

AM Luke 6:1-11

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[0 : 00] Every Sunday morning we're going to meet together, we're going to pray, we're going to read God's Word and we're going to try and think about what God's Word means for us as we live day by day.

We're going to continue our studies in Luke's Gospel this morning. Luke's Gospel, we've come to Luke chapter 6. We're going to think about these first 11 verses of Luke chapter 6.

On the Sabbath, while he was going through the grain fields, his disciples plucked and ate some heads of grain, rubbing them together in their hands. But some of the Pharisees said, Why are you doing what is not lawful to do on the Sabbath?

And Jesus answered them, Have you not read what David did when he was hungry, he and those who were with him? How he entered the house of God and took and ate the bread of the presence, which is not lawful for any but the priests to eat, and also gave it to those with him.

And he said to them, The Son of Man is Lord of the Sabbath. On another Sabbath he entered the synagogue and was teaching, and a man was there whose right hand was withered.

[1 : 04] And the scribes and the Pharisees watched him to see whether he would heal on the Sabbath so that they might find a reason to accuse him. But he knew their thoughts. And he said to the man with the withered hand, Come and stand here.

And he rose and stood there. And Jesus said to them, I ask you, Is it lawful on the Sabbath to do good or to do harm, to save life or to destroy it? And after looking around at them, he said to him, Stretch out your hand.

And he did so. And his hand was restored. But they were filled with fury and discussed with one another what they might do to Jesus. Amen. That is the reading of God's inspired and inerrant word.

Let us join our hearts together now in prayer. Heavenly Father, we thank you this morning that you do indeed keep your people. We thank you that you are the great God of heaven and earth.

We recognize as we come this morning that the situation we find ourselves in is far from ideal. The situation that we find ourselves in is not of our choosing.

[2 : 09] And yet, Heavenly Father, we thank you as we come this morning. We come to the God of the universe. We come to the God who set each star in place. We come to the God who is in control of every atom in the universe.

And so we pray, Heavenly Father, that you would be with us this morning as we come to your word. We pray that you'd be with our friends and family who are struggling at this time. Perhaps some struggling with worry and fear.

Some struggling with anxiety. Some struggling even with illness. We pray, Father, that when this situation arises, that you would give us a word in season. That we would be ready to speak to those who have seemingly lost all hope.

May you go before us now, Heavenly Father. May you remove the scales from our eyes. May you remove the hardness from our heart. And may we see the glory of Christ, we ask.

In Jesus' name. Amen. Well, let's turn then, please, to that passage in Luke chapter 6. These first 11 verses of Luke chapter 6.

[3 : 08] And we're going to see together what God says through his word. Over Christmas, the popular BBC drama had a special episode set on the Western Is.

The drama is, of course, called *The Midwife*. And it caused a bit of a stir on Twitter. One of the people I follow on Twitter was saying, well, how long is it going to be before they bring out the stereotypes of the Western Is?

He himself had a Western Is background, so he knew what that was going to be. And sure enough, when they came to a woman who was sick, who needed help on the Sabbath, The nurses went off

to find the boatman who refused to take them.

Well, because it was the Sabbath. Because it was the Lord's Day. He wouldn't move his boat on the Lord's Day. He was tweeting about how unrealistic this was.

And how, in fact, the woman would have had no difficulty finding help on the Sabbath in the Western Is. Someone then tweeted him back and said, well, come on, that's just how things were in the Western Is.

[4 : 10] That's just how things happened in those days in the Western Is. People would not break the Sabbath. Some people religiously obeyed it. Some were even more extreme, especially those in the Free Church of Scotland.

Now, it was fascinating. Because this was a show filmed in 2018, 2019, about the 1950s. But yet, in it all, they'd missed the whole point of the Sabbath. If they bothered doing any research at all, if they bothered looking into the issue at all, They would have discovered that works of necessity and works of mercy are not only allowed on the Sabbath, But are actually encouraged.

Not only permitted on the Sabbath, but actually encouraged. And as we come to Luke this morning, as we come to this section, as we come to these first 11 verses, We see this confrontation that Jesus has with the Pharisees over the Sabbath.

And we notice that they had made the same mistake. They'd fallen into the same trap as the producers of Call the Midwife. They had made the Sabbath a millstone around the people's necks. Rather than something to be enjoyed, They'd so lost the purpose of the Sabbath, That at the end, they plot the killing of Jesus.

Because he had supposedly broken the Sabbath. He hadn't followed their rules. He hadn't obeyed their commands. And so they plan to kill him. We want to think about three things this morning.

[5 : 35] Three things together from this chapter. These 11 verses of Luke, chapter 6. Firstly, we want to think about works of necessity. Secondly, then, we want to think about works of mercy.

And then thirdly, we want to think about the response to mercy. How do these religious leaders respond when Jesus shows mercy? So firstly, then, we want to think about the works of necessity.

The works of necessity. And we see that in the first five verses of Luke, chapter 6. At the end of Luke 5, we remember how we thought about that strange parable that Jesus told.

That parable of new wine being poured into old wineskins. How that would burst the skins. We saw how Jesus had come not only to fulfill the law and the prophet, But to bring in an entirely new way of dealing with God.

He wasn't just topping up the old way of Jewish religion. But was, in fact, radically bringing something new. To highlight that, then, I think this week, Luke points us To the Jewish Holy Day, to the Sabbath, which lasted from the sunset on Friday to the sunset on Saturday.

[6 : 41] And during it, no Jewish person was allowed to do any work. And these two episodes, then, that focus on Sabbath days, These two episodes that focus on the Jewish Holy Day, Show us how that Jesus is bringing in something that is radically different.

Something that is radically new. It's not just a bolt-on to the Jewish religion. It's not just an addition to what the Pharisees wanted, But it is something entirely new.

We see, verse 1, that this incident isn't given a specific time frame. It just happens on a Sabbath. Some manuscripts, if you have a King James in front of you, for example, Will have that it was on the second Sabbath after the first.

And people tie themselves in exegetical nods, trying to work out, Well, what does that mean? What is the second Sabbath after the first? They can't figure out what the first Sabbath was, Let alone the significance of the second Sabbath that follows from it.

It's safe to say that Luke locates the day for us, But does not locate the date. He locates that it happened on a Sabbath, Without locating the date.

[7 : 48] He doesn't tell us what Sabbath day these things took place on, Just that it happened on the Sabbath. Now, as we come to it, We perhaps miss what all the fuss is about.

We can't really see the big deal, can we? But when we read it with Jewish eyes, I think we begin to see something of it. Because the first alarm bell that's ringing for us Is the fact that Jesus and his disciples are walking.

The Pharisees who we meet here had rules for everything, Including how far you could walk on a Sabbath Before it was considered work. About one kilometre was the accepted standard.

Now, I accept that the passage here doesn't tell us How far Jesus and his disciples walked, Merely that they're going through a grain field. But given that they're hungry, Given that they don't just say, Well, let's go back to a house, Let's go back to where we came from, And get something to eat. I think it's safe to assume that they've walked A little distance from home. So that's the first strike, if you like. They're walking. Secondly then, The disciples picked and ate some heads of grain. [8 : 54] Now, the problem here isn't theft, As you might presume. You might assume that the Pharisees are worked up Because the disciples have taken something That doesn't belong to them. Rather, the problem here is that What they're doing actually constitutes work.

They're harvesting on the Sabbath. They're threshing on the Sabbath. They're winnowing on the Sabbath. They are doing work on the Sabbath.

They're separating the grain from the chaff. When I was younger, I used to watch a show on BBC Called Traffic Cops That followed police officers As they worked around the M6 Around Bradford, West Yorkshire, I think it was.

And I always loved it. I always loved seeing people getting caught By the police for breaking the law. As I've said to you many times before, I think if I wasn't a minister, I'd probably be a policeman. But one of the things that always amazed me Was that people would be stopped For something relatively minor.

You know, they might have a broken taillight. They might not be wearing their seatbelt. And when they were stopped, Eventually you discover that actually Not only had they a broken taillight, Not only had they not been wearing their seatbelt, But actually the car they were driving Wasn't insured. [10 : 04] The car they were driving Didn't have any MOT and tax. In that one incident, They'd broken several laws. In that one incident, They'd broken the law several times. And that's how it was for the Jews here.

As the disciples walked through this grain field, As they picked and rubbed the heads of grain Together in their hands, They'd broken the law several times In just a few moments. They'd broken the tradition several times In just a few moments.

So the Jews pipe up verse 2, Why are you doing that? Why are you breaking the law? Why are you doing what isn't lawful to do On the Sabbath? Why are you breaking the law? And yet notice what's recorded for us In verse 3.

Because it's lovely. We've seen it before, But we see it again. Jesus answered them. They accused the disciples.

They want to know why the disciples Are breaking the law. Notice that Jesus doesn't actually pick Any heads of grain. His disciples were told, Verse 1 plucked and ate some heads of grain. Not Jesus. And they accused the disciples.

[11 : 07] They said to the disciples, Why are you doing this? But Jesus actually answers them. Jesus answers on their behalf. Jesus pleads their case before their accusers. And it's a wonderful truth for us to remember this morning That Jesus pleads our case this morning.

That if we have faith in Jesus Christ this morning, He stands before our accuser And declares us not guilty. He stands before the devil and says that our sins have been paid for.

That our account is clear. The devil would love to get to us. The devil would love to accuse us. The devil would love to have us. And yet our advocate stands between And defends us.

Assures us that our sins have been paid for. And notice how he defends them. Notice what it is that he uses to defend them. He uses the Jews' own history.

He says, Look, don't you remember what David did? Don't you remember your great king? Don't you remember that great figure that you look up to? He was hungry. And he went on to the temple. Not only that, but he took all these people with him.

[12 : 14] He took and he ate the bread of presents. These were breads or cakes That were always supposed to be present in the temple. As a perpetual sacrifice to God. And yet David took them And ate them.

He did what he wasn't allowed to do. He did what only the priests were supposed to do. And he gave it to those who were with him. The implication of this is that the Lord overlooked David's offense.

That the Lord overlooked the things that David had done wrong. Because it was a necessity. Because David and his companions needed this sustenance to survive. It was what David and his companions had to do To get through the situation they were in.

So God will overlook this offense of the disciples Because it's what they had to do to survive. Because it was sustaining them. Even more than that, Jesus says Well look, if that doesn't satisfy you If that doesn't float your boat, verse 5 Look The Son of Man Is Lord of the Sabbath If you don't accept it It's what the disciples had to do to survive Well remember this then That I'm in charge here That I am the Lord Of the Sabbath We see here then That works of necessity Are not works That are breaking the Sabbath What might this look like for us today?

Well Let's say if you have to cook dinner on the Sabbath That's a work Of necessity I would argue that bus drivers probably are Works of necessity For the good functioning of society Bus drivers enable People to get to church What about if our work Forces us to work Some Sundays What if we're in Retail perhaps What if we're in other occupations That force us to work Some Sundays I think again That the two creation ordinances Of work And Sabbath Have to be balanced If 99% of the time Our work allows us To enjoy a Sabbath rest To enjoy a Sabbath Meeting with God's people Then I think the other 1% Of the time Is Fine The danger can be That we get so bogged down In thinking Is this a work of necessity Or not Is this a work That we need to do Or not That we never get around To do anything That we need to do If an all good conscience

[14 : 35] You as a believer Can describe The thing you're doing As a work of necessity Then I think That's fair enough So that's works of necessity Then the disciples As they're going through The grain fields Pluck these heads of grain And eat them Secondly then We want to think about The works of mercy The works of mercy And we have this confrontation Recorded for us In verse 6 It reminds us On another Sabbath Again there's no reference point Again there's no date for us There's no time frame As to when this happens Just simply that it was Another occasion When Jesus challenged the Jews About their use of the Sabbath This time the confrontation Takes place not in a field Not as the disciples are walking But it takes place In the synagogue itself Yet notice again Just as we pass through Just as we won't stop And dwell on it But notice again What Jesus is doing He's teaching in their synagogue He wasn't there per se To perform a miracle He wasn't there To showcase his power per se

He was there to teach And there's a man there Whose hand Was withered Notice how Luke the doctor Here records for us That it was his right hand That was withered Now there are a few ways You could Look at this A few ways you can Understand this Firstly you can look at it Purely anatomically You can say Well Luke's just recording The facts for us He's recording the fact That it was his right hand That it was withered But in the culture of the time The right hand was seen As the hand of power Think of Benjamin The son of the right hand The right hand Was the hand of strength And here is the man In the midst of their synagogue Here is this man Whose right hand Is withered Whose power Was withered Who was useless Much like the Pharisees Who Jesus would rebuke And notice what the scribes And the Pharisees do They sit

And they watch They sit And they wait Verse 7 To see whether Jesus Would heed on the Sabbath Or not They sit And they watch And they wait So that they might find Verse 7 A reason To accuse him It's one of the stranger Pressures of being A minister In a town Or in a Certain situation You feel that pressure That people are always Watching you People are always Watching to see What you're doing Watching your kids In town And whenever you're Losing the plot With them You feel that people Are judging you They're watching you At the gym To see if you'll Make a mistake Or not To see if you'll Let the mask slip Or not And that's the impression That we have Of the religious leaders Here They're sitting Watching Waiting They're sitting Waiting for Jesus To slip up They're sitting Waiting for the mask To slip They're sitting Waiting to see Whether you heal This man or not So that they might Accuse him So that they might Trap him So that they can

Make something stick Against him About their law But Jesus of course As we've seen before Verse 8 Jesus knew Their thoughts And he brings the man With the withered hand Into the centre Of their gathering That in itself Is a worrying thought In many respects Isn't it That Jesus knows Our every thought Because when I Think back Over the thoughts That I've had Over the past week I'm not necessarily Proud of them all When I think back Over the thoughts That I've had Over the past week I'm not necessarily Sure that I would want Everyone to see Every thought That I've had The thoughts That no one else Knows about Those thoughts That have Flitted across My mind It's worrying To know That Jesus Knows those thoughts And that's why Friends We must be careful Not to cherish Sins of thought That's why we must Be careful not to Cherish sins Of imagination Because you see The temptation Is to say Well No one gets hurt By them The temptation Is to say Well no one else Really knows about them So it's okay If I fantasise About that It's okay If I think

About that It's okay To say that No one saw that Thought No one saw that Hatred No one saw that Thing that I thought So therefore I got away With it And yet Jesus here Reminds us That he sees And knows But we're also Reminded that Jesus is the one Who came to save us From sin and death The sins of thought And word And deed And Jesus says To the religious They look What should we do On the Sabbath Should we do harm By leaving the man In his hand Like this Or should we do good By healing him Should we show him Mercy and grace By healing him Or should we leave him Like this Should we save his life Or should we destroy it

[19 : 39] And the question He's really asking them The question that he's Really getting to Is Which do you think Would bring more Honour to God Which do you think Would glorify God More Healing this man Or leaving him In misery Making him right Or leaving him The way he is The ironic thing here Is that the Pharisees Law actually commanded Healing on the Sabbath If anyone's life Was in danger If anyone was In difficulty Then they were Supposed to help According to their law The Sabbath was to be Disregarded And yet here they are Trying to trap Jesus By healing this man On the Sabbath Jesus looks at them We're told To see if there's any Verse 10 Jesus after looking Around at them all To see if there's any Flicker of compassion To see if there's any Flicker of hope Any flicker of mercy At all At what he's saying But he simply says

To the man Look Stretch out your hand The man stretches Out his hand And his hand is restored That which was his Weakness That which was a sign Of his infirmity Has been healed And cured Jesus came to heal us Jesus came to free us From our infirmities Not in the body Necessarily But in the spirit He came to free And forgive us From our sin And our wrongdoing Again we might want To ask What does this Look like today What do doing Works of mercy Look like today There are certainly Jobs that I think Are obvious Works of mercy Aren't there Doctors Nurses Home helps That sort of thing That are Just Apparently Obviously Works of mercy Going to the shops For an elderly Neighbour Who's just had a fall Constitutes a work Of mercy Running a soup kitchen To feed the hungry And homeless In our situation

Obviously works of mercy And again Rather than get into A list of things That we can And can't do Rather than get into A list of things That we say Are works of mercy And aren't works of mercy That's exactly What the Pharisees did They wanted the rules They wanted to know How far you could walk They wanted to know What was happening They wanted to know What they could And could not do On the Sabbath Rather than get into A list of things like that I think we need to say Well This is where Our Christian conscience And Christian liberty Comes into play If we can do the thing That we want to do On the Sabbath With a clear conscience If we can do the thing That we're going to do On the Sabbath With a clear conscience Saying that it's a work Of necessity Or a work of mercy Then I think It should be left there We've seen works Of necessity We've seen works Of mercy And then finally Today we want to think About the response To mercy The response to mercy

And we see that In verse 11 Verse 11 The response To mercy So Jesus Has just healed The man in their midst Jesus has just Restored this man Who was lame Jesus has just Healed this man's Right hand And how do the Religious leaders respond Are they joyous Do they glorify God For the work of his power That they've just seen In their midst Are they happy That this man Has been restored No Verse 11 They're filled With fury And wrath And they discuss What they're going To do with Jesus What are we going To do with him This can't be Allowed to go on This can't be Allowed to continue You see their Idol's been touched They've been made Fools of In their own synagogue Their area Of expertise Their area Of knowledge The law Has been used To hoist them And they're furious Ultimately of course What they're going

To do with Jesus Is kill him Ultimately What they're going To do with Jesus Is put him to death And that's where This confrontation That begins in Luke chapter 6 That's where this Confrontation Ultimately is going To end up Friends It's easy for that Seeing self-righteous Attitude to creep In amongst ourselves When others Don't behave In the way That we expect When others Don't conform To the standards That we have set We can tend To behave Like the Pharisees Here We may not Want to kill Anyone But we may Shun them We may not Want to kill Anyone But in our Hearts We may think Well are they Really converted I can't believe That they would Do something Like that We may say Well they say They're a Christian But would a Christian really Do that The Pharisees Expected Jesus To conform to Their image Of a religious Teacher The Pharisees Expected Jesus To conform to Their mold Of what a teacher Should be

[24 : 42] And when they Wouldn't When he wouldn't Do that They had him Killed When people Don't conform Don't follow Our pattern Today How do we react When people Don't dress The way that We think They should dress How do we react When people Take different Stances on issues Of Christian liberty Than we do How do we react Do we shun them Do we neglect them Do we make it Apparently obvious That they're not Welcome here Or do we move Them towards them In love And in charity One final thing To say about The Sabbath here You see the Sabbath was made To be a joy And a delight The Sabbath was made For man Not man For the Sabbath The Pharisees Missed out on that Joy The Pharisees Missed out on That rest Because they Were so busy Being worried About breaking Their rules

Don't make The same mistake Friends Make the Sabbath The highlight Of your week Make the Sabbath Your crowning joy Don't weary Yourself Don't weary Others By taunting up So many rules And regulations That you've broken The Sabbath Make it a joy Make it a delight Meeting together With God's people Make it a joy And a delight Meeting together And hearing from God Delight yourself In the Lord Delight yourself In his word And you will know The true Sabbath rest That Jesus offers here We may not be able To meet together We may not be able To share fellowship In the same way That we often have But friends This morning Enjoy the Sabbath rest Of God We can know The rest Of sins forgiven We can know The rest Of peace with God Enjoy it This morning Don't make it A burden But make it Your great delight Amen Listen to this Ok Well Let's do So, let's go. So, let's go.