



The Lord of the Sabbath

Revelation of the Son of Man

About the Story

As we journey with Jesus during the season of Epiphany, more of who he is and what he has come to do is revealed to us. In today's story, we see Jesus come into direct conflict with the Pharisees over what is allowed and not allowed on the Sabbath.

The Pharisees were Jesus' most frequent debate partners. Like Jesus, they worked to interpret the Hebrew Bible and apply them to everyday life. The Pharisees often felt that Jesus was too easy on the rules, putting the people in danger of mocking God and incurring God's anger toward them. Jesus argued that the Pharisees were too worried about right practices and that they hurt people as a result.

Today's story focuses on the practice of sabbath. When the Israelites left Egypt, God gave them a number of commandments to teach them to live faithful lives. One of the central commandments was a day of rest during the week. No longer would they live like slaves, toiling all day, every day. The people were given a day to rest their bodies and souls (and even the bodies of their working animals) and to practice their faith that God would provide. Working on the Sabbath was a selfish declaration that one did not trust God.

The Sabbath was meant to be a gift. The problem came when some of the Pharisees turned it into a burden—a test for who was in and who was out, who was righteous and who should be shamed. Jesus challenges that use of the Sabbath, turning it into a day of healing and restoration.

Today Jesus claims a name for himself: the Son of Man. Jesus uses this name to declare that he has authority over the Sabbath. It is a dangerous claim—one that will continue to follow him throughout the coming chapters.

Opening Prayer

Begin your time together with this or another prayer:

Holy God, today we come in from busy lives, lives that are full to the brim with needs, wants, and expectations. Lives where it can be hard to find the silence where you speak. Lives where rest is forgotten. As we gather, let our bodies relax. Let our hearts rest. Let our minds be gently opened to your Word and your will for us. In your name we pray. Amen.

The Point:

The Sabbath is for rest and helping others.

Jesus uses the Sabbath as a time for feeding, healing, and showing compassion, thus restoring the Sabbath to its original intent. Today it can be hard for us to find time to rest in our busy lives. What does real rest, rejuvenation, and healing look like?

Last Week/Next Week

Last week, we heard the story of Jesus calling his first followers: Simon, James, and John. Today's lesson takes us further on the journey with Jesus and the disciples. We, like Simon and James and John, come to see that Jesus' teachings and healings come directly into conflict with the main religious leaders of the day. Next week, we will see the continued power and love of Jesus. He works his way through the countryside, raising the dead, healing the sick, and proclaiming the good news of the kingdom.

Into the Story

Let's begin today's Bible study with a brief discussion about rules. What do you think of first when you hear the word "rules"? How are laws, rules, and expectations different? What are some rules that you try very hard to keep, and it makes you crazy when others break them? What are some rules that you do not keep, and it makes you crazy when others insist that you should? What are some examples of rules, laws, and expectations that are intended to protect us but are actually often harmful in practice?

Learning the Story

The Pharisees, leading interpreters of the Hebrew Bible, are troubled by this new teacher named Jesus. He does not appear to care for rules the way they do, potentially endangering the people's relationship with God.

Read Luke 6:1-5 – Who Is in Charge Here?

- ❓ The Pharisees are often Jesus' main challengers because they served a similar role, interpreting and applying the Scriptures to everyday life. Who have you disagreed with because you were so much alike?
- ❓ How do you think the disciples felt during this argument? Scared? Defiant? Unsure?
- ❓ What would it be like to have a day when you were not permitted to work? Does that sound relaxing or stressful?

Read Luke 6:6-11 – To Save Life or Destroy It

- ❓ When have you felt the need to watch someone closely in case they did something dangerous? When have you felt like you were being watched?
- ❓ When have you been afraid to act even though you knew it was the right thing to do?
- ❓ Have you ever had to admit that someone you really did not like had done the right thing?

Read Luke 6:12-16 – Choosing the Twelve

- ❓ Jesus retreats in order to pray. When do you feel your mind is most clear? How often do you get to have that clarity?
- ❓ Do you ever wonder about the disciples we hear less about, like Bartholomew? What do you suppose he was chosen for?
- ❓ What would it have felt like to be a disciple but not be chosen as one of the twelve? Would you be disappointed or relieved?

Living the Story: Worship

It can be difficult to imagine what Sabbath must have felt like for the Jewish people. We know what weekends feel like (hopefully), but do we cease from picking fruit or preparing food? Some Jews today do not even use electricity during the Sabbath. This can sound more stress-inducing than stress-releasing to us. In today's activity, we will try to create a mini-sabbath of resting in God's love, remembering that to slow down and breathe is God's gift to us in the midst of a busy world.

Everyone should sit as comfortably as they can.

This may require rearrangement of chairs. Practice together a centering prayer. Use this or another set of phrases:

Lord, we long to rest in you. Let our breath be holy, like the wind of the Spirit.

Close your eyes if you wish, and sit in silence for ten minutes. Each two minutes are signaled by a designated person repeating the centering prayer phrases.

Closing Prayer

Sit or stand in a circle, and close together in prayer having each person say one line:

During those days, he went out to the mountain to pray;

He spent the night in prayer to God.

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He spent the night in prayer to God.

May we, as we go from here, be well rested.

With each new day, may we know God's peace.

Amen.

Bible Connections

- ✝ Rules about work on the Sabbath were strictly enforced, beginning with God's provision of extra bread on the day before (Exodus 16:4-5, 22-30).
- ✝ Violating the Sabbath was seen as a grave offense (Numbers 15:32-36).
- ✝ Jesus refers to the story of David and his soldiers, who were on the run from the murderous King Saul and starving (1 Samuel 21:1-6).

Bible Nuts & Bolts: Son of Man

“Son of man” is a phrase found throughout the Hebrew Bible, usually as a way to refer to a person (a child of a human). However, in a vision in the Book of Daniel, a powerful figure was called “one like a son of man” (Daniel 7:13-14). Some religious texts that fill in the gaps between the Hebrew Bible and the New Testament appear to connect this “son of man” with the Messiah, a coming messenger of God who would right the wrongs of the world. In using this phrase to refer to himself, Jesus may be claiming the title of Messiah, declaring his humanity, or both.

At Home

- ✚ The Sabbath was meant to be a gift to humanity—a day of rest after six long days of very hard work. This week, after a long day of work, choose to do something that replenishes your energy.
- ✚ The disciples pick and rub grains because they are hungry. Wandering around with Jesus is not always a guarantee of a good meal. Do some research about food shelves and other hunger-related organizations in your area. Can you contribute a little to support their work?
- ✚ Jesus heals on the Sabbath because it is the right thing to do. Where are you moved to do something unusual or even problematic when it is the right thing?

Daily Readings

Sunday—Read Luke 6:1-16

Jesus asserts himself as Lord of the Sabbath, freed to do work on a holy day of rest when the work is helping and healing those in need. How do you find time to rest your soul during the week?

Monday—Read Deuteronomy 5:12-15

Moses restates the commandments given to Israel, promises from God that if the people will follow God's way of living, they will be well and live long in the Promised Land. But the history of God's people shows that they will often forget God's way of living and break the commandments. Reflect on a mistake you have made recently, and take steps to ask for forgiveness and make amends.

Tuesday—Read Luke 6:17-19

Crowds come out to see Jesus, wanting to hear his words and experience healing and exorcisms. If you had crowds following you, what would you want to say?

Wednesday—Read Luke 6:20-26

Jesus begins his grand message with blessings for those who are suffering, and woes to those who are comfortable. Which group do you think you are part of? What if you are a member of both?

Thursday—Read Luke 6:27-36

Jesus tells the crowd to love their enemies, challenging them to do good even to those who harm them. Who in your life is causing you difficulty? Send them a note congratulating them on a recent success or complimenting them on a particular characteristic.

Friday—Read Luke 6:37-45

Jesus warns the crowd not to judge others, but instead to look at ourselves first. If Jesus were looking at your eye, what "log" would he want to remove? How would that change your life and free your heart?

Saturday—Read Luke 6:46-49

Jesus tells the parable of house builders to illustrate what it is like for those who hear him and either apply or ignore his teachings. When have you ignored what you knew was right? What were the consequences?