here we see in the fourth commandment that they were not to work. They were to set aside the Sabbath day to rest. It was a day.

[11 : 29] There's six days they could work but the seventh they were not. It was to be a holy day to the Lord. No work. But it was a sign. It pointed back to what God did at the beginning.

So we need to understand even back further, back at creation. What is it pointing to? This sign, this command that we've got, commandment that they were given, what did it point to?

Well, it points back to the creation account. There, we see God creating the world in six days and on the seventh day he rested.

And the picture we have there is a fantastic picture of rest. You see it all building up to this moment. all the creation is working towards this seventh day as it describes it.

A day of rest in which God rested. It's a new type of time. It's a time when there could be enjoyment, where God could enjoy his creation.

[12 : 27] It was a time of relationship, a time of fruitfulness. It's a beautiful picture. beautiful picture of rest. I don't know about you and where you're at at the moment, but I feel utterly exhausted.

Last night my daughter was up quite a few times during the night. At about 2.30 she screamed her little lungs out for quite some time. We have in our house at the moment eight people in our small little house.

We have some friends staying with us from Sydney. And I just feel really exhausted. Four little girls all below three years of age yelling and screaming and running around.

I want some rest. I'd love some rest. The picture that we have here is a beautiful picture of rest. Of enjoyment that we see in creation.

We see therefore that these commands point back to this. See God sets up this sign. This way of saying this is what God is bringing forth.

[13 : 37] God will one day bring about this rest. Therefore work six days take a day off. Don't work to remind yourselves of the grace that God is bringing about.

Stop and rest. rest. We know as we go through the Bible that it's tied to the land. That when God's people get back to the promised land it's there that they'll enjoy that rest.

But as we see through the Bible they fail to get there continually. Because of their idolatry because they keep on failing they do not get there. Yet they continue to look towards a time when God would bring about his rest.

Well what does it mean not to work? Well the leaders of God's people sat down to try and work out well what does it mean? We need to try and come up with some consensus that says he not to work.

But this is quite difficult. Now does work mean that I can walk between here and my house or can I only take ten steps? Or is work classed if I do twenty steps or five steps?

[14 : 52] Or is it work if my cow falls into a river and I have to get it out? Is that work? They set about trying to work out what is work. And so they set up this tradition.

Now the Mishnah was a set of rules, an oral tradition and there's a whole unit there devoted to what you could and couldn't do on the Sabbath. Thirty-nine different tasks were prohibited.

Four of which were reaping, that's collecting grain, threshing, that means crushing the grain so that you actually separate the grain from the husk, winnowing, that's the actual process of separating the grain, and preparing food.

These are the four that the Pharisees are charging Jesus and his disciples. In one mouthful, as they swallow the food, the Pharisees charge them of Sabbath breaking.

Jesus could have stopped there and said to the Pharisees, look, we're only breaking your oral tradition. But he does something even more astounding. He could have said, look, this is just your oral traditions that you set up here.

[16 : 15] I can point you to where the law is. Let me show you what that is, how we fulfill that. But instead of doing that, he does something even more astounding. He points to his own authority, his own authority in relation to the Sabbath.

Let's have a look at verse 3 and 4. Let me read it for you. Jesus answered, have you not read what David did when he and his companions were hungry?

He entered the house of God and took and ate the bread of the presence, which is not lawful for any but the priest to eat, and gave some to his companions. Jesus starts by saying, look, haven't you read the story about David and his men?

How David went into the temple, got some of the bread that was holy bread, only to be eaten by the priests, took it back and went to his band of men who were hiding and gave it to them.

Haven't you read that? Jesus is pointing out here that King David and also for the priests for that matter enjoyed a special, that they were above the law in some respects, that they were above the law.

[17 : 32] The law had a certain limit and they were above that. Jesus asked the question because it's a very good question because it puts them in a bit of a bind the Pharisees because they say, no, no, no, no, no, that's wrong, what you're doing, Jesus.

Then they're also pointing to the fact that King David, what King David did was wrong as well and the priests and they're not sure they want to go there. Here we see Jesus saying King David in some respects is above the law in certain aspects.

of it and the priests. But then comes the punchline in verse 5. Verse 5, Jesus brings it all to line.

Just as King David is above the law, so as we see in verse 5, then he said to them, the Son of Man is Lord of the Sabbath.

Jesus is not subject to the law, but as verse 5 points out, he is Lord over it. He has authority over the Sabbath, not the other way around.

[18 : 44] He is claiming authority over it. This is an extraordinary claim. authority, he is claiming that he has the same authority as Moses' law.

In fact, he is saying that he is the right to interpret it a right. He is able to declare what is acceptable and not acceptable on the Sabbath. He is Lord of the Sabbath.

And Jesus claims that for himself. What an extraordinary claim to have that authority. An extraordinary claim.

Well, to demonstrate that he actually does have this authority, Luke gives us another story. We see that in verses 6 to 11.

Again, it starts off as a nice innocent story, an innocent picture of Jesus teaching in the synagogue. Let me read it for you in verse 6. On another Sabbath, he entered the synagogue and taught.

[19 : 47] And there was a man there whose right hand was withered. An innocent picture. Jesus going into the temple. Note that it's on a Sabbath again, but note also that instead of the disciples being in the centre of the picture, we have a man whose hand is withered.

It's somehow, there's something wrong with it. It's all withered up, dry. He's not well. And the hands were very important for that culture, a means of earning money, of tilling the land.

This is a problem. But note that the man is not in danger. His life is not in danger. He just has a withered hand. Things aren't good, but he's not in mortal danger.

Then this innocent picture that we have here is shattered again. Who should pop up from the background? But the Pharisees again. They just happen to be there all the time, don't they?

Just looking at what Jesus is doing. It's kind of sinister as we read there. Let me read it for you in verse 7. There they are.

[21 : 09] They're there trying to catch Jesus out. No longer is it a passive watching. They're out there actively trying to find a way of getting Jesus.

They're not happy with what Jesus has just said. Their Judaism, the thing that they're the leaders of, this religion, was a threat.

He was Jesus claiming to have authority over the Sabbath. There they are, watching out, spying, looking out of the corner of their eyes as they watch Jesus.

But Jesus doesn't back down. Let me read to you verse 8 and 9. Even though he knew what they were thinking, he said to the man who had the withered hand, come and stand here.

He got up and stood there. Then Jesus said to them, I ask you, is it lawful to do good or to do harm on the Sabbath, to save life or destroy it?

[22 : 15] Jesus, at his best, he has a pointed question. He asked them, to save life, to do good, evil and destroy life.

What is the right thing to do on the Sabbath? What is the right thing to do on the Sabbath? there's a long pause.

Jesus looks around waiting for them to give an answer. No answer comes forth. And then Jesus displays his authority over the Sabbath.

After looking around at all of them, he said to them, stretch out your hand. He did so and his hand was restored.

Here we see Jesus, Lord of the Sabbath. Here he is healing on the Sabbath. Here he is interpreting what the Sabbath, what you could and couldn't do.

[23 : 29] Here we see God giving a divine approval of Jesus. If God didn't approve of what Jesus was saying, if Jesus really didn't have that authority, do you think the hand would have been healed?

But here the hand is healed. Jesus is shown to have this authority. He is indeed Lord of the Sabbath. Note a bit of irony here though.

He speaks. He says to the man, your hand is healed. Wow, that's a lot of labour, isn't it? He works really hard there, doesn't he? He just simply speaks.

Yet through speaking, he shows his power. He shows his authority. Here we see Jesus, Lord of the Sabbath.

I want to suggest to you that it also suggests that Jesus is the one who will bring about the blessings of the Sabbath. Here we see Jesus claiming authority over it.

[24 : 39] Here we see Jesus healing a hand of a man. here we see Jesus bringing about the Sabbath rest.

Can you start to see it? Can you start to see here that the Sabbath is actually pointing to a day when there would be rest? Can you start to see that it's starting to point towards Jesus?

He's the one that is to bring rest. He's the one to bring that picture of creation. when there is rest. He's the one to restore humans. Didn't we just see that with him restoring a hand?

Yet note verse 11. What is the Pharisees response to this? After seeing this, what do they say? For they were filled with fury and discussed with one another what they might do to Jesus.

They were no way going to accept Jesus' authority. They were just filled with fury, mindless rage. How dare this man come in and do this and say these things?

[25 : 52] They had no idea. They could not understand. They utterly rejected his claim of authority. They were at their wits' end.

It's a turning point in the story, in Luke. It's a turning point of where the Pharisees and the scribes try to get Jesus to stop him.

Well, this is an important story for the flow of Luke. It's a very important story. We saw at the beginning of chapter 4, verse 16, 16, Jesus states his mission.

In his inaugural address, he's in there in the temple and he takes out the scroll of Isaiah and he reads it. It speaks of good news that has been given to the poor.

It speaks about the release of the captives, the recovering of sight, the oppressed go free, a time of God's favour. That's what he read out, speaking about a time that that would happen, a prophecy.

[27 : 04] And then at the end of the scroll he rolls it up and he goes, it's fulfilled in your midst. Jesus states very clearly his mission. He's the one to bring the blessings, to bring the Sabbath rest.

He's the one. As we go through from that point there from chapter 4, 16, each of the incidents keep on giving us a clearer picture of Jesus' mission.

At the end of chapter 5, we see there that Jesus comes to bring a new era, a new era in salvation history. What he was about to bring was new, new era.

Then we look in today's passage, chapter 6, verse 1 to 11. We see that Jesus does have authority over the Sabbath. He wasn't subject to it.

He was the one that gave it meaning. It also suggests in our passage today that he is the one that might bring the Sabbath blessings. It has this suggestion, it hints at it at this point in our passage.

[28 : 18] He is the one to bring about the Sabbath blessings. But also we see in today's passage, it is also a turning point in the conflict. It is a point where Jesus, they are out to get Jesus and kill him.

As we follow the story through to the end of Luke, the scribes and the Pharisees do get Jesus. The conflict increases. They think they have got him.

they destroy his life on a cross. They think they have won. But the reality is at Jesus' death and resurrection, that is where he brings about the victory.

That is where he brings about the new era. That is the point where he enters the Sabbath rest. The Sabbath pointed towards a time where there would be rest, God's rest, a time of great blessing.

Jesus was the first to enter into it. As we read, we see that those who trust in Jesus, those who trust in him, are united to him and share in that rest now.

[29 : 36] They share in that blessing now by faith. it's a message not just for Israel but for the world.

What did you do today? What are some of the things that you did today? For me, Sundays are a work day, so I take Thursdays off. On Thursdays, we make sure we get the paper, we read the paper, we also do a bit of shopping sometimes.

I actually mow the grass usually on a Thursday. This is my day off. I like to mow the grass, although at the moment I've missed it for a couple of weeks, so it's a little long. I try to drive at the speed limit, try.

I spend time with my family. We go to the zoo, we go to the park. Like most days, I like to spend some time with God in prayer and reading the Bible. It's good to take time out and rest.

Thursdays is a day for me where I stop and just rest, take some time out from the work that I do through the week. But Thursday is not a Sabbath for me. It's not a Sabbath day.

[30 : 56] For to observe a weekly Sabbath, for me to keep on observing this Sabbath is for me to ignore the fact that the reality is already here.

The Sabbath day as described in the Old Testament was a shadow of a reality. The reality is found in Christ.

By faith I enter that Sabbath rest now. I enjoy all the blessings with Christ now by faith. When Christ comes again I will see in full what I enjoy now as I am united to Christ.

One day and Christ comes again I will see it in full. This is just fantastic news. The Sabbath points to Christ.

How do you view Christ? Many in the world react like the Pharisees and the scribes and they ignore his authority. many are indifferent to Christ.

[32 : 07] Where do you sit in your understanding of who Jesus is? May we see the reality that Christ is our true rest.

That in Christ we enjoy our rest by faith now. May that encourage us in our daily lives the way that we live. May it help us to lift our eyes in the race that is before us.

To look towards the day when Christ will come again. To fix our eyes on the prize and not to give up. to remember saying to to an to who help our church our family will we should judge other children Kindern and elujah a little to please can hear Ram ch