

Congregational Study: Luke's Epiphany

Luke 6:1-5, 6-11

Wednesday Class (1/29/25)



Read Luke 6:1-5.

The disciples' action seemed innocent enough. Taking grain wasn't a problem. Why was this allowed, according to the Old Testament? Look at Deuteronomy 23:24-45.

Why do you think that this common practice suddenly became a problem for Jesus' opponents, on this particular day?

How did the Pharisees know that the disciples of Jesus were grabbing grain and eating it?

Remember the Pharisees were heavily focused on their traditional, detailed interpretations of how the Old Testament Law applied. They were famous for taking what the Scriptures said, and giving exacting instructions on what the Bible laws meant – thus expanding the Law greatly.

Jesus answers their challenge by referring them to a Bible story. Read 1 Samuel 21:1-6. David gathers bread that came from the Tabernacle, that was by law set aside only for the priests. Since David wasn't disciplined by the High Priest, the Old Testament seems to be implying that what he did was appropriate. For the Pharisees, speaking against what the great David did would have been problematic.

Jesus is making a comparison between David and himself. What do you imagine the Pharisees thought about that comparison?

What's Jesus' basic argument? Either ...

- God's law was never intended to exclude people from meeting basic needs like eating (David becomes example of what the law really intended); or
- In certain situations of need, the law can be superseded.

Luke's story doesn't give us a clear indicator of which is more in the mind of Jesus – but he's definitely indicating that Jesus has a different approach to Sabbath issues than the traditions of the Jewish leaders.

Read Jesus' statement in verse 5 again. Is this statement taking the argument further than the parallel with David?

Jesus is stating that he has the right to regulate what takes place on the Sabbath. He is making it clear that his actions (and those of his followers) are not the issue. What's the real issue here? His authority.

The Pharisees, and all of us reading Luke's Gospel, are left to ponder, "Just how far does Jesus' authority go? Does Jesus reveal God's way and have authority? Or does he not? The Law has been the central regulating force for life in Israel for centuries. Now Jesus is claiming the right to exercise authority over it?"

Are people today in God's church ever resistant to change? Are you?

Move on to the next section, and read Luke 6:6-11.

Again, the scribes and the Pharisees were watching Jesus closely, and looking for reasons to accuse him. They're aware of the man with the withered hand. What do you think their view of this man's physical need would have been?

Why did Jesus invite the man to stand up in front of those present? Why not perform the miracle quietly and without fuss? In what way is this almost like a test? Will God allow the healing to take place?

Jesus asks the Pharisees a challenging question in v. 9, one they can't answer. Do you think he's implying that it's always OK to do good, and to save life? Is he suggesting that a failure to act here would be doing evil?

After Jesus' miracle of healing, Luke tells us that his opponents "were filled with fury." A turning point now has come. They begin making concrete plans for getting rid of Jesus. Despite all the signs of God's favor surrounding Jesus' activity, the Jewish leaders are getting more hostile.

They've already condemned him for forgiving sins (5:21) and for not fasting (5:33). Now they're accusing him of breaking the Sabbath laws.

Do you think that they understood the messianic claims that Jesus was making, by healing this man's hand?

What do you think we are we supposed to learn from this story?

Jesus is showing us that God intends for us to not ignore acting with love and mercy whenever the opportunity to do so exists.

And Jesus is teaching us that the old way is not his way. We need to be ready for God to lead in directions that might be surprising and new.