

Luke 13:10-17

Jesus Loosens What Binds You

There is most certainly one attribute that no one in human history can ever question that God must possess in abundance: PATIENCE (see also LONGSUFFERUNG / FORBEARANCE). The apostle Paul declared that Jesus was crucified:

to show God's righteousness, because in **his divine forbearance** he [God] had passed over former sins (**Rom. 3:25**).

What Paul is referring to here is that since the beginning of sin entering into our world in Adam, God has been extremely patient with man in their rebellion against Him. While it may have appeared that God did not take our sin seriously, God could have easily wiped the earth completely clean and started over. Even when He came very close to in fact doing this in the days of Noah, it didn't work. Transgressing God's Law had become so integrated – so systemic - to human nature that to be cleansed by mere water was impossible. Yet God in His mercy did not put us all to death. He spent years, decades, centuries, millennia bearing with our awful sin contaminating His beautiful world.

He knew what man needed was a complete death and resurrection! For man to be saved, somehow he had to die for what he has done and yet somehow live again through that fatal process. So God waited until time reached its fullness to send His only Son – the only true Son of God who could actually accomplish this feat - into our world to rescue us from the wrath of God through His own death and resurrection for us. It was through the cross that God proved forevermore that He took sin seriously – very seriously. Paul says elsewhere:

But when the fullness of time had come, God sent forth his Son, born of woman, born under the law,⁵ to redeem those who were under the law, so that we might receive adoption as sons (**Gal. 4:4-5**).

What man could not accomplish, God did it for us (**Rom. 8:1-4**)! That is what grace does for us! The grace and mercy and love of God persistently pursues us long after we would have easily given up on one another. We see the magnanimity of God's marvelous grace in our passage this morning. Before we turn their, let's briefly review the context.

Jesus is on a mission, along with His disciples, that will end in His death. He has already told His disciples that “the Son of Man must suffer many things **and be rejected by the elders and chief priests and scribes and be killed**, and on the third day be raised” (**Luke 9:22**). Further, “when the days drew near for Him to be taken up [to His Father in Heaven], He set His face to go to Jerusalem [to fulfill this mission for which He was sent: to die for you!] (**Luke 9:51**). While on this journey towards Jerusalem, Luke will fill in the details for why the leaders of Israel will soon crucify Jesus. Jesus is about to face fierce opposition, but we the reader (the

follower/the worshipper) need to understand why Jesus was so hated. Passages throughout this section of the Gospel, like the one we will read today, explain why Jesus was eventually nailed to the cross.

But Jesus' death also included within it the death of a whole nation – Israel. At the cross, Israel died! Once Jesus dies, the previous covenant with Israel, would in the words of the preacher to the Hebrews, become “**obsolete** and growing old [will forever] ~~is ready to~~ vanish away” (**Heb. 8:13**). The old wine would not be contained in the new wineskins (**cf. Luke 5:37-39**). The only way anyone in this world – Jew or Gentile, male or female, slave or freeman - will ever be saved from the wrath to come is through faith alone in the finished work of Jesus the Messiah, the Son of God.

What this meant for the crowds and religious leaders whom Jesus approached in these last days before He reached Jerusalem was that He was giving them one more chance to repent and settle their accounts before they faced their judge (**cf. Luke 12:57-59**). If they choose to reject Jesus' offer of salvation, as He promised “the kingdom of God will be taken away from [them] and given to a people producing its fruits” (**Matt. 21:43**). In other words, these are dangerous times Israel is living in – the clock is running out – the whole scheme of what God has been doing for thousands of years is about to be transformed now that the true and perfect Israel has arrived and is about to go through His death and resurrection.

Now, previous to our passage this morning, Jesus has absolutely condemned Israel's religious leaders (**see Luke 11:37-54**) and given several explicit and stringent warnings to the crowds throughout the land of Israel (**see 12:54-13:9**). What we see in our passage this morning is basically **a test** to see if these final warnings have done their job. Has the religious leadership heeded the warning Jesus has pronounced? Have the crowds chosen to repent and turn to Jesus in faith? While we are at it, how have you the congregation responded to Jesus warnings? Have you been turned off – thinking, “who is Jesus to talk to me like this?” “Just who does He think He is?” Or, has Jesus proven to you who He is and what He offers you with His own blood? Are you now willing to fall at His feet, receive Him wholeheartedly, and be forever washed from your sins and granted His perfect righteousness through resting on Him alone and by which you can now approach the living and true God and be loved by Him forevermore? This passage will put you to the test as well!

Finally, what makes this test particularly valuable, is that we can measure where everyone is by comparing how we all respond to this passage **AND** how we all responded earlier to the previous miracles Jesus completed on the Sabbath day (**cf. 4:31-41; 6:6-11; He will repeat a Sabbath healing in 14:1-6**). Are the religious leaders still going to become furious with Jesus because He couldn't wait another day to heal someone (**cf. Luke 6:11**)? Will the crowds still be amazed and spread the word around what Jesus will do (**cf. Luke 4:36-37**)? Will anyone give glory to God and worship Him for the amazing power He displays through His Son? Let's see.

Our story begins once again with Jesus teaching in one of the synagogues on the Sabbath day (**Luke 13:10**). How glorious it must have been to sit under Jesus' preaching? Can you imagine what it would be like to not only sit under the perfect teacher but the One who when He speaks, everything He says is truth? There are no mistakes in His theology for He alone does not have to see "in a mirror dimly" (**cf. 1 Cor. 13:12**). He alone speaks from perfect knowledge because He alone has seen God the Father – He knows Him intimately and He alone can explain Him and His will to us perfectly (**cf. John 1:18; 5:37-38; 6:46**).

Further, remember that if you want to see what it was like to sit under Jesus as a preacher in the synagogue on the Sabbath day, you only have to go back and read **Luke 4:16-27**. Jesus Himself wonderfully sums up the content of all His preaching, as well I was He was sent in **Luke 4:42-44**:

When day came, Jesus left and went to a secluded place; and the crowds were searching for Him, and came to Him and tried to keep Him from going away from them. ⁴³ But He said to them, "I must preach the good news of the kingdom of God to the other cities also, for I was sent for this purpose." ⁴⁴ So He kept on preaching in the synagogues of Judea (**Luke 4:42-44**).

To preach "the good news" or "the gospel of the kingdom of God" particularly on the Sabbath is so beautifully appropriate. It is the Sabbath that constantly reminds God's people that now that God has acted for us, we can now rest from all our labors (**cf. Heb. 4:1-3, 9-10**). We can now rest from all our work because God has done everything we needed through Jesus Christ. We can now enter into our Sabbath because Jesus declared for us, "It is finished!" (**cf. John 19:30**). So it is entirely appropriate that Jesus continually chooses not only to preach the Gospel of the Kingdom of God on the Sabbath day but to release a daughter of Abraham from her 18 year old affliction on the day of Sabbath rest! (**see Luke 13:16**).

We now turn all our attention to this daughter of Abraham just as Jesus did on this day. Here Luke reveals both this woman's spiritual and physical maladies as she joins with the others to hear Jesus preach the good news of the Kingdom of God (**v. 11**). Now think for a moment about this woman's terrible condition. We are told that she had been disabled for 18 years, either by being possessed and then left in a disabled state or by being possessed by a demon for those 18 years. She is described as having a disease known as AS, which is a type of arthritis that inflames the joints in the spine leaving its victim doubled-over and unable to straighten themselves. The poor woman has suffered for a long, bitter and difficult life and has most likely given up all hope of ever getting better. Yet, where do we find her on this Sabbath day? She is attending the weekly synagogue service in the worship of God. She doesn't appear to be bitter or even looking for a healing. She doesn't try to get Jesus' attention at all.

Rather, it is Jesus who gives her all His attention (**v. 12**). As He has done in each of yours and my life, Jesus sovereignly calls her to redemption. For an ever so brief moment in her long

life of pain, Jesus enters into her brokenness and speaks and instantly this woman experiences the eschatological kingdom of God come upon her. He lays His gentle hands on her so there is no question where the power is coming from and immediately she straightens up (v. 13). Suddenly the long night of her travails is over and she is freed not only from her physical oppression, but also her spiritual oppression – in her case, being freed from her infirmity is to be freed from Satan's power (cf. vv. 11, 16).

Now that the situation is before us, we need to examine each of the three responses to Jesus incredible display of divine power. We want to not only watch how each responds, but particularly by comparing how the woman responds compared to the synagogue leader and how the synagogue leader responds compared to Jesus' response.

The Healed Woman's Response (v. 13b)

Immediately she glorified God! Now, why would she glorify God? Why not Jesus? This is very important. Clearly what this woman's immediate reaction was was that this preacher in the synagogue did for her can only be explained as being the work of God. What she is doing is confirming at the very least that God is acting through Jesus or as Nicodemus understood, "Rabbi, we know that you are a teacher come from God, for no one can do these signs that you do unless God is with him" (John 3:2). What a marvelous declaration of who Jesus is! There is no question in the woman who experienced this healing at the hands of Jesus that this was the work of God.

The Synagogue Leader's Response (v. 14)

Notice how vastly different is the response of the leader of the synagogue – He is indignant – "to grieve so intensely over an appeared wrongdoing so as to become furious with someone"! Notice what the leader of the whole worship assembly of the people of God is most concerned about – what day of the week it is! Talk about completely missing the whole point! He has just witnessed the power of God in the form of an incredible miracle – a real miracle done by the hand of God in human flesh – and all he can see is what day it is? Talk about being blinded by the god of this world (2 Cor. 4:3-4) and "darkened in his understanding, alienated from the life of God because of the ignorance that is in them, due to their hardness of heart" (Eph. 4:18). Further, note his argument – there are six days to work – come on one of those days and not on the Sabbath day! Is this man insane?

First of all, what better day for the Son of God to work on than on His own day. After all, **He is LORD of the Sabbath** (N.B. Luke calls Jesus LORD in v. 15; cf. Luke 6:5; Matt. 12:8). He alone has all authority to work on His day! No where in Scripture is God ever commanded to not work on the Sabbath – that commandment is given to man to obey. The woman just acknowledged that it was the work of God – that is why she glorified God!

Second of all, what better day of the week to free this woman from bondage than on the Sabbath? Think about it – as long as this woman is suffering and afflicted and oppressed and

bound by disease and demons she is working harder, not just on the Sabbath, but every day of her life! Jesus had preached on the passage of the year of Jubilee – the Sabbath of Sabbaths from **Isaiah 61** which declares that when Messiah comes He will set the captives free and release the prisoners from bondage that God may be glorified (cf. **Isa. 61:1-3; Luke 4:16-21**). Further, she has been suffering for 18 years! If Jesus did anything by removing her affliction, He made it possible so that she didn't have to work as much but could now enter into the worship of God on the Sabbath day with greater rest than she had known for the last 18 years! Does anyone really think she needs to wait one more day when God has suddenly appeared before her in human flesh? When is the right time to be freed from bondage? Does God's mercy and compassion take vacation days? How callous is this man's heart that he can only see his laws and not see the power of God's grace?

Jesus' Response (vv. 15-16)

Well, Jesus answers that question in His response next (vv. 15-16). Warning! This isn't pleasant to hear! Jesus begins His rebuke of the synagogue leadership by referring to them as "Hypocrites!" - note the plural, which tells us that there is more than one. Now, Jesus quotes from their rabbinic traditions which permit the Jews to untie their oxen, feed them in a manger, and lead them to water on the Sabbath (cf. Mishnah, Sabbat, 7.2). They can do this as long as their beast of burden is not carrying a load and as long as they are tied up the rest of the time so as not to wander on the Sabbath (5 & 15.2). In fact, even the Qumran community permitted their cattle to wander in the field for up to 2,000 cubits on the Sabbath for pasturing (CD, 11.5-6). This was all common practice for the Jews in Jesus' day. No one questioned the mercy shown to their beasts of burden.

The problem arises when Jesus draws their attention to the fact that they treat their animals better than they do human beings, created in the image of God Almighty (v. 16). Further, this woman is not merely a daughter of Adam, but a daughter of Abraham! Think about what is going on here. This woman is living in a culture where women were not much higher than the way a man thought of his cattle. Further, she is disabled – most likely not the prettiest woman in the room. Further, she is in a synagogue where men typically shun the presence of a woman. Think about how women are treated today in Afghanistan or the Sudan or Saudi Arabia and you just about get an idea of how women were treated in Jesus' day. When Jesus reaches out and touches this poor woman you suddenly see the extent of God's love and how far He is willing to go into the extremities – the far outer circle – of human society to free someone from bondage and graciously and lovingly bring them into the Kingdom of God.

Further, Jesus will not wait another day to set this woman free. Every day, especially the Sabbath, is an appropriate day to show God's love because God's love and mercy and grace never take a day off!

And doesn't this give us all a wonderful example of how we are called to live as citizens of God's Kingdom? Very simply - we are called to show the compassion of God, as exemplified

in Jesus, to everyone we meet – with no exceptions and no days off! Jesus shows us the Father here. We see the kind of God we serve in the way Jesus cares for her more than, not simply the birds of the air, but the beasts of the field.

Now, the result of what Jesus has done and said here is seen in the last verse (v. 17). Those who hated Jesus, now hate Him more (cf. **John 15:18; 17:14**). Why? He put them in their place and they are filled with shame (v. 17a). Notice, they are not filled with guilt that leads to repentance (which is God-centered) but with shame that strikes at their pride (man-centered). Sadly, we can now see the first answer to our question as to whether or not the warnings Jesus provided earlier have done their job: in regards to the religious leaders, the answer is no! They haven't learned anything in this whole process. They are just as hardhearted as before (**Luke 6:11**) and clearly they know nothing of God's compassion and love for others. In fact, they show by their attitude that they care more for animals than they do for people created in God's image.

But those who loved Jesus – whom the Holy Spirit opened their heart to believe in Jesus (cf. **Luke 10:21-22**) – love Him all the more. In fact, they rejoiced at all thing things that were done by Him. How appropriate for anyone whose heart is set aflame by the Holy Spirit of God!

Many opportunities have been given for the people to respond to Jesus. In fact, we can still see God's patience, that even after Jesus says what He says here, He will extend even more opportunities to repent and believe in Him even as He makes His way down the *via dolorosa*. It is clear that Jesus is forming two large groups of humanity with no one in the middle. When Jesus appears there is no room to sit on the fence. "All" his adversaries were put to shame and "all" the people rejoiced at "all" the glorious things that were done by Him! It is impossible to remain neutral when Jesus enters your world. Where do you stand today? Joshua stood before the people of God more than 3,000 years ago and said:

"Now, therefore, fear the LORD and serve Him in sincerity and truth; and put away the gods which your fathers served beyond the River and in Egypt, and serve the LORD. ¹⁵
"If it is disagreeable in your sight to serve the LORD, choose for yourselves today whom you will serve: whether the gods which your fathers served which were beyond the River, or the gods of the Amorites in whose land you are living; but as for me and my house, we will serve the LORD" (**Josh. 24:14-15**).

That invitation has gone out over the millennia, down through Jesus' day and all the way down to today – God is so patient with us! - but He won't be forever! Today, while it is still called "today," (**Heb. 3:13**) if you hear God's voice do not harden your hearts (**Ps. 95:7-11; Heb. 3:7-4:10**) but call on the name of the LORD Jesus Christ and you will be saved (**Rom. 10:13**).

Amen! -SDG-