

IDLEWILD PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

The Reverend Dr. Victor Aloyo
Sunday, February 2, 2025

Isaiah 53:5

*But he was pierced for our transgressions,
he was crushed for our iniquities;
the punishment that brought us peace was on him,
and by his wounds we are healed.*

Luke 6:6-11

On another Sabbath he went into the synagogue and was teaching, and a man was there whose right hand was shriveled. 7 The Pharisees and the teachers of the law were looking for a reason to accuse Jesus, so they watched him closely to see if he would heal on the Sabbath. 8 But Jesus knew what they were thinking and said to the man with the shriveled hand, "Get up and stand in front of everyone." So he got up and stood there. Then Jesus said to them, "I ask you, which is lawful on the Sabbath: to do good or to do evil, to save life or to destroy it?" 10 He looked around at them all, and then said to the man, "Stretch out your hand." He did so, and his hand was completely restored. 11 But the Pharisees and the teachers of the law were furious and began to discuss with one another what they might do to Jesus.

It is an honor to be in worship with this precious congregation, your Pastor The Reverend David J. Powers and pastoral and leadership team of the Idlewild Presbyterian Church. On behalf of Columbia Theological Seminary, I bring warm greetings from the students, trustees, faculty and staff who make up this dynamic hub of theological inquiry, leadership development and ministry formation for the renewal of the Church and transformation of the world. One of the important elements of our identity is that we are an educational institution of the Presbyterian Church (USA), deeply rooted in the Reformed Tradition where we celebrate the priesthood of all believers and the connectivity of the Church. Therefore, as a symbol of our gratitude for your faithfulness in boldly proclaiming the Gospel of Jesus Christ, and the connection that Columbia Seminary is blessed to share with you, I wish to provide this gift to Pastor Powers and to you. In the Gospel of Luke, the Sabbath presents a significant source of tension between Jesus and the religious authorities. Originally established by God as a day for rest and renewal, the Sabbath's observance has evolved into a topic of intense debate. Strict interpretations of the Sabbath laws often emphasize adherence to the letter of the law rather than its intended purpose of promoting spiritual well-being and renewal.

In the opening verses of Luke 6, we observe the disciples of Jesus engaging in the act of plucking and eating grain, which draws the attention of the Pharisees. These religious leaders question the disciples' actions, as they are supposed to adhere to practices of fasting and

IDLEWILD PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

The Reverend Dr. Victor Aloyo
Sunday, February 2, 2025

observing rest from work. The Pharisees' reaction reflects their concern about the disciples' disregard for traditional customs.

In Luke 6:6, a significant event unfolds as Jesus performs a healing in a surprising location and on a day when such activities are prohibited. This act occurs under the watchful eyes of the Pharisees, who are eagerly monitoring his actions for any potential misstep (Luke 6:7). Despite their scrutiny, Jesus proceeds with the healing, highlighting his disregard for the rigid interpretations of the law and emphasizing his commitment to compassion and mercy.

In the Gospel of Luke, Jesus is presented as the central figure for understanding expressions and practices of faith. One notable encounter illustrates how Jesus confronts legalistic practices surrounding the Sabbath. This passage highlights not only His authority to heal on the Sabbath but also emphasizes His compassion for those in need, showing that His priorities extend beyond tradition or strict adherence to the law.

"On another Sabbath, he entered the synagogue and taught, and there was a man whose right hand was withered."

In this scene, Jesus is teaching in a synagogue on the Sabbath when he encounters a man with a withered right hand. This condition not only likely caused the man physical discomfort but also led to his marginalization within society, as physical deformities were often interpreted as indicators of sin or divine retribution. The man's presence in the synagogue carries significant implications; due to his condition, he would have been regarded as unclean by many, complicating his ability to participate in communal worship. Nevertheless, he attends, and it is noted that Jesus takes notice of him.

The actions of the Pharisees illustrate a clear motive: their primary concern lies not with the well-being or healing of individuals but rather in monitoring Jesus to determine if he will breach their interpretation of Sabbath laws. They viewed healing as a form of work, which they believed was prohibited on the Sabbath. This narrative highlights a troubling reality: the Pharisees' fixation on legalism blinds them to the human needs present before them. A similar response is observed in the group during the events surrounding Bartimaeus' cries for help and his eventual healing.

"But Jesus knew what they were thinking. He said to the man with the withered hand, 'Come and stand here.' He got up and stood there."

IDLEWILD PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

The Reverend Dr. Victor Aloyo
Sunday, February 2, 2025

The current interpretation of the law has led some to prioritize it so that they may overlook the mercy it is designed to embody. This perspective can hinder their comprehension of the fact that true obedience to God's commandments should encompass love and compassion, rather than merely focusing on adherence to rules.

This passage inspires us to reflect on our understanding of rules, tradition, and mercy. Jesus' healing on the Sabbath goes beyond mere rule-breaking; it uncovers the profound, compassionate purpose of God's law. The law is not a barrier to healing, compassion, or mercy. Its true essence is restoring life and uplifting the spirit, not diminishing it. Participation in every aspect of life—our faith journeys, civic responsibilities, and family duties—often reveals the fragmented nature of our existence. As followers of Christ, we are called to be present with the people of God, provided our involvement is grounded in God's love. This means doing good in God's name and sometimes engaging in challenging interactions to share Christ's healing. We embody Christ in our actions and continue the witness of Jesus of Nazareth by broadening our understanding of what it means to be the church, rather than just performing church activities.

In our lives, we can sometimes become Pharisaic, driven by good intentions to uphold the law while imposing additional rules that seek power and control over others. This can lead to a life where the appearance of righteousness overshadows the very essence of what God desires from us: love, mercy, and compassion. Jesus reminds us that doing good, especially caring for others, is always the right choice, transcending tradition or rules.

This passage challenges us to view those around us with eyes that recognize their needs rather than just their faults. Jesus' example inspires us to be proactive in showing mercy, noticing those who are suffering, and bringing healing to places of brokenness.