

Please stand with me for the reading of God's Word and turn to Luke 13.

Luke 13:10 Now he was teaching in one of the synagogues on the Sabbath. 11 And behold, there was a woman who had had a disabling spirit for eighteen years. She was bent over and could not fully straighten herself. 12 When Jesus saw her, he called her over and said to her, "Woman, you are freed from your disability." 13 And he laid his hands on her, and immediately she was made straight, and she glorified God. 14 But the ruler of the synagogue, indignant because Jesus had healed on the Sabbath, said to the people, "There are six days in which work ought to be done. Come on those days and be healed, and not on the Sabbath day." 15 Then the Lord answered him, "You hypocrites! Does not each of you on the Sabbath untie his ox or his donkey from the manger and lead it away to water it? 16 And ought not this woman, a daughter of Abraham whom Satan bound for eighteen years, be loosed from this bond on the Sabbath day?" 17 As he said these things, all his adversaries were put to shame, and all the people rejoiced at all the glorious things that were done by him.

You may be seated. Let's pray.

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Let me begin by asking you a question: do you want to hear about how Johnny almost got beat up by two women at the laundromat or how Ricky almost burned down the house?

I'll tell you about Ricky almost burning down the house. I got his permission to share this. And if you want to hear about Johnny almost getting beat up you can ask him.

Some years ago I watched a video about the dangers of grease fires and how you're never supposed to pour things like water or flour on them. The video was narrated by someone who was terribly disfigured by a grease fire. They showed a small grease fire burning on the stove and then someone threw a little water on it and it quickly exploded and burned down the kitchen.

I showed this video to my family a few years ago, but apparently I should've shown it to them two times. Or maybe 20.

Katie and I were downstairs talking in the morning and she said something like, "It's wonderful that Ricky likes to cook. He's upstairs making monkey bread, the same bread that Elizabeth has made at camp."

We start hearing some screaming from upstairs. We race upstairs and the house is full of smoke and there's a pan on the front steps with flames – and I'm not joking – stretching up above the roof. The bread caught fire and fortunately Ricky took it out front. Rhea tried to put the fire out by throwing some water on it, which caused the flames to explode upward.

It gets worse. Because the fire wasn't big enough already, Katie decided to put it out by throwing a huge bag of flour on top of it.

I'm sure our neighbors had an entertaining morning. Some of you live in Longview and you probably see the flames from your house as well.

So you're wondering how we put it out?

We decided to use a fire extinguisher...not sure why we didn't think of that first.

One of the reasons I shared this is to tell you not to throw water or flour on a grease fire. We were fortunate the pan was outside when Rhea and Katie tried to save the day.

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The title of this morning's sermon is: *"The Dangers of Legalism and Spiritual Bondage."*

On Sunday mornings we're working our way through Luke's gospel verse by verse and we find ourselves in Luke 13. We will look at verses 10 through 17.

Jesus' ministry is well under way and the people have been amazed, not just at the things He's been teaching, but the things He's been doing. In this morning's verses we will get to see him perform a healing that amazes some and upsets others.

Look with me at verse 10...

Luke 13:10 Now he was teaching in one of the synagogues on the Sabbath. 11 And behold, there was a woman who had had a disabling spirit for eighteen years. She was bent over and could not fully straighten herself.

Even though the opposition continued to rise against Jesus he was still welcomed into some synagogues on the Sabbath.

On this particular Sabbath there was a woman who was unable to stand up straight for eighteen years, because of a disabling spirit.

It's hard to know exactly what that means. I read quite a few commentaries and they don't all agree. Here are the two things I can tell you that I feel confident about:

1. First, she wasn't demon possessed.
2. But second, there was a demon causing her condition. We know it was a demon because we can't imagine a godly angel doing this, and in verse 16 Jesus said she was **bound by Satan**.

Beyond that, I think anything we might say is speculative.

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We shouldn't think that all physical problems, or even many of them, are caused by demons.

But in a sense, as I said in a previous sermon, all suffering is the result of sin. When sin was introduced, so too was suffering. We are all affected by the fall, and it seems like part of that is God allowing the devil and his demons to afflict us up to a point.

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But what I would really like us to focus on is we see this crippled woman worshipping.

Apparently, she was a regular worshipper because no one seemed to take special notice of her.

I want to point out three things about her worship that we can learn from. She might shame many of us, myself included, regarding reasons we don't worship corporately...and this brings us to lesson one...

Lesson one: don't be kept from worshipping because of (part one) suffering.

She wasn't hindered from worshipping because of her suffering.

Sometimes I feel frustrated about how difficult it is to get all of our children ready for church on Sunday. But I'm guessing whatever difficulties we have pale in comparison to how difficult it was for this woman to get ready, get around, and make it to worship...but she did.

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If you've ever had back trouble, you know how tough simple tasks become. You don't sleep well because every time you move you wake up. You can barely dress yourself because every movement of your body hurts. You're exhausted before you even leave the house...if you leave at all!

I don't want to compare my lower back problems with this woman's problems, but I can tell you that when my lower back was hurting the last thing I wanted to do was get out of bed...say nothing about go somewhere. But she still went to worship.

There was:

- No handicap access
- No special seating
- No railings to hold
- Nothing to make it more comfortable for her

It was about as hard as it could be, but there she was, mingled among the regular worshippers.

The quality of her physical life was poor, but the quality of her spiritual life was good. Regardless of what she experienced physically her focus was spiritual. Instead of looking downward at this life, she looked upward to heaven.

We live in a fallen world. Illness, injury, and infirmity will affect our physical quality of life. But they don't have to affect our worship. This woman teaches us that we can enjoy a spiritual quality of life regardless of our physical condition.

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The next part of lesson one...

Lesson one: don't be kept from worshiping because of (part two) shame.

Do me a favor and briefly look back at verses one through five:

- In verse two some Galileans were murdered and Jesus asked a question that reveals the people thought they were murdered because they were worse sinners than everyone else.
- In verse four some people were killed by the tower in Siloam when it fell, and Jesus asked a question that reveals the people thought they were killed because they were worse sinners than everyone else.

It's similar to the man born blind...

John 9:2 [Jesus'] disciples asked him, "Rabbi, who sinned, this man or his parents, that he was born blind?"

We can tell the thinking of the day is people suffer because of their sin.

If this woman has been suffering terribly for 18 years, what do you think she thought most people thought about her?

That she is a terrible sinner! She must've been evil to be suffering this much.

So, I would say she suffered physically, but she also suffered mentally and emotionally as she thought about what people thought about her.

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Listen to this interesting quote from Adam Clarke...

"[Her] situation [was] equally painful AND HUMILIATING; the violence of which she could not support, and the SHAME OF WHICH SHE COULD NOT CONCEAL."

Why do you think Adam Clarke said that her situation was not only painful but also humiliating and shameful?

Because she had to live with what people thought about her. I'm sure people stared at her and whispered about her. But she still continued to corporately worship.

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This is important because shame is one of the most common reasons people don't go to church. They feel shame because of what other people think of them:

- *They're going to look at me differently.*
- *I'm not like them.*
- *They probably know some of the things I've done.*
- *They're going to think bad things about me.*

This woman encourages all of us to go to church and not worry about what other people think.

The next part of lesson one...

Lesson one: don't be kept from worshiping because of (part three) bitterness.

I read two commentaries that really helped me imagine how bad her situation was, and I would like to share them with you to help you put yourself in her place.

Charles Spurgeon said...

"For eighteen years she had not gazed upon the sun; for eighteen years no star of night had gladdened her eye; her face was drawn downward towards the dust, and all the light of her life was dim: she walked about as if she were searching for a grave, and I do not doubt she often felt that it would have been gladness to have found one."

Kent Hughes said...

"She lived in a posture of forced humility, her face always toward the dust of the earth, unless she wrenched sideways and peered upward like an awkward animal. She seemed to sink lower and lower as the weight of the years pressed upon her. Her gait was a lunging shuffle. She walked about as if she were searching for a grave."

She had many reasons to be angry with God, but she was still faithful to continue worshiping.

Because the thinking of the day was that if people are suffering God is upset with them, it would be easy for her to think that God was upset with her.

I could say it like this: she could feel shame because of what she thought people thought about her, but she could also feel shame because of what she thought God thought about her:

- *God is mad at me.*
- *He must not love me.*
- *He must think I've been terrible.*
- *He wouldn't want me to go to church. I'm too bad.*

Plus, I'm sure she prayed and asked God for help. He hadn't answered yet, but she also didn't allow that to make her bitter or resentful.

It makes me wonder if I had a debilitating condition for 18 years:

- Would I continue going to church?
- Would I become bitter or resentful?

This woman sets a good example that discourages all of us from becoming bitter toward God when we are suffering.

Let me conclude this lesson by asking you to think about this...

This woman shares some similarities with Job. For example:

1. First, they both suffered terribly.

2. Second, their suffering was caused by the devil.
3. Third, they were surrounded by people who caused them to experience shame because of their suffering.
4. Fourth, and what I think is very instructive for us, is they didn't let their suffering make them bitter. Instead, they worshiped.

After Job's first day of suffering, it says...

Job 1:20 Then Job arose and tore his robe and shaved his head and FELL ON THE GROUND AND WORSHIPED.

This woman, like Job, sets a great example for us of worshiping when we suffer.

And I would say when we suffer we have even more reason to worship, because it is our worship that will help us deal with our suffering.

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Look at verse 12...

Luke 13:12 When Jesus saw her, he called her over and said to her, "Woman, you are freed from your disability." 13 And he laid his hands on her, and immediately she was made straight, and she glorified God.

I like that she **glorified God**, but what I like even more is what we have been discussing: she **glorified God** BEFORE she was healed. Whether bent over or standing straight she was a worshipper.

We get the impression that even if she wasn't healed she would've kept returning to the synagogue week after week.

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She glorified God the father, which is interesting considering God the Son is the one who healed her. Jesus is setting a good example of what he taught...

Matthew 5:16 In the same way, let your light shine before others, so that they may SEE YOUR GOOD WORKS AND GIVE GLORY TO YOUR FATHER WHO IS IN HEAVEN.

We're tempted to want to bring attention to ourselves, but we should try to direct the attention to God like Jesus did.

Corrie Ten Boom used to tell a story about a proud woodpecker who was pecking away at a tree when a storm rolled in. The woodpecker kept working until a bolt of lightning struck the tree splintering it into hundreds of pieces. The proud woodpecker flew off and told his friends, "You are not going to believe what I just did!"

God wants us to be more like his Son and give him the glory.

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Notice something interesting in the account...

The woman didn't come to Jesus for help. He reached out to her...

When Jesus saw her, he called her over and said to her...

- He called out to her
- He spoke a miraculous word of healing to her
- He compassionately laid his hands on her

I'm reminded that Jesus could have healed her without touching her. Take your mind to the Roman centurion's servant...

Luke 7:6 Jesus went with them [to heal the servant]. When he was not far from the house, the centurion sent friends, saying to him, “Lord, do not trouble yourself, for I am not worthy to have you come under my roof. 7 Therefore I did not presume to come to you. But say the word, and let my servant be healed.

And sure enough the servant was healed without Jesus ever seeing him...

Luke 7:10 And when those who had been sent returned to the house, they found the servant well.

Similarly, Jesus could have healed this woman without touching her, but he chose to tenderly lay his hands on her.

Spurgeon said...

“He might have called to her from a distance, and said, ‘Be healed,’ but he did not, for he wished to show his special sympathy with such a sad case of suffering.”

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Jesus described her disability as something like a post to which this woman was tied and he declared her free from it.

We look at what Jesus did for her physically, and it would be wrong to think that we can do this for people physically. We don’t have the gift of healing like Jesus and the apostles had.

But I have told you before that what we see physically take place in the Gospels is often a spiritual picture for us:

- Jesus physically raises Lazarus to life, and it’s a picture of how he wants to spiritually raise us to life.
- Jesus physically heals blindness and deafness and it’s a picture of how he wants to spiritually help us see and hear.

And there is a spiritual lesson in this account for us as well...and this brings us to lesson two...

Lesson two: We can’t free people physically, but we can spiritually.

I want you to notice that freedom is one of the themes in these verses:

- **12 When Jesus saw her, he called her over and said to her, “Woman, you are FREED FROM YOUR DISABILITY.”**
- **15 Then the Lord answered him, “You hypocrites! Does not each of you on the Sabbath UNTIE HIS OX OR HIS DONKEY from the manger and lead it away to water it?**
- **16 And ought not this woman, a daughter of Abraham whom Satan bound for eighteen years, BE LOOSED FROM THIS BOND on the Sabbath day?”**

We can’t give people freedom from the physical suffering they experience, but we can give them freedom from the spiritual suffering they experience when we preach the gospel to them.

Let me say it like this...

Jesus straightened this woman out physically. We can’t do that, but we can straighten people out spiritually when we share Christ with them.

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Look how the synagogue ruler responded to Jesus’s wonderful work...

Luke 13:14 But the synagogue ruler, indignant because Jesus had healed on the Sabbath, said to the people, “There are six days in which work ought to be done. Come on those days and be healed, and not on the Sabbath day.”

The synagogue ruler was supposed to:

- Line up the readers and teachers for each gathering.
- Pay attention to what was being said and scrutinize the doctrines being taught.
- Maintain order to make sure things proceeded according to tradition.

Maybe things normally ran smoothly for him, but now he saw something he didn't like, and that was Jesus healing on the Sabbath.

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Jesus could have healed this woman on any day of the week. After all, she had been bound for 18 painful years and one more day wouldn't have made much difference. But he chose the Sabbath, and he did this seven times. He performed seven Sabbath miracles. Seven miracles on the seventh day.

I don't know whether this was the case or not, but it seems like Jesus TRIED to heal people on the Sabbath. And if I go a little further, it almost seemed like he was trying to upset people...like this synagogue ruler.

I think Jesus chose to heal on the Sabbath for two reasons:

1. First, he wanted to free this woman from her physical bondage.
2. Second, he wanted to free people from their spiritual bondage to legalistic man-made rules.

And this brings us to lesson three...

Lesson three: The synagogue ruler was in greater bondage than the crippled woman.

This synagogue ruler would claim that Jesus broke the fourth commandment, which forbid working on the Sabbath. But Jesus didn't break any of God's commandments, because God never said people could not heal or help others on the Sabbath.

Instead, Jesus broke the Jewish traditions that had been handed down for centuries. They made the Sabbath a crushing burden rather than the blessing it was intended to be.

These traditions were so important you see how angry the synagogue ruler became at them being violated.

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As I studied this account this week and thought about what it was like for this woman to live this way for 18 years I was encouraged just thinking about her being healed.

But it wasn't encouraging to the synagogue ruler. It says he was **indignant**, which means he was furious.

Interestingly, instead of rebuking Jesus, he scolded the congregation.

Sometimes when we are really angry we say things that don't make sense, and I think that's the situation with this ruler. He told the people to bring their sick on another day of the week to be healed as though people could actually bring their sick on another day of the week to be healed. If people did bring their sick on another day who would heal them? Did the synagogue ruler or anyone else have that power? Apparently not since the disabled woman could have been coming for 18 years and she had not been healed yet.

It is hard to believe that something so beautiful could be so upsetting to the synagogue ruler, but it shows the kind of bondage he was in: bondage that was worse than the crippled woman's bondage.

Adam Clarke said...

"It would seem as if the demon who had left the woman's body had got into his heart."

Earlier I said that freedom is one of the themes in these verses, and bondage is one of the other themes:

- The woman was in physical bondage to the condition that afflicted her for 18 years.
- The synagogue ruler was in spiritual bondage to his legalism.

If you want to see how terrible legalism is, look at Jesus's response in verse 15...

Luke 13:15 Then the Lord answered him, "You hypocrites! Does not each of you on the Sabbath untie his ox or his donkey from the manger and lead it away to water it? 16 And ought not this woman, a daughter of Abraham whom Satan bound for eighteen years, be loosed from this bond on the Sabbath day?"

Jesus looked very compassionate up to this point, but all of that changed when he saw the synagogue ruler's legalism. He rebuked him because he valued his legalistic commands more than this woman's health and comfort.

Even though Jesus responded to the synagogue ruler, notice the word **hypocrites** is plural and he said, "**Does not EACH OF YOU,**" because he's speaking to all the people.

This leads me to believe that even though the synagogue ruler is the one who said something aloud, some of the other people were thinking the same thing in their hearts and needed to be rebuked as well.

Jesus's argument is simple, but convincing...

He argues from the lesser to the greater: if God permits people to help their thirsty animals on the Sabbath, wouldn't he care even more about helping a needy person?

Jesus gave several compelling reasons why it was more appropriate to help her than a distressed animal:

- She was a human being, made in the image of God which meant she had greater value than an animal.
- She was a woman, and because a woman and not a man, she was worthy of greater care and concern.
- She was afflicted for eighteen years, which is long enough to suffer greatly and expect the compassion of Jesus and others.
- She was a daughter of Abraham, a Jewish woman, which means she was part of God's covenant people.
- She was bound by Satan, and every day – not just Sabbath days – is a good day to oppose Satan's work and set captives free.

Look at the people's response in **verse 17**...

Luke 13:17 As he said these things, all his adversaries were put to shame, and all the people rejoiced at all the glorious things that were done by him.

It was obvious to everyone present, including the synagogue ruler, that Jesus's enemies were wrong and he did exactly what was right and proper. This caused the people to rejoice.

Seeing what Jesus did in this account should cause us to rejoice as well.

I want to conclude by getting an elevated view and asking you to consider what we see:

- There was a woman in physical bondage and Jesus delivered her from it.
- There was a synagogue ruler in spiritual bondage and Jesus rebuked him for it.

We see the synagogue ruler's spiritual bondage was even worse than the crippled woman's physical bondage:

- The woman's physical bondage only affected her body, but his legalism and spiritual bondage affected his heart and mind.
- Despite her physical bondage she was still able to have joy, love others, and most importantly worship the Lord, but the synagogue ruler's legalism and spiritual bondage destroyed his joy, prevented him from loving others, and worst of all ruined his relationship with the Lord.

This is what legalism does. It destroys the spiritual life and keeps us in bondage.

True freedom comes from Christ...

Galatians 5:1 For freedom Christ has set us free; stand firm therefore, and do not submit again to a yoke of slavery.

Jesus frees us from:

- Bondage to keeping the law to be saved
- Bondage to sin
- Bondage to eternal punishment in the lake of fire

If you have any questions about anything I taught this morning, or any questions about whether Jesus has spiritually set you free, I will be up front after service and out consider it a privilege to build a speak with you.

Let's pray.