

Foothills Christian Assembly Sermon December 22, 2019

Luke 14: 1 – 6 – “Chronic Sabbath Madness”

31 On that very day some Pharisees came, saying to Him, "Get out and depart from here, for Herod wants to kill You." 32 And He said to them, "Go, tell that fox, 'Behold, I cast out demons and perform cures today and tomorrow, and the third day I shall be perfected.' 33 Nevertheless I must journey today, tomorrow, and the day following; for it cannot be that a prophet should perish outside of Jerusalem. 34 "O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, the one who kills the prophets and stones those who are sent to her! How often I wanted to gather your children together, as a hen gathers her brood under her wings, but you were not willing! 35 See! Your house is left to you desolate; and assuredly, I say to you, you shall not see Me until the time comes when you say, 'Blessed is He who comes in the name of the Lord!' "

1 Now it happened, as He went into the house of one of the rulers of the Pharisees to eat bread on the Sabbath, that they watched Him closely. 2 And behold, there was a certain man before Him who had dropsy. 3 And Jesus, answering, spoke to the lawyers and Pharisees, saying, "Is it lawful to heal on the Sabbath?" 4 But they kept silent. And He took him and healed him, and let him go. 5 Then He answered them, saying, "Which of you, having a donkey or an ox that has fallen into a pit, will not immediately pull him out on the Sabbath day?" 6 And they could not answer Him regarding these things.

7 So He told a parable to those who were invited, when He noted how they chose the best places, saying to them: 8 "When you are invited by anyone to a wedding feast, do not sit down in the best place, lest one more honorable than you be invited by him; 9 and he who invited you and him come and say to you, 'Give place to this man,' and then you begin with shame to take the lowest place. 10 But when you are invited, go and sit down in the lowest place, so that when he who invited you comes he may say to you, 'Friend, go up higher.' Then you will have glory in the presence of those who sit at the table with you. 11 For whoever exalts himself will be humbled, and he who humbles himself will be exalted." 12 Then He also said to him who invited Him, "When you give a dinner or a supper, do not ask your friends, your brothers, your relatives, nor rich neighbors, lest they also invite you back, and you be repaid. 13 But when you give a feast, invite the poor, the maimed, the lame, the blind. 14 And you will be blessed, because they cannot repay you; for you shall be repaid at the resurrection of the just."

I. Introduction

- a. In last week's sermon text, Jesus said, ""Go, tell that fox, 'Behold, I cast out demons and perform cures today and tomorrow, and the third day I shall be perfected.'" Today's text describes Jesus performing a cure just like He said He would. Jesus keeps His Word. And, Jesus works His mighty miracle on a Sabbath Day for all to see, again intentionally unveiling the chronic Sabbath madness widespread in apostate Judaism at that time.
- b. Today's Sermon: Luke 14: 1 – 6 – “Chronic Sabbath Madness”
 - i. Setting v1
 - ii. Behold, a man with dropsy v2
 - iii. Jesus' first silencing question v3,4a
 - iv. Jesus heals the man v4
 - v. Jesus' second silencing question v5,6
 - vi. Questions to know, love and obey God

II. Setting

- a. V1 “Now it happened, as He went into the house of one of the rulers of the Pharisees to eat bread on the Sabbath, that they watched Him closely.”
- b. So, in spite of His ongoing public correction of the Pharisees, Jesus receives an invitation to dine with a Pharisee on the Sabbath day.
 - i. “one of the rulers of the Pharisees” – Jesus has an opportunity to fellowship with a religious leader in this particular town.
 1. Why was Jesus invited there? A simple offer of hospitality and kindness? A goal to honor Jesus and bring Him over to their side? A trap to set Him up and find reasons to accuse Him?
 2. Poole “In his going to a Pharisee’s house, he gives us a great precedent of humanity and self-denial, for the Pharisees were his great enemies, and we shall observe no great kindness showed to him in the invitation of him.”¹
 - ii. “to eat bread on the Sabbath” – a time of peace and friendship, resting together in God’s goodness and grace. Note the practice of eating together on the Sabbath was in place at that time.
 1. But, was it really a time of peaceful fellowship? Or a scheme?
 2. Bock “This type of meal is important to Luke because it shows that Jesus had table fellowship with the Pharisees and that he had their attention”²
 3. This is the 3rd time Luke has included an event where a Pharisee invites Jesus to a meal (7:36, 11:37)
 4. Like Judas used a kiss to betray, it appears these Pharisees used a meal to entrap.
 - iii. “that they watched Him closely”
 1. “they” = a conspiracy
 2. Watched = in a bad sense, to watch insidiously.
 - a. Insidious = lying in wait; looking for an opportunity to entrap or ensnare; deceitful; sly; treacherous.
 - b. Censorious = apt to blame or condemn
 - c. Bock “they were watching him carefully (11:53–54; 20:20)... The term means to “watch lurkingly” ... Their question seems to be, “What will he do this time?””³
 3. Here Luke points to the sinister nature of this invitation. Remember what Luke said of the Pharisees in chapter 11:
 - a. V53,54 “And as He said these things to them, the scribes and the Pharisees began to assail Him vehemently, and to cross-examine Him about many things, lying in wait for

¹ Poole, M. (1853). [*Annotations upon the Holy Bible*](#) (Vol. 3, p. 242). New York: Robert Carter and Brothers.

² Bock, D. L. (1996). [*Luke: 9:51–24:53*](#) (Vol. 2, p. 1256). Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic.

³ Bock, D. L. (1996). [*Luke: 9:51–24:53*](#) (Vol. 2, p. 1256). Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic.

Him, and seeking to catch Him in something He might say, that they might accuse Him.”

iv. Proverbs 1:17,18 “Surely, in vain the net is spread In the sight of any bird; 18 But they lie in wait for their own blood, They lurk secretly for their own lives.”

1. Henry “The Pharisee that invited him, it should seem, did it with a design to pick some quarrel with him; if it were so, Christ *knew* it, and yet *went*, for he knew himself a match for the most *subtle* of them, and knew how to order his steps with an eye to *his observers*. Those that are *watched* had need to be *wary*. It is ... contrary to all laws of hospitality to seek advantage against one that you invited to be your guest, for such a one you have taken under your protection. These lawyers and Pharisees, like the fowler that lies in wait to *ensnare* the birds, *held their peace*, and acted very *silently*.”⁴

III. Behold, a man with dropsy! V2

a. v2 “And behold, there was a certain man before Him who had dropsy.”

b. Behold – it is a surprise to find such a man in the midst of this type of gathering. How did this man get there? Was he invited? Unlikely he could be there without the knowledge and approval of the host.

i. Bock “the surprise of [“behold”] is that such a person is at the meal. Combined with the presence of the “watching eyes” of the leadership (14:1), this verse probably suggests a trap, especially since 11:54 [“lying in wait”] indicates that after the last meal the leadership determined to catch Jesus. A set-up is likely.”⁵

ii. Calvin “It is therefore probable, that he was placed there with the concealed design of tempting Christ”⁶

c. Dropsy – used only once in the NT, here by Luke

i. Bock “Its symptoms are swollen limbs and tissue resulting from excess body fluids”⁷

1. So, this man has noticeable swelling of his body. The cause of the swelling is not mentioned. His appearance is deformed.

2. Holman Bible Dictionary “Edema, a disease with fluid retention and swelling. Dropsy is a symptom of disease of the heart, liver,

⁴ Henry, M. (1994). [*Matthew Henry’s commentary on the whole Bible: complete and unabridged in one volume*](#) (p. 1874). Peabody: Hendrickson.

⁵ Bock, D. L. (1996). [*Luke: 9:51–24:53*](#) (Vol. 2, pp. 1256–1257). Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic.

⁶ Calvin, J., & Pringle, W. (2010). [*Commentary on a Harmony of the Evangelists Matthew, Mark, and Luke*](#) (Vol. 2, p. 163). Bellingham, WA: Logos Bible Software.

⁷ Bock, D. L. (1996). [*Luke: 9:51–24:53*](#) (Vol. 2, p. 1256). Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic.

kidneys, or brain. The condition involves the accumulation of water fluid in the body cavities or in the limbs.”⁸

- ii. In addition, for unknown reasons, some argued that the sufferer had brought this disease upon themselves via sinful behavior.
 - 1. Bock “...dropsy was often viewed as God’s judgment, either for sin or uncleanness.”⁹
- iii. This man’s disease and suffering are obvious for all to see. The Pharisees have set their trap, and this poor man is their bait.

IV. Jesus’ 1st silencing question v3,4a

- a. “And Jesus, answering, spoke to the lawyers and Pharisees, saying, “Is it lawful to heal on the Sabbath?” 4 But they kept silent.”
- b. “Answering” – even though no question had been vocalized, Jesus is described as “answering” → again, this shows Jesus knew their thoughts, knew their intentions, knew they were spying on Him.
- c. “to the lawyers and Pharisees” – Jesus initiates another corrective discourse with these madmen. Others are also likely present, non-lawyers and non-Pharisees, along with the disciples of Jesus.
- d. “Is it lawful to heal on the Sabbath?”
 - i. “Lawful” - Jesus, the Author of the Law of God, knows there are no God-ordained laws against healing on the Sabbath Day.
 - 1. But, which “law” occupies the minds of these madmen? The law of man. Their manmade system of enslaving regulations blinds them to the actual Law of God.
 - a. Lk 13:14 the ruler of the synagogue said, “There are six days on which men ought to work; therefore come and be healed on them, and not on the Sabbath day.”
 - 2. Mark 6:6-9 “He answered and said to them, “Well did Isaiah prophesy of you hypocrites, as it is written: ‘This people honors Me with their lips, But their heart is far from Me. 7 And in vain they worship Me, Teaching as doctrines the commandments of men.’ 8 “For laying aside the commandment of God, you hold the tradition of men—the washing of pitchers and cups, and many other such things you do.” 9 He said to them, “All too well you reject the commandment of God, that you may keep your tradition.”
 - ii. Sproul “He is there to be put on trial, and instead he turns the tables on the Pharisees.”¹⁰

⁸ Brand, C., Draper, C., England, A., Bond, S., Clendenen, E. R., & Butler, T. C. (Eds.). (2003). [Dropsy](#). In *Holman Illustrated Bible Dictionary* (p. 443). Nashville, TN: Holman Bible Publishers.

⁹ Bock, D. L. (1996). [Luke: 9:51–24:53](#) (Vol. 2, p. 1256). Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic.

¹⁰ Sproul, R. C. (1999). [A Walk with God: An Exposition of Luke](#) (p. 290). Great Britain: Christian Focus Publications.

- iii. Similar to Lk 6:9 “Is it lawful on the Sabbath to do good or to do evil, to save life or to destroy?”
 - e. “but, they kept silent”
 - i. They hide in their silence. They can give no answer, or they will give no answer. Not one of the gathered lawyers or Pharisees says a single word in response to Jesus’ simple question. This is more evidence that these men are in league together against Jesus.
 - 1. Sproul “Jesus had put them in an embarrassing no-win situation. If they replied positively that it is lawful to heal on the Sabbath, then they can’t complain if he heals this man. If they reply negatively, however, then they look bad in front of this man who is suffering. So they kept silent.”¹¹
 - 2. Calvin “They... make it evident by their silence, that their desire of finding fault is stronger than their zeal for the law”¹²
- V. Jesus heals the man v4
- a. “And He took him and healed him, and let him go.”
 - i. Imagine being this poor man. How long had he endured this disease process and its attendant scorn and loneliness? To the Pharisees and lawyers, primarily a prop in their scheme. But, to Jesus, through Whom he was made, this man is now the focus of His love and power, the recipient of His benevolence, and an eternal example of God’s unfailing grace and victory over sin, death and hell.
 - b. “Took him and healed him, and let him go” – took hold of, seized. Jesus not only touches this man, but He takes hold of this man.
 - i. Bock “The text says that Jesus took (ἐπιλαβόμενος, *epilabomenos*) the man as he healed him, perhaps an embrace or some other form of physical contact that places the man in Jesus’ compassionate care.”¹³
 - ii. How long does Jesus hold onto this man? The healing takes place as Jesus holds onto the man. And the grip is long enough that Luke then says Jesus lets go of him.
 - iii. This healing moment becomes the centerpiece of this event as this man comes under the almighty affection of God.
 - iv. A dramatic sight to behold. Have you ever seen someone extremely swollen and disfigured? Imagine them suddenly reduced to normal shape and size before your eyes. This occurred right before the eyes of all present, as Jesus held onto the man. The man shrank to normal as Jesus embraced him.

¹¹ Sproul, R. C. (1999). [A Walk with God: An Exposition of Luke](#) (p. 290). Great Britain: Christian Focus Publications.

¹² Calvin, J., & Pringle, W. (2010). [Commentary on a Harmony of the Evangelists Matthew, Mark, and Luke](#) (Vol. 2, p. 163). Bellingham, WA: Logos Bible Software.

¹³ Bock, D. L. (1996). [Luke: 9:51–24:53](#) (Vol. 2, p. 1258). Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic.

1. Henry "The cure of a dropsy, as much as any disease, one would think, should be gradual; yet Christ cured even *that* disease, perfectly cured it, in a moment."¹⁴
 - c. Think of the contrast. The scheming Pharisees and lawyers are present to spy and accuse, using this man for their own evil plans. Jesus has different plans. He is present to demonstrate the power and love of God as His compassion for this poor man flows forth.
- VI. Jesus' 2nd silencing question v5,6
- a. Then He answered them, saying, "Which of you, having a donkey or an ox that has fallen into a pit, will not immediately pull him out on the Sabbath day?" 6 And they could not answer Him regarding these things."
 - b. Very similar to the incisive question from chapter 13:15,16:
 - i. "Hypocrite! Does not each one of you on the Sabbath loose his ox or donkey from the stall, and lead it away to water it? 16 So ought not this woman, being a daughter of Abraham, whom Satan has bound--think of it--for eighteen years, be loosed from this bond on the Sabbath?"
 - ii. Their madness precludes learning. This is a form of spiritual and moral insanity. Luke shows us their persistent refusal to bow before God's power, love and reason. Very sick = a good look at the fallen flesh given over to false worship and unrestrained pride.
 - c. "a donkey or an ox"
 - i. Pickering Majority Text "Then He addressed them saying, "Which of you, if a son or an ox falls into a pit, will not immediately pull him out on the Sabbath day?"
 - ii. Bock "Jesus points to the scribes' and Pharisees' own Sabbath practice to justify his actions: what would they do if a son ... or an ox was in danger on the Sabbath? The remark is significant, for the appeal is to a basic act of compassion and rescue. These concerns should govern human relationships, even on God's day of rest."¹⁵
 - iii. Son – would these lawyers and Pharisees leave their own son in a pit until the Sabbath day was over? No. But, they would leave this poor man in his suffering. Double-standard. They do not love this sick man like they should. Son → brings up the innate compassion of a father. Even these Pharisees would have some experience of that fatherly pity.
 - iv. Ox – like chapter 13, these madmen have more regard for their animals than they do for fellow human beings.
 - d. Bock "The leadership has learned nothing from Jesus' teaching, his work, or even their own practice! Jesus' rhetorical question expects a positive reply (so οὐκ, *ouk*, not): of course, they would assist a son or ox in danger. With their

¹⁴ Henry, M. (1994). [*Matthew Henry's commentary on the whole Bible: complete and unabridged in one volume*](#) (p. 1874). Peabody: Hendrickson.

¹⁵ Bock, D. L. (1996). [*Luke: 9:51–24:53*](#) (Vol. 2, p. 1258). Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic.

inconsistency exposed, no reply is possible. The miracle becomes a rebuke and a call to repentance.”¹⁶

- e. “And they could not answer Him regarding these things”
 - i. The prior silence is unexplained by Luke, but here we see that the lawyers and Pharisees “could not answer Him”.
 - ii. Their insane system of belief could not process what had just occurred before their eyes. Their false system of analysis left no room to see the truth set right before their eyes. Jesus the Messiah had come. Instead of love and worship, they offer only hatred and derision.
 - iii. Parable of Lazarus (paradise) and the rich man (sheol):
 - 1. Lk 16:30,31 “And he said, 'No, father Abraham; but if one goes to them from the dead, they will repent.' 31 But he said to him, 'If they do not hear Moses and the prophets, neither will they be persuaded though one rise from the dead.' ”
 - iv. In their spiritual deadness, they literally “could not answer” Jesus. They have no spiritual senses to perceive God in their midst. Their reason and will are paralyzed by their malice.
 - v. Poole “The evangelist reports them put to silence, but saith nothing of their conviction. It is an easier thing to stop malicious persons’ mouths than to remove their prejudices. Malice will ordinarily hold the conclusion, when the reason of the soul infected with it is not able to justify the premises.”¹⁷
 - 1. Even though these madmen perceive they have lost on grounds of reason and evidence, they still will not repent.

VII. Questions to know, love and obey God

¹⁶ Bock, D. L. (1996). [Luke: 9:51–24:53](#) (Vol. 2, p. 1258). Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic.

¹⁷ Poole, M. (1853). [Annotations upon the Holy Bible](#) (Vol. 3, p. 242). New York: Robert Carter and Brothers.