

“Let Your Love Be Consistent”
(Luke 14:1-6)

I. Introduction.

This morning, Luke records for us

Another healing Jesus did on the Sabbath day.

He was invited to the house

Of one of the leaders of the Pharisees –

Likely after synagogue,

Since it was on the Sabbath –

To have dinner –

At least that was the pretense –

There was,

With very few exceptions,

An ulterior motive whenever a Pharisee was involved:

Usually it was to find something they could use to accuse Him –

That appears to be the case here:

Luke writes, “They were watching Him closely” (v. 1).

And here was the test:

“There in front of Him was a man

Suffering from dropsy” (v. 2).

Dropsy is an old word for edema/water retention:

His arms and legs were swollen –

Likely because of a weak heart –

Severely enough to be debilitating.

It's possible this man had heard

That Jesus was dining with this Pharisee

And came hoping to be healed:

It's more likely this meeting

Had been set up by the Pharisees

To give them grounds to accuse Him.

Either way, Jesus knew what they were after:

John writes, "But Jesus, on His part, was not entrusting Himself to them, for He knew all men, and because He did not need anyone to testify concerning man, for He Himself knew what was in man" (2:24-25).

Instead of waiting for their accusation,

Jesus decided to be proactive:

He asked, "Is it lawful to heal on the Sabbath, or not" (v. 3)?

They believed that to do so would be work,

And to work on the Sabbath would be to break God's Law –

When Jesus earlier healed the woman on the Sabbath,

Who had been bent over for 18 years,

The synagogue official said to the crowd:

"There are six days in which work should be done; so come during them and get healed, and not on the Sabbath day" (Luke 13:14).

But rather than answering Jesus,

They kept silent –

They wanted Him to break the Law:

They wanted Him to heal this man.

And Jesus didn't disappoint them:

"He took hold of him and healed him,

And sent him away" (v. 4).

But before they could say anything,

Jesus said to them:

"Which one of you will have a son

Or an ox fall into a well,

And will not immediately pull him out

On a Sabbath day" (v. 5)?

Which one of them wouldn't?

Which of us would let our children die –

Or even an animal we cared about –

When we could save them,

Even if it was on the Sabbath?

They couldn't deny they would –

To do so would be hypocritical –

And so they remained silent (v. 6) –

Jesus again puts the clever to shame –

That's what we considered last time

With the healing of the woman.

This morning, let's draw two additional lessons from this encounter:

1. First, that we are to love others by protecting their lives, even on the Sabbath.
2. Second, that our love needs to be consistent.

II. Sermon.

A. First, we are to love others

By protecting their lives,

Even on the Sabbath.

Not everything the Pharisees did was wrong:

If we were to ask Jesus

Whether they would be doing the right thing

If they saved their children or their animals on the Sabbath,

His answer of course would be yes.

Jesus said,

“The Sabbath was made for man,

And not man for the Sabbath” (Mark 2:27).

God doesn’t intend it to harm us,

But to bless us (Gen. 2:3) –

He gives us a day off from work

So that we can do what we need most:

Spend time with Him;

Worship Him –

God doesn’t need our worship –

He has everything He needs in Himself –

We need to worship Him –

That’s how we gain His blessing/strength.

And it shouldn’t be a burden:

Nothing is when you love someone:

John writes, “For this is the love of God, that we keep His commandments; and His commandments are not burdensome” (1 John 5:3).

If we asked Adam and Eve

Whether they looked forward to this day,

What would they have said?

“It’s the best day of the week.”

Even after the Fall –

And their redemption –

They still looked forward to this day –

Not quite as ardently as they did before,

But they still desired it –

And so should we.

Our week is often so busy –

It’s a struggle to find

The time we would like to have with Him –

Without that time,

Our love will cool,

And we will grow weak.

Haven’t you found that to be true? –

Our hearts need to be fueled by communion with Him –

The communion we can only have in His Word and prayer –

That’s the way He’s made things to work –

So that we’ll come to Him more often.

The stronger our love,
The more our sin will be restrained:

Have you ever wondered how David
Could go from being a man after God's own heart,
To an adulterer and murderer?

His sin was kept in check
By his fellowship with God;
But when that fellowship weakened,
He fell from the Lord.

Since our strongest defense is love,
We need this fellowship –
God gave us the Sabbath/the Lord's Day
So that we might have it.

But in giving us this day with Him –
To show our devotion to Him,
By keeping the first four commandments –
He never meant for us to stop keeping the other six –
We're still to love our neighbors as we love ourselves –

The sixth commandment tells us
Not only that we're not to take life unjustly,
But that we're to preserve life.

That's what the Pharisees were doing
When they would rescue their children

And their animals on the Sabbath –

Love dictates that we do the same –

That we protect our own lives

By taking care of our daily needs;

But also that we protect those under our care –

It's always right to love your family

And take care of your animals on the Sabbath:

Jesus wasn't faulting the Pharisees for this.

B. He was faulting them for not protecting everyone else:

For not rescuing their neighbors.

They weren't willing to rescue this man –

He had to suffer on the Sabbath

Even though Jesus was there to make him well.

And this brings us to our second point:

That our love needs to be consistent.

Why did they help their own,

But not this man?

Where was the disconnect?

It was in their hearts –

This is what sin does:

It makes us think/behave irrationally,

Even hypocritically.

It can make us see two contradictory things –

“I should relieve the suffering

Of my children and animals on the Sabbath,

Because that’s the loving thing to do;

But I shouldn’t relieve the suffering

Of my neighbor on the Sabbath,

Because that would be work” –

As completely reasonable and consistent.

Sin is the reason we break God’s Law:

It often deceives us

Into thinking something wrong is good,

Even when God clearly tells us it’s wrong.

Their inconsistency becomes even clearer

When we consider what they thought about Jesus:

They hated Him –

The commandments are all about loving God:

Loving Him with all our heart, mind, soul, and strength;

And our neighbor as ourselves.

Even our love for our neighbor

Is a reflection of our love for God –

Since He is the One who commands us to do so.

These Pharisees would not do either:

They hated their neighbor –

They would rather see this man suffer than be made well –

And they hated God –

They invited Him over for dinner

But only that they might find a way to kill Him.

It might have appeared as though they loved God,

But their affection was really self-centered –

It was directed either towards

Those who showed them affection,

Or to those from whom they expected to receive it –

But not towards all their neighbors –

Especially not their enemies –

And not toward Jesus.

All unbelievers have this kind of love:

Jesus said in the Sermon on the Mount,

“For if you love those who love you, what reward do you have? Do not even the tax collectors do the same?” (Matt. 5:46).

They could go through the motions,

But they couldn’t keep the commandments from the heart –

Out of a genuine love for God –

Jesus said to the Jews in John 5:42,

“But I know you, that you do not have the love of God in yourselves.”

They didn't have the power to love consistently,

Because they didn't have the love of God:

But we do:

God has given us His Spirit –

Through His Son's work –

And with His Spirit

A new heart/affection –

One that empowers us to love our neighbor –

That's what the last six commandments are all about:

Paul writes, "Owe nothing to anyone except to love one another; for he who loves his neighbor has fulfilled the law. For this, 'YOU SHALL NOT COMMIT ADULTERY, YOU SHALL NOT MURDER, YOU SHALL NOT STEAL, YOU SHALL NOT COVET,' and if there is any other commandment, it is summed up in this saying, 'YOU SHALL LOVE YOUR NEIGHBOR AS YOURSELF.' Love does no wrong to a neighbor; therefore love is the fulfillment of the law" (Rom. 13:8-10).

And if it gives us the power

To keep the last six commandments,

It certainly gives us the power to keep the first four –

Which are summarized by the Great Commandment:

You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, mind, soul, and strength.

We can do more than love ourselves;

We can love others.

We can do more than simply go through the motions –

We can obey from the heart;

We can do more than obey just when it suits us –

We can obey consistently –

We can do this

Because the Spirit is working in us

To make us like Jesus.

We know we won't be perfect in this life –

As long as we have sin in our hearts,

We'll be somewhat inconsistent –

But there will be enough consistency

To see Jesus being formed in us.

May the Lord remind us this morning

How important it is to spend time with God,

So that our love will grow stronger,

And we will be more consistent Christians. Amen.

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