



[Luke 14:1-6](#)

(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. (2) And behold, there was a certain man before Him who had dropsy. (3) And Jesus, answering, spoke to the lawyers and Pharisees, saying, "Is it lawful to heal on the Sabbath?" (4) But they kept silent. And He took *him* and healed him, and let him go. (5) 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?" (6) And they could not answer Him regarding these things.

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Christ's miracle of [healing](#) a man with dropsy is the last healing He performed on the [Sabbath](#). It occurs in the house of one of Judaism's chief Pharisees. Luke records that the lawyers and Pharisees "watched Him closely." Their suspicious attitude set the initial mood for the meal and their intentions toward [Jesus](#): They wanted to discover a way to make an accusation against Him. The miracle occurred under the malicious scrutiny of enemies who especially criticized Him for His healing on the Sabbath. They sat and ate with the Son of [God](#), yet they were so blind, they could not see who He was. As a consequence, they did not know Him.

Sabbath dinners, famous for their festive entertainment, were an integral part of Jewish social life. The Pharisees were well known for their own careless approach to the Sabbath, often feasting and drinking excessively, but at the same time, they nitpicked how others kept it. They had no reservations about throwing a party on God's day, but to heal the sick on the Sabbath was, to them, unforgiveable ([Mark 3:1-6](#)). Jesus accepted invitations to feasts ([Luke 15:1-2](#)), and was known to enjoy eating and drinking with publicans and sinners. He knew the Jewish leaders would use occasions like these to condemn Him.

This is the only case of dropsy found in the Gospels. The term the physician Luke uses to describe the man's condition is a strictly technical one. Dropsy was considered to be

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a symptom of an organic disease, usually one of the heart or kidneys. What we call “dropsy” manifests itself in edema or swelling of various parts of the body.

Whether the unnamed man is an invited guest or had come only to be healed, we do not know. The healing is performed by actual contact. At Christ's touch, the disease flees, and he is allowed to leave the feast before Jesus resumes His conversation with His antagonists. Though the man does not ask to be healed, Christ gives him the blessing of healing.

Jesus' teaching is clear and pointed. He brings to the Pharisees' attention that, if their acts of [love](#) toward their animals in danger on the Sabbath are acceptable, why would acts of love for human beings on the Sabbath be any less acceptable? He had taught a similar lesson earlier in the synagogue ([Matthew 12:9-14](#); [Mark 3:1-6](#); [Luke 6:6-9](#)). He compares the man with dropsy to an animal stuck in a cistern or pit ([Luke 14:5](#)) and the woman with a crooked spine to a bound animal ([Luke 13:10-16](#)). By healing the man with dropsy, Jesus proves that it is [merciful](#) to heal on the Sabbath day, and by His illustration, He exposes their lack of love and consistency.

We see here what happens to the unconverted mind because of unbelief—alack of love is the inevitable product of rejecting God. By these Sabbath healings, He emphasizes the humane element in the original institution of the Sabbath as a day of rest, recovery, and [joy](#), rescuing it from Pharisaic distortion. In addition, by observing the seventh day as the day of public worship, He gives it sanction as God's weekly holy day for the church.

By these deeds of healing, He honors it specifically as a day of showing mercy. As Lord of the Sabbath, He consecrates it by His Spirit for the worship of God, as well as for the service of man ([Mark 2:27-28](#)). His constant compassion for human suffering is a mirror of His compassionate heart for sinners. He lived to relieve the afflicted and oppressed, and He died to emancipate men and women from a worse disease than that of any physical nature. By His shed blood, He can take the sinner by the hand, heal him, and “let him go” to walk in newness of life.

— Martin G. Collins

To learn more, see:

[The Miracles of Jesus Christ: Healing a Man With Dropsy](#)

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