

# The Lord of the Sabbath

**Passage:** Luke 6:1-11 | From the series: Luke

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**Date:** 3/8/26

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## The Couch Covered in Plastic

Have you ever walked into someone's house and immediately known — this is not a “sit-down” living room?

You walk in, and there it is. The couch. Covered in plastic. Perfect cushions, not a wrinkle in sight. No one had to say it; you just knew: Don't sit there. Don't lean there. Don't even breathe too hard near it.

Even as a kid, I didn't have the language for it. But I felt the tension. What is the point of a couch no one can sit on?

Reflecting on it more, I realized: protection had replaced purpose.

If we're honest, for some of us, faith feels a little like that living room. Careful. Restricted. Don't mess up. Don't get it wrong. Am I doing this right? It can start to feel less like a gift and more like a rule and a regulation.

In Luke 6, Jesus walks into a version of faith that had been wrapped in plastic — guarded by rules and regulations. He doesn't just challenge it; he reveals what it was always meant to be.

## The Grainfields | Luke 6:1-5

*Luke 6:1-2 On a Sabbath, while he was going through the grainfields, his disciples plucked and ate some heads of grain, rubbing them in their hands. <sup>2</sup> But some of the Pharisees said, “Why are you doing what is not lawful to do on the Sabbath?”*

A helpful backdrop: the Sabbath was the day of the week when faithful, practicing Jews ceased from all work. This practice goes back to Exodus 20:8, where the children of Israel were commanded to work six days and rest on the seventh — a reflection of God himself, who created for six days and rested on the seventh.

So when Jesus and his disciples began picking and eating grain on the Sabbath, the law-keeping Pharisees took issue. Historical documents such as the Mishnah give us a window into how seriously this was viewed. Over 39 regulations governed what was and wasn't permitted on the Sabbath. To be clear, these were not God's commands — they were man-made plastic wrap placed over the command.

By those standards, historians suggest the disciples would have violated four categories: reaping, winnowing, threshing, and preparing food.

The Pharisees were not evil men. They were serious about honoring God. They wanted to protect obedience and preserve the Sabbath. But somewhere along the way, they moved from honoring God's command to controlling how God's command must be applied. Protection replaced purpose.

*Luke 6:3-4 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?"*

Jesus doesn't wade into the details of oral tradition and regulation. Instead, he calls on a biblical precedent — the story of David.

While fleeing from King Saul, David arrived at the sanctuary, hungry and desperate. The only food available was the Bread of the Presence, bread consecrated to God and reserved exclusively for the priests. Yet David was permitted to eat it. A human need overrode the law's ceremonial restrictions.

The implication is sharp: to condemn Jesus and his crew would be to condemn David and his crew, something no faithful Jew would dare do.

And then Jesus drops the mic:

*Luke 5:5 And he said to them, "The Son of Man is lord of the Sabbath."*

This is no small claim. The Sabbath was the Lord's Day, instituted by God himself at creation. For Jesus to say he is Lord of the Lord's Day is a staggering declaration of authority. He isn't just another religious teacher. He is the one to whom the Sabbath belongs.

Jesus is claiming, *"The Sabbath doesn't interpret me; I interpret the Sabbath."*

Luke is placing Jesus in a unique category. Not just another religious great. Not ordinary claims, not ordinary salvation, not an ordinary person. He does what only God does.

## **1. Submit to His Authority**

The irony of this scene is that the ones working the hardest are the Pharisees. They are tense, watching, accusing, measuring. They are the very picture of not submitting.

We can submit because he holds the authority. It's like arguing with someone about how their own app works, only for them to remind you, "Hey, I wrote the code. I know exactly what this is for and how it works."

Submission means we don't edit the code of faith. We trust the Creator.

Jesus being Lord of the Sabbath means he has the authority to set the agenda, not our family version of faith, not church tradition, not cultural expectation. We are not the product managers. Submission is the moment we hand over the whiteboard.

In practical terms, submission can look like closing the laptop, actually practicing the sabbath. Taking 24 hours each week to cease from your work and rest and delight in God, and the many wonderful gifts that he has given.

There is an unofficial commandment in our culture: Thou shalt always be productive. Submission to Jesus says: Trust me enough to rest. There is always another email, another task, another open loop. But Sabbath rest is your body and your calendar saying out loud, “Jesus is Lord — not my productivity, not my pipeline, not my performance.”

Whether you’re leading meetings, writing papers, or chasing toddlers around the house, Sabbath is the quiet declaration that God runs the universe and we don’t.

## **A Man with a Withered Hand | Luke 6:6-11**

Luke is intentional here. He places this scene immediately after Jesus has claimed to be Lord of the Sabbath — as if to say: You want to know what it actually looks like when the Lord of the Sabbath shows up? Watch.

*Luke 6:6-11 On another Sabbath, he entered the synagogue and was teaching, and a man was there whose right hand was withered. 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 all 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.*

The tension in this scene is real. According to rabbinic tradition, if a condition was not life-threatening, healing could wait until after the Sabbath. A withered hand wasn’t killing this man. It could “technically” wait.

So for Jesus to heal him, in the synagogue, on the Sabbath, with no emergency present, was not an accident. It was a line in the sand. A deliberate revelation of purpose.

And notice: God did not correct Jesus. The man’s hand was restored. God’s power flowing through Jesus endorses Jesus’s claim. Luke is showing us something unmistakable:

This is what it looks like when the Lord of the Sabbath walks into the room. Restoration.

They knew the story of the Sabbath. They missed the point of the Sabbath. They were majoring in a minor.

To be clear, Jesus is not anti-Sabbath. He regularly worshiped on the Sabbath. He honored it. He isn't so much breaking the Sabbath as he is defining it. When Jesus heals on the Sabbath, he is revealing God's heart.

## **2. Receive His Restoration**

Religious leaders saw the Sabbath as being about protecting boundaries. Jesus shows that the Sabbath is about releasing burdens.

The man's hand had been clenched, limited, adapted to. Jesus says: "Stretch it out." And the moment he obeys, what was withered is restored.

Think about a phone charger that only works at a very specific angle. It's not totally broken; sometimes you plug it in, wiggle it just right, hold it at exactly the right degree, and it'll charge. So you don't replace it. You build your life around its dysfunction. That's how withered hands work. They function, technically. But they're not operating as designed. The people around this man in Luke 6 had adapted to his condition. It can wait. It's not urgent. He's learned to live with it.

Jesus walks in and restores.

So the question becomes: what is your withered hand?

Maybe it's burnout you've renamed "drive." Distance in your marriage you've called "busy season." Anxiety you've rebranded as "responsibility." Maybe it's a dream you quietly gave up on and told yourself you were just being realistic. A friendship that slowly died, and you never grieved. A version of yourself you used to believe in — you just stopped expecting them to show up.

We've learned to hold it at just the right angle. Dysfunctional enough to survive, not broken enough to fix.

*Stretch out your withered hand.*

That God would restore, for his glory and our good.

## **Sabbath Through Scripture**

In Genesis, Sabbath was a delight. In Exodus, Sabbath was freedom. In Leviticus, Sabbath was restoration. In Isaiah, Sabbath was joy. In Luke, Sabbath was standing right in front of them.

Would we submit to his authority and receive his restoration, stretching out the hands that have been withered? It may not always look like what we want. But by God's grace, we can trust it will always be what we need.

— Amen.