

Son, Saviour, Suffering

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Preacher: Colin Dow

[0 : 01] Turn again with me to Luke chapter 6 and from verse 1 to 11 where we see Jesus, Son, Saviour, suffering.

All over the world when people think of Scotland, they think of tartan, hogmanay, bagpipes, and haggis.

Now we know of course the reality of Scotland is more train spotting than tartan, it's somewhat different. But in Jesus' day when people thought of Israel, they thought of food laws, circumcision, and Sabbath.

These were the distinguishing marks of what it meant to be Jewish. And in some ways it's true even up until this day. Many Jewish people eat kosher food, male infants are circumcised soon after birth, and the Sabbath is kept.

These are the distinctives of the Jewish religion. Again, the reality of Jewish life is somewhat different with most Jewish people being no more religious than the people of Scotland.

[1 : 14] But by and large, these are the distinctives of the Jewish religion, food, circumcision, Sabbath. What are the distinctives of true Christianity?

What are the distinctives of true Christianity? Let me suggest it is not an observance of the Christian Sabbath, the way in which we bring our children up, nor the things we choose to eat. It is something which at first sight cannot be seen. Let me say that again so that none of us are under any illusion.

Now, Luke 6 verse 1 through 11 is set in the context of two Jewish Sabbaths, Saturdays, demonstrates this true distinction in Christianity.

Whereas it's easy to read this passage as a legalistic list of do's and don'ts on a Sunday, the better interpretation is to view it from the perspective of how it adds to our fascination and fixation with and faith in Jesus Christ.

[3 : 04] This passage is composed of two accounts, the disciples picking grain on the Sabbath and Jesus healing of the man with the withered hand. But as we read them together, as I believe Luke wants us to, we gain a fuller picture of what he's teaching us about Jesus.

And let me suggest that from this passage, we can learn the following three things about Jesus. He's the Son, Savior, and Sufferer.

Son, Savior, and Sufferer. Again, let me remind you that our chief distinctive as Christians, is this true of us, is a fascination and fixation with and faith in the person and work of Jesus Christ.

Strip back all the religious practices and the holy lifestyle in which Christians engage, and we are left with this, our relationship with Jesus Christ.

Heavenly Father, we bow in your presence. May your word be our rule, your spirit our teacher, and your greater glory our supreme concern, through Jesus Christ our Lord.

[4 : 22] Amen. First of all then, Son. Jesus is the Son, verses 1 through 5. This first section recounts how the disciples were walking through some grain fields on a Jewish Sabbath and being hungry.

They picked some heads of grain and having rubbed them on our hands to get rid of the chaff, they ate them. The Jewish Pharisees, dominated as they were by the teaching of the rabbis, objected. What you are doing is not permitted on the Sabbath. From the perspective of all the man-made laws and regulations the rabbis had added to the Sabbath law given by God to Moses, they were quite correct.

In fact, Jesus' disciples were guilty of breaching the rabbinic law on four counts. Reaping on a Sabbath, threshing on a Sabbath, winnowing on a Sabbath, and preparing food on a Sabbath.

If the Pharisees were good about anything, it was laying guilt trips and making people feel bad about being alive. Jesus' response is characteristic.

[5 : 30] He knows the Old Testament scripture far better than the Pharisees do, and so he goes back and chooses to use an episode recounted in 1 Samuel 21, something that happened nearly a thousand years previous.

King David and his companions, the so-called mighty men, were hungry. And having entered into the house of God, they ate some of the bread, here called the bread of the presence, which had been set apart for God, and only the priests were allowed to eat it.

Only the priests could eat that bread because only they had been set apart for the service of God. But when David came to the house of God with his mighty men, he argued that his men also were set apart for the service of God, and on that basis, Abiathar, the priest in charge, allowed them to eat this consecrated bread.

And the point of this passage here in Luke 6 is that Jesus is saying to the Pharisees that just as David's men were set apart for the service of God, so were his disciples.

But they were the New Testament equivalent of David's mighty men. The immediate point has far less to do with meeting hunger on a Sabbath, as much as it has to do with the status of the disciples of Jesus.

[7 : 00] They are to Jesus what the fighting companions of King David were to him. They are set apart for the service of God, and as such they should be treated with respect by the Pharisees.

But the greater point of this section is not to raise the status of the disciples as much as it is to point to the identity of Jesus.

If the disciples of Jesus represent the companions of King David in the Old Testament, then Jesus, surely, is the New Testament successor of King David.

Right? That's why Jesus says the Son of Man is Lord of the Sabbath. This section of Scripture has been the occasion of much argument over the years with many Christians interpreting Jesus' words to mean that Jesus and his followers can do whatever they like on a Sabbath because Jesus is its Lord.

They justify breaking the fourth commandment on the basis it doesn't apply anymore because Jesus is Lord of the Sabbath, I'm a Christian, I can do whatever I like. But that's not the point Jesus is making.

[8 : 20] In fact, he's not really talking about the Sabbath at all. He's telling the Pharisees who he is. He is the King in the line of David.

He uses a title for himself which was reserved in the Israel of the day to refer to the Jewish Messiah, the Son of Man. Over the previous chapters in Luke's Gospel, Jesus has been self-identifying as the Jewish Messiah, David's successor.

Think of how in Luke 4 when he preached in his hometown synagogue at Nazareth, he applied an Old Testament passage to himself, Isaiah 61, describing the Messiah.

Today, he said, the scripture is fulfilled in your hearing. Think of how also in Luke chapter 5, Jesus forgives the paralyzed man his sins.

And now again here at the beginning of chapter 6, Jesus is claiming to be the Son of Man, the Jewish Messiah, the New Testament King David. He's drawing parallels between himself and King David because in Jewish minds, the coming Messiah would be cast in the frame of David, their greatest ever king.

[9 : 40] So by referring to this episode from the history of King David, Jesus is not talking about what his followers may do or may not do on a Sabbath. He is pointing to himself as King and Messiah.

When we read this passage as Christians, rather than looking for moral practices as to how we are to keep Sunday special, we become more fascinated and fixated by Jesus as we learn that he's our King and Messiah and our faith in him grows.

Rather than conclude that it's right to feed the hungry on a Sabbath, which we should do every day, not just a Sabbath, we conclude that because of who Jesus is as King and Messiah, it is right for us to have faith in him and to worship him.

Now that's not to say that the Pharisees understood what Jesus was saying in the way we do because for them to be Messiah after King David, Jesus should be a warrior king who with military power should throw out the Romans and establish a new mega-Jewish empire.

they viewed the Messiah for whom they were waiting as an earthly king who would exercise Jewish power and Jewish control over the nations rather like the Romans had been doing over them.

[11 : 07] As we know, Jesus had no intention of bowing to their misunderstanding of what true messianic kingship looked like, as we'll see in a moment. But all the way through this passage, as you can see, Jesus is drawing parallels between himself and King David.

In a world of authority and power, who is your king? To whom do we swear ultimate loyalty and offer unlimited devotion?

Is it to the sons of men entirely as frail and sinful as ourselves, though dressed up in finery and possessing all the wealth and power of this world?

Or is it to Jesus, the Son of Man who is Lord? This section calls us to choose our king and to choose him now.

Son. Second, from verse 6 to 10, Savior. Savior. Here's the question.

[12 : 27] If Jesus is Messiah, then what kind of Messiah is he? The kind who wields his power to do evil things in the name of God?

The kind to destroy life? That's the burden of the second section of our passage. The question of what kind of Messiah Jesus shall be. This story's well known.

It's another Sabbath and Jesus is at the synagogue teaching. Notice, as an aside, Jesus' determination to spend the Sabbath in the synagogue.

if only we as Christians were as determined to attend church physically with the same determination Jesus was with the synagogue.

Anyway, back on track. There is in that day in the synagogue a man with a withered hand. The Pharisees believed that if a man's life was in danger on a Sabbath, he may be healed.

[13 : 28] But this man's life was not in danger and so for them, Jesus' healing of this man was not allowed. It's the difference between working as a nurse or doctor in A&E; on a Sunday and working in general practice.

For the Pharisees, to work in A&E; is okay, but general practice is not. And so they're waiting to see if Jesus is going to break their rabbinic laws.

But Jesus, knowing their thoughts, wants to make an example. And so he stands the man in full sight of the whole synagogue because he wants to make a point to the whole synagogue and to the Pharisees who were there.

And so before he calls on this man to stretch out his hand to heal him, he says to the Pharisees in verse 9, let me ask you, is it lawful on the Sabbath to do good or to do evil?

To save life or to destroy it? Shall the Sabbath be used to do good or to do evil? To save life or to destroy it?

[14 : 41] Shall it be used to restore wholeness to that which is broken? Or shall it be used to break that which is whole?

Let me say that again. Shall the Sabbath as designed by God restore wholeness to that which is broken? Or shall it break that which is whole?

Shall it save life or destroy life? Shall it do good? Shall it do evil? Well, here in Luke 6, verse 6 through 11, we have the burden of what it means for Jesus to be the Messiah.

This is the kind of king he is. The kind who does not break that which is whole but makes whole that which was broken.

The king who does no evil. The king who saves life and does not destroy it. The Jews with their images of a messianic king riding at the head of their armies viewed him as destroying the military might of Rome taking Gentile life after Gentile life after Gentile life.

[16 : 01] But Jesus steadfastly contradicts their image of messianic kingship. It does not mean doing evil. It means doing good. It does not mean destroying life.

It means saving life. It does not mean breaking that which is whole. It means making whole that which is broken. The Messiah the Son of Man will engage in salvation work in restoration work in good work.

Here is the kind of king Jesus is. The kind who shall work with the outcasts of society like this man with the withered hand and restore them.

His greatest interactions shall not be with the great and powerful of this world but with its offscourings. We were privileged in October to visit the museum of the Northumberland Fusiliers in Annick.

In that museum there is a section entirely devoted. I would recommend going. It is only two hours from here. In that museum there is a section devoted to the first world war history of the Northumberland Fusiliers.

[17 : 16] And one of the exhibits in that museum is a poster used to raise recruits for that unit and it read like this. Wanted a few dashing spirited lads to complete that old undistinguished regiment the bold 5th of Northumberland.

You can almost imagine the kind of moustache Porschach. Wanted a few dashing spirited lads to walk into no man's land. If Jesus had been the kind of Messiah the Jewish rabbis had wanted him to be he would need dashing spirited lads to fight in his army.

But Jesus recruits into his old and distinguished spiritual kingdom the coward the unclean the broken and the outcast like this man with the withered hand.

This section fits into the theme of Luke seamlessly. That theme that the church of God is filled with the needy and downtrodden of this world. The blind and the lame unclean Gentiles renegade Jews people who the religious respectable would look down upon and consider unworthy of God's love and salvation.

Very far from being the dashing and spirited lads who made up the bold fifth of Northumberland. This is the kind of son of man Jesus is.

[18 : 52] Not an earthly king wearing an earthly crown but a king who loves his people and restores them to health and wholeness who saves them by his word of grace and his works of power who heals and does not destroy so very good.

The Christian aware of our own sinfulness and weakness and in desperate need is fixated and fascinated by this Jesus. And we turn to him in faith and say on a daily basis Lord will you heal me? Will you restore me? Will you save me? Will you make me whole? If we're looking for an earthly crown and worldly power we're in the wrong place because despite all appearance our church is filled with the broken and needy with whom in whom and for whom the heavenly Jesus has worked restoration salvation and wholeness.

This is a place perhaps the only place in the world which welcomes not the proud and self-sufficient and respectable but the outcast and the stranger the weak and the sinful the poor in the morning because that my dear brothers and sisters is what we once all were before we met with Jesus our Messiah and Savior.

so we have son Savior and then from verse 11 sufferer sufferer now over the last few passages in Luke's gospel we've learned that opposition to Jesus is growing his own people in Nazareth have tried to throw him off a cliff but now he comes to the notice of the religious establishment and they don't like what they see and hear.

[21 : 03] They call Jesus a blasphemer for forgiving the sins of the paralyzed man. They took exception with Jesus for associating with tax collectors and sinners that is like the way we saw this last week with the way in which Jesus disciples do not fast or pray.

But now what Jesus has done has struck deep into their national identity and Jewish distinctive. Remember how I said at the beginning the Jewish world of the day could be recognized by three things.

Food laws, male circumcision, and the observance of the Sabbath. Now Jesus has attacked the third of these. Their strict observance of the Sabbath according to the traditions of the rabbis.

It would have been entirely as offensive to these Jewish Pharisees as the burning of a stars and stripes flag would be to Nate. And so true to form in verse 11 we read of these scribes and Pharisees they were filled with fury.

Wouldn't you be if you saw a Union Jack being burned? We're discussing with each other what they might do to Jesus. So from now on they dog his steps and they look for every opportunity to discredit and kill him.

[22 : 22] Let's go back a bit to the parallel that Jesus drew between himself and King David. Why was David and why were his men so hungry that they were forced to eat the bread set apart for the priests?

It was because they were being pursued by King Saul who was looking for every opportunity to catch and kill David. And now the New Testament King Jesus is once again being pursued by his enemies who are looking for every opportunity to catch and kill him.

These religious leaders are playing the part of the pantomime villain King Saul mercilessly pursuing God's choice of king and for what?

Doing good restoring wholeness and bringing salvation on the Sabbath. As you know the gospel of Luke as well as the book of Acts was written to the early church.

This is what these first Christians were to expect at the hands of their Jewish countrymen.

Opposition and persecution just like King David and their own King Jesus suffered at the hands of those who hate him so they too must expect to suffer.

[23 : 53] They will be hunted and persecuted they'll be tortured exiled and killed for no other crime than preaching a gospel that brings wholeness and salvation to needy people.

But more importantly verse 11 squares the circle of this passage. We learned in the first point Jesus is the Messiah King. We learned in our second point that Jesus as Messiah King does not lead his people into war with the Romans but rather loves them and restores wholeness.

As Messiah King he brings salvation and healing. But how shall this salvation and wholeness come to be? It shall be as pursued and hunted by the Pharisees.

Jesus the King suffers and dies. in this the parallel between David and Jesus breaks down because whereas King David was crowned by the Jews Jesus was crucified by the Jews.

But in and through his suffering death and crucifixion Jesus secured a greater victory than David could ever have imagined for while David's kingship was confined to Israel.

[25 : 18] Through his death and resurrection Jesus kingship extends to the whole world. On that cross as Jesus suffered at the hands of religious Jews he conquered sin and death.

He overcame and destroyed the causes of men's brokenness and he won that crushing victory for the outcast and the downtrodden of this world. Jesus the Messiah King the Messiah King who loves his people and restores their wholeness by himself being broken for them through his sufferings on their account on the cross.

This is our Lord and Master. This is our King and Saviour and for all these things we are fascinated and fixated by him. By his wounds we have been healed.

In his brokenness we have wholeness. In his sufferings we have salvation. So you see this is not primarily a passage about what a Christian can or cannot do on a Sunday.

This is a passage which holds Jesus up as King and Saviour of the world. That is the distinctive of true Christianity because anyone Christian or non-Christian can keep Sunday special although as I've already said the Christian should be especially concerned to devote Sunday to God by prioritising church worship.

[26 : 48] But only the Christian can be fascinated and fixated by and has faith in Jesus Christ as King and Saviour. this is our distinguishing feature as Christians not the religion of Christ but our relationship with Christ not the Sabbath but the Saviour not the law but the Lord God and my question in closing is obvious are we fascinated and fixated with the person and work of Christ do we have faith in him right now in this place believe in him commit your life to him and in so doing he will restore your humanity and he will make you whole again happen also in