

Luke 6:6-11

Sermon: **The teaching of Jesus vs. The teaching of Pharisees #6**

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THEY WANTED TO HEAR HIM

1. In this event, too, Jesus seeks to convince His people (the ordinary crowd and the Pharisees) of the truth He brought into the world—that “new wine cannot be put into old wineskins.” What Jesus’ disciples believe is entirely opposite to the beliefs of the Pharisaic movement, which at that time dominated as the main religious force in Israel. Through various events, Jesus aimed to show that God does not primarily ask them to be religious people. Personally, I believe that God, universally speaking, first and foremost desires that all people promote and reflect His goodness and holiness. And if God’s goodness at certain times conflicts with our religious practices prescribed by the movement or denomination we belong to, we must reject the theological assumption that those practices are more important than God’s goodness. In other words: moral goodness is always, always more important in God’s eyes than our ceremonial rituals! This is the light of wisdom that Jesus came to bring into the world. This is the new wine that will often not be welcome in the old wineskins (our denomination).

1.1. **(Luke 6:6)** “On another Sabbath He entered the synagogue and was teaching; and there was a man there whose right hand was withered.”

1.2. The text tells us that on another Sabbath Jesus entered the synagogue and taught. From previous accounts, we know that Jesus often used the Sabbath to teach the people. He did this frequently in synagogues, though it was not unusual for Him to teach outside them as well. For someone to be allowed to teach in a synagogue as a rabbi, he had to be invited. And because of the growing popularity surrounding Jesus, synagogue communities and their elders wanted to hear what the man from Nazareth—Jesus—was teaching.

1.3. Luke continues by telling us that while Jesus was teaching, among the listeners was a man whose hand was withered. Just to note—the man’s hand was not pleasant to look at. Because of paralysis, the muscles had atrophied (wasted away), which meant the skin hung loose on his hand. We will return to this man with the withered hand later; for now, let us move on.

HE IS AN OBSTACLE

2. (Luke 6:7) “The scribes and the Pharisees were watching Him closely to see if He would heal on the Sabbath, so that they might find reason to accuse Him.”

2.1. The passage before us is very direct and easy to understand. The Pharisees were “watching” in order to catch and accuse Him. Sadly, we see that the hearts of the Pharisees were wrongly oriented. These were men who believed evil ideas, whose theological convictions were corrupted, and for that reason Jesus’ teaching was repulsive to them. He was an obstacle they needed to remove as soon as possible. Just imagine how depraved a person must be to protest against the good that Jesus does—to object when He heals another human being—and then to justify it by believing that God thinks and desires the same as they do: *“Nothing must be done on the Sabbath; that’s what pleases God most.”*

2.2. (Luke 6:8) “But He knew what they were thinking, and He said to the man with the withered hand: ‘Get up and come forward!’ And he got up and came forward.”

2.3. The text says that Jesus knew their thoughts. If you remember, I said before that Jesus did not have to be the all-knowing God to discern what the Pharisees thought about His teaching¹. I believe the same applies here. Their gestures and facial expressions clearly revealed how much they despised the man teaching the people these “mad” ideas. They openly, in front of everyone, attacked and accused Jesus for everything He stood for.

2.4. Since He knew their thoughts, Jesus acted. He told the man with the withered hand to come and stand in the middle, before everyone, so that all could see. Jesus wanted everyone present to witness what He was about to do. From the following verses, we see that the man obeyed Jesus—he rose and stood in the center. I can only imagine the look of displeasure and anger on the faces of the Pharisees directed at the man with the withered hand. Everyone present knew who held authority in the synagogue—the Pharisees—but this man with the withered hand rejected their authority and listened instead to the man from Nazareth, whom he perhaps saw for the first time in his life. I personally believe that what this man did was an act of courage. Considering the pressure the Pharisees placed on the common people, it is clear that this man’s obedience to Jesus’ command was an act of faith and bravery.

WHERE IS THE LOGIC IN THAT?

3. (Luke 6:9) “And Jesus said to them, ‘I ask you, is it lawful on the Sabbath to do good or to do harm, to save a life or to destroy it?’”

3.1. When the man stood in the middle where everyone could see him, Jesus asked the Pharisees a simple, direct question: *“What is lawful on the Sabbath—to do good or to do evil? To save life or to destroy it?”* Every human being on this planet—not only the Pharisees—should be able to answer that question easily, shouldn’t they? We would all say: *“Of course it is right to save life and to do good*

¹ Sermon 28, §4.2.-4.3.

to others.” But do we truly believe that? Our words may say one thing, but the proof lies in our decisions—the fruit we bear through the course of our lives.

3.2. What Jesus was confronting the Pharisees with in that moment—believe me—He is confronting us with today, we who call ourselves Christians. Sadly, we see that the Pharisees did not answer His question. And how could they, when their theology was corrupt? I truly believe this question ties directly to the earlier events we’ve studied. Remember: Jesus defended His disciples, declaring them innocent even though they picked grain on the Sabbath. Why were they innocent? Because in their choices, Jesus saw love for God—with all their heart and soul. Through their actions they displayed God’s goodness and chose to follow the Messiah no matter the cost. With that defense, Jesus wanted to show the Pharisees that their zealous observance of hundreds of man-made rules was worthless if they failed to do what mattered most—to reject religious rituals whenever they conflict with God’s goodness. In other words, if we find ourselves in a situation where someone needs our help, yet the rules of our religious circle forbid it, we must break those rules and help that person.

3.3. I imagine Jesus saying to the Pharisees: *“Does it make any sense to think that God would rather you uphold your rules than do good when you have the chance? Do you really believe that religious rituals are more pleasing to Him than the well-being of a human being? Is not our God—the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob—the One who promised to give you blessing, eternal life, which is good? Should we not, as His chosen people, do the same whenever we have the opportunity? How can you believe that by refusing to help someone in need on the Sabbath—simply because you ‘must not work’—you are honoring God’s holiness? Isn’t that absurd? Where is the logic in that?”*

3.4. Though Jesus’ question sounds simple—at least to us—a religious mind enslaved to false doctrine finds it almost impossible to answer. Perhaps, just for a moment, one of those Pharisees thought deep within himself: *“Surely the right answer is to save life and to do good; that’s what God desires from His people.”* But no—their rules, their true god, would not let them say it aloud.

3.5. What truly frightens me is how religion can blind a human soul. And I’m not speaking only of Christian denominations. A movement can be anything—any group of people bound by its own set of beliefs and rules. It could be a “fan movement”—shouting and lighting flares at games, mocking opponents, yelling at the referee, and teaching our children to do the same. It could be a “scientific movement”—claiming, “We are the enlightened ones; faith is outdated; we have all the answers; listen to us—we came from animals, so we live by instinct; forget morality—it’s an illusion.” It could be a “political movement”—take whatever power offers you, blind the people with empty promises, and if they resist, recruit them so you can control them. Or it could even be a “neighborhood circle” obsessed with keeping up appearances—if you don’t fit their image, if you fall below their standard, they gossip about you to raise themselves higher. And sadly, most of them will never sincerely ask: *“Why are things so hard for you? Do you need help, neighbor? Should I take you to the hospital, fix your roof, repair your pipe, bring you food?”* The rules of their “neighborhood code” won’t allow it—image matters more.

3.6. To sum it up: a religious heart is willing, for the sake of its own rules, to refuse to reflect God’s goodness toward others—just to stay loyal to its misguided ideas. It is willing to destroy another person’s life through gossip, false teaching, or self-justification—claiming moral superiority simply because it keeps its rules.

A STRONG REACTION

4. (Luke 6:10) “After looking around at them all, He said to him: ‘Stretch out your hand!’ And he did so, and his hand was restored.”

4.1. As I said a moment ago, the Pharisees never answered Jesus’ question. After a short pause, as He waited for their reply, Jesus chose to do something astonishing—something that, if we witnessed it today, would leave us breathless. He told the man to stretch out his hand, and before the healing took place, Jesus looked around at everyone in the synagogue. I believe that glance was deliberate—a silent emphasis on the significance of what was about to happen.

4.2. We must remember what that hand looked like: it had no muscle, only bone and skin hanging limp, probably dry, wounded, and cracked after years of immobility. Yet for this man to stretch out his hand—and we read that he did—he had to have muscle in it. That is an astounding miracle. Before the eyes of everyone present, Jesus caused new muscle to form in a man’s arm in an instant. Unlike the miracles we often hear of today—someone healed from terminal illness or walking again after paralysis—true miracles indeed, for God still works wonders among us—this one stands apart. Why? Because those in the synagogue literally saw the transformation happen before their eyes, in the span of a single second.

4.3. It would be as if, right before our very eyes, we witnessed a new limb—a hand or a leg—miraculously grow where it had once been lost. The sheer power of this miracle proved to everyone there, including the Pharisees, the kind of authority the man called Jesus possessed—and where that authority came from. He held the power to create, to form flesh; He bore the very authority of God the Father, the Creator of all reality. Standing among them was a man from Nazareth who could literally restore a human limb.

Wow.

HOW TO FACE PRESSURE

5. Another thing we can notice in this event is Jesus’ strong—and I dare say, almost aggressive—reaction to everything the Pharisees stood for. Jesus deliberately and directly opposes them: *“You think it is wrong to heal a man on the Sabbath? Then watch and see what I think of your beliefs. Get up and stand before everyone, so that all may see that what I am about to do is good in the eyes of God.”*

5.1. The question that naturally arises is this: knowing the Pharisees’ thoughts, could Jesus have said to Himself: *“Hmm... I know how they’ll react if I’m too direct. Maybe I should hold back, avoid conflict. If I stay quiet, I might be invited to teach in this synagogue again. But if I’m too radical, I’ll lose that chance.”* Yes—He could have. And most of us, if we’re honest with ourselves, would have done exactly that. We’d have chosen to avoid confrontation with the religious establishment, convincing ourselves that it was “for the greater good.” We’d have said: *“I’m not Jesus—only He can do that.”*

5.1.1. And at first glance, that's true. Jesus is unique—above all other human beings in countless ways. We cannot perform miracles as He did; we do not share that perfect relationship with the Father; we are not sinless as He was. But we must never forget why Jesus came into the world. For us, as human beings, to truly understand how we are meant to live, how to relate to one another, and how to see the reality around us—one of us had to come. A truly human being had to appear to show us the way. In other words: we cannot fully understand a lion—only a lion can fully understand another lion. Likewise, we cannot fully comprehend our heavenly Father, who is Spirit, eternal, without beginning or end. But we can fully understand another human being. Why? Because we, too, are human.

5.2. And so, for God the Father to reveal Himself completely to us—to show us who He truly is as a person—He had to speak our language, a language we could grasp. He had to create a unique human being who would be the visible image of the invisible God. Jesus is the only human being who could show us, in human form, what the Father actually desires from us. And it's through that lens, that paradigm, that we must read every event in the Gospels.

5.3. What do I mean by that paradigm? Jesus is our example, our model—He shows us how to confront evil, how to handle the temptations that life throws at us, how to respond to injustice in the world, and how to deal with the lies that surround us. His interaction with evil in this moment is a model for how we, too, should respond when faced with something similar. If we call ourselves God's children and find ourselves in a situation like His, we must respond as He did: we must stand against religion and speak the truth. What we choose to do in such a moment—whether we value the rules of our movement or God's goodness above those rules—reveals who we truly are: children of God or children of the devil.

5.4. Someone might object: *"But we are sinners; we don't fully know our own motives. Isn't it better not to act so boldly? Jesus' motives were always perfect—that's why He could act so decisively."* And yes, that's true—our motives are often tainted by pride. We crave recognition, praise, admiration. Many of our motives spring from selfish desires, perfectly masked by outward acts of false righteousness and holiness. All of that is true. But when we honestly admit that to ourselves, only then can we fight it. Only then can we discern what truly drives us—whether it is the desire to reflect God's goodness or the hunger to glorify ourselves.

5.5. In the Book of Acts, we see time and again that the apostles and other believers openly stood against the Pharisees—and they were sinners just like us. Why did they do it? For fame or power? To glorify themselves? No. They wanted to glorify their Father and His Son, Jesus Christ, their Messiah. They wanted to reveal God's goodness. In other words, they longed to open the eyes of those lost in deception. Sadly, that commitment often cost them dearly—some were flogged and persecuted, and others gave their very lives for proclaiming God's goodness and speaking the truth².

5.6. Therefore, if our motives are righteous—if we truly desire to promote God's goodness, in whatever way we can—and if the opportunity arises, even when it may cost us dearly, we must act. We, as God's children, are called to do exactly that.

² Acts 3:12-13; 4:18-20; 5:27-29,40-42; 7:59-60; 9:15-16; 26:17-18

FACE THEM HEAD-ON

6. That being said, don't misunderstand me — I'm not suggesting that any of us should become radical to the same degree Jesus or the apostles were. Their mission was unique, designed for them alone. Yet even if we're never called by God to act as boldly as they did, that doesn't mean we are to stand by in silence when, in our own surroundings, some religious faction is doing wrong. That could mean our parents, our friends, our neighbors, our coworkers, or others close to us.

6.1. And there will be moments when we recognize that their ideas are harmful — ideas that, in the end, damage everyone around them. In those moments, we must, in love, warn them that they are mistaken. But if, over time, they grow increasingly resistant to correction, then we must be ready — for the sake of God's goodness — to face them head-on, even knowing it may cost us the relationship, or something far greater.

6.1.1. Can we imagine a scenario in which Jesus, after everything He had taught His disciples and all He had done before them, simply gave up and said: *"It's better if I step back — I'll only stir up unnecessary trouble for Myself and My followers"*? What kind of example would that have been for His disciples? Let's not forget — these are the very men who would one day proclaim His teaching to the entire world after His return to the Father.

6.2. Theoretically speaking, if Jesus had acted that way, do we really think the Gospel would have had such a powerful impact on the world? Do we think the world, two thousand years ago, would have experienced such a radical transformation? Would we be living in even a somewhat humane and compassionate society today if Jesus had been "soft" and said: *"Better if I withdraw"*? Of course not!

6.3. Change has always come when individuals had the courage to confront injustice face-to-face — history itself confirms this. And this, here, is about the well-being of all humanity. Humanity is perishing, racing toward destruction. Jesus knew this, and to save us, He had to stand against the Pharisaic order; later, His disciples did the same.

6.4. In other words, Jesus cared above all about pleasing His Father. The Father's opinion — not the world's — was what mattered most. That's why He acted with such boldness and conviction. And if He is our model, then we too must begin to take that truth into our own lives.

DONE IN LOVE

7. (Luke 6:11) **"But they themselves were filled with rage, and discussed together what they might do to Jesus."**

7.1. At the end of the account, we read that the Pharisees were furious. Jesus' actions enraged them. The question arises: did Jesus do something wrong here? Did His "aggressiveness" come from hatred? Was He being unkind or rude toward the Pharisees and the people around Him?

7.1.1. If we're ready to answer "yes," then we are, in effect, declaring Jesus to be unwise and imperfect. But if we believe that Jesus was the wisest human being ever to walk the earth — morally

perfect and completely good — then we must also believe that His actions, though sharp and direct toward the Pharisees, were filled with wisdom, love, reason, and goodness in the eyes of God. In other words, Jesus was confronting wicked people with their wicked theology — and that's what made them furious. They had had enough and began plotting what to do with Him.

7.2. A dear brother once said to me: *"We all think we're doing good by being 'patient' with those around us, by keeping silent instead of speaking the truth that Jesus proclaimed to His people — while we listen to them repeat the false wisdom this world feeds them. We call it patience because we're afraid of losing them. But is that really good for them? Are we truly reflecting God's goodness? I'm beginning to believe the answer is no. What is truly good for them is often the hardest thing for us to do — to confront them with the truth of the Gospel, to show them that their beliefs are wrong and, in the end, harmful both to them and to everyone around them."*

THAT IS THE ULTIMATE GOAL

8. After hearing his words, I thought deeply about them. He was right: if we truly love another human being, we must tell them the truth.

8.1. And I'm not speaking of intimate love — the love between husband and wife, between close friends or siblings — but of the awareness that every human being is moving steadily toward certain death, and that we, as God's messengers, should long to persuade them not to take that path. Human life is far too precious to simply cease to exist; it was never created for extinction. If we truly believe that, deep within our being, we will act on it — we will reflect God's goodness, and we will speak the truth of the Gospel.

8.2. In the end, Jesus did not have an intimate love for every person on earth — yes, there were a few whom He loved especially. But what moved Him to such courage was His understanding of who God is and where humanity is headed when it chooses not to love Him.

8.3. He knew that a single human life is too precious to be lost — not because we are perfect beings, but because He knew what we could one day become if we repent and choose to follow God: morally perfect human beings.

8.4. You see, Jesus knew exactly what a perfect, good human being looks like. How? Because He is that very being. And His selfless desire — then and now — is that we too would become like Him: morally perfect and wholly good human beings, entirely free from even the smallest trace of evil.