

Luke 6:1-16 in the context of Luke 5:17-6:16

New Revised Standard Version (NRSV)

The gospel of Luke is written with a Gentile or Greek-speaking cultured people in mind. In writing the gospel account Luke focuses upon the role and importance of women and the poor, more than the other three gospels, and relates the most parable teachings of Jesus in his story of who Jesus is, how he was and is in the world, and how that changes even us.

PHARISEES; TEACHERS OF THE LAW; THE SCRIBES:: We forget that there were multiple “sects” among Judaism. These two were highly focused on the Torah Law and its observation. The Pharisees are the spiritual fathers of modern Judaism. Their main distinguishing characteristic was a belief in an **Oral Law** that God gave to Moses at Sinai along with the Torah. The Pharisees believed that God also gave Moses the knowledge of what these laws meant and how they should be applied. This oral tradition was codified and written down roughly three centuries later in what is known as the Talmud. Pharisees were in a sense blue-collar Jews who adhered to the tenets developed after the destruction of the Temple; that is, such things as individual prayer and assembly in synagogues. They were zealous in seeking to fully live out the prescriptions of the law in daily life. Among the religious leaders they were probably the closest to the people.

The Scribes (also called lawyers and teachers of the law in the gospels) were the writers, copyists, 'bookmen' and consequently the interpreters of the **sacred writings** of the Old Testament. After the Exile, the scribe tended to take the place of the priest as teacher of the Law. They were “lawyers” in that they were the experts in the sacred Mosaic Law which was in theory the sole legislation, civil and religious, governing the Jewish people. They were usually associated with the Pharisees. Many of the scribes became members of the Sanhedrin, the highest legal administration body in the Jewish theocratic state.

the Son of Man | Messianic titles:: Throughout the gospel account Jesus is identified with different names, each carrying significant theological weight and cultural meaning. This title refers back to an apocalyptic vision in the prophetic book of Daniel, equating Jesus as either the one prophesied in the scripture, or it's a possibly an expression to talk about one who is a human being (a son of man). In Daniel chapter 7 the prophet glimpses the judgment by God [the Ancient One] of the God-opposed powers of the earth and the coming of God's agent of peace as the rightful and ultimate leader [one like a son of man]. ⁹ As I watched, thrones were set in place, and an Ancient One took his throne, his clothing was white as snow, and the hair of his head like pure wool; his throne was fiery flames,... A thousand thousands served him, and ten thousand times ten thousand stood attending him. The court sat in judgment, and the books were opened. ... ¹³ As I watched in the night visions, I saw one like a **son of man** coming with the clouds of heaven. And he came to the Ancient One and was presented before him. ¹⁴ To him

5 ¹⁷ One day, while [Jesus] was teaching, **PHARISEES** and **TEACHERS OF THE LAW** were sitting nearby (they had come from every village of Galilee and Judea and from Jerusalem); and the power of the Lord was with [Jesus] to heal. ¹⁸ Just then some men came, carrying a paralyzed man on a bed. They were trying to bring him in and lay him before Jesus; ¹⁹ but finding no way to bring him in because of the crowd, they went up on the roof and let him down with his bed through the tiles into the middle of the crowd in front of Jesus. ²⁰ When he saw their faith, he said, “Friend, your sins are forgiven you.” ²¹ Then **THE SCRIBES** and the Pharisees began to question, “Who is this who is speaking blasphemies? Who can forgive sins but God alone?” ²² When Jesus perceived their questionings, he answered them, “Why do you raise such questions in your hearts? ²³ Which is easier, to say, ‘Your sins are forgiven you,’ or to say, ‘Stand up and walk’? ²⁴ But so that you may know that **the Son of Man** has authority on earth to forgive sins”—he said to the one who was paralyzed—“I say to you, stand up and take your bed and go to your home.” ²⁵ Immediately he stood up before them, took what he had been lying on, and went to his home, glorifying God. ²⁶ Amazement seized all of them, and they glorified God and were filled with awe, saying, “We have seen strange things today.”

²⁷ After this he went out and saw a **tax collector** named Levi, sitting at the tax booth; and he said to him, “Follow me.” ²⁸ And he got up, left everything, and followed him.

²⁹ Then Levi gave **A GREAT BANQUET FOR HIM IN HIS HOUSE**; and there was a large crowd of tax collectors and others sitting at the table with them. ³⁰ The Pharisees and their scribes were complaining to his disciples, saying, “Why do you eat and drink with tax collectors and sinners?” ³¹ Jesus answered, “Those who are well have no need of a physician, but those who are sick; ³² I have come to call not the righteous but sinners to repentance.”

³³ Then they said to him, “John’s disciples, like the disciples of the Pharisees, frequently fast and pray, but your disciples eat and drink.” ³⁴ Jesus said to them, “You cannot make **wedding guests** fast while the **bridegroom** is with them, can you? ³⁵ The days will come when the bridegroom will be taken away from them, and then they will fast in those days.” ³⁶ He also told them a parable: “No one tears a piece from a new garment and sews it on an old garment; otherwise the new will be torn, and the piece from the new will not match the old. ³⁷ And *no one puts new wine into old wineskins*; otherwise the new wine will burst the skins and will be spilled, and the skins will be destroyed. ³⁸ But

new wine must be put into fresh wineskins. ³⁹ And no one after drinking old wine desires new wine, but says, 'The old is good.'"

6 ¹One **sabbath** while Jesus was going through the grainfields, his disciples plucked some heads of grain, rubbed them in their hands, and ate them. ² But some of the Pharisees said, "Why are you doing what is not lawful on the **sabbath**?" ³ Jesus answered, "Have you not read what David did when he and his companions were hungry? ⁴ He entered the house of God and took and ate the *bread of the Presence*, which **IT IS NOT LAWFUL** for any but the priests to eat, and gave some to his companions?" ⁵ Then he said to them, "**The Son of Man is lord of the sabbath.**"

⁶ On another **sabbath** he entered the synagogue and taught, and there was a man there whose right hand was withered. ⁷ The scribes and the Pharisees watched him to see whether he would cure on the **sabbath**, so that they might find an accusation against him. ⁸ Even though he knew what they were thinking, he said to the man who had the withered hand, "Come and stand here." He got up and stood there. ⁹ Then Jesus said to them, "I ask you, **IS IT LAWFUL** to do good or to do harm on the **sabbath**, to save life or to destroy it?" ¹⁰ After looking around at all of them, he said to him, "Stretch out your hand." 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.

¹² Now during those days he went out to the mountain to pray; and he spent the night in prayer to God. ¹³ And when day came, he called his disciples and chose twelve of them, whom he also named apostles: ¹⁴ Simon, whom he named Peter, and his brother Andrew, and James, and John, and Philip, and Bartholomew, ¹⁵ and Matthew, and Thomas, and James son of Alphaeus, and Simon, who was called the Zealot, ¹⁶ and Judas son of James, and Judas Iscariot, who became a traitor.

Questions for the practice of Examen & Contemplation

***What strikes you in this passage – both the smaller sermon-focused one, and the larger context? How does it interact with your life?**

***Jesus is beginning to butt heads with the other teachers of the Ways of God (the Torah Law). It's not about the importance of the law, but rather they differ in their interpretation of it. Jesus seems to prioritize people. The others, obedience to religious standards. How could they not see eye to eye? How do you – do we – struggle with understanding obedience between the poles of serving people and observing tradition or maintaining standards?**

***Repeatedly the actions of Jesus are focused on life: giving, restoring, and empowering it. How have you experienced the life-giving power of Jesus in your life? How do you need to experience it anew, or today? Talk with God about this.**

was given dominion and glory and kingship, that all peoples, nations, and languages should serve him. His dominion is an everlasting dominion that shall not pass away, and his kingship is one that shall never be destroyed." *What then does this historical title convey?*

a tax collector:: At this time tax collectors who could walk up to a man and tax him for what he was carrying, and much more. They were hated and despised because they were usually fellow Jews who collaborated with the foreign occupying power, working for Rome. In the eyes of Rome the provinces were to carry the heavy weight of administering the Empire, paying for good roads, law & order, security and other imperial benefits. Judea was in the province of Syria and every man was to pay 1% of his annual income for income tax as well as a portion on anything they grew and a type of sales tax. It was actually a Roman official [a censor] who was ultimately responsible to Rome for collecting the revenue of the province, but he sold the rights to extort tax to the highest bidders. When tax collectors collected their taxes for Rome they would turn over the required amount of money, and whatever they could add on for themselves is what they kept. They were known to be extorters of large sums of money. And so for their collaboration with Gentiles, extortion from brothers, and probable corruption they were treated similar to the worst kinds of sinners and prostitutes.

A GREAT BANQUET FOR HIM IN HIS HOUSE:: Leviticus 11 lists the acceptable types of food to eat [kosher] and those that weren't. A tax collector might be assumed to not keep a clean, or kosher, household by his professional association with Gentiles. Hence entering into his house conveys a certain risk, a contagion of unrighteousness according to the Torah Law.

wedding guests ... bridegroom:: throughout the Hebrew Scriptures the covenantal relationship between God and the people of Israel is compared to and spoken of as a marital one in which God is the bridegroom and Israel the bride. See Ezekiel 16:8 "I passed by you again and looked on you; you were at the age for love. I spread the edge of my cloak over you, and covered your nakedness: I pledged myself to you and entered into a covenant with you, says the Lord God, and you became mine."

sabbath:: The end of the week was a day of rest (Friday sunset to Saturday sunset) recalling the 7th day of creation and the freedom of enslaved worked in Egypt. It was about cherishing freedom by resting, and using time required for daily work to study God's word and enjoy the fruits of creation. There were intricate rules about what was work and what wasn't. Healing was considered work, and thus ungodly (or unlawful) to do on the sabbath.

bread of the Presence:: special bread always present on a table in the tabernacle (and later in the temple). Described in Leviticus 24:5-7, it wasn't to be eaten. And yet when David was hunted to the death by King Saul, the priest gave the bread to the starving David to eat as there was nothing else told about in 1 Samuel 21:1-6.