

Is It Lawful? Luke 14:1-11

Grace to you and peace from God our Father and our Lord Jesus Christ. Amen.

Is it lawful? Jesus asks that question of the Pharisees in our text. There was a man before them suffering from dropsy, but that particular day was the Sabbath. You are to remember the Sabbath day and keep it holy! And what exactly did that mean? From Exodus 20 we read: "Remember the sabbath day, to keep it holy. Six days you shall labor and do all your work, but the seventh day is a sabbath of the LORD your God; in it you shall not do any work, you or your son or your daughter, your male or your female servant or your cattle or your sojourner who stays with you. For in six days the LORD made the heavens and the earth, the sea and all that is in them, and rested on the seventh day; therefore the LORD blessed the sabbath day and made it holy.(Ex. 20:8-11)

So, why do I bring this all up? Because that is the first lesson Jesus is teaching in today's Gospel lesson. Listen to it again. *One Sabbath, when he went to dine at the house of a ruler of the Pharisees, they were watching him carefully. And behold, there was a man before him who had dropsy. And Jesus responded to the lawyers and Pharisees, saying, "Is it lawful to heal on the Sabbath, or not?" But they remained silent. Then he took him and healed him and sent him away. And he said to them, "Which of you, having a son or an ox that has fallen into a well on a Sabbath day, will not immediately pull him out?" And they could not reply to these things.*

This isn't the only account in the Gospels in which Jesus deals with issues concerning the Sabbath. This topic came up a number of times. It came up because the Pharisees and the teachers of the law wanted something of which they could accuse Jesus and find Him guilty. What does it mean however, to ask, "Is it lawful?"

In today's text, Jesus is attempting to show the Pharisees that they are lacking something. They know the letter of the Law. They make valiant efforts to do **nothing** on the Sabbath, in order that they may claim that they **keep** the Sabbath, but there is no love in them. As you well know, that one word, Love, is the fulfillment of the Law. We are to love God with all our heart, soul, mind, and strength; and love our neighbors as ourselves.

Why was the Law given? Jesus! What is the Law about? Jesus! How do we fulfill the Law? Jesus!

I know that may sound a bit simplistic, but that is how simple it is. The Law is all about Jesus, and Jesus is the love of God incarnate. Love of God sacrifices of self to bring us into a right relationship with Him. It is God taking on human flesh, and suffering our condemnation and death. Love is not about some feeling in my heart toward another. Love is an act of the will to do for another that which will bring them aid, in all disregard for ourselves. In so doing, we are also loving and serving Jesus.

Remember how Jesus spoke about the sheep and the goat, those who would be admitted to the kingdom and those who would be cast into hell? He stated that whether or not they had fed, given drink, clothed, or visited, those who needed such things, they had done it to Christ?

You keep the commandments when you do for others, when you actively love them.

So, Jesus asks them, "Which of you, having a son or an ox that has fallen into a well on a Sabbath day, will not immediately pull him out?"

Place yourself in our text. You are this man suffering from dropsy, you are dealing with abnormal swelling in your whole body. The pain is unbelievable. The swelling has made even simple movement nearly impossible, and you are unable to do much of anything.

Now here is Jesus. Jesus can bring about healing for you. Jesus can bring you health. Is it lawful for Him to heal on the Sabbath?

The Pharisees made sure that this man was there that day. They set this whole situation up. Would Jesus break the Law, would Jesus do a work on the Sabbath and heal this man? Jesus knew they had invited Him to entrap Him, that they did this out of pure condescension. Jesus accepted the invitation to benefit the others in attendance. He was there to make them eyewitnesses of His power, that perchance they might believe indeed that He was the Son of God.

Is it lawful, then to heal on the Sabbath?

So Jesus asks them, "Which of you, having a son or an ox that has fallen into a well on a Sabbath day, will not immediately pull him out?"

Seriously, you think you can invite me here, put this man who is obviously in physical distress because of his illness in front of me, and expect me not to heal him? Do you see His pain? Should I allow it to continue? You would do even more if your son or even your ox were to fall into a well.

All the commandments are fulfilled by love, by doing for another, possibly even sacrificing of myself. Do not believe me? Let us look at a couple commandments.

Is it lawful to rise in the morning and pray to God, asking Him to guide all your decisions that day?

Is it lawful for you to praise God, to use His name to bless your neighbor?

Is it lawful to gather with your blood-bought relatives to be united to Christ and raised to new life?

Is it lawful to travel the speed limit?

Is it lawful to take your neighbor with a broken leg to his doctor appointment?

Is it lawful to pray with your spouse, and then enjoy one another's company in private?

Is it lawful to call the police and report the names of people who break into your neighbor's home?

Is it lawful to walk away from a conversation where others are speaking gossip about your enemy, and tell them such conversations are not healthy?

Is it lawful to desire that your enemy has a great day?

Is it lawful to pray that your neighbor's business does well?

God uses my wife to pull lawfulness and righteousness out of me. God uses you, and this service, to pull lawfulness and righteousness out of me.

And right about now you are thinking, "What?" God uses Pauline who asks me to do things, in

order to lead me to do things which require me to sacrifice of my selfishness to do them. God uses you to bring me to study His Word, to lead me deeper into it, to pray it, meditate upon, and then His Spirit leads me to bring that Word to you – even when I would rather be fishing, hunting, of something else to gratify my selfish desires.

Is it lawful to heal on the Sabbath?

That is exactly what the Sabbath is all about. When God gave the commandments, what was He doing? He was pointing forward to what He would be doing, resting from His labors.

Do you not see it? On that Sabbath after the Friday called good, Christ lay in the tomb, His body rested from the labors of the previous week. He had worked salvation for all mankind. He had carried the burdens of your sinfulness; He had borne the tribulations of your brokenness; He carried your griefs and sorrow, unto His own death that He might bury them in the grave.

He rested on the Sabbath, and rose on the first day of the week to bring new life.

When we gather to celebrate the joy of that first day of resurrected life, it is our Sabbath, our rest in the Lord. What happens on the Sabbath? It is a day of rest and healing. We rest in Christ's tomb, His death is our death, that we might be raised to new life.

This is the Sabbath, the day of rest in the Lord God. It is exactly what this day brings, healing and life. Here you do not work, but work is done to you, healing and life are given to you. On this Sabbath, you are joined to Christ. He is the Word who comes into your ears and raises you to new life. It is His flesh that you eat, His blood that you drink, and Christ fills you – He loves you to love one another. Amen.