

## INTRODUCTION:

1. [Image] There is one area of my life where I am unequivocally a rule follower. That is in board games. The first thing I do when getting a new board game is obsessed over the rules. Even when I play a game I have played a lot I keep the rule book near by. Because I want to be playing the game exactly as it was designed to be played. One thing I have little time for is house rules. If you decide to play the game one way, I am going to pull out the rule book and tell you why you are wrong. So, don't invite me to play monopoly with you. As you can imagine, there are times when this behavior leads to conflict. One time I drove my then 8 year old brother-in-law to tears because I wouldn't play Stratego according to the weird rules he wanted to use. And my legalistic approach defeats the very purpose of board games, which is to have fun.
2. [Need] Most of us are not tempted by board game legalism, but we are tempted by spiritual legalism. The problem is our spiritual legalism damages us in similar ways. We don't realize what it keeps us back from being able to experience. It doesn't keep us from something as simple as having fun. It does something much more damaging than we realize. Legalism does serious damage to our souls and holds us back from everything God wants to give us. It is like a chain on a farm dog, that keeps it from enjoying all the acreage has to offer.
3. [Subject] Our story this morning centers on Sabbatical legalism. The Pharisees are angry with Jesus and His disciples. Particularly they are angry because Jesus is not keeping their legalistic Sabbatical laws. And what we will see is that their legalism is not just wrong, but it harms them.
4. [Text] Luke 6:1-16
5. [Preview] This morning we are going to look at three things legalism keeps us back from.

### Point number 1: **Legalism keeps us from loving Jesus (v. 1-5).**

This is the most dangerous part of legalism.

It puts distance between us and Christ.

It is a chain on our hearts that holds us back.

Let's look at the story.

**"On a Sabbath, while he was going through the grain fields, his disciples plucked and ate some heads of grain, rubbing them in their hands. 2 But some of the Pharisees said, "Why are you doing what is not lawful to do on the Sabbath?"**

Once again this story takes place during the Sabbath.

As the disciples and Jesus are traveling they walk through a field.

Presumably, they are hungry.

So they pick up some of the grain, rub it in their hands, and eat it.

The rubbing the hands detail is important, we will come back to it.

And the Pharisees accuse Jesus and His disciples of violating the Sabbath.

And what particular law are they accusing the disciples of breaking?

You can find it in Deuteronomy 23:24-25.

**"If you go into your neighbor's vineyard, you may eat your fill of grapes, as many as you wish, but you shall not put any in your bag. 25 If you go into your neighbor's standing grain, you may pluck the ears with your hand, but you shall not put a sickle to your neighbor's standing grain."**

The law says that eating your neighbors food is fine.

As long as you are just passing through and hungry.

But the sickle is forbidden because you should not harvest.

To harvest their food would be work and stealing.

But to eat during lunch time is just expected hospitality.

So, the Pharisees have gone a step beyond the sickle.

They say, not just should you not use a sickle, you shouldn't rub your hands together.

Because they believe that to do so is to violate the sabbath.

The disciples are not guilty of breaking the actual Sabbath laws,

They are only guilty of breaking the Pharisees additional laws.

Because legalism always desires to make everyone follow it's extra interpretation of God's law.

But Jesus responds to them with the Scriptures.

He refutes their flawed interpretations with God's Word.

**3 And Jesus answered them, "Have you not read what David did when he was hungry, he and those who were with him: 4 how he entered the house of God and took and ate the bread of the Presence, which is not lawful for any but the priests to eat, and also gave it to those with him?"**

You can find this story in 1 Samuel 21.

That was actually the chapter I preached when I visited TBF as a candidate to be your pastor over 3 years ago.

This story takes place when David is on the run from King Saul.

God chose David to take Saul's place as the next king of Israel.

Saul is unhappy and decides to kill David.

So, David flees with his life along with some of his men.

He comes to God's house and asks the priest for food.

The priest tells him that the only bread they have is the holy bread.

It is the bread of presence you can read about it in Exodus 25.

It is twelve loaves of bread representing the tribes of Israel.

It is supposed to sit on a table in the tabernacle before God's presence.

Every Sabbath it is made fresh and only the priests can eat of it.

Yet, the priest allowed David to eat it.

And not just David, but he allowed David to take it to his men who were waiting for him.

They were allowed to eat holy bread.

In any other circumstances, if they tried to eat it then God would probably strike them dead.

But they are allowed to eat it.

Because the priest understood the true purpose of the law was for their good.

The law was not meant to keep some bread off limits,  
The law was meant to increase their love for God.

Jesus is trying to teach them that they have missed the point of the laws.

The laws are not there to keep them in line.

The laws are for their good.

The laws are meant to help them be holy.

Ultimately the law is meant to point them to Jesus.

**5 And he said to them, "The Son of Man is lord of the Sabbath."**

There is so much wrapped up in this one sentence.

Jesus is not claiming that the rules don't apply to him.

Jesus says that He is the law.

He is the ruler and Lord over the Sabbath itself.

The Pharisees are telling Jesus He doesn't understand the Sabbath,

When Jesus is the ruler and inventor of the Sabbath.

Jesus is the one who created it and shaped it.

The Pharisees could spend a thousand years studying only the Sabbath,

And all of that knowledge would amount to nothing more than a raindrop  
in the ocean of Jesus' knowledge.

How gracious Jesus is to even try to teach them.

There is a great tragedy here.

This is not just Jesus flexing His status or Sabbatical knowledge.

This is Jesus trying to show them what they are missing.

Their legalism regarding the Sabbath is forcing them to miss the fact that  
the LORD of the Sabbath is in front of them.

Legalism blinds us.

It blinded the Pharisees even when the Savior was standing in front of their  
face.

It blinds us and makes us unable to see Jesus too.  
We got so focused on the rules we miss the person who made them.  
We forget that the rules are there to help us see Jesus.  
But legalism holds us back.

And legalism keeps us from being able to learn from Jesus.  
We get too focused on our own interpretation that we ignore the teacher.  
We are like college freshmen arguing with the professor about how we  
know better on the first day of class.

The Pharisees should be questioning Jesus and asking for help.  
They should be trying to learn from the LORD of the Sabbath.  
Legalism still makes us fall into that trap today.  
We come to the Bible and we force Jesus to fit into our interpretation.  
Instead of wrestling with Jesus as He is, we try to change Him.  
Or we ignore Him.

And you cannot understand any of the things of God without Jesus.  
Legalism fails to understand Jesus.  
And legalism takes the gifts of God and turns them into a curse.  
The Sabbath is meant to be a glorious gift from God.  
It is a day we can spend resting and worshipping our Savior.  
It is a day to be refreshed and renewed.  
The Sabbath laws are meant for our good.  
They are meant to help us experience the refreshment of Christ.

But legalism turns it all around.  
It makes the Sabbath something we do instead of something we receive.  
The entire law can be summed up in "Love the LORD your God."  
The point of the law is to grow in love for God.  
But legalism keeps us from loving God.  
We end up loving our own rules more than we love God.

**[Transition]** Legalism keeps us from Jesus. It makes us unable to see Him, learn from Him, or imitate Him. Ultimate it keeps us from loving God. But the second thing it keeps us from loving is others.

Point number 2: **Legalism keeps us from loving others (v. 6-11).**

This is what legalism does to our hearts.

It turns our hearts cold towards the love of God,

Then it turns it cold to the love of others.

Just like I can care more about the rules in a board game, then the person I'm playing with.

Again the whole law can be summed up in **"love the LORD your God with all your heart, soul, mind, and strength, AND love your neighbor as yourself."** Leviticus 19:17-18

We already saw how legalism keeps us from loving God,

But it also keeps us from being able to love our neighbors.

Let's look at this story.

**"6 On another Sabbath, he entered the synagogue and was teaching, and a man was there whose right hand was withered. 7 And the scribes and the Pharisees watched him, to see whether he would heal on the Sabbath, so that they might find a reason to accuse him."**

Stop right there.

We have another Sabbath day.

Jesus is in the synagogue teaching, because that is what He does on the Sabbath.

And one man has come who needs to be healed.

His hand is withered, or non functioning in some way.

The crowd gathered knows that Jesus can heal.

They have seen or heard the stories of Him healing entire villages.

This man may have come this morning to ask Jesus to heal him.

Some in the crowd might be watching and wondering in anticipation if they will get to see a miracle today.

The Pharisees are watching too.  
But they are watching in judgment.  
They are not hoping Jesus heals this man.  
They do not care at all about the affliction and suffering this man has felt.  
They are sitting with their arms crossed hoping that Jesus dare not heal.

Because they have got around and decided that healing is work.  
It's probably work because they can't and have never done it.  
And no work needs to be done on the Sabbath.  
How little must they care for this man?  
They do not even acknowledge his humanity.  
He is nothing more than a pawn in their fights with Jesus.

This is the danger of legalism.  
It keeps us from loving others.  
It keeps us from seeing people as made in the image of God.  
We can only view them through our lens of extra rule keeping.  
Verse 8, **"But he knew their thoughts, and he said to the man with the withered hand, "Come and stand here." And he rose and stood there. 9 And Jesus said to them, "I ask you, is it lawful on the Sabbath to do good or to do harm, to save life or to destroy it?"**  
Jesus knows exactly what the Scribes and Pharisees are thinking.  
He can hear their unloving thoughts.  
And Jesus is not afraid of confrontation.  
He gets right to the point.

Jesus calls the man to front and asks him to stand where everyone can see.  
Then before Jesus does anything,  
Before He works a miracle, He looks right at this group of unloving people.  
And Jesus asks them a theological question.  
And His question gets right to the heart of the matter with the Sabbath.  
**"is it lawful on the Sabbath to do good or to do harm, to save life or to destroy it?"**

Notice that Jesus directs this question to them.

He wants them to answer it.

Are they allowed to save lives on the Sabbath?

Are they allowed to do something considered work if it helps another?

If someone was going to die could they lift their hand to help them?

If someone was so sick that they would die if they couldn't get help now

would they be allowed to work in order to save their life?

Ultimately, is it lawful on the Sabbath to do good for others?

To save others?

Or to destroy others?

All of these experts of the law are here.

The scribes are mentioned because they're supposed to be the people who know the law of frontwards and backwards.

They probably spend all of their days arguing with each other over minutia.

Yet here they are silent.

Luke does not record them as saying anything.

Jesus has them trapped.

Because they do not want this man to be saved.

They do not want Jesus to do good to him.

They would rather he be destroyed.

Verse 10, **"And after looking around at them all"**

Can you imagine the silence in that moment?

The tension in the room?

As He just sits there having asked a question and they have nothing to say.

Because Jesus has them cornered.

I think that they don't say anything because they know Jesus is right.

Deep in their hearts they know the truth.

But their legalism keeps them from being able to admit it.



So, because they have nothing to say Jesus answers the question for them.  
Not theoretically but practically.

**"He said to him, "Stretch out your hand." And he did so, and his hand was restored."**

Jesus heals the man's hand.

Jesus does good on the Sabbath.

Jesus works miracles on the Sabbath.

Because the lord of the Sabbath loves His people.

You notice too that the man is the one who stretches out his hand and it is healed.

Jesus does not even appear to do work.

Jesus does not live a finger.

The only way the Pharisees can accuse Jesus of doing work is if they believe that he is the one who healed this man.

Their legalism has blinded them.

**"But they were filled with fury and discussed with one another what they might do to Jesus."**

Legalism has so blinded their hearts.

It has so destroyed their love for others,

that seeing someone healed fills them with rage.

It angers them.

They leave the place trying to figure out how can we get rid of this person  
who does good for others on the Sabbath.

Jesus heals on the Sabbath.

Jesus does good on the Sabbath.

And they believe that it is wrong, unrighteous, and wicked.

So on the Sabbath, they want to destroy.

They will spend the rest of the Sabbath arguing  
and talking about how best to get rid of Jesus.

And they believe that this is righteous, just, and good.

Their focus on the rules is keeping them from being able to love others.  
And this happens to us as well.

We can get so trapped and legalism  
that we forget to love the person in front of us.

The person who was created in the image of God.

The person who God has commanded us to love.

There are a lot of ways that this can happen.

We might not get angry that God healed someone,  
but our legalism blinds us as well.

The main places that we today are tempted to be legalistic is in areas of  
Christian freedom.

There are plenty of places where the commands of Jesus are explicit.

Commands like we are not to get drunk.

So the Commandment that all Christians should agree with is that  
drunkenness is sinful.

Where legalism comes in is it then goes beyond the command of Jesus  
and adds another rule.

It might say that not only should you not get drunk but you shouldn't drink  
even a drop of alcohol.

Or it might even say that in order to be the best witness for Jesus and to  
avoid the stain of sin you should not even be around alcohol.

That is a valid Christian position that many of you might hold.

Where it becomes legalism, is when you begin to bind the conscience of  
other Christians do not have the same conviction as you.

The problem is not that the Pharisees believe that healing is work and they  
won't do it on the Sabbath.

The problem is that the Pharisees believe healing is work and they don't  
want Jesus to do it on the Sabbath.

Do you see the distinction?

This is where legalism keeps us from loving the people in front of us. Legalism can't allow someone to disagree with you they must agree with you.

They must stop being around alcohol.

They must not watch that movie or that television show.

They must not vote for that political candidate because my conscience tells me that it's wrong.

They must not celebrate Easter or lent or Advent or Christmas and that manner because my conscience tells me this is wrong.

It becomes a problem when we start to attack our brothers and sisters in the faith.

At Tanglewood we want to focus on the essentials of the faith.

There are a lot of things we will not compromise on.

Things like the Divinity of Jesus, His resurrection, and the authority of God's word.

But there are areas that we should show grace to others in.

We believe Christians should daily meditate on God's Word.

But that doesn't mean they must read 30 minutes daily before 7am.

We don't let our person convictions keep us from loving others.

So examine your own heart.

Look for ways that you are tempted to be like the Pharisees.

Ways you are tempted to attack and confront others and make them follow God's word in exactly the same way as you are.

Because legalism wants to steal the love that you have for your fellow brothers and sisters in Christ.

Legalism wants to destroy the unity that we have not because we do everything exactly the same way but because we love and we follow the same Jesus.

Legalism wants to destroy your love for God and for others.

Do not let it.

**[Transition]** Legalism keeps us from loving others. And there is a painful consequence of legalism.

Point number 3: **Legalism keeps us from blessing (v. 12-16).**

You may have wondered why I included this section of the passage in with the rest of the Sabbath.

You shouldn't just wonder why I would include it you should wonder why does Luke include this right here?

Why does Luke want us to see this choosing of the Apostles right after these confrontations over the Sabbath?

And why does he do so right before The Sermon on the Mount and the giving and proclaiming of blessing?

I think he does so to show that the Pharisees and the scribes are missing out on the blessing of Jesus.

Let's look at the story and see why I would say this.

See if you can see what I see.

Verse 12, **"In these days he went out to the mountain to pray, and all night he continued in prayer to God."**

Like Moses Elijah and other prophets before him he ascends up onto the mountain top to commune with God.

Jesus stays up all night praying.

If you have a really big decision to make, it's usually a good idea to spend a lot of time in prayer.

So when the day comes time of prayer and unity with God, Jesus does something special.

**13 And when day came, he called his disciples and chose from them twelve, whom he named apostles: 14 Simon, whom he named Peter, and Andrew his brother, and James and John, and Philip, and**

**Bartholomew, 15 and Matthew, and Thomas, and James the son of Alphaeus, and Simon who was called the Zealot, 16 and Judas the son of James, and Judas Iscariot, who became a traitor."**

Jesus chooses his apostles.

These 12 have already been following Jesus.

They are not just a part of the crowd who has shown up in the synagogue but they are from his disciples.

It's important to see that they are his disciples not just the spectators

There are those who have heard the call come and follow me and have answered it.

They're those who have left behind their family and everything that they have in order to follow Jesus.

From those disciples Jesus chooses the 12.

Jesus chooses a special group from all of those who are following him that are going to get extra attention from Jesus.

They are appointed to the office of apostle.

In the apostles are the primary leaders of the church.

They are the official ambassadors of Jesus.

What we believe as a church today is built on the foundation and the teaching of the Apostles.

It is based on their letters and their writings.

It is based on their affirmation of saying yes what Luke has written is true and is the words of Jesus.

Being chosen as an apostle is a tremendous blessing.

Because there are only these 12, plus Matthias who was chosen to replace Judas, and Paul.

There are some of these days who will claim that they have the gifts of the Apostles.

That may or may not be true I'm skeptical and doubtful, but there is no one who has the office of apostle.

You notice who's not listening anywhere in these names?

No scribes or Pharisees are chosen.

None of the priests are chosen.

None of those who would have been considered by most Israelites as the most righteous and qualified to serve the Messiah as his apostles,  
All of them miss out on that blessing.

They miss out on the blessing because they're not Jesus's disciples.

Their legalism keeps them from following Jesus.

Their leak lesson costs them to miss out on the profound blessing that could have been bestowed upon them.

Because the blessing of being Jesus's disciple,

The blessing of being chosen by Jesus to be his apostle,

It did not come from strict rule following.

It did not come from incredibly righteous living from the time that you were a baby.

The blessing came to tax collectors.

The blessing came to Hot Heads like Peter.

The blessing came to doubters like Thomas.

The blessing even comes for Judas who will forfeit it.

Even Judas seems to get the blessing at least for a short time.

But not the Pharisees.

Not the scribes.

Not the Sadducees.

The blessing doesn't go to those trapped in legalism.

Their warped view of the Sabbath and the laws of God keeps them from seeing the Fulfillment of it.

I think that part of the reason Luke puts this section of Jesus choosing the apostles right here is to show us who gets chosen.

Because the last several weeks of the Pharisees opposition to Jesus.

Because of their refusal to follow him in faith even when they don't understand.

Peter and John didn't understand but they put down their nets.

Because they refuse to obey they miss out on the blessings of the Covenant.

The Covenant is all about blessings and curses.

Leviticus 26 Deuteronomy 28.

Those chapters list out the blessings that will come for those in Israel who are obedient and follow the law.

It also lists out the curses for those who are disobedient and who go against God's law.

Part of the Pharisees fanatical legalism is a desire to obtain the blessings of God.

But their foolishness will make them miss it.

But if you look you see one name, **"Simon who was called the Zealot."**

The Zealot's were a fanatical legalistic group.

There were not just legalistic like the Pharisees, but they also sought to violently resist and overthrow Rome.

That is who Simon used to be.

But he left it all behind to follow Jesus.

And because of his faith, he gets the blessing.

It's tragic.

We shouldn't argue with people who are legalistic.

We shouldn't try to fight with people who are legalistic.

I think that we should pray for them who are legalistic.

Because their legalism will keep them from experiencing the blessings that God wants to give them.

Their belief that they know better than God will put them at odds with Him.

But how can we get free from the chains of legalism?

How can we break these chains?

The answer is we cannot break anything, only Jesus can.

We cannot get free from our own effort.

Trying to escape legalism through our own effort is like adding chains to more limbs thinking it will help us be free.

The only way to be free is to call on the name of Jesus, our chain breaker.

Because Jesus came to break the chains.

He breaks the chains of sin.

Jesus breaks the chains of our shame.

Jesus breaks the chains that hold us in old patterns.

Jesus breaks the chains demons try to place on us.

Jesus breaks the chains of legalism.

For the Christian, our salvation comes from Jesus alone.

Our deliverance comes from Christ's victorious death on the cross.

We are set free not from our strong efforts, but by faith.

We are set free by the strength of Jesus.

We cry out like the Israelites trapped in chains in Egypt.

Who Jesus set free and placed in the promised land.

We cry out like the thief chained to a cross who cried "Remember me."

And Jesus placed him in paradise.

We cry out like the blind man crying "Son of David, don't pass me by."

And Jesus made him see.

So, cry out to Jesus.

And He will break your chains.

He is the only one who can.

#### CONCLUSION:

1. [Summary] Legalism keeps us from loving Jesus. Legalism keeps us from loving others. Legalism keeps us from blessing.
2. [Challenge] Legalism will not help you become like Jesus, It will only keep you from Him. Let Jesus break your chains. And be free.