

Daily Bread with Brother Hwa-Chi (Not reviewed by the speaker, for personal use only)

Luke 14:1-6

Brothers and sisters, peace be with you, this is Hwa-Chi. Thank the Lord, it's time to read the bible again. This week, we will read Luke chapter 14. Today, we will read verses 1-6.

Verse 1: “Now it happened, as He went into the house of one of the rulers of the Pharisees to eat bread on the Sabbath, that they watched Him closely.”

These Pharisees did not have good intentions toward Jesus. During the time of His earthly ministry, especially toward the end, they were constantly seeking to find fault with Him. Therefore, this ruler of the Pharisees invited Jesus to dine at his house with the purpose of watching Him—to look for an opportunity, to find something to accuse Him of.

Previously, Jesus had performed many miracles on the Sabbath. In the Gospel of Luke alone, this is the fifth such instance recorded, and likely the last one mentioned in this Gospel. Although Jesus clearly knew that their invitation was not well-intentioned, He still went openly and graciously. Jesus always sought opportunities, hoping perhaps to gain some among them.

Verse 2: “And behold, there was a certain man before Him who had dropsy.”

Luke was a physician, and the term “dropsy” here is a medical term describing a condition in which certain organs in the body are diseased, leading to swelling due to fluid retention. Because of this condition, the abdomen becomes greatly swollen.

Usually, Pharisees were people of high social standing in Jewish society, and their friends were also prominent and respectable individuals. It is unclear where they found this man with dropsy, but they placed him right before Jesus. Their purpose was simple—to challenge Jesus and see whether He would heal on the Sabbath.

As for this sick man, it is uncertain whether he was truly a friend of the Pharisees. Suffering physically from his illness and having heard that Jesus could heal, he was likely glad for the opportunity to be there, hoping that Jesus might heal him.

Verse 3: “And Jesus, answering, spoke to the lawyers and Pharisees, saying, ‘Is it lawful to heal on the Sabbath?’”

Before they even questioned Him, Jesus asked the Pharisees and lawyers whether it was lawful to heal on the Sabbath. The Chinese translation makes it seem as though Jesus initiated the conversation, but in the original Greek and in English, it indicates that Jesus “answered” and said this.

Yet interestingly, no one had asked a question. Why then did Jesus begin with an answer? Because the situation was obvious. They had placed a man with dropsy right before Him, and it was the Sabbath. Jesus immediately discerned their intentions. Therefore, in response to the situation, He took the initiative and asked whether it was lawful to heal on the Sabbath.

Verses 4–5: “But they kept silent. And He took him and healed him, and let him go. Then He answered them, saying, ‘Which of you, having a donkey or an ox that has fallen into a pit, will not immediately pull him out on the Sabbath day?’”

The Sabbath was established by God so that man might have rest. If an ox or a donkey fell into a pit on the Sabbath, a person would not be able to rest; therefore, it was permissible to pull it out.

However, through the interpretations of the scribes and Jewish rabbis, many detailed regulations developed regarding what could or could not be done on the Sabbath. These were human traditions.

In the face of these traditions, Jesus did not hesitate. In fact, He deliberately acted on the Sabbath. He made it clear to the scribes and Pharisees that the Sabbath was established by God for man, so that man might receive rest. He Himself had come as the Son of Man, and the Son of Man is Lord of the Sabbath.

If they would rescue an ox or a donkey on the Sabbath, how much more a human being created by God? This man with dropsy was in extreme discomfort and unable to rest. Therefore, Jesus healed him so that he could receive rest—this is the true intention of the Sabbath.

In response to their challenge—placing the sick man before Him—Jesus healed him and then asked, “Which of you, having a donkey or an ox that has fallen into a pit, will not immediately pull him out on the Sabbath day?”

Verse 6: “And they could not answer Him regarding these things.”

What they had placed before Jesus, He accepted without hesitation, clearly demonstrating that He would heal on the Sabbath. Yet when Jesus questioned them, they were unable to respond.

There are many paradoxical aspects in this entire event. These Pharisees, especially their leader, took pride in their piety and in strictly observing the Sabbath. The Sabbath was meant to give people rest, yet here he was hosting a banquet, inviting Jesus and his friends.

To maintain their observance of the Sabbath, it is likely that all the food had been prepared the day before. Even so, hosting a banquet requires much activity and busyness. Although what they did might have conformed outwardly to Sabbath regulations, their hearts were not truly at rest before God—that is the true meaning of the Sabbath.

This is somewhat like in the New Testament today. We no longer observe the Sabbath, but the Lord commands us to break bread in remembrance of Him on the Lord’s Day. So we set apart Sunday to gather with brothers and sisters, to sing hymns, worship and praise the Lord, and study God’s Word. This is all very good.

But are there times when, like this ruler of the Pharisees, after the morning meeting, we spend the afternoon and evening feasting and entertaining ourselves? Especially in American culture, Sunday afternoons and evenings are often devoted to watching

football. After such enjoyment, do we sometimes forget entirely what we received in the morning gathering?

I have no intention of condemning watching games on Sunday afternoons—appropriate recreation is acceptable. But we should be watchful: are there times when we, like the Pharisees, turn the Lord's Day meeting into a mere regulation? When you can do it, you may begin to judge those who cannot—at that point, you are likely in legalism.

Just as these Pharisees placed a man with dropsy before Jesus, they did not realize that they themselves were suffering from “spiritual dropsy.” What is spiritual dropsy? It is the swelling of the self—our mind, emotion, and will—our soul becoming abnormally inflated. Especially in the things we consider good, the things we take pride in, the things we are able to accomplish, we allow ourselves to become puffed up.

May God help us to see our true condition. Without God's grace, we could not come to the meeting to worship and praise Him. Without His grace, we could not preach the gospel. Without His grace, we could not bear witness for Him. Without His grace, we could do nothing for Him.

Since everything comes from God's grace, what do we have to boast about? Why do we feel superior to others or judge them? May the Lord truly help us to realize that everything is of grace. Since it is all undeserved, we should have no demands on the saints, relatives, friends, or seekers around us, but instead be willing, in grace, to share God's love with those in need.

Let us pray together: Lord, thank You. You are the Lord of grace, and everything we have comes from Your grace. Help us to see our true identity and to stand in the position of grace, receiving more of Your grace. Let Your grace flow out from us to those we encounter today. May our family and friends be willing to know You and receive You because of our living and our conduct. Bless our daily life, that it may become a channel of grace to others. We pray in the Holy Name of Jesus Christ.