

# Explore the Bible: February 14

*Reigns • Luke 6:1-11*

*By Ann Maniscalco*



Maniscalco

As we arrive at the middle of February, we realize it was about this time last year we began hearing of a new virus that had entered the United States. However, authorities felt confident it was no big thing. Surely, it would stay localized and controlled, not presenting a threat to the general populace. How wrong that assumption proved to be!

As we know, the COVID-19 virus has become a devastating plague. Running rampant, it has taken hundreds of thousands of lives, wreaked havoc on the economy, and affected almost every aspect of the life we cherish. We chafe at restrictions placed on us, including social distancing, forbidding or limiting indoor gatherings, and the wearing of masks.

Because many aren't submitting to these limitations, countless lives have been needlessly lost but if we're honest, wouldn't most of us admit we don't like being told what to do? "It's my life!" we think to ourselves, or even arrogantly say out loud. We resist change, especially if it goes against the culture we've embraced since childhood. Today's lesson from Luke 6 shows Jesus once again confronting the traditions the Jewish leaders fiercely embraced, and there are lessons to challenge

us today as well.

Oftentimes, our preferences are in conflict with God's will. How do we deal with such? As we study these Scripture passages, may we be willing to see situations where we are similarly headstrong and the ways we need to recognize the Lord's supreme authority.

As our story begins, we find Jesus and His disciples "going through the grain fields" on a Sabbath day (Luke 6:1 NIV). As they walked, they picked some heads of grain and rubbed them between their hands, eating the kernels. Sounds innocent enough, doesn't it? Not to the strict Pharisees. The original laws of Moses had grown over the years with the addition of a multitude of onerous traditions having no scriptural basis, including Sabbath restrictions.

Our Leader Guide explains: "The Mishnah, a written collection of Jewish oral tradition (200 BC-AD 200) includes a section entitled 'Shabbath' (Sabbath). The Sabbath section alone has twenty-four chapters and enumerates thirty-nine activities that were forbidden on the Sabbath."

Along the way, some eagle-eyed Pharisees saw this hunger-satisfying event and challenged the disciples: "Why are you doing what is unlawful on the Sabbath" (v. 2)? Although this Scripture account doesn't say Jesus got involved in the Pharisees' interrogation of the disciples, it was a personal affront to Him as these men were His proteges. Just as He did when tempted by the devil in the wilderness (Luke 4), the Lord responded with Scripture.

His answer began with a rhetorical question relating to an Old Testament passage with which they were surely familiar. 1 Samuel 21:1-6 recounts the whole story, but Jesus gave a consolidated version in verses three and four of our focal passage. Surely the comparison of His disciples meeting their physical need for sustenance to that of the highly-revered

King David wasn't lost on these steeped-in-Scripture Jewish leaders.

Jesus then added a mind-boggling statement: "The Son of Man is Lord of the Sabbath" (v. 5). As we've seen before, the term "Son of Man" was a Messianic title, and then His claim to be "Lord of the Sabbath" added insult to injury in the minds of these Jewish leaders.

Verse six recounts events of "another Sabbath." Here, Jesus was found teaching in the synagogue. In attendance was a man whose right hand was shriveled (other translations say "withered"). Again, the Pharisees and other teachers of the law, watching for ways to trap Jesus, were eyeing this scenario closely. They didn't have to say a word; Jesus "knew what they were thinking" (v. 8).

Halting His teaching, He called for the man with the crippled hand to "stand in front of everyone." Then the Lord, addressing the callous hearts of His detractors, asked another pointed question about proper ways to observe the Sabbath (v. 9). As Jesus called for the man to stretch out His hand, it "was completely restored." The enraged Jewish leaders then sulked away to plot vengeance.

What are our takeaways? Consider the story of the good Samaritan (Luke 10:25-37). Like the religious priest and the Levite, do we sometimes focus more on religious etiquette and expectations, overlooking "the weightier matters of the law: justice and mercy and faith" (Matt. 23:23)?

We also see the value of the Sabbath and the ultimate lordship of Christ. "The Sabbath was made for man, not man for the Sabbath" (Mark 2:27), Jesus declared. We reap the benefit (spiritually, physically, and mentally) and God is glorified by properly observing the Lord's day.

*Maniscalco is a member of Emmanuel Church, Ocean Springs.*