

*DATE: January 31, 2021*

*SCRIPTURE: Luke 6:1-16*

*TITLE: Son of Man, Lord of Sabbath*

## Luke 6:1-16 Jesus faces two Sabbath controversies and then picks The Twelve

It is a common misconception that the relationship between Jesus and the Pharisees was purely adversarial. We often think of the Pharisees as the “Bad Guys” of the story. They walk around with black hats and try to antagonize, entrap, arrest, and ultimately crucify Jesus. A closer look at these stories, and the Gospel of Luke in general, reveals a more nuanced relationship between Jesus and the Pharisees.

One of the clues of this is that the Pharisees were not a part of Luke’s Passion story. At all. Once Jesus gets to Jerusalem and begins his journey to the Cross, the Pharisees are not in the story. The group that decides that Jesus must be killed are the Chief Priests. In fact, as Jesus is entering Jerusalem on Palm Sunday, some Pharisees that are with warn him that he is going to get killed if he doesn’t calm things down a little.

A closer look at this story reveals something that can easily be missed. It begins with “Jesus and his disciples” walking through wheat fields, when “some Pharisees,” begin to question him. The story does not imply that these are two different groups of people. It is very possible that the Pharisees in this story were among a larger group of people who would be considered disciples of Jesus.

The Pharisees challenged Jesus. They were frustrated by what he was teaching, doing, and saying. They confronted him often. Conversely, Jesus was frustrated by the Pharisees. He called them out. He called them hypocrites. There is no question that Jesus and the Pharisees were often at odds, but part of this is because they were so similar. The Pharisees believed that the spiritual life of a person was important. They taught about the importance of a connection to God, and that the ritual and sacrifices of the Temple were not the most important part of one’s relationship with God. They pointed to the Torah and the Oral Tradi-

tion to support their belief in an afterlife, resurrection, and a salvation based on one’s connection to God.



Jesus agreed with much of this. In all of his controversies with the Pharisees, it was never about what they taught. His problem was the way they interpreted and applied their beliefs. In this story Jesus wants to eat and heal. He is appealing to the basic rights of humanity and his fundamental mission: to restore people to life. The Pharisees question whether or not he should be doing these things on the Sabbath.

Jesus does not abolish the Sabbath (in fact at the end of this passage you could argue that Jesus takes a Sabbath, and observes the practice of finding time and space to be with God alone). He differs with their interpretation of what it is to keep it holy. To him, eating and healing are holy acts that are a part of a closer walk with God—no matter the day they take place.

Jesus and the Pharisees challenge each other, but Jesus never dismisses them. He keeps teaching them. He keeps calling them out. He keeps breaking bread with them. In Luke, he eats with Pharisees more than any other group of people.

We live in a culture where we are often quick to dismiss those who challenge us and completely disengage with those we see as disagreeing with us. We must be challenged by Jesus whose response to the Pharisees is to continue to be in relationship, speak truth, teach, and break bread.