



JESUS THE SABBATH LORD

Part 22 of Luke's Gospel: Investigating the Man Who Is God

Pastor Mark Driscoll | Luke 6:1–11 | March 28, 2010

Luke 6:1–11

¹ On a Sabbath, while he was going through the grainfields, his disciples plucked and ate some heads of grain, rubbing them in their hands. ² But some of the Pharisees said, “Why are you doing what is not lawful to do on the Sabbath?” ³ And Jesus answered them, “Have you not read what David did when he was hungry, he and those who were with him: ⁴ how he entered the house of God and took and ate the bread of the Presence, which is not lawful for any but the priests to eat, and also gave it to those with him?” ⁵ And he said to them, “The Son of Man is lord of the Sabbath.”

⁶ On another Sabbath, he entered the synagogue and was teaching, and a man was there whose right hand was withered. ⁷ And the scribes and the Pharisees watched him, to see whether he would heal on the Sabbath, so that they might find a reason to accuse him. ⁸ But he knew their thoughts, and he said to the man with the withered hand, “Come and stand here.” And he rose and stood there. ⁹ And Jesus said to them, “I ask you, is it lawful on the Sabbath to do good or to do harm, to save life or to destroy it?” ¹⁰ And after looking around at them all he said to him, “Stretch out your hand.” And he did so, and his hand was restored. ¹¹ But they were filled with fury and discussed with one another what they might do to Jesus.

INTRODUCTION

All righty, Mars Hill. We're in Luke 6:1–11. If you've got a Bible, feel free to go there as we deal with Jesus the Sabbath Lord. Let me begin by saying that what we're talking about today is very important for your life individually, your family, if you have a family, married, children, and the like, your community group, the campus that you're involved in at Mars Hill Church, the more than three hundred churches in our Acts 29 Church Planting Network, as well as those churches, and networks, and ministries, that by God's grace, we're able to partner with around the world. That you are to enjoy freedom, and life, and transformation, and hope, and joy, beginning in your life with Jesus flowing out to your family, flowing out to your community group, flowing out to your campus, flowing out from our church, to serve and assist other churches, and flowing out from our nation to the nations of the earth.

And I've been really blessed traveling. My big travel season is over. I recently got back from Africa but it is really amazing to see what God is doing globally, raising up church planting leaders, young pastors in and around urban centers who are like-minded, and friends and partners, and what could ruin all of this, from your life, to your family, to your community group, to your campus, to our network, to our movement, is something called legalism. It's a pernicious, continual, ever-present danger. And as we get into Luke 6 today, the battlefield is the Sabbath, but the issue is legalism.

LEGALISM

So let me address both before we jump into the story in Luke 6:1–11. Legalism is the enemy of Jesus Christ. Legalism is religion; those words I will use frequently, synonymously. James says that, “Pure religion is to look after widows, orphans, and those in need.” What we're talking about is like the band name Bad Religion. Bad religion is rule making. It is legalism. It is living by the letter of the law, not the spirit of the law, and it is living out of devotion to the law, not out of love for God and people.

And so legalism is where people take the Scriptures and they add to it. Oftentimes saying, “Well, God wrote a number of rules, but those rules aren't clearly sufficient, so we feel we have permission to add to God's rules to make other books and lists.” And this gets done by denominations, traditions; this gets done by churches, religious leaders, authors, and the like. And so all of a sudden, you've got the Scriptures, plus you need to have this other book, or this other list of rules. These are not books and lists of rules that help illustrate and inform us of what the Bible says, but add to it.

This is a denial of something called *sola scriptura*, where Scripture is our highest authority. That slogan was used by the Protestant Reformers to say that the Bible alone, Scripture alone, is our highest authority. All other authorities, like other books, teachers, rules, and leaders, are under, not equal to, Scripture. Legalists tend to elevate teachers and also other lists, and rules, and books equal to Scripture. This is also legalism, and religion is a denial of the something called the sufficiency of Scripture; that we need more than just the Bible. We need other teachers. We need other rules. We need other additions, not to just explain what the Bible says, which is a good thing, but add to it, which is a bad thing. Proverbs 30:5–6 says it this way, “Every word of God is flawless,” one translation will say. Another will say, “Every word of God proves true.” It goes on to then say, “Do not add to his word or he will rebuke you and prove you to be a liar.” Every word of Scripture is flawless, it's perfect. Scripture alone is highest authority. It is sufficient.

Do not add to it, or God will rebuke you as a liar.

A PAINT-BY-NUMBERS LIFE

And religious people are dangerous, deadly, and damaging, because they're bold, they are courageous, they're arrogant, as we will see, and they push people to obey them rather than God. And the result of religion is that some people feel and present life with God as a sort of paint-by-numbers kit. It's artless. It's heartless. All you do is just get the Bible and the other rule book, put them together, and then paint by numbers. You guys ever painted by numbers? The whole goal is that everyone's painting would look exactly the same. And to do that, all you need to do is obey all of the rules. All of the number two dots, you paint those in with the green. The number threes with the orange. The number four with the red. The number five with the yellow. Do not go outside of the lines, that would be a violation of the rule. And your goal is to make your picture look like everyone's picture.

And some people really prefer the paint-by-numbers relationship view with God; no passion, no love, no heart, no discernment, no care, just paint by numbers. "Eat this, do this, pray this, read this, do that, tithe this. Good, my picture is perfect even if my heart is passionless, and my relationship is null and void. I was obedient to the law." God wants more. God wants more than a paint-by-numbers relationship with his people. He wants a living, active, vibrant, conversant, prayerful, discernment, Spirit-filled, Spirit-led, living, loving, life-giving relationship with you. And religion and legalism, which undergirds religion, is an enemy of that kind of living, loving, life-giving relationship with God.

THE SABBATH IS A GIFT TO BE ENJOYED

And as we get into it today, the religious legalists show up to argue with Jesus Christ, and the real issue is legalism, and the battlefield is the Sabbath. And there will be other battlefields throughout the course of this gospel, but today it is the Sabbath, and Luke will give us two occasions where Jesus has a conflict—and there is such a thing as good, holy, sanctified conflict—on the Sabbath with religious legalists. So let me tell you a little bit about the Sabbath. The Sabbath was created by God. Genesis 1:2 says that, "For six days God worked, and on the seventh day he rested." Exodus 20:8–11, next book of the Bible. In the Ten Commandments, I think it's the fourth commandment, God says, "I worked six days, rested on the seventh. You work six days, take the seventh day off."

Let me say this—the Sabbath is a gift to be enjoyed. It's a good thing, and religious people take it and they make it into a bad thing. Religious people could take good things, make them into bad things by putting so many extraneous rules around them that they're not even fun anymore. This would be like birthday cake rules. You don't need birthday cake rules. Birthday cake is fantastic all by itself. It doesn't need a list of rules. It just needs a fork, if that. That's all a birthday cake needs. And the reason I think of birthday cake, it's one of the happiest things I could think of. You just give someone a cake, they just figure out what to do with it, all right, they don't need a list. If you want to ruin a birthday cake, go to a kid and say, "Okay, we're gonna give you a birthday cake, not chocolate which is what you wanted, but we're gonna give you vanilla because we're religious, and we don't do chocolate or sprinkles. So eat your vanilla cake, and eat it on Tuesday, not Wednesday, not Monday. Eat it between 2:17 and 2:19, not before or after. Eat it with your left hand, not your right hand. Use a spoon and not a fork and if you drop it on the floor, there's no ten-second rule. We're legalists, you cannot pick it up and eat it. We live by the letter of the law. Enjoy your birthday cake." At that point, eating birthday cake would sound like going to the dentist. It's something you have to do, not something you get to do. It would have been awesome, but they ruined it. That's what religious people do to everything.

And the Sabbath, they did the exact same thing. God says something good, "Hey, you know what? Take a day off." You'd think people would be like, "That is a good idea." And then the religious people come along and say, "Oh, we need to put together a rule book for this." Really, a rule book for a day off? We need a rule book for a day off? "Yes, and then you need to memorize the rules, and you need to obey the rules and we're gonna discipline you if you disobey the rules." And the whole point is it's supposed to be a day off, and you've made this into a lot of work. Now I actually I have a to-do list, a religious job description for my day off. You've ruined everything. I was gonna nap, but now I gotta figure out whether or not I'm obeying the nap rules for the day off.

So let me say this about the Sabbath, it's a good thing, take a day off, rest, enjoy your friends, community. God wants you to rest, it's a real gift. It gives people a day off, it gave the slaves a day off. It gave the poor a day off. It gave the land a day off. It gave the animals a day off, but the religious people, they wanted to add to what God said about the Sabbath, so they came up with all kinds of rules.

And the Sabbath used to be on Saturday, and then Jesus rose from death on Sunday. So the church started worshipping on what Revelation calls "the Lord's day," on Sunday. Constantine allegedly gets converted, the Roman emperor, in the early 300s and so all of a sudden, he declares that Sunday's the new Sabbath day. America's founded, we can't decide. "Well, do we get the Jewish Saturday Sabbath or the Christian Sunday Sabbath?" Well, we're Americans, so we took them both. We took a two-day weekend. Some of you here are like, "Oh, really? Are there any other religions that have any other days? Maybe we can petition for those also." That's why we got a two-day weekend. And Paul says in the New Testament, "Don't let people judge what day," the principle is: Get a day off, rest from your labors, enjoy God, your work, your friends, your family, your neighbors, practice hospitality, enjoy community, and take a nap, because the sovereign God of the universe has still got it under control even if you take a day off. It's a really good principle, but again, the religious people made a whole bunch of rules that God never put in the Bible. And I'll say this up front, we love the Bible. We believe everything the Bible says, and if you've come here with an additional list of rules, feel free to put those away. We still have a lot of things in here we're working on. We're not ready for your list yet. Amen?

1. LEGALISM MAKES YOU BOLD.

Now, what you'll learn today are a number of things about legalism. The first is this: legalism makes you bold. We're gonna jump into this story where

Jesus has conflict with religious legalists on and about the Sabbath. Luke 6:1-2, “On a Sabbath,” so it was a Saturday, this was before Jesus rose from death, and the Sabbath shifted to Sunday. “While he was going through the grainfields, his disciples plucked and ate some heads of grain, rubbing them in their hands. But some of the Pharisees said, ‘Why are you doing what is not lawful to do on the Sabbath?’”

Okay, you’re gonna meet a few characters here. First, you’ll meet the Pharisees and then later on in this chapter, you’ll meet the scribes. The scribes were the religious leaders forty or older, formerly theologically trained. I’ll be forty in the fall, so let’s say these are my peers. I hate to say that, but that’s the religious professional, the teacher. We’ll call him the queen bee.

And then there were the Pharisees. These were their followers, blue-collar folk, often not formerly educated. We’ll call them the swarm. And what they would do, they would take the teaching of the queen bee, and then they would swarm around other religious leaders, and traditions, and classes, and meetings, and services, and groups. They’d swarm in, and criticize, and sting, and kill. Okay, so you guys can be the Pharisees. That’s how this would work.

And so they—here’s what’s happening. Jesus on a Sabbath day, it’s a Saturday, he’s walking through a grain field. Deuteronomy, the Old Testament law, made a provision that if you’re walking through someone’s field, and you’re hungry, as long as you don’t, you know, take out a winnowing fork, as long as you don’t pull out, you know, a harvester and steal them blind, you could pick a little bit of food and eat it to feed yourself. It was a generosity provision for the hungry. So they’re not disobeying the law here.

So they’re walking through and all of a sudden, they pluck a little bit of grain. They rub it in their hands ‘cause they’re preparing a meal ‘cause they’re hungry. And according to the religious people, you’re not supposed to prepare a meal on the Sabbath, that’s supposed to be done the day before. And they had made—‘cause all the Bible said was, “Don’t work on the Sabbath,” so the religious people came along and put together an addendum to the Bible, a thirty-nine-point checklist for what constitutes the Hebrew word “work.” I’m not making this up.

And they look at Jesus and they realize, he has now broken four of their rules. Number one: he is reaping. Number two: he is threshing. Number three: he is winnowing. And number four: he is preparing food. And so they come up to him, and here’s my question, where? In the grain field. They’re following him around. That’s what religious people do. It’s okay on the Sabbath to hassle God, but it’s not okay to make a sandwich. That’s religious people. And today with Twitter, Facebook, blogging, religious people—it’s like crack for religious people. They get to just RSS feed and watch everybody and cyber-stalk. That’s what they do.

So here, they’re following Jesus around in the grain field, and here’s what they say, “Why are you doing what is not lawful on the Sabbath?” This is very bold. You walk up to Jesus and you assume if you disagree with him, he’s wrong. That’s a huge assumption. “Hello God, why do you do this? You have broken our rules.” Do you think Jesus cares about the rules? You think Jesus is like, “Ooh, so sorry. I made the heavens and the earth, and your scribe, whom I made, made a list. Well, I’m not very interested in the list that your scribe made ‘cause I made your scribe.”

See this is what happens, religious people are bold. They’ll follow you around. They’ll get right in your face, and they’ll assume if there’s disagreement, they’re right, you’re wrong. And for some of you, see, some of you are gonna really struggle with religious people ‘cause they’re bold. You’re more shy. They’re more bold, so they’re gonna run you over. Some of you are young, they’re old. Some of you are new Christians, they say they’ve been Christians for a while. All right, some of you, you haven’t read a lot, and you’re pretty simple, and they’ve got a lot of verses. Now, they don’t use them right, but they know them, and they put you on the defensive, and they make you feel like you’re stupid, and you’re not that holy, and you’re not that well read, and you should just shut up and obey them because they know what they’re talking about. Now if you do that, they’ll rob you of your joy. They’ll rob you of your freedom in Christ. They’re very bold.

You can be bold and wrong. You can be bold and wrong. Just because they’re bold doesn’t mean they’re right. Some of you really need to push back family, friends, coworkers, religious people. Very bold—so bold, they confront Jesus to his face. That indicates there’s something seriously wrong with them. They’re not accusing him of disobeying the law. He’s disobeying their laws. Just so you know, Jesus couldn’t make it in a lot of Christian colleges or denominations, because he breaks some of their rules. He doesn’t break any of the Bible’s rules, but he breaks certain religious rules.

2. LEGALISM MAKES YOU UNBIBLICAL.

Number two: legalism makes you unbiblical. “And Jesus answered them, ‘Have you not read what David did when he was hungry, he and those who were with him: how he entered the house of God,’” the tabernacle, “‘Took and ate the bread of the Presence, which is not lawful for any but the priests to eat, and also gave it to those with him?’” Here’s what he says, “You guys have a lot of rules, but your rules don’t agree with the Bible,” so you’re on the horns of a terrible dilemma. Do you keep your rules and disobey the Bible, or do you keep the Bible and repent of your rules? What are you gonna do?

And he does something in philosophy that’s called a *reductio ad absurdum*, and this is a philosophical treatment. It says, “Assume that the position of your opponent is right, and then walk it out to its logical conclusion, showing it to be ridiculous because religion is ridiculous.” I’ll give you an example. I was at a conference not long ago. I had a pastor come up and he—I mean, this guy was upset, and he said, “All alcohol consumption is a sin.” That’s what he told me. I told him, I said, “Look, here’s the deal. I come from a long line of alcoholics. I know alcohol could cause great damage. I didn’t even have a drink till I was thirty ‘cause I was afraid of being an alcoholic. I don’t think anybody should be drinking under age, disobeying the law, causing anyone else to stumble. If you’re saying alcohol can be dangerous, I agree. But are you sure you want to say it like that, ‘All alcohol consumption is a sin?’” He said, “Yes.” I said, “Okay, let me assume that that’s true. You serve, I volley, my next question is, what about Jesus? Jesus made and drank wine.” Just leave a long, awkward silence. He said, “He either drank grape juice or he drank wine but if he did drink wine, he shouldn’t have.” “Oh, so

Jesus isn't as holy as you?" That's a real problem. See, it's either change the Bible or question Jesus' character, probably not the best conclusion. The God you worship needs to give an account to you, that seems like an inversion of the relationship. Jesus never did sin, but he did drink wine.

Jesus does this same thing here and he says, "Okay, you've got a rule that you could never make a meal and eat anything that's not pre-prepared on the Sabbath." He says, "Well, let's just—let's not argue your goofy list. Let's go to the book that God wrote." He says, "Do you remember the story in 1 Samuel 21?" Saul was king, he started off pretty good, he went totally, thoroughly cocoo for Cocoa Puffs, lost his mind. Starts chucking spears at David, who was to be a successor as the next king. David and his mighty men, his soldier-warrior comrades, they are literally running for their life, and it's the Sabbath. And I know religious people would be like, "You can't run on the Sabbath." Well, they're trying to kill him, he needs to run, alright?

So he's running for his life, and he shows up at the tabernacle, and he goes up to the priest, and he tells him, "Hey, look. We're starving to death. We're out of provisions. We're running for our life. Do you have anything to eat?" And the priest says, "You know, not really, all we have is the bread of the Presence." Now, in the presence of God there were twelve loaves. They would be placed there on the Sabbath, and they would be replaced every week. It was to show that God is our provider, and we are dependent on him. No one was allowed to eat that bread except for when it was taken off the altar after a week. The priests could eat it because they were holy men of God, and they were allowed to partake.

And the priest says, "All we have is that bread. That's the only bread we got." So then he asked him a good question, "Are you holy men or not? Are you those kind of soldiers that are running around with women, or have you kept your hands pure and to yourself?" David says, "Me and my men, we love the Lord. We've not been messing around with women. We're not, you know, unclean, and sinful, and godless, like a lot of soldiers. We're godly men, we're serving the Lord. Like the Blues Brothers, we're on a mission from God. We're just hungry, that's all." So the priest takes the bread of the Presence, he gives it to David and his men, and they go off, and they have a nice feast.

Now, the question is, did they sin in eating the bread? Did the priest sin in giving them the bread? The answer is no. No. And so legalism makes you unbiblical. Jesus says, "You know, I'm greater than David, and my men are greater than his men, and the priest allowed them to eat the holy bread on the Sabbath, surely we can pick a few heads of grain and make a bite to eat on the Sabbath. We're not dishonoring my Father. We're not sinning against him. We do abide by the Sabbath laws, but our God loves mercy, and he cares for people, and we're hungry so it's okay to eat." And see what happens, religious people become unbiblical. They make rules outside of the Bible, then they enforce their rules outside of the Bible, and then invariably it paints them in a corner where they have to start disagreeing or rewriting parts of the Bible. It's unbiblical. It's unbiblical.

3. LEGALISM MAKES YOU ARROGANT.

Number three: legalism makes you arrogant. "And he said to them, 'The Son of Man is lord of the Sabbath.'" Here's how arrogant they are. They come to Jesus to argue, not to listen. Jesus says, "First of all, I'm the Son of Man." That's a messianic title of divinity from Daniel 7. The Son of Man is the one who is with God the Father in eternity past, comes into human history as the God-man, ruler, king. And Jesus says, "That's me, so don't argue with me, listen to me. Don't fight with me, follow me. If we disagree, assume you're wrong."

See, some of you would come here today and you would disagree with Jesus, you disagree with parts of the Bible. Assume you're wrong. It's a very proud thing to say, "Well, that's just Jesus' opinion." Well, he's God, so your opinion probably doesn't count. And he says, "I'm Lord of the Sabbath," saying, "I'm creator God, the whole 'seven-day' thing, that was my idea. The 'take a day off,' that was my idea. The book it's written in, yeah, that's my book. And so I get to decide what's acceptable and unacceptable on the Sabbath."

But see, here's what religious people do. They're so arrogant. They always place themselves in the position of judge, and they're sitting in judgment over Jesus. Religious people, if you allow them, will put you on the defensive. They will judge you. They will make you give an account to them, not to Jesus. All of a sudden, you're trying to earn their favor. You're trying to earn their approval. You're trying to get them to say, "Well done, good and faithful servant." Incredibly arrogant. They've assumed God's position, and Jesus will not tolerate that. He doesn't appeal to their authority. He doesn't accept their theology. He instead invites them to acknowledge him as God become a man, and Lord of the Sabbath, as well as the other six days of the week. Arrogant.

And see for some of you, this is where it will become very difficult because religious people are proud. They are self-confident. They are absolutely assured. And you may think, "I don't know, maybe they're right." They seem so convinced that they've become convincing.

4. LEGALISM MAKES YOU UNLOVING.

Additionally, what we see is that legalism makes you unloving. It moves from the first story to the second story. Luke 6:6-10, "On another Sabbath, he," that's Jesus, "Entered the synagogue and was teaching, and a man was there whose right hand was withered. And the scribes," there's the queen bee, "And the Pharisees," there's the swarm, "Watched him, to see whether he would heal on the Sabbath, so that they might find a reason to accuse him." That's telling. "But he knew their thoughts," I think through the Holy Spirit, "And he said to the man with the withered hand, 'Come and stand here.' And he rose and stood there. And Jesus said to them, 'I ask you, is it lawful on the Sabbath to do good or to do harm, to save life or to destroy it?' And after looking around at them all he said to him, 'Stretch out your hand.' And he did so, and his hand was restored."

Now, here's what had happened. The Bible said, "No working on the Sabbath," so the religious people came along and they made a number of rules, one of which was you're only allowed to do emergency medical care on the Sabbath, and they had a whole list of rules for what defined emergency care—a baby being born or a traumatic accident.

Religious people worked this way as well. They worked through something called "the fear of man." Proverbs 29:25, "The fear of man is a trap or a

snare.” They like to make a scene in public, that’s why they’ll swarm to a blog, swarm to a Facebook, swarm to a Twitter account, swarm to a church, swarm to a church meeting, swarm to a dinner at someone’s home. Swarm you at work, swarm you as family members at the holidays. They swarm, and they’re always looking for an audience to pressure you, back down, compromise, be quiet. Do you want to get stung some more? Then tap out, give up, give in. So they’re always picking a fight with Jesus where there’s a crowd, and here it’s on the Sabbath, a Saturday, in the synagogue in front of an audience.

And it says they came not to listen to Jesus, but to find fault with him. Let me say this—you need to examine your own heart. When you listen to me, another preacher, teacher, radio, podcast, read a book, are you listening, are you reading? First asking, “Okay God, teach me. I want to be humble. I want to learn. Secondly, “Show me my sins, my faults, my flaws, my failures so I can grow.” Thirdly, “Show me things I can help other people with as a good friend.” Fourthly, “If there’s anything wrong or askew or really dangerous here, show me that so I don’t get led into error.” But don’t start with, “If I disagree, they’re wrong, I’m right and I’m here as God to judge.”

When you come, are you coming to listen or criticize? Are you coming to find what is helpful or to pick at, critique that which you might find fault with because you’re inerrant like the Bible? Their heart is bad. I mean, you think about this, they had an opportunity to listen to Jesus teach, and they don’t hear a word. All they’re thinking is, “Oh, I can take that quote out of context. That might get him in trouble. Oh, I wouldn’t have said it that way, so obviously he didn’t say it well. Yeah, that’s not a great illustration, I would have done it differently.” They’re criticizing, picking apart the teaching of Jesus. They’re trying to find fault. Let me say this—there’s no fault in Jesus’ teaching, the rest of us, there’s always something to find fault in, especially me. You want to find fault with me? If you can’t find it, just e-mail and I’ll tell you what was wrong with this sermon, all right? There are lots of things wrong with this sermon. Teachers are not inerrant like the Bible, and neither are the hearers.

And this guy walks in with a withered hand. This is a medical diagnosis by Luke the physician. I don’t know if he was born this way, had a traumatic accident, we don’t know what happened. Most people are right-handed so odds are, this is the hand he really, really needs. His right hand is withered, he walks in. You know what this guy wants? He wants to be healed, and the religious people decided this isn’t urgent, come back another day, which is very unloving because for this guy, it probably seemed fairly urgent. Like, “My hand doesn’t work, if he could fix it, today’s good for me. It’s far better than tomorrow.”

So now Jesus has a decision. Will he heal this man publicly in front of the scribes and Pharisees knowing that this will be their opportunity? Or does he cave into fear of man and say, “I’ll do it tomorrow, and I’ll do it privately, so that I don’t get criticized.” And he steps forth boldly, and it says that he looked everyone in the eye. What he’s doing, he’s saying, “You, and you, and you, and you, and you, and you, and you, and you, and you would all need to make a decision. Are you gonna live for the approval of the scribes and the Pharisees, the religious legalists, or will you serve God alone?”

And Jesus tells him, “Stand up and come here and raise your hand.” This is an act of faith. “If you think I can heal you, raise your hand,” so he does. That’s an act of faith, and he’s healed. And the religious people are unhappy ‘cause Jesus didn’t paint by their numbers. “Well, our numbers say that you can only fill in the green box for healing on a day other than the Sabbath, and you painted the right color in the right box, but you painted it on the wrong day. So we’re not happy with you.” It’s amazing. It’s tragic. It’s horrible.

It’s religion, and the truth is, was this a lot of work? The guy did this... [*Raises his hand*] Doesn’t seem like a ton of work and Jesus healed him. That’s it. Wasn’t a ton of work. It took more work to criticize Jesus than it did to heal the man. Yet in their religious ideology, criticizing Jesus doesn’t count for work, but simply having a guy raise his right hand, that was a real problem, because that’s what religious people are like. That’s why Paul says in the New Testament, “Take your Sabbath day, you really need it. It is a gift from God, but don’t let anyone judge you.”

Do you know on Sunday—Sunday’s the Christian Sabbath—you should take a day off, practice hospitality, enjoy your friends, get a day off. Some of us though, we work on Sunday. I do, I don’t know if you noticed that. I work on Sunday, so Sunday’s not a Sabbath day for me, Saturday is. See, the point is that God wants us to grow in rest, and love, and relationship with him and his people. And religious people come around, and they make rules around gifts, and they turn delights into duties and drudgeries.

If you want to raise somebody who really hates God as a parent, be a legalist religious person. Put so many rules around faith and God that it’s not even enjoyable or freeing. Some of you were raised in those homes, and you don’t even know there’s a difference between Jesus and religion, and I apologize, there is. I want you to see here that the religious people are the ones fighting with Jesus, not working for him. These are the people who ultimately kill Jesus. They’re the real problem.

I talked to a guy earlier today, he comes up to me, tears in his eyes. I preached this sermon a little earlier. He says, “Pastor Mark, I’m not a Christian. My whole family’s really religious. They love rules, and rules about the rules.” He said, “Are you sure there’s a difference between religion and all of its rules, and Jesus?” I said, “Yeah.” He said, “Cause I know I’ve got a lot of sin, and I want a God who will forgive me and help me, not just give more rules to me that I can’t do.” I said, “Well, that’s not Jesus. Jesus will show you your sin, died for your sin to forgive you, and then gives you a new life, and the power of the Holy Spirit, and the support of his people to help you change.” He said, “So God doesn’t just stand back and judge me and give more rules?” I said, “No, God comes near in Jesus to help you to change.” The guy said, “I’ve always hated Jesus, but I think I just hated religion.” He said, “You know, Jesus sounds helpful and I could use that help.”

Yeah, see some of you religious people, you’re really serious and you’re proud and you’re devout and you’re killing people. You’re killing people. You’re no help at all. In fact, Jesus says, “Your converts are twice the son of hell that you are.” Look at these people. And some of us would read the story and say, “I can’t believe they did that to Jesus.” If you’re religious, if you’re legalistic, if you’re moralistic, if you’re self-righteous, if you’re hardhearted, if you have rules that are outside of the Bible that you hold equal to the Bible, you’re on your way to being a Pharisee. You’ve taken the

first step. Some of you are far down the path, and it's very unloving. This was very unloving to Jesus. They show up to criticize him. This is very unloving to the man. They're unhappy at the way that he was healed.

RELIGIOUS PEOPLE TAKE THEMSELVES WAY TOO SERIOUSLY

So here's what we'll do at this point. We will take a few moments and make fun of religious people, and we do this in love. No, we do, because we love to make fun of religious people. Religious people take themselves way too seriously, and they expect everyone to take them very, very seriously and sometimes the best thing we can do is laugh at them and invite them to join us as a liberation. That's why the Old Testament prophets and Jesus use prophetic irony and sarcasm. So, we will also make fun of lots of religious people because we believe in diversity, and so we believe in making fun of lots of people, that's our diversity commitment.

We will start with the Jews. Now, in Judaism, it really is a rule-based legalistic religion. Lots of rules, and rules about the rules, and different teams and tribes, and different rules. I'll give you a few examples. There's a guy on staff who has a friend who's Jewish, and his team of Judaism made a rule that you cannot travel more than, let's say, I think it was a mile on the Sabbath, with the only exception being if it was over water, and that was to cover in case you're on a boat. Hard to mark how long a mile is, and sometimes a boat, because of the sea, just gets moved more than a mile, and there's not a lot you can do about it. So this guy, to be committed to the law, he gets in his car on the Sabbath, puts a bottle of water under his seat and then drives, knowing that he's now met the exception of being "over water." Can you imagine God in heaven going, "Doh, that kid's smart. I didn't see that coming. He got me with that."

The thing too I don't understand about religion—and religious people love rules, and rules about the rules. I don't get the hats. I don't understand the hats. I don't know why if you go to a Catholic place, you gotta take your hat off. You go to a Jewish place, gotta put your hat on. Depending upon what team you're on in Judaism or Catholicism or Orthodoxy, you get a big hat, small hat, colored hat, round hat, all kinds of hats. I don't understand the hats. They are funny, so I thought I would share a few with you. Here's one example of a religious hat. What I like about that hat is you can put a cake in it, and I like cake, and so I like that. And it's funny, it's like the religious people think, "Well, God's in heaven. We're way down here. How will he know who his children are? Oh, we'll put the hats on, and then he can't miss us." "My people are the ones with hats."

I also love it when we combine a hat with a dress on a man. I always think that's a nice combination. These are religious leaders. Can you tell which one is in charge? The one with the hat. The hat always makes you closer to God, and so you get the hat. I would not wear a hat. Maybe a cowboy hat. What I love too is the dresses. I'm not sure where the dresses kicked in. I always think it's interesting when the religious leader has to wear a dress. Anytime a man has to wear a dress, something theologically has really gone sideways for me, unless it's a Jedi robe. I would totally wear a Jedi robe.

I will also tell you some things I learned about the Jews in Israel. I went to Israel, which was awesome, and I discovered something called the Shabbat elevator. I will share it with you. This is official footage taken on location in Israel of a Shabbat, Sabbath elevator. And the rule here is if you're Jewish on the Sabbath, you cannot cause electricity to current so you can't push buttons. So the Shabbat elevator in the hotel, I didn't know this, it stops on every floor so no Orthodox Jew has to push the button, 'cause that would be a sin to push the button. And so I didn't know this. So being a dumb Gentile, I got on the Shabbat elevator with a lot of the Jewish people. And it stopped on every floor. It was really slow. So I asked one of the guys, "What is up with this elevator?" He said, "Oh, this is the Shabbat elevator." So I asked, "Is 'Shabbat' Hebrew for slow?" He said, "No, we cannot push the button because that would be a sin, so it just stops on every floor for the Sabbath." I said, "Is there a Gentile elevator?" He said, "Oh yes, there are Gentile elevators and you could push the button." I said, "Okay," thank you, Jesus. So I went over and I started taking the Gentile elevator, henceforth called "the Gentavator." And I jumped on the Gentavator, and as soon as I got on the Gentavator, all of the Jews jumped on the Gentavator and said, "Could you push number seven please?" [Congregation laughing] "It's a sin, could you do it for me?" "Yes, I'm a new covenant Christian, I will push it twice." Awesome, yes.

The next morning after riding the Gentavator and pushing the button for all the Jewish people that I love with all my heart, I saw a man that I will now refer to as Mr. Goldilocks because he had these sideburns that were Goldilock-esque, and he was a big man, maybe four hundred pounds, couldn't get things out of his pocket 'cause they were too far away. And he was eating, for breakfast, a whole massive cheesecake and four huge glasses of chocolate milk, while wearing a black hat, of course, a white shirt, a little braided belt, black pants, black shoes with his Goldilock ringlet sideburns. And so I asked one of the Jewish guys who was with us, nice guy, I said, "What's up with all the dairy for breakfast? That's a cheesecake for breakfast?" He said, "Well, you know, the dietary laws say that we cannot eat dairy past a certain time of day, and we can't mix it with other foods, so in an effort to please God, we eat all our dairy at once." Really? So a whole cheesecake for breakfast and four glasses of chocolate milk and God's in heaven going, "That's what I was wanting to have happen, all my kids to die of heart attacks and lactose intolerance, fabulous." So those will be the Jewish examples.

We'll move on to Catholics. "Did he say that?" "Yes, he did, he did say that." I grew up Catholic. Very glad to have you. Welcome to Mars Hill, enjoy our mass. And the way it worked in Catholicism was there were lots of goofy rules. One of them was no meat on Friday. I do not know why. I do not know why. And so what happened in Zurich during the Reformation is that all of the Protestants would get together on Friday night after they got off work for a city-wide, open-air barbecue. I just think that's awesome.

Also in Catholicism there are weird rules like priests cannot get married, which has not worked out so well. Sometimes you don't get the healthiest guys to sign up for the job when you forbid marriage and children. It's not worked out so well. Paul said that's among the "doctrines of demons." And they will say—and I love Catholics, I just don't agree with a lot of their goofy rules. They will say, "Well, you know, Peter's our Pope. He's our founder." Okay, then let's do *reductio ad absurdum*. He was married. He was. We already saw it in Luke's Gospel. Jesus came and healed his mother-in-law. They are a package deal with a wife, I don't know if you knew that. All right, there's no guy out there right now going, "I could give or take the wife,

mother-in-law, that's what I'm looking for." It's a package deal. Peter had a mother-in-law, that means he had a wife. He was married, so the whole thing is built on a faulty, flawed system.

he other thing in Catholicism that I think is really, really, really interesting is when we went to Israel, certain sites are run by the Catholic Church, the holy sites, and when you get to the holy sites, you always see this sign... You'll notice there are no verses on the sign 'cause it's not in God's book. "No shorts." I asked repeatedly, "Why?" "Your knees will show." God sees them either way. It's not like God's like, "Oh, those are pants. I cannot see the knees." I just, I don't understand.

Now, I have saved arguably the best for last on Catholicism—and this is a big issue for some of you former Catholics, and especially at our Albuquerque campus where Catholicism is just in the water, it just is something you've got to deal with. Take a deep breath. I'm gonna reload because this one is so awesome, we have to nail it. This is my twenty-third sermon in Luke, and I have been waiting to share this for a long time. This one is fantastic.

In the Bible, Jesus taught and five thousand men came out, plus the women and the children, that's maybe, twenty or twenty-five thousand people. And so Jesus had this little boy come to him and hand him a Lunchable, right? Couple fishes and loaves, Hebrew Lunchable, and Jesus multiplied it and fed twenty, twenty-five thousand people. So they all sat on the grass and had an enormous picnic. And I thought, I can't wait to go to that place and just envision in my mind twenty thousand people having a picnic on a hill and I got there, it was a Catholic holy site. I am not kidding you, this is the sign... [*"No Picnics Allowed"*] That is awesome. [*Laughing*] "You know what this place needs, it needs a sign that says, 'No picnics.'" That's awesome.

The Muslims. It got so quiet. Everybody's like, "Oh, man. Can't we do the Mormons and the under britches, can't we do anything else?" No, that's too easy. We won't talk about the burkas. I'll just give you one thing on the Muslims. It's amazing, you see everybody's like, "Oh man, move fast, say it quick." We were in Turkey, right, which is a predominantly Muslim—everybody's Muslim or everybody claims to be Muslim there. And everywhere we went for a bite to eat, they kept asking, "Do you want some raki?" I think that's how you say it. "You want raki, you want raki, you want raki?" I was like, "I'd love to meet him, is he here?" They're like, "No, it's a drink." "Oh, okay, what is it?" "Well, it's an alcohol, really hard beverage. It tastes like"—what is it?—"Sambuca." I was like, "Really? Oh, okay. Well, you guys are a Muslim country." So finally I asked our tour guide, I was like, "You guys are a Muslim country. You're not supposed to drink alcohol. You guys keep offering me raki, why?" He said, "It's our national drink." "Really? The national drink is hard alcohol?" You know, bottled water would have been a better choice just for health purposes, but I'm not a hater. Okay, fine. "Explain this to me, how come Muslims aren't allowed to drink and your national drink is a hard alcohol?" What he said was, "You know, the Muslim scholars say we're not allowed to drink fermented drink, and this is alcohol that's distilled." So you can be a distilled alcoholic, no problem. You just can't be a fermented alcoholic. "We gotta draw the line somewhere and that's where we're gonna draw it." I thought that was awesome.

How about this one? Oh, you know what? It's not just religious people. There's secular religious people too. I double-dog-dare ya in Seattle, even with an atheist to do this. Get a huge SUV, drive it up to a yoga center, okay, and just leave it running, don't turn it off. Just roll the windows down, just start eating a lot of meat, okay, while smoking a cigarette and littering. Just see if the lotus position Pharisees don't come out, "What are you doing?" "Well, I'm smoking less than 20 feet from a building, and I am littering, and I am killing animals, and eating them. And I leave my vehicle running 'cause I read about global warming and it's too cold. So I just run my SUV every day for a couple hours, and occasionally I just get aerosol cans, and I just unload. If you would like, you can come in with me, eat some meat. I'll give you a cigarette, we can drive down to the river, and we could just put our ashes on the salmon, smoked salmon." And see if you don't have a full-on Pharisee, right? Atheistic Pharisees show up.

We'll deal with Christians as well, alright? Okay, so we're Reformed. We'll pick on Calvinists. The Westminster Confession of Faith, which is pretty good, in chapter 21, point number, I think it's 8, says that on the Sabbath you're not allowed to do anything that's, "recreation," recreation. So no sport, no fun. So if you're Presbyterian, this is it, which means yesterday when I took my sons to T-ball and baseball and threw the ball around with them, if I was in a Presbyterian church that strictly adhered to the Westminster Confession of Faith, I'm in sin 'cause I played catch. I don't think that's what Jesus meant. I don't think that's what the Bible meant.

How about other Christian legalisms? Do you know at Mars Hill Church, we can have our own legalisms as well? I'll give you two that a lot of ladies here are prone toward, natural childbirth and home schooling. They go together like two barrels on a gun to shoot the other women. Natural childbirth is where you don't use drugs, right? You're like, "I understand the crucifixion 'cause I felt the pain. I committed myself to natural childbirth." Right, and natural childbirth is fine, it's great. You can do it, praise God, you got options, but it doesn't work for everybody. Some ladies need to go to the hospital, and I saw it, I've been there for five births, each of my kids. The first one, Grace is in labor for like twenty hours, my Shrek-size head, her body. The doctor finally comes to me and says, "We cannot make this geometry work." I understand. I can't even find a hat that fits. "We're gonna need to do an emergency C-section," which kind of freaked me out. So they rush her in. They say, "We're gonna need to do an epidural." "What is that?" "Well, that's where we tap her spine, and we put drugs in there to numb the pain so she can endure the C-section." And then they cut her open, they take her organs out. I'm there watching the whole thing, and at one point the nurse looks at me and says, "Do you need anything?" "Yes, I need an epidural, 'cause I'm freaking out, man. Hook me up to whatever she's got." But the natural childbirth crowd, it's like, "Oh, that is not very Christ-like. I suffered for my baby." And then it turns into home schooling becomes legalistic, it becomes the only way do it. Not against home schooling, it's totally fine, but some of you ladies, it's like, "I do natural childbirth, and I do home schooling, and I didn't do drugs for either." Well, that's cool, but don't get so religious about it. Oh, that was fun.

We will now read from the Bob Jones University handbook, because we can. The Bob Jones University handbook, years 1994, 1995, not that far ago: "All women students, ninth grade and above are to wear hose at all time." I wonder if that includes sleeping. I just thought of that. "Jean skirts and jumpers are permitted after 7:00 p.m. on weekdays, on Saturdays, and on outings, Jean jackets are permitted on outings only. Split skirts, not culottes."

that's what it says, "May be worn to weekend ball games." Oh, that's good.

For you men, "Coats and ties should be worn to evening assemblies." Imagine if our evening service, all the guys are walking in in suits and ties. "Man, are the Mormons taking us over? What happened at Mars Hill?" "When on front campus on Sundays, except for Sunday breakfast when only a tie is required." "Haircuts," you knew this was coming. "Men are to have their hair cut so the back is tapered and does not come over the collar or ears. Sideburns are to be no longer than the lower opening of the ear. Mustaches and beards are not permitted." That would be hard for me 'cause I grow a beard in like seventeen minutes. My dad Chewbacca. "In front the hair must not fall lower than two finger-widths above the eyebrows." And you know there was some little Nazi walking around checking. That kid, like, "Oh, I'm gonna be a deacon, that's what I'm gonna be." They would have to kick Samson out of school. "Oh, long hair, there you go."

"Dormitory students may watch only G-rated home videos while visiting in town. VCRs are not permitted in the dormitories." You'll love this, Mars Hill. "Students may listen to only three types of music. "Number one: classical. Number two: semi-classical." [Laughing] That is awesome. "Three: serious religious music." Like Muslim chants? They don't even qualify that. And it goes on to say you can't listen to folk music or rock music or serious religious music or classic music done in a folk or rock style, and you cannot listen to new age music, and there's a whole paper in the dean's office that explains what new age music is, and its dangers.

And this is interesting, this next policy was in place till the year 2000, you ready? "Interracial dating. There is to be no interracial dating. Students who become partners in an interracial marriage will be expelled. Students who are members of, or affiliated with, any group or organization which holds interracial marriage as one of its goals or advocates interracial marriage will be expelled." That's the Christian fundamentalist doctrine of degrees of separation. You can't marry someone of another race, and you can't be in an organization that will marry someone of another race otherwise you're guilty by association. "Students who date outside of their own race will be expelled," until the year 2000. They would have to kick Moses out because he married a woman who was, the Scripture tells us, black. So Moses, who wrote the first five books of the Old Testament, would have to get kicked out of school.

5. LEGALISM MAKES YOU DANGEROUS.

My point is, back to my preface, legalism makes you bold, unbiblical, arrogant, and unloving. And lastly, here's the big problem, legalism makes you dangerous, makes you dangerous. Luke 6:11, "But they were filled with fury and discussed with one another what they might do to Jesus." See, Jesus breaks their rules, not the Bible rules. He does so publicly. He takes them on. They pick the fight, but he's not gonna lose it. And what they decide is, "We are furious." And religious people attack, and they get angry, and they defend their idols. Anytime you attack someone's idol, people tend to get very violent to defend their idol. When your idol is religion, you tend to get violent defending your religion, which is your idol. And apparently for them, it's a sin for Jesus to heal on the Sabbath, but it's not a sin for them to plot his murder on the Sabbath, which is curious indeed. Religion makes you very dangerous, legalism makes you very dangerous. It could kill everything that we enjoy of God's grace.

SEVEN STEPS TO BECOME A LEGALIST

There are, I think, seven steps to becoming a legalist. I'll share them with you, so you cannot do them by God's grace, and not parent your children to become little legalists. Here's how you become a legalist.

Number one: make rules outside of the Bible. Make rules outside the Bible that are equal to the Bible.

Number two: push yourself to try and keep your rules. "I'm gonna get up at this time, I'm gonna read this many verses. I'm gonna give this—" You make a punch list, and you work really hard, really devout, really serious to really be a Varsity-committed believer. And it's not bad to be zealous, provided you're zealous for the right things, like love, and grace, and mercy.

Number three: castigate yourself when you don't keep your rules. Beat yourself up, punish yourself, put yourself in the position of God. Make your own rules, be your own judge, and then atone for your own sin.

Number four: become proud when you do keep the rules. "I did it. I got up early, I served hard. I gave a lot. I was committed. I was devoted. I did it! I'm a good person, better than others."

Number five: appoint yourself as judge over people. "Oh, you didn't do the thing that I do, you don't do it as well as I do. You should do it like I do. I judge you, I follow you around. I criticize you. I do to you what the Pharisees did to Jesus." Get angry with people who break your rules or have different rules. "How dare you break my rules?" If you're a parent that parents like this, you'll destroy a child. If you're a boss who leads like this, you'll destroy an employee. If you're a community group leader, a deacon or a pastor or a spiritual leader who leads like this, you will destroy people by either them becoming devastated, broken religious people or proud, self-righteous, violent Pharisees.

And then number seven: you just beat the losers. "You didn't obey my rules. You didn't listen to me. You do it the way I do it. You don't do it as well as I do it. Yeah, I know it's not in the Bible but through intimidation, coercion, force, threatening, me and my friends, we're gonna swarm on you. We're gonna criticize you. We're gonna say things about you. We're gonna pressure you, verbally, emotionally, spiritually, sometimes even physically," as they did with the murder of Jesus. "We're going to beat you, we're going to punish you. We're not gonna draw you in with love. We're gonna coerce you through fear, intimidation, and force 'cause we don't care about the heart. We just want you to paint by numbers. We want to decide the numbers, and we just want you to shut up and paint."

RELIGION IS THE DEFAULT MODE OF THE HUMAN HEART

That's religion. That's legalism. And you know what? At Mars Hill, I wrote this down, I think the campuses that are most susceptible to religion and to legalism are the Federal Way Campus, the Olympia Campus, the West Seattle Campus, the Bellevue Campus, the Lake City Campus, the Shoreline Campus, and the Albuquerque Campus 'cause it's steeped, that whole city is, in Catholicism. I'll go on record and say it. Legalism and religion are real threats to the health and well-being of those campuses.

Now for Ballard, Downtown, and the UW Campuses, the real threat and risk is reverse legalism. "Oh, they don't drink? We're gonna drink. Oh, they don't smoke? We'll smoke a pack a day to show our freedom in Christ." Right? "Oh, they tithe, we're not gonna tithe. That's how free in Christ we are. Oh, they serve, well, we're not any of that kind of works theology, we have a nap theology. We sleep like Calvinists. We don't do anything, Jesus said, 'It's finished.' So we're done. Oh, they read their Bible every day, oh, that's a lot. Yeah, we don't have a list like that, yeah, we're not legalists. We don't read the Bible at all. Don't want to get all religious, read a book or pray or serve or care or give. We're free in Christ. Anybody see my pants? I go to the Ballard campus," right? We can be total reverse legalists. "Oh, that church doesn't use instruments, we got a punk band, yee-haw, thank you, Jesus," right? And we can just be reverse legalists, and we could appoint ourselves as judges. We could judge all the religious people, and we could condemn them, and we could feel holier than they are because they're trying so hard, and we don't do anything.

And so for seven of our campuses, I think religion is a real threat. For three of our campuses, I think reverse religion, reverse legalism is a real threat. And the answer is not to be a legalist and not to be someone who is a libertine, not to be someone who is religious, and not to be someone who is irreligious, but the whole point is really what the Pharisees and the scribes were missing on the Sabbath, and that is that the Sabbath is a day to stop working, and just rest in the finished work of Jesus, to stop impressing God, and start enjoying him. To stop doing things for him, and acknowledge what he's done for you. See, religion and irreligion, legalism, and what I'll call licentiousness or lawlessness, all it is is just trying to find a way to be righteous in the sight of God by what you do or do not do. And the truth is Jesus lived the perfect life. He died a substitutionary death, and he rises to give the gift of righteousness. So on the Sabbath day, we stop trying to be more righteous, and we receive the righteousness of Jesus.

That's what they missed. So now that I've got you all, right, we made a lot of the fun of the religious people, and you know what? The irreligious people are just another form of religion. We've made fun of the legalists, but those who are lawless and don't obey even the rules in the Bible, they've got a reverse legalism going on. Those of you who are legalists, repent of your legalism in religion. Those of you who are lawless and irreligious, repent of your lawlessness and irreligion. Come to Jesus, all of us, receiving his death for our sin, his righteousness for our unrighteousness, let him do a work for us, let him do a work in us, so that by grace he might do a work through us, that wouldn't contribute to our righteousness, but would be an outflowing of his gifted to us. Amen? So I hope I've got you all. We had a few laughs at the religious people, but the truth is there's a little bit of religion in all of us. Martin Luther rightly said, "Religion is the default mode of the human heart." So let us not just start by criticizing the Pharisees, because if we do so too wholeheartedly, we're becoming one, by appointing ourselves in the position of righteous, religious judge. That's Jesus' job. I'll pray.

Father God, I pray for those who would hear this and really struggle with religion. I pray for those who would struggle with irreligion. I pray for those who would struggle with legalism. I pray for those who would struggle with lawlessness or licentiousness. I pray for those, Lord God, who would have a proclivity to add to the Scriptures. I pray for those who would have a proclivity to ignore whole portions of the Scriptures. Father God, by the grace of the Holy Spirit, we repent of our religion, our irreligion, our legalism, and our lawlessness of adding to, and subtracting from, the perfection of Scripture in the finished work of Jesus. Please give us the grace to not just laugh at others, but also laugh at ourselves, so that we might take you seriously, but not ourselves. In Jesus' name, Amen.

[End of Audio]

Note: This sermon transcript has been edited for readability.