

## ***FPFWC Christian Development***



## **Love Completes, Law Falls Short**

September 2023

Fall Quarter

**September 9, 2023**

## **Jesus Silences Critics**

SCRIPTURE TEXT – Luke 14:1-6

### **ICE BREAKER** –

1. Why and how do we show the mercy of God to others?

***Key Verse: “Jesus answering spake unto the lawyers and Pharisees, saying, Is it lawful to heal on the sabbath day? And they held their peace. And he took him, and healed him, and let him go.—Luke 14:3–4***

### **LESSON BACKGROUND**

This lesson depicts the third occasion in Luke’s Gospel that Jesus shared a meal with a Pharisee (see also Luke 7:36–50; 11:37–53). All three interactions share a common pattern of events. First, a Pharisee invited Jesus to join the meal. Second, a tense moment between Jesus and the host led to a conversation regarding issues of religious observance. Third, Jesus used the opportunity to instruct those in attendance on issues regarding how to follow God. In doing so, Jesus taught His fellow diners to act mercifully in their dealings with other people. The issue of doing work on the Sabbath is the primary concern of Luke 14:1–6, today’s Scripture. The Jewish Sabbath was established based on the day that God rested after six days of creation (see Genesis 2:2–3; Exodus 20:8–11; Deuteronomy 5:12–15). As a result, the people were to cease work on the Sabbath. Such requirements regarding that day were a sign of holiness between God and His people (see Exodus 31:12–17).

As the ancient Israelites left Egypt, they were commanded to take certain steps to prepare for Sabbath observance (example: Exodus 16:21–30). Later, as the people entered the promised land, the Law of Moses provided further descriptions regarding proper observance of the Sabbath (see 34:21; 35:1–3). Defiance of these commands brought harsh consequences to the people (examples: Numbers 15:32–36; Nehemiah 13:15–18; Jeremiah 17:27). The Israelites understood the Sabbath to be “a delight” (Isaiah 58:13) and a day for worship (see Leviticus 23:3). Even certain psalms were to be sung on that day (example: Psalm 92).

By the first century AD, certain expectations regarding proper adherence of the Sabbath had been established by the Jewish religious leaders. In the time between the testaments, an oral tradition later codified as the Mishna (rabbinic law) attempted to define the rules regarding proper Sabbath observance. These included nuanced definitions of work, as well as complex regulations regarding what was allowed and disallowed on the Sabbath. Such intricacies made it

challenging for most first-century Jews to accurately interpret how they should observe the Sabbath.

Jesus never disputed the importance of the Sabbath. His high regard for it can be seen in His habit of teaching in synagogues on the Sabbath (examples: Mark 1:21; Luke 13:10). Further, He was willing to use the day to show mercy toward suffering people (examples: Mark 1:21–34; Luke 6:6–11; 13:10–17; John 5:1–18). As “Lord of the sabbath” (Mark 2:28), Jesus demonstrated the true intent of the Sabbath: to remind God’s people of His mercy (see Deuteronomy 5:15). The day was not to be a religious burden or an excuse to limit works of love and mercy.

### **LESSON COMMENTARY**

Jesus did not refrain from meeting and even dining with His opponents. He used these opportunities to rebuke and instruct them. On this occasion Luke recorded Jesus’ attendance at a Sabbath dinner with one of the leaders of the Pharisees (14:1), “a synagogue head (8:41) or a higher official” (Bock, Luke, 1255). More than likely, a man suffering from dropsy (14:2; “ ‘dropsy’ is literally *hydropikos*, probably edema in which various parts of the body become filled with fluid”; Stein, Luke, 386) was present for the purpose of testing Jesus. Luke notes He was under the scrutiny of the opposition—they were watching Him closely (14:1). “The term means ‘to watch lurkingly’ ” (Bock, Luke, 1256), no doubt to find some cause to accuse Him of some infraction of their traditions. Jesus challenged His opposition with a question: “Is it lawful to heal on the Sabbath or not?” (14:3; cf. 6:9; 13:16). Their silence allowed Him to proceed to heal the man. Jesus healed him with three actions: He took hold ... He healed him ... He sent him away (14:4), thus the miracle was firm, full, and final. Jesus concluded this encounter with an illustration of simple, commonsense kindness and humanitarianism (14:5) that made the unarguable (14:6) point that even Sabbath observance was subordinate to compassion.

**LESSON NUGGET** – When we eat together, it should be a time of loving fellowship and joyful gratitude to God; but the Pharisees turned tables into traps and exploited people. They used a man with a handicap condition in trying to catch Jesus; they went to feasts only to receive honors; and they invited to their feasts only people who would return the favor. Hospitality is ministry only if our motive is to help others and glorify God.

**Sources:** *Moody Bible Commentary, Standard Lesson Commentary, and The Essential Everyday Bible Commentary*