Sermon Notes

Speaker: Patrick Mead

2/23/25

The Lord of Sabbath in a World of Pain

Luke 6:1-5

1. We have been focusing on the person and teaching of Jesus since Our Safe Harbor Church began and especially so in the last few months. Today, we are once again focusing on Jesus but with a twist: I want you to think of these two chapters, Luke 6 and 7, as a perfect way to introduce Jesus to those who don't know him or who are unsure of him.

2. While most of us live in communities where the majority of people say they believe in God and in Jesus, the fact is that the majority of people on earth and a fast growing plurality of people in this nation either do not believe in the deity of Jesus or they don't know enough about him to form an opinion.

3. We are surrounded by the unread and the untaught and that is not entirely their fault. A host of factors have brought us to this place and discussion of those factors is well beyond the scope of today's lesson. It is important that you understand that you cannot assume that anyone you meet really knows who Jesus is and what he was like in his years on earth. Luke 6 and 7 are a great introduction to him.

4. They are fast moving chapters and give us an intriguing look at a most amazing man. Ready?

5. We who are Christians know that Jesus is the head of the church. The Bible tells us so in exactly those words. However, we need to understand that when it comes to religious traditions and the way we look at scripture, Jesus can be an iconoclast. In the opening verses of chapter six, Jesus challenges the way people had elevated law over the needs of people…twice.

6. In the first instance, he challenged the way they expanded God's law of the Sabbath and made it a burden. Rather like Eve who over spoke for God when asked if He allowed them to eat from every tree (she said God told them not even to touch the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil), they took the command to rest and made it a burden.

7. In the second instance, they refused to relieve human suffering on the Sabbath, treating strict obedience to the law as a great command than any that called for us to care for each other. (some churches refuse to feed or clothe anyone who is not in their religious tribe)

8. Jesus challenged the religious leaders and conventions of the day. Later in this chapter, he would wryly state, "Woe to you when all men speak well of you, for that is how their fathers treated the false prophets." If everyone agrees with you, someone is lying, either you or them. Jesus didn't come to establish some big ecclesiastical monolith but a movement of love and grace.

9. That might be a surprise to your unbelieving friends…and more than a few of your church going friends.

10. Luke 6 has a different version of Jesus's basic teachings found in the Sermon on the Mount. The Sermon on the Mount was given to the general public in Matthew 5-7. The lesson in Luke 6 is called the Sermon on the Plain and it was given to his disciples. "Looking at his disciples, he said…" This is directly given to those who follow Jesus. This is how we are to behave.

11. Matthew's version starts with 8 blessings. Luke's version starts with four blessings and four curses. One big change in the message is one that leaders need to hear. Rather than being told to be perfect as their Father in heaven is perfect, in Luke, Jesus says (Luke 6:36), "Be merciful, just as your Father is merciful." (FULL of mercy)

12. Those outside church circles almost always describe Christians as judgmental. Many inside church circles believe that judging who is right or wrong IS their job! Your agnostic or unchurched friends might be shocked to see that Jesus commands us NOT to judge. (Luke 6:37-38). Instead of spending our time judging, we are to spend our time being merciful and generous.

13. Besides, we can't judge because we do not see the heart of the person and we do not know their genetic predispositions, their life experiences...we just don't know enough. So, don't be blind people trying to guide blind people. Instead, treat people like Jesus treats people.

14. In chapter 7, we see Jesus's love in action. First, a Centurion, a Roman officer, has a son who is sick and in danger of dying. Some of the local community leaders ask Jesus to intervene as this Roman had been generous and loving toward them (rare!). Then, this happens: Luke 7:6-10.

15. Did Jesus require anything of the Centurion? Did he call on him to repent, to leave the Roman army, put his sword down? No, Jesus did good because he could...and he calls us to do the same. No judgment, no demands, no layering of religious traditions on the act...just kindness.

16. He raises a widow's son. It looks that everything is going great and that evil is on the run...but then emissaries from John the Baptist arrive. John is in prison and, with Herod in charge, he would have been held in atrocious conditions. Soon, he would be killed. John was wondering why he was locked up when there was so much to do. He sends messengers to Jesus to ask this rather brutal question: "Are you the one who is to come, or should we expect someone else?"

17. Jesus responds: Luke 7:21-23. Jesus would then go on to praise John the Baptist and tell people that a greater man had never been born. Then...why not spring him from prison? Jesus came here to give us life instructions, a new way to live, as well as freedom from death and forgiveness of sins. He did not come to remove all our problems or struggles. As we have said before, he does not remove the storms. Rather, he shows us how to behave in the storms.

18. Then, show your friends Luke 7:36ff. Jesus goes to a dinner party made up of Pharisees. A sex worker interrupts the dinner by touching Jesus, crying on his feet, pouring her perfume on his feet, scandalizing the religious men at the table. Jesus gently schools the judgmental religious people and then sends the woman away, forgiven...without telling her to change her life. (it might not have been possible to do so. She might have been a slave pimped out by her owner, a widow trying to feed her children, etc.)

19. This is the Jesus the world needs to see. A Lord of the Sabbath who can clear away all the religious baggage that men love to pile on the faithful. A savior in the storm. One who is far more concerned with doing good than in demanding rituals and adherence to doctrines.

20. He is the ONE you want walking in your door if you are sick, in pain, under attack, or in despair. No judgement, just love. That's our Jesus.