**The Law at Its Best**

**Luke 13:10-17**

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| **Slide** | **Sermon** |
| 1 | Title slide |
| 2 | Intro – Rules and Regulations – The Law – are always part of our lives. Sometimes we don’t like them –   * 70 mph when making long trip * Tax time – we all have to pay them – my experience – the forms make it hard to know all you can deduct! |
| 3 | In NASCAR – you have race rules  Owner/crew chief and Driver meeting   * + When caution – let off gas, get in single file, pace care picks up leader at 1st turn.   + Slower cars let others go by and fall in line.   + Use hand signals   + Watch flags for when pit road opens   + Before the race begins all cars get in a few safe laps at the start to make sure all is ready to race.   Need rules to have safe and enjoyable race.  Like NASCAR, we accept that laws are necessary in our lives and work. They protect us from each other and help us enjoy our freedoms so long as we don’t impede another or hurts another. |
| 4 | And in terms of our faith, God set out – early on – standard rules, laws to which we could turn, to guide our faith and worship. And these are good and are important.  Take for instance, this Sabbath Day law.  Quote: Exodus 29:8-14 – “Remember the Sabbath day and keep it holy. 6 days shall you labor and do all your work. But the 7th day is a sabbath to the Lord, our God; you shall not work, you or any in your home – in 6 days God made the earth and then rested, therefore the Lord blessed the Sabbath day and consecrated it. |
| 5 | This Law was needed:   * + Reminded of God’s work and their response   + Gave time for worship   + Gave physical rest   + Forced attention on the spiritual   It was and is a good law!  This is good for us today, isn’t it? No work on Sunday so we can focus on our relationship with God. |
| 6 | We (myself included) don’t adhere to it much these days –   * Some are on shift work or on call on Sundays * We have so much to do or want to play that we cram Sundays chalked full to accomplish whatever it is we want to do * We here of the church fill Sunday afternoon and evenings with church meetings.   Yet – if we brought back some of the original intent – perhaps it would give us a way to cut through the hectic pace of life and halt it for a few life-giving moments each week.  The Sabbath Day law had good intentions and holds good possibilities for our lives even in the present time.  Yet over the years the interpretation became so strict and riddled with double standards for one group over another that it (The Law) became more important than the people it was supposed to serve. |
| 7 | Before our text today – Luke has already recorded in Chapter 6 two (2) incidences where Jesus and the synagogue leaders argued over keeping the Sabbath.   1. Jesus heals a man with a withered hand on the Sabbath – asks if it is right to do good or harm on Sabbath? 2. Jesus and disciples walk through a cut field and pick grain and blow the chaff away and eat it – Leaders are angry and Jesus tells story of King David and his soldiers eating holy bread when they are on the run.   Each case – strict adherence to the Sabbath law would hurt and not help the persons. Obedience to LAW or help people in their relationship with God? |
| 8 | The same issue again is in our text – what’s important – the Law or the people?  This time Jesus turns and uses the leader’s own words and logic to show the duplicity in their interpretation of this law. He argues from the minor to the major.  If you can lose the bound animals and lead them to water, then I can lose the bound woman and lead her to God!  Thus, people – their concerns and their lives, are central to God and the Law is to help people; not trap them.  Jesus came to free people – to help them feel again the love and acceptance of God. Not to be trapped and burdened with form and procedure.  This unsolicited act of healing became a demonstration for all – clearly Jesus was reclaiming the notion that God loves people and wants them to know God’s love.  Whatever binds us, burdens us, whatever keeps us at arm’s length from the very presence of God – must be broken and dealt with – even if it’s the improper use of the Law! |
| 9 | EX: - Wade’s school like many others in the area of Asheville and beyond have a program called OM – Odyssey of the Mind.  Program geared to encourage kids to challenge their mind and creativity. In his first year of OM, the K- 2nd grades were invited to form a team to engage a problem and demonstrate their answer or practice for future competition.  There was one hitch – through miscommunication, it was only learned toward the end, that only 5 of the 7 who had worked several months on the project could actually demonstrate their answer. The law was 5 only.  The parents of the kids met with an OM official – Could all 7 participate since they had been working together equally? - Some parents said no – must abide by the rule – even if 2 are excluded. Law and obedience are more important than the full participation. A few parents felt the opposite – kids are more important than rule.  On the day of mock competition several of the other groups chose to allow all to participate – even though the Law was fixed.  Clear modern-day issue of Law vs. People. Law was intended to be good – to allow each team same # of contestants to keep competition fair and to ensure alternates for the members that became ill. But to me the competition in my opinion was undermined - the intent to encourage cooperation and sharing in the solving of a problem; it put kids on same team competing instead of pulling together.  Person or the Law – who or what is the more important? |
| 10 | Luke in his Gospel – over and over again shares stories where Jesus was continually putting people first over the strictness of the Law.  EX: included the tax officials – Levi, Zacchaeus, other unnamed ones  Included the sinner – sinful woman of Luke 7:36-50 and the Prodigal Son.  Included the women – widow of Nain, Galilean women who followed him; Martha and Mary, the cripple of our text, women in parable of lost coin, widow of persistence in Chapter 18, the Widow’s mite, and daughters of Jerusalem.  Included the poor – speeches in 4:18, first beatitude, parable of Lazarus, etc.  His love and concern for people would not allow him to continue the Laws that had been created to keep these and others out. |
| 11 | How do we handle the law – the rules and regulations at our workplace, our schools, our homes, etc. Are they a means which we help people become more of who God wants them to become? Or do we use the Laws, intentionally or unintentionally, as a means to promote ourselves and our separation from others.  EX: I don’t know about you, but I always get anxious when a transient person comes up to me. What do they want from me? Will I help them? Can I? How? People like this make us feel ill at ease. Sometimes angry. Why should I give them a free hand out. After all, I’ve had to work for what I have. And if I help them, then will it just perpetuate and reinforce their condition. They didn’t obey the rules of hard work and perseverance.  But to be bound by these rules and assumptions that only the lazy and slothful end up like this, is to deny the truth that life has treated some harsher than others and keeps us separated from another as God’s people - whom God seeks to love.  Jesus included the down and out, the ones excluded from the mainstream. They were more important than the proper ways of being and working. And I try to recall this when a homeless, hungry person comes through our doors.  People – all people – even like ourselves are more important than those laws which have been used to separate us and pit us against one another. |
| 12 | God’s law was a *covenant between God and humanity; given to reflect the eternal character of God, righteousness, & to keep humans from sin.*  It was not created to create separation among people.  No rule or regulation has been enough to bring us back into a good, positive relationship with God. God so loves all – including each of us, that Jesus stepped beyond and through the Law to come to us.  Now be clear I am not saying that we "chuck" the Law and condone that anything goes! The Law applied in the correct way will lead us to God. But the Law doesn't work to bring us salvation. It is by the love of Jesus dying on the cross for everyone's sins that we return to the place God so wants up to be. |
| 13 | By Law Jesus should never have died. But by love he chose to give his life because he wanted all of us to be included.  He has borne our griefs and carried our sorrows –  On him was laid our iniquity  He was wounded for our transgressions  He was bruised for our iniquities  On him was laid the chastisement that made us whole.  By his stripes we are healed!  All because God loves us more than the Law.  If we can grasp this profound truth, then the way we treat others will become remarkably different. Many of our problems with race and the poor and the hungry will be solved. |
| 14 | The Law was for people to know God’s love & to be righteous, pleasing to Him – That’s the Law at It’s Best!  - It was not to keep them from the very presence of God, an incorrect use of God’s law.  So, obey the Law but always let love open the door to everyone so that all of us share a place in the Kingdom of God!  ***After all, Jesus came so that all could share in God’s Kingdom! Amen!*** |