

GOD IS GOOD

Part ? of LUKE, Luke 6:1-11.

Peter Foxwell. The Cornerstone Church. August 15, 2021.

INTRODUCTION

I was in a shoe store the other day, looking for a pair of running shoes. A young woman helped me, but she didn't do a very good job. First, she tried to measure my left foot using the right foot measuring thing. Then, she brought out a box of shoes and walked away, leaving me to figure stuff out alone. The shoes were way too tight, so I told her they didn't fit. She shrugged and said, "OK". That was it. She didn't offer to get another size for me. I walked out and I will never go back to that shoe store. Ever.

She did a bad job of representing that store. Today, in Luke 6, we'll see the religious leaders doing a bad job of representing God. In fact, they mis-represent God; they paint an inaccurate and unattractive portrait of God. We don't want to repeat their mistake, so we'll study the passage to figure out how to do a great job of representing God. This matters. In 2 Corinthians 5, the apostle Paul calls Christians ambassadors of Christ, people who represent God to the world:

(2 Corinthians 5:20) We are therefore Christ's ambassadors, as though God were making his appeal through us. We implore you on Christ's behalf: Be reconciled to God.

First, let's look at how NOT to represent God.

In Luke 6, the religious zealots and religious teachers are up to their same old nonsense, nit-picking Jesus and waiting for a reason to condemn him. But Jesus is focused on revealing the goodness of God. Let's read verses 1-11 and you'll see what I mean.

LUKE 6:1-11

One Sabbath Jesus was going through the grain fields, and his disciples began to pick some heads of grain, rub them in their hands and eat the kernels. 2 Some of the Pharisees asked, “Why are you doing what is unlawful on the Sabbath?”

3 Jesus answered them, “Have you never read what David did when he and his companions were hungry? 4 He entered the house of God, and taking the consecrated bread, he ate what is lawful only for priests to eat. And he also gave some to his companions.” 5 Then Jesus said to them, “The Son of Man is Lord of the Sabbath.”

6 On another Sabbath he went into the synagogue and was teaching, and a man was there whose right hand was shriveled. 7 The Pharisees and the teachers of the law were looking for a reason to accuse Jesus, so they watched him closely to see if he would heal on the Sabbath. 8 But Jesus knew what they were thinking and said to the man with the shriveled hand, “Get up and stand in front of everyone.” So he got up and stood there.

9 Then Jesus said to them, “I ask you, which is lawful on the Sabbath: to do good or to do evil, to save life or to destroy it?”

10 He looked around at them all, and then said to the man, “Stretch out your hand.” He did so, and his hand was completely restored. 11 But the Pharisees and the teachers of the law were furious and began to discuss with one another what they might do to Jesus.”

THE SABBATH DAY LAW

When God rescued his people from slavery in Egypt, he gave them a moral code to guide their lives. These are the terms of the covenant God made with Israel. The code is summarized in Exodus 20 as the Ten Commandments.

The fourth commandment is the Sabbath Day law.

(Exodus 20:8-11) “Remember the Sabbath day by keeping it holy. 9 Six days you shall labor and do all your work, 10 but the seventh day is a sabbath to the LORD your God. On it you shall not do any work, neither you, nor your son or daughter, nor your male or female servant, nor your animals, nor any foreigner residing in your towns. 11 For in six days the LORD made the heavens and the earth, the sea, and all that is in them, but he rested on the seventh day. Therefore the LORD blessed the Sabbath day and made it holy.

The Sabbath law is based on two ideas: 1) It's good to have a weekly reset - "keep it holy" (verse 8); a day to set God apart as Lord over us, as provider, protector, and Savior, as worthy of our exclusive worship, and 2) It's good to have a weekly rest from the demands of work: "you shall do no work" (verse 9); a time to get off the treadmill of constant emails and texts.

Let me ask you: After reading this passage, what is God's motive for the Sabbath? Was God trying to hurt his people or help his people? Is God good to us, or is he evil?

It seems obvious, that the Sabbath law was given to Israel to help, not hurt them. Why? Because God is good.

Unfortunately, religious zealots twisted the Sabbath into a stick with which to beat people. Let's talk about what they did and how Jesus responded to show that God is good.

THE PHARISEES AND THE SABBATH LAW

The religious scholars in Jesus' day taught about keeping Sabbath. They defined work and rest; what was allowed and what was not allowed on the Sabbath. In the Mishnah (Rabbinic oral interpretations of the Law, the ORAL TORAH, written down in 3rd century AD), they classify thirty-nine activities as work. These included reaping, threshing, and grinding grain. Also, the Rabbis taught that saving a life was OK on the Sabbath, but if the medical problem was not life threatening then it must wait until after the Sabbath to be treated.

Now, it's very important to note this: none of these interpretations and applications were in the Bible. They are not God's words; they are man-made regulations. But the religious leaders made no distinction. They treated their regulations as the Oral Torah and gave it the same authority as the written Torah, the Bible itself.

The result was that the religious leaders painted a portrait of God in their own image; a God who is mean and hurtful, a God who doesn't care about people in need; a God who places crushing religious burdens on people.

(Luke 11:46) Jesus replied, "And you experts in the law, woe to you, because you load people down with burdens they can hardly carry, and you yourselves will not lift one finger to help them."

Not only did they pass off their regulation as God's law and use them to crush people, the Pharisees and teachers of the Law also used the regulations as a weapon. They policed the Sabbath, looking for offenders to shame and rebuke. They targeted Jesus and "were looking for a reason to accuse him" (verse 7); that is, to bring him to trial.

Jesus ignored their regulations. Why?

JESUS AND THE SABBATH LAW

In the first incident, Jesus reminded his accusers that King David fed himself and his soldiers with bread that was set apart for God - (verses 3-4; cf., 1 Samuel 21:1-6). In the second incident, Jesus asked them, "which is lawful on the Sabbath: to do good or to do evil, to save life or to destroy it?" (Verse 9).

Jesus was making a serious point: God does not want the Sabbath or his other laws to hurt us (hunger or illness), but to help us.

(Mark 2:27) Jesus said to them, "The Sabbath was made for man, not man for the Sabbath.

God is good and kind and gracious to people. Jesus ignored the man-made regulations because they misrepresented God:

1. They hurt people
2. They portrayed God as not good
3. They misinterpreted God's pure word with flawed human insights.

Jesus' words and actions to feed and heal on the Sabbath painted an accurate portrait of God. He represented God as good and it evoked a fierce reaction:

(Luke 6:11) The Pharisees and the teachers of the law were furious and began to discuss with one another what they might do to Jesus.

In the parallel passage in Matthew 12, it gives more detail about their intentions: "they plotted how they might kill Jesus" (verse 14).

Jesus challenged his opponents authority to interpret God's Word and asserted his own. He identified himself as "Lord of the Sabbath" (verse 5); that is, the God who originated the Sabbath; the one with authority to interpret and apply the Sabbath law.

Jesus painted an accurate portrait of God. He revealed the true God, who is good all the time (Mark 10:18). As Christ's ambassadors, we want to represent God well. Let's talk about how to do that.

HOW TO REPRESENT GOD

As God's people today, we have a responsibility to represent God to the world as ambassadors of Christ, painting an accurate portrait of God. Let's focus on two ways to do that.

1. ACCURATELY REPRESENT GOD'S WORDS

Our responsibility is to speak the truth to the world, but we must be careful to distinguish between the Bible and our interpretations and applications of the Bible. The Bible is God's Word to the world, and it is true and without error. It's not our book.

Our interpretations and applications of the Bible can be mistaken. And whenever they are mistaken, we misrepresent God. We paint an inaccurate picture of God. There are three ways in which we tend to mix up God's words with our words:

1. We are biased, so we twist the Bible to fit our agendas.
2. We have blindspots, so we ignore passages that do not support our ideas.
3. We can be bullies, so we use the Bible to create us versus them.

It's a good idea to make a distinction between God's words and our own: "This is what the Bible says, and this is what I think it means, and this is how I think it applies.

We should be extremely humble and careful when interpreting and applying the Bible because we can accurately represent God ONLY when we accurately present his Word. Paul emphasized the need for accurate Bible teaching when he told Timothy:

(2 Timothy 2:15) Do your best (*make every effort*) to present yourself to God as one approved, a worker who does not need to be ashamed and who correctly handles (*with the accuracy of a finish carpenter - clarity and precision*) the word of truth.

God's book deserves to be communicated with clarity and precision. It's not our book. It does not serve our agendas. It's not a collection of proof texts that we can use as weapons or leverage to get what we want.

The second way in which we can accurately represent God is ...

2. ACCURATELY REPRESENT GOD'S CHARACTER

Jesus painted an accurate portrait of the good God who wants the best for people. He showed by his actions of feeding and healing on the Sabbath that the goal of the Ten Commandments, and thus God's goal, is human flourishing.

We should follow Jesus' example and accurately represent God's character. God is not only good; God revealed himself to Moses as compassionate, gracious, forgiving, just, and so on (Exodus 34:5-7). However, our focus today is on accurately representing his goodness to the world.

Here are three ways we can do that.

1. **Help People.** Treat everyone the way God has treated you, with goodness, mercy, and grace. Whenever possible, make friends, not foes.

(1 Peter 2:12) Live such good lives among the pagans that, though they accuse you of doing wrong, they may see your good deeds and glorify God on the day he visits us.

2. **Respect Opponents.** Fight fair, speak truth in love, respect every person's God-given dignity and worth. Do not display an US versus THEM mentality. There is only US. We are all in need of the goodness of God, all in need of grace and forgiveness in Christ. Opponents are not our enemies, they are our mission field.

(1 Peter 3:15-16) But in your hearts revere Christ as Lord. Always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have. But do this with gentleness and respect, 16 keeping a clear conscience, so that those who speak maliciously against your good behavior in Christ may be ashamed of their slander.

3. **Profess Jesus.** It does not represent God well when we only point out a person's or nation's sins. An accurate portrait of God portrays him as holy Judge AND merciful Savior. Jesus is God in human form who came into the world to seek and to SAVE the lost (Luke 19:10).

CONCLUSION

The devil has a deceptive strategy to delude the world into believing that God is not good. He succeeded in the Garden of Eden when he persuaded Eve that God was holding out on her so she'd be better off without God. Today, the devil's lies are working better than ever. People are blinded to the goodness of God, but we are called to RE-present God to the world and, by so doing, demolish the lies of the devil.

Our mission is to communicate the Gospel, the Good News that God is so good that he is willing to forgive us for breaking his laws. He is so good that he is willing to restore us to himself and fill us with his life.

Our best evidence of the goodness of God is Jesus Christ. He reveals God's goodness in concrete, visible, tangible ways through his incarnation, his life among us, his self-giving on the cross, and his resurrection to life. All this was for us. And it is all God's goodness, mercy, love and grace in action.

As we leave here today and go back to our homes, workplaces, and communities, let's pray for grace to represent God well, just as Jesus did. Amen!

WORSHIP CELEBRATION**Sunday, August 15, 2021****1:30 Welcome & Prayer**

Prayer partners are in the back during worship

0:00 Invocation- Alex

"Let us go up to the house of the Lord together!"

4:27 *the house of the lord-Josh***6:21 *Freedom-Alex*****0:45 Pray & Dismiss Kids - Tami****3:00 Bible Reading - Romans 14:1-12, Tami****5:52 *Way Maker-Julia*****3:00 A.C.T.S. Prayer - Tami****25:00 Teaching - God Is Good, Luke 6:1-11**

Peter Foxwell

0:00 *Set A Fire-Alex***1:30 Updates - Peter & Joey****0:30 Blessing - Peter**