

Luke 13:10-17
December 8, 2019

Open with Prayer

HOOK:

Q: What do you think it's like for someone who is crippled to get ready to come to church. What difficulties do they face from the time they wake-up to the time they arrive at the church? [Let people engage]

Q: If you had to guess, what percentage of people are attending our church who are spiritually crippled and are desperately looking for help? [Let people make their best guess]

Transition: Riverbend has a mission statement that basically says, "We exist to reclaim the lives of the bruised, battered, the bored and the broken for Christ." Perhaps you've heard the idea that the church is not a hotel for saints, but rather a hospital for sinners. In today's Scripture text, we see Jesus showing up at the synagogue on Sabbath, and He illustrates what we stand for at Riverbend. He demonstrates to us what really matters to Him, while the Pharisees express what really matters to them. Let's read the text.

BOOK:

A Crippled Woman Healed on the Sabbath

10 On a Sabbath Jesus was teaching in one of the synagogues, 11 and a woman was there who had been crippled by a spirit for eighteen years. She was bent over and could not straighten up at all. 12 When Jesus saw her, he called her forward and said to her, "Woman, you are set free from your infirmity." 13 Then he put his hands on her, and immediately she straightened up and praised God.

14 Indignant because Jesus had healed on the Sabbath, the synagogue ruler said to the people, "There are six days for work. So come and be healed on those days, not on the Sabbath."

15 The Lord answered him, "You hypocrites! Doesn't each of you on the Sabbath untie his ox or donkey from the stall and lead it out to give it water? 16 Then should not this woman, a daughter of Abraham, whom Satan has kept bound for eighteen long years, be set free on the Sabbath day from what bound her?"

17 When he said this, all his opponents were humiliated, but the people were delighted with all the wonderful things he was doing.

Process Observations/Questions:

Q: What did you most like about this passage? What resonated with you? [Let people engage]

Q: What did you least like about this passage? [Let people engage – Satan is in the synagogue!]

Q: What did you find in this passage that you didn't understand? [Let people engage]

Q: What do we learn about Jesus in this passage? [Let people engage - any time is appropriate to come to God for healing and restoration; Jesus is compassionate]

Q: In light of this text, what application(s) are you sensing the Spirit is telling you? [Let people engage]

LOOK:

Ask yourself honestly, “Which marks my life: Dead religion or reality with the living Lord?” If you lack reality, your need, like that of this woman, is to make personal contact with Jesus Himself. He alone has the power to release you from dead religion so that you can walk in the joy of new life with Him.

Close in Prayer

Commentaries for Today's Lesson:

Wiersbe, W. W. (1996). *The Bible Exposition Commentary* (Vol. 1, pp. 225-226). Wheaton, IL: Victor Books.

A Legal Question about the Sabbath (Luke 13:10–17)

Liberation (vv. 10–13). If I had been crippled for eighteen years, I wonder if I would be faithful to worship God week after week in the synagogue? Surely this woman had prayed and asked God for help, and yet she was not delivered. However, God's seeming unconcern did not cause her to become bitter or resentful. There she was in the synagogue.

Ever sensitive to the needs of others, Jesus saw the woman and called her to come forward. It may have seemed heartless to the congregation for Him to do this and expose her handicap publicly (see Matt. 12:13), but He knew what He was doing. For one thing, Satan was in the synagogue and He wanted to expose him and defeat him. But He also wanted the woman to help Him teach the people an important lesson about freedom.

Not only does Satan bow people down, but so do sin (Ps. 38:6), sorrow (Ps. 42:5), and suffering (Ps. 44:25). Jesus Christ is the only One who can set the prisoner free. He spoke the word, laid His hands on her, and she was healed and gave glory to God! That was a synagogue service the people never forgot.

Indignation (v. 14). Instead of rejoicing and giving God the glory, the ruler of the synagogue (see Luke 8:41) became very angry. He did not have the courage to express his anger to Jesus, so he scolded the congregation! But the more you ponder his tirade, the more laughable it becomes. Suppose they did bring their sick to be healed; who would heal them? Did he have that kind of power; and, if he did, why had he not used it to help people before? What a cowardly hypocrite!

The bondage of the ruler of the synagogue was worse than that of the woman. Her bondage affected only her body, but his bondage shackled his mind and heart. He was so bound and blinded by tradition that he ended up opposing the Son of God! Elbert Hubbard called tradition "a clock that tells us what time it was." The ruler of the synagogue could not "discern this time" (Luke 13:12, 5, 6) and he stood condemned.

Vindication (vv. 15–17). Jesus could have healed this woman on any other day of the week. After all, she had been bound for eighteen painful years, and one more day would have made little difference. But He deliberately chose the Sabbath Day because He wanted to teach a lesson about freedom. Note the repetition of the word "loose" (Luke 13:12, 15–16).

First, the Lord defended the woman and rebuked the ruler of the synagogue. Jesus reminded him that he treated his animals far better than he treated this poor woman. This indictment included the people in the congregation as well. Our Lord was arguing from the lesser to the greater: if God permits people to help their thirsty animals on the Sabbath, would He not want us to care for needy people made in the image of God? Any tradition that keeps us from helping others is not from God. In fact, it is easy to use tradition as an excuse for not caring for others.

Jesus said that the woman was a "daughter of Abraham," referring to her spiritual condition and not her physical birth (Luke 19:9; Gal. 3:7). All the Jewish women present would have been "daughters of Abraham." Does this mean that she was a converted person before the Lord healed her? If so, then she is the only believer in the New Testament who was physically afflicted because of demonic attack. (We are not sure what Paul's "thorn in the flesh" was or exactly how Satan used it to buffet Paul. See 2 Cor. 12.)

Perhaps it is a matter of semantics, but I prefer to speak of demonic work in believers as "demon oppression" rather than "demon possession." In fact, the Greek word is "demonized," so

we need not think of “possession” in spatial terms. Certainly Satan can and does attack the bodies and minds of God’s people. Some satanic oppression could last for many years until someone detects that Satan is at work. Not all sickness is caused by demons (Luke 6:17–19), so we must not blame everything on Satan.

There were people in the congregation who hoped to use this Sabbath violation to accuse Jesus, but He left them so ashamed that they said nothing. The lesson that He taught was clear: Satan puts people into bondage, but true freedom comes from trusting Christ. The Sabbath that God wants to give us is a “heart rest” that comes through His grace and not from obeying traditions (Matt. 11:28–30).

Martin, J. A. (1985). Isaiah. In J. F. Walvoord & R. B. Zuck (Eds.), *The Bible Knowledge Commentary: An Exposition of the Scriptures* (Vol. 2, p. 240)

e. Jesus’ healing of a woman (13:10–17)

Jesus illustrated His teaching by healing a woman on a Sabbath. This episode is the last time in the Gospel of Luke Jesus taught in a synagogue. The term “hypocrites” is extremely important in the narrative. Toward the beginning of this section (12:54–13:21) Jesus had called the crowds and the leaders of the people “hypocrites” (12:56). Here at the end of the section He again called them “hypocrites” (13:15). Jesus’ point was that the crowds and the leaders were not really interested in what God could and would do in their lives.

13:10–13. Luke described the **woman** as one **who had been crippled by a spirit for 18 years** and “bound” by “Satan” (v. 16). Without denying the historicity of the event, it must be pointed out that there is obvious symbolic value in Luke’s placing this miracle at this point in the narrative. It was Jesus’ mission among the people of the nation to loose them from crippling influences and bring them to uprightness. Here was a graphic example of Jesus’ touch, bringing the woman to a position of uprightness. Jesus healed **her** by His words (**Woman, you are set free from your infirmity**) and by touching **her. Immediately she straightened up and praised God.** This act of praising God was the proper response to the work of Jesus (cf. 2:20; 5:25–26; 7:16; 17:15; 18:43; 23:47). It showed that people were understanding His mission.

13:14. In contrast to the proper response which the woman evidenced, **the synagogue ruler was indignant because Jesus had** not followed the Law as that ruler interpreted it. He appealed to the crowd to reject Jesus’ miracle. This attitude supports what Jesus had already said about religious leaders keeping others from entering the kingdom (11:52).

13:15–17. Jesus pointed out that a person is much more important than an animal, and His enemies saw nothing wrong in helping their animals **on the Sabbath** (cf. 14:5). The total hypocrisy and foolishness of the thinking of the religious leaders was obvious. As a result Jesus’ **opponents were humiliated but the crowds were delighted.**

Cabal, T., Brand, C. O., Clendenen, E. R., Copan, P., Moreland, J. P., & Powell, D. (2007). *The Apologetics Study Bible: Real Questions, Straight Answers, Stronger Faith* (p. 1542). Nashville, TN: Holman Bible Publishers.

13:11 Since no exorcism took place, the phrase “disabled by a spirit” used to describe the cause of the woman’s condition may be idiomatic. That is, the condition was not caused by direct demonic influence but was a manifestation of satanic opposition to humanity in general (v. 16). See note on 9:1.

Stein, R. H. (1992). Luke (Vol. 24, pp. 372-375). Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers.

Context

The exact reason for connecting this passage to the preceding one is debated. Luke may have placed them together because he saw this incident as an example of God's visitation of salvation among the people of Israel (12:56) and the hypocrisy with which Israel's leaders responded (12:54–13:17). The first aspect is also present in the following two parables (13:18–21). On the other hand, Luke may have placed this account here because of word association (cf. 13:11 "eighteen years" with 13:4 "eighteen"). Luke may even have found this episode already connected to the parable of the unfruitful tree in the source he was using. Some combination of the first and second explanations seems most likely. The sayings are connected within the passage by the words "set free," "untie," and "set free" (13:12, 15–16). Although there are similar incidents in the Gospels (cf. 6:6–11), the present account is unique to Luke.

In this incident Christology takes second place to the pronouncement of the meaning of the Sabbath. Here Jesus used his authority and power to heal a crippled woman. Although she was healed, it was done on the Sabbath, and the synagogue ruler rebuked Jesus for it. Healings should have been performed on other days, not the Sabbath. Jesus harshly called the ruler a hypocrite, pointing out that if it was permissible for animals to receive help on the Sabbath, how much more ought one of Abraham's children to have been allowed to receive such help. As Ellis observes: "Thus whereas earlier Jesus' authority over the sabbath is the issue (6:1–11), here the issue involves the meaning of the sabbath." The result is that while the people rejoiced in this display of God's glory and power, the ruler and Jesus' other adversaries were humiliated.

Comments

13:10 On a Sabbath Jesus was teaching. There is no necessary connection of this account with what precedes. Compare 4:31.

In one of the synagogues. This is the last incident in which Luke referred to Jesus' teaching in a synagogue.

13:11 Crippled by a spirit. The woman is described as having an evil spirit that caused her crippled condition. See comments on 4:39 and 7:21.

Eighteen years. Compare 13:4 (cf. the tie between the accounts in Mark 5:25 and 5:42 with respect to the number "twelve").

Bent over and could not straighten up at all. "At all" can be interpreted as modifying "could not" ("could not at all straighten up") or "straighten up" ("could not straighten up at all"). The latter (NIV, RSV, NASB) is more likely.

13:12 When Jesus saw her. Something like "he was moved with compassion" probably should be assumed (cf. Luke 7:13). No request was made to Jesus. His compassion instigated the healing.

You are set free from your infirmity. The clause is literally you have been released from your infirmity. This is not to be understood as a divine passive, however, because of 13:14. If God had healed the woman, then the ruler would not have been able to complain. He complained because Jesus healed her. Compare also 13:17, where "the wonderful things he [Jesus] was

doing” refers to his healing of the woman. The deliverance of the woman is described more as a healing than an exorcism.

13:13 Then he put his hands on her. Is the pronouncement of the healing in 13:12 to be understood as having preceded the healing or as contemporaneous with it? Acts 6:6; 9:17; 28:8 (cf. also Matt 19:13; Mark 7:32–34; 8:23) favor the latter.

Immediately. See comments on 18:43. In contrast to eighteen years of sickness, the woman’s healing was instantaneous.

And praised God. An inceptive imperfect (“began to praise”). Compare Luke 2:20; 5:25–26; 7:16; 17:15; 18:43; 23:47. See comments on 5:25–26.

13:14 A typical healing miracle would end at 13:13, but this one is part of a larger controversy story concerning the Sabbath. For similar controversies cf. 6:1–11; 14:1–6; cf. also John 5:1–18; 9:13–17. For the Jewish reverence toward the Sabbath, see comments on 6:2.

Indignant. Jesus was rebuked supposedly for profaning the Sabbath. The ruler rose up in “righteous indignation” against extending mercy on the Sabbath to someone who had needed it desperately for eighteen years.

13:15 The Lord. See comments on 7:13.

Answered him. Jesus was not answering a question directed to him (cf. 14:3; 17:17; 22:51) but rather responding to the synagogue ruler’s statement, which had been directed at him (13:14).

You hypocrites! Jesus’ scathing denunciation was addressed not only to the ruler but to all who thought like him, to all who put their religious traditions before mercy and compassion. The lack of concern over Abraham’s daughter’s eighteen years of suffering was sufficient reason for Jesus to call his opponents “hypocrites.” The kind of religious thinking that cares so little for people in their misery and need is indeed damnable.

Doesn’t each of you. Jesus offered an a fortiori (see comments on 11:11) argument to show the hypocrisy of their criticism. If it is permissible to show mercy to animals on the Sabbath, how much more should mercy be shown to one of God’s covenant people.

13:16 Jesus, who already had displayed his authority over the Sabbath in 6:1–5, now clarified the Sabbath’s meaning (cf. also 6:6–11). Jesus had come to do God’s bidding (4:18–19). Doing God’s will should not/cannot be limited to certain days. If it is right to perform God’s will on the first six days of the week, how much more should God’s will, mercy, and love be performed on the Sabbath.

Should not. Is it not divinely necessary? For dei see Introduction 8 (1).

A daughter of Abraham. The rare title “daughter of Abraham” points to the full inclusion of women in the covenant community Jesus gathered. For Luke’s typical complementary male example, cf. 19:9.

Whom Satan has kept bound. If “bound” animals were led to water on the Sabbath, how much more should this woman, “bound” by Satan, have been allowed to experience the refreshment of healing. The woman’s illness was traced to Satan (see comments on 13:11).

Eighteen long years. Compare 13:4.

13:17 The story’s conclusion finds Jesus’ opponents humiliated and the people rejoicing (see comments on 6:17) at his marvelous deeds (cf. 7:16).

The Lukan Message

Luke again revealed Jesus’ miraculous powers, but the emphasis was not on this but on the hostility official Judaism displayed toward Jesus. The reasons for their hostility vary. At different times it was due to Jesus’ violation of the oral traditions (5:33–39; 11:37–44), his association

with tax collectors and sinners (5:27–32), his Christological claims and actions (5:21), or his denunciation of the rich and arrogant (6:24–26; 16:19–31). Here it was the freedom he claimed to do God’s work on the Sabbath that provoked their animosity (6:1–11; 14:1–6). The conflict described in 13:1–9 now was given concrete form. When official Judaism chose to disregard God’s mercy toward people as desperate as a woman crippled for eighteen years, that religion was doomed; judgment would be forthcoming. Looking for the true fruits of OT piety—justice, mercy, and humility (Mic 6:8)—Jesus found instead the worst of all sins: hypocrisy. Therefore, the fig tree would be cut down (13:8).

On the other hand, Luke’s emphasis on God’s love for the outcasts and oppressed resonates throughout the passage. Luke delighted in proclaiming that divine salvation was coming to the powerless. Widows, harlots, the grieving, lepers, and cripples found that “today” God was visiting them with the salvation promised long ago (4:16–21; 7:22–23). For Theophilus and the other readers, once Gentile “dogs” without hope and outside of the covenant of promise (cf. Eph 2:12), God’s salvation had at last appeared. As a result, they too could delight in the wonderful things God had done (Luke 13:17). Jesus brought the divine blessing of God’s kingdom to the truly “poor” of this world (6:22).

Several other Lukan themes are also found in this account. One is Christological: Jesus’ power over disease and the demonic world had been displayed once again. See Introduction 8 (4). The positive attitude the crowd had toward Jesus is another (13:17; see comments on 4:15). A final theme is the joyous experience of the messianic salvation (13:17). In the coming of God’s kingdom there is joy indeed (see comments on 1:14).

Barry, J. D., Mangum, D., Brown, D. R., Heiser, M. S., Custis, M., Ritzema, E., ... Bomar, D. (2012, 2016). Faithlife Study Bible (Lk 13:10-17). Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press.

13:10–17 In another passage unique to Luke, Jesus again faces criticism after He performs a healing on the Sabbath (compare 6:6–11).

13:11 a spirit that had disabled her The woman’s distorted posture appears to be the result of demonic activity, as opposed to a defect suffered from birth.

13:14 come and be healed on them The people were coming to Jesus for healing without regard for the day. Jesus was not bothered by this; indeed, His actions encouraged it. The religious leaders saw His healings as a violation of God’s command to honor the Sabbath by refraining from work.

13:15 untie his ox or his donkey Jesus calls attention to the religious leaders’ willingness to make exceptions to the law to care for animals but not to care for God’s people.

13:16 a daughter of Abraham Identifies the woman as a Jew. **whom Satan bound eighteen long years** See v. 11.

The Holy Bible: New International Version. (1984). (Lk 13:10-17). Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan.