

Jesus Silences Critics

The preaching was sound,” said Jacenta, “and I liked the pastor. So what is the problem?”

“Who said there is a problem?” asked Lamonte.

Jacenta squinted her eyes at her husband as he drove. She knew there was a problem. They were headed back home. This was their second time visiting the church, and she really liked the pastor and the people. Lamonte’s new job had landed them in Memphis four months ago, and she was ready to get settled into a new church.

“Would it kill the man to wear a tie?” Lamonte said. “I mean, the man is in the pulpit on a Sunday morning!”

Lamonte’s and Jacenta’s religious backgrounds were not too far apart, although, Lamonte did have more of what might be described as a conservative upbringing than Jacenta.

“I wondered if that would bother you,” she said. “He had on a sports coat. So many people are coming to church dressed down these days.”

“Should the pastor dress like the world?” he asked.

“Not wearing a tie is dressing like the world?” Jacenta asked “Really?”

“But the pulpit is a holy place, and it’s Sunday morning,” said Lamonte, fingering his tie.

“Did the prophets of old wear ties when they preached?” asked Jacenta. “Sweetheart, if we are trying to reach people and are loving and honoring God, isn’t that’s what’s important?”

1. *How would you define the word honor, and why is it important in relationships?*

2. *Name at least three ways you can honor God.*

3. *What do you do to honor God on the Sabbath (Sunday)?*

Seeing a Need on the Sabbath

Luke 14:1-2, KJV

1 And it came to pass, as he went into the house of one of the chief Pharisees to eat bread on the sabbath day, that they watched him.

2 And, behold, there was a certain man before him which had the dropsy.

Luke 14:1-2, NIV

¹One Sabbath, when Jesus went to eat in the house of a prominent Pharisee, he was being carefully watched. ²There in front of him was a man suffering from abnormal swelling of his body.

Much had happened since the events covered in our last lesson when Jesus had also been invited to dine in the home of a Pharisee. By the time Jesus was done admonishing and chastising the host and his hypocritical guests, they were so outraged that they “began to oppose him fiercely and to besiege him with questions, waiting to catch him in something he might say” (Luke 11:53b-54).

With this background in mind, we can see why the religious leaders would want to keep a close eye on Him. When Jesus was once again invited to dine in the house of a leader of the Pharisees, the whole thing might have been a set up to trap the Lord. For one thing, verse 3 indicates that a prominent Pharisee invited many like-minded guests who were very concerned that Jesus was becoming too popular among the people. Therefore, they watched carefully so as not to miss anything that was about to happen.

A second possible indicator that this event was set up to entrap the Lord is that there just suddenly appeared a man in attendance who was infirmed and in need of help. Lo and behold, right on schedule, there appeared a man in front of Jesus who had what the King James Version calls “dropsy.” The Greek word here, *hydropikos*, carries with it the concept of looking watery or being swollen with water. So this affliction would have brought on abnormal swelling due to an overabundance of bodily fluid, which likely would have been painful, debilitating, and potentially even

deadly. That this poor man was there seems beyond mere coincidence. Jesus' detractors were there to see for themselves what Jesus would do about this poor man on the Sabbath. Of course, it was a divine appointment ultimately orchestrated by God, who can use anyone, even His detractors, to carry out His purposes.

4. *Where did Jesus go and why?*

5. *What were the host and other guests doing?*

6. *Who appeared before Jesus?*

Confronting the Critics on the Sabbath

Luke 14:3-4, KJV

3 And Jesus answering spake unto the lawyers and Pharisees, saying, Is it lawful to heal on the sabbath day?

4 And they held their peace. And he took him, and healed him, and let him go;

Luke 14:3-4, NIV

³Jesus asked the Pharisees and experts in the law, "Is it lawful to heal on the Sabbath or not?" ⁴But they remained silent. So taking hold of the man, he healed him and sent him on his way.

Knowing the hearts of the prominent Pharisee and his guests—other Pharisees and those well versed in the law—Jesus turned the tables on them by asking a simple question about whether or not it was lawful to heal on the Sabbath. Everyone was looking at a man who was swollen and suffering, and they were going to see if Jesus would do an amazingly good deed by healing that poor soul. They were watching so closely because in their minds, it would have been unlawful for Jesus to do so. Therefore, they just refused to answer. We can only marvel at such hardheartedness toward this infirmed man. But even more unbelievable is that they rejected Jesus as being from God, despite all the wondrous miracles He had done in plain view of so many witnesses.

Fully in control of the situation, Jesus took hold of the man, healed him, and then sent him on his way. Scripture

does not tell us how the healed man reacted, but there is little doubt that it would have been a joyous experience. Anyone today who has been cured or healed of a serious affliction can relate to how the man must have felt. Sadly, the Lord's detractors did not share in the man's joy. All they cared about was that Jesus had healed on the Sabbath and therefore had violated the Law in their opinion. Likewise, how sad it is today that so many people do not rejoice in the wonderful things God does among us.

7. *What did Jesus ask the host and others in attendance at the dinner?*

8. *How did they respond?*

9. *What did Jesus do next?*

Honoring God on the Sabbath

Luke 14:5-6, KJV

5 And answered them, saying, Which of you shall have an ass or an ox fallen into a pit, and will not straightway pull him out on the sabbath day?

6 And they could not answer him again to these things.

Luke 14:5-6, NIV

5Then he asked them, "If one of you has a child or an ox that falls into a well on the Sabbath day, will you not immediately pull it out?" **6**And they had nothing to say.

After healing the man, Jesus turned to His host and the dinner guests and questioned them about what they would be willing to do on the Sabbath. Clearly, they would be willing to rescue livestock, and especially any family member who may have fallen into a pit or well. The Greek for pit or well, *phrear*, refers to a hole in the ground that was dug specifically to hold water, which could also refer to a cistern. So in such a situation, the victim that had fallen into the hole would not only have needed help getting out, but could also have been in danger of drowning in a relatively short period of time. Therefore, waiting until the Sabbath was over would have been out of the question.

Those in attendance knew that Jesus had asked a question they could not answer without undermining their accusations against Him, which was quite often the case.

For example, when the angry religious leaders asked Jesus by what authority He chased out the moneychangers (Matt. 21:12-23), instead of giving them an answer, the Lord asked them, “John’s baptism—where did it come from? Was it from heaven, or of human origin?” (vs. 25a). They could not say it was of heaven and admit they did not follow God’s message, and they couldn’t say it was of human origin because everyone believed that John was a prophet. Therefore, they answered Jesus, “We don’t know” (vs. 27).

This case was similar. Had the Pharisees answered that they would have rescued one that had fallen into a well on the Sabbath, then Jesus could have easily pointed out their hypocrisy for calling Him a lawbreaker for healing the man. And if they had said that they would have left the victim in the well, then everyone would know that they were lying. So they decided that the best course of action was to remain quiet. Jesus, of course, did not let them get away with their silence. Rather, He took the opportunity to teach on pride, the blessings of giving to those who have little, and other important matters of God’s kingdom and discipleship.

From Jesus’ actions that day, we see a couple examples of what truly glorifies God on the Sabbath, namely ministering to others and teaching the truths of God’s Word. The same is true today when it comes to your church’s day of worship. Clearly all that Jesus did brought glory to His Father in heaven, and by His example and leading, we can also glorify our Lord by serving Him and others.

10. *How did Jesus challenge the onlookers after healing the man?*

11. *What was their response?*

12. *In what ways can you glorify God when your church gathers to worship?*

Keeping the Sabbath

The Sabbath represents a day of rest, a time especially to reflect on God's goodness and faithfulness throughout the past week, a time to attend worship services with your family and remember God's grace and love toward us. Author Maya Angelou wrote in her book *Wouldn't Take Nothing for My Journey Now*, "Every person needs to take one day away. A day in which one consciously separates the past from the future. Jobs, family, employers, and friends can exist one day without any one of us, and if our egos permit us to confess, they could exist eternally in our absence. Each person deserves a day away in which no problems are confronted, no solutions searched for. Each of us needs to withdraw from the cares which will not withdraw from us."

God created the Sabbath as a day of rest to mirror the rest He took after creation. As Genesis 2:2-3 says, "By the seventh day God had finished the work he had been doing; so on the seventh day he rested from all his work. Then God blessed the seventh day and made it holy, because on it he rested from all the work of creating that he had done."

When Jesus came, He affirmed the importance of a Sabbath rest, and proclaimed, "The Sabbath was made for man, not man for the Sabbath" (Mark 2:27). He also said to the law-keeping religious leaders who objected to His "work" on the Sabbath, "It is lawful to do good on the Sabbath" (Matt. 12:12).

We honor God on the Sabbath when we think of Him first, do good works He leads us to do, and rest from the relentless cares of this world. The One who created us deserves our honor and praise on the Sabbath He gave us.

13. *What good works could you do on the Sabbath that would honor God?*

14. *Why is Sabbath-observing not just an Old Testament ritual that Christians can ignore?*

15. *How will you honor the Sabbath today? Next week?*

Honoring God in Our Hearts

The Pharisees and experts in the law did not understand how their many laws and regulations had actually hindered God's desire for them to honor the Sabbath. Jesus showed them that God is interested in people, not laws and rituals. God wants us to honor Him both in our words and in our actions every Sabbath and every day of our lives. Observing a day dedicated to God is not a ritual but a reaction of our hearts to the awesome God who created us.

► *Finish this statement: "O God, I will honor You in my heart on the Sabbath and every day by...."*

KEY VERSE

And Jesus answering spake unto the lawyers and Pharisees, saying, Is it lawful to heal on the sabbath day? And they held their peace. And he took him, and healed him, and let him go.

—Luke 14:3-4, KJV

Jesus asked the Pharisees and experts in the law, "Is it lawful to heal on the Sabbath or not?" But they remained silent. So taking hold of the man, he healed him and sent him on his way.

—Luke 14:3-4, NIV

DAILY BIBLE READINGS FOR NEXT WEEK'S LESSON

Week of September 11 through September 17

(See *The Quiet Hour* and *Cross* devotionals on these passages.)

- Mon.** Isaiah 58:6-14—God Demands Justice and Promises Healing.
- Tue.** John 5:1-9—Do You Want to Be Well?
- Wed.** John 5:10-16—God's Work Faces Resistance.
- Thu.** John 5:17-21—The Father Works on the Sabbath.
- Fri.** Deuteronomy 4:1-14—Obedience Shows Wisdom and Discernment.
- Sat.** Psalm 119:113-128—God, Teach Us Your Statutes.
- Sun.** John 7:14-24—Jesus Glorifies the Father.