

Your Sabbath Rest
Luke 13:10-17

A controversy is a clash in opinions. The news these days is filled with controversy, but there has always been controversy whether local, national or global.

According to the view of some people, even Jesus was controversial. Apart from His claim to be the Messiah, the issue in today's passage brought the sharpest controversy with His adversaries. It is the matter of the Sabbath observance.

Turn in your Bible to Luke 13:10-17. Let's look at our passage and consider what occurred on that day in history. To get there we'll need to consider these points.

- The disease
- The delivery
- The declaration
- The deliverer

I. THE DISEASE – v. 10-11

The only thing about the miracle we know for sure is that it took place on the Sabbath.

The location of the miracle is not important to us.

The recipient of the miracle is not important to us.

It occurred in some synagogue to a person who was attending, but it happened on the Sabbath.

Even the type of disease this woman had is unknown. We are given a brief description in the text but otherwise can only speculate.

Whatever it was did not render her unable to enter the synagogue as some diseases like leprosy but it was a debilitating disease. She had been in this condition for 18 years. Our text describes her as being bent over.

Now before I had my gall bladder removed, and for those of you have had gall bladder problems you know that the pain can be so severe that an attack can double you over for a couple of hours. I remember going to have a test done where they

injected stuff that would make you have a gall bladder attack. It only lasted a few minutes, but that was a few minutes too long in my opinion. It was supposed to tell them if the gall bladder was really the problem. They did it intentionally. It would be like going to the doctor complaining of a toe ache and the doctor taking a sledge hammer and whacking you on the toe and asking you if it hurt.

Although stomach pain can be chronic, I don't think that was her problem.

Many scholars believe it was a problem in the back or spine that caused the pain to double her over. I find it amazing that in a congregation our size that there are so many of us who have suffered from back problems. I could be walking out in the back yard and have to stop because of the severity of the pain. I might only go 20 or 30 feet before I would have to stop, bend over resting my hands on my knees for relief. That position provided some relief from the severe pain.

Some scholars suggest that it was a disease known today as Marie-Strumpell disease. It is a fusion of the spinal bones. Early in the course of the disease, sufferers often find that the pain is relieved somewhat when they lean forward. So they often go through the day leaning slightly forward, and gradually their spine begins to fuse. The more they lean in order to relieve the pain, the greater the angle, until the person might be bent almost double.

Whether that is what she had or not we don't know, but we do know it was debilitating, and it had been a long term, chronic condition.

Think for a moment about the physical, emotional, and financial toll such a condition would take on a person. If you have or do suffer from chronic pain you know the emotional toll it takes on the mind. It's easy to understand depression when every day you wake up with the same problem and there is no relief.

Then think also about the social stigma. From our passage last week we considered the belief held by many that tragedy was the result of sin. To have suffered for 18 years would have left an indelible stigma on her emotionally and socially. That can affect someone spiritually as well where you begin to believe what others say that it must be sin.

It would have affected her financially as well. We have the account of the woman who had suffered for 12 years with a bleeding disorder spending all her money on doctors to cure her. This woman probably spent her resources to for a cure.

Notice something else in the text. It says that she had been crippled by a spirit. It was not the result of sin. It wasn't a genetic disorder. It wasn't from an accident. It was caused by an evil spirit. We know that to be the case because of what Jesus says. We'll get there in a moment.

The disease was pitiable.
It was painful.
It was permanent.

And I want to say this before we move on. While our text tells us it was because of a spirit, I want to add that it was the result of the entrance of sin in the garden when Adam and Eve disobeyed God and sin entered the world. The entrance of sin resulted in its affect on the body physically where we now suffer from disease, illness, death, even demonic influence and oppression.

Revelation 21:3-4

Here's my point. Since there is coming a day when God will wipe away every tear, when there will be no more death or mourning or crying or pain because the old order of things has passed away, then it stands to reason that those things exist now in order for them to be done away with then. Like the earth that groans because of the effects of sin, so we groan because of the consequences of that first

act of disobedience which brought upon man the curse of death and all that comes with it.

The disease this woman had was terrible.

II. THE DELIVERY – v. 12-13

Remember that the synagogue was the place where Jews gathered for religious instruction. Shortly after the Temple was destroyed by Nebuchadnezzar in 586 B.C., after the dispersion, Jewish people began to assemble in groups for worship and teaching. Somewhere along the way it was determined that at least 10 men were required in order to hold a meeting. That regulation carried through to the time of Jesus. The Talmud estimated that there were 480 synagogues in Jerusalem alone during the time of Jesus.

At a synagogue, Jesus is teaching. We read in our text that when He saw this crippled woman He called her forward. Was it because she arrived late? Was it because there was a stir in the congregation, people whispering? Did her arrival cause a commotion? Was every step so painful that one couldn't help but hear her groan in agony? Did Jesus see her bent over on the bench where she sat in obvious pain?

Of all those who were in attendance on that Sabbath day in that synagogue, Jesus took notice of this woman whose infirmity had crippled her for 18 yrs.

I want to suggest to you today that this infirmity is symbolic of all kinds of infirmities, that Jesus knows about whatever we are facing whether it's been for 18 hours, or 18 days or 18 years. He takes notice.
Isaiah 40:25-31

Pause and turn that over in your mind a few times. Chew on it. Ponder it. Let it become a warm blanket on a cold day. Let it become a cool drink of water when you are parched.

We are reminded of it in the old hymn (#609)
 There's not a friend like the lowly Jesus –
 No, not one! No, not one!
 None else could heal all our soul's diseases –
 No, not one! No, not one!
 Jesus knows all about our struggles;
 He will guide till the day is done.
 There's not a friend like the lowly Jesus –
 No, not one! No, not one!

CCLI 1292471

The psalmist writes much the same as he reminds us that God knows when I sit and when I rise. He discerns when and where I go. There is no place we can go where the Lord does not know or is not present. If that be the case, He knows and sees me in my distress, in my despair, in my deplorable condition. (Psalm 139) So let us never question whether God knows or sees what is happening to us. He will renew your strength.

Psalm 23:4 reminds us that He walks through those valleys with us.

Hebrews 13:5 indicates that He will never leave us or forsake us.

Isaiah 41:10 bids us not to be afraid or dismayed because God is present.

II Corinthians 12:9 assures us that whatever thorns we have been given, God's grace is sufficient.

Had this woman learned these valuable lessons? Jesus saw her in this hopeless condition and had compassion on her and didn't want to leave her in that condition so He called her forward. Then He spoke to her. He spoke words that no one else had ever spoken to her before or if they had, words certainly that had no bearing on her condition, that is until they were spoken by Jesus.

“Woman, you are set free from your infirmity.”

Healing was probably the last thing on her mind as she got up that morning and readied herself to set out for the synagogue. It probably hadn't even crossed her mind that she would ever hear such sweeter words, after all she had been like this for 18

years. Why did she think this day would be any different than the 6,408 previous days? She had no reason to believe it would change in the future. “Woman, you are set free from your infirmity.”

What must have gone through her mind at the sound of those words?

Think with me for a moment about other occasions when Jesus uttered sweet words of comfort.

To the centurion whose servant had suffered – “Go! It will be done just as you believed it would.”

To the woman who suffered 12 years – “Take heart, daughter, your faith has healed you.”

To Jairus whose daughter lay dead – “Do you believe that I am able to do this this? According to your faith will it be done to you.”

To the man who was leprous – “Be clean.”

To Lazarus bound by grave clothes enclosed in a tomb – “Lazarus, come forth!”

To the man brought to Jesus on a mat – “Your sins are forgiven.”

To a little tax collector named Zacchaeus – “Today salvation has come to this house.”

To the criminal affixed to the cross next to Jesus, lingering in the shadow of death – “I tell you the truth, today, you will be with Me in paradise.”

To every man, woman, boy, girl, young, old for all time He uttered three simple words of great significance that can change man's destiny – “It is finished.”

Here is this woman bent over in a pitiable condition, a condition that has lasted 18 years. She is standing before Jesus, uncertain about why Jesus had called her forward, hearing words she thought she would never hear, perhaps even uncertain about what they meant. No doctor had the ability to heal her. The synagogue ruler or other religious leaders couldn't make that statement. We can assume they thought like everyone else – if she confesses her sin, she'll get better. *Jesus' words didn't condemn her, they comforted her, they changed her.* And we see that as He spoke those words He reached out and

touched her and she felt the comfort of those hands that would in time stretch out again for an entirely different purpose. When He would stretch out those hands on the cross He would in effect say the same thing to those who come to Him – “you are set free from your infirmity.” That infirmity is sin. It is by His stripes that we are healed. We who have been bound by the infirmity of sin have been released by the shed blood of Christ through faith in His finished work on the cross. As we come to Him in faith – He says – “be released.”

Two things happen when Jesus touched her.
The first is that she immediately stood up straight.
The tense indicates that it was immediate.
It wasn't progressive or delayed.
It wasn't medicinally induced.
It wasn't temporary.
It wasn't painful.
It was immediate.
It was permanent.

She would not have to wonder when she woke up the next day how long it would last before she would experience the same debilitating condition again. It was gone. When we come to Jesus by faith, the result is immediate and we sing “Gone, gone, gone, gone yes my sins are gone.

The second thing she did was praise God.
Any time Jesus does something for us, that out to be our immediate response – Praise God.
Revelation 5:1-14

Jesus is worthy of our praise because He is the Lamb that was slain. Her healing gave reason for celebration. Giving praise is always the right response.
Luke 2:20; 5:25-26; 7:16; 17:15; 18:43; 23:47

Psalm 34:1 “I will extol the Lord at all times; His praise will always be on my lips.”

Psalm 9:1 “I will praise you, O Lord, with all my heart; I will tell of all Your wonders.”

Psalm 22:22 “I will declare Your name to my brothers; in the congregation I will praise You.”

Psalm 28:6-7 “Praise be to the Lord, for He has heard my cry for mercy. The Lord is my strength and my shield; my heart trusts in Him, and I am helped. My heart leaps for joy and I will give thanks to Him in song.”

Psalm 150:6 “Let everything that has breath praise the Lord. Praise the Lord.”

Say that with me – “Praise the Lord.”
Let it roll off your tongue.
Let it ring from your heart.
Let it resound to the heavens above.
Praise the Lord.

Praise the Lord for He is glorious;
Never shall His promise fail.
God hath made His saints victorious;
Sin and death shall not prevail.
Praise the God of our salvation!
Hosts on high, His power proclaim,
Heav'n and earth and all creation
Laud and magnify His name. (Hymn #82)

What infirmity has He loosed you from for which you can and need to give Him praise?

III. THE DECLARATION – v. 14-17

Not everyone is pleased with the work Jesus did. Instead of adoration, there is anger. They can always find something to criticize. The synagogue ruler speaks to the congregation but indirectly criticizes Jesus. Too timid to address Him directly, he chastises the congregation. He was more concerned about the rules surrounding the Sabbath than in the care of this woman.

It is in Mark 2:27-28 that Jesus said “The Sabbath was made for man, not man for the Sabbath.”

The ruler in charge of the synagogue was more concerned about ceremonial propriety than human need. He claimed that there were plenty of other days in which this woman could have been healed. He chose rather to be bound by tradition. Folks, when we become more concerned about traditions, about appearances, about the letter of the law instead of concern for people, then we have become just like the synagogue ruler.

Henry Ironside notes “God finds more glory in delivering people from their suffering, physical and spiritual, than in any formal religious service.”

Instead of rejoicing that this woman had been healed He rebuked Jesus and the crowd. Without saying it he rejected the Messiah.

Jesus’ response defended the woman and His compassionate actions. He called those who objected to what He did hypocrites and brought the synagogue ruler back to the law. They were two faced when it came to observance of the law and to prove it Jesus referred to a practice they did every Sabbath. They untied their animals and led them to food and water, even though the law said that kind of task was work. If they were going to condemn Him for working on the Sabbath, they condemned themselves.

When God rested on the seventh day, it wasn’t because in some way God needed to rest after a hard week of creative activity. The word rest in Genesis 2 means that He stopped His work, He was done, it was complete, not that He was tired and needed to catch His breath. God was not exhausted from creating the universe. Later on God made the day holy setting it aside, not for Him, but for man, He knew we would need a day to rest from labor. F.F. Bruce in his book *Hard Sayings of Jesus* comments “The Sabbath day was instituted, then, to

meet a human need, and the day is best sanctified when human need is met on it.”

When you think about what Jesus did for this woman there was no better day than the Sabbath to free her from her infirmity. After 18 years of suffering she was given rest.

I am just going to mention in passing because we have dealt with this before. Notice that Jesus says she had been bound by Satan. But notice something that is absent though. When Jesus spoke and released her from the infirmity, even though He said Satan had bound her those 18 years, no demon came out of her. I don’t believe this woman was demon possessed. I believe she was tormented physically, much as Job was when God allowed Satan to touch Job’s body with numerous physical maladies.

I do want to pause and speak about a term that Jesus uses about her. He calls her a “daughter of Abraham.” You may differ from my view, but I believe this means more than that she was a Jewess descended from Abraham. I believe this is saying she was part of the kingdom of God.

Romans 2:28-29

Luke 19:9-10

If Jesus stated that Zacchaeus had become a son of Abraham that day and received salvation, it stands to reason that the same term used about this woman by Jesus would also speak to her salvation as well.

The response is typical and I guess we shouldn’t expect anything different. There were those who, like the synagogue ruler, opposed Jesus and were humiliated because they believed the same about the Sabbath. And there were those who were delighted at what they had witnessed. I hope their joy was in realizing they too could be freed from the sin that had bound them.

We have considered the disease, the delivery, and the declaration. Let's conclude by looking at the deliverer.

His heart is touched with my grief;
When the days are weary, the long nights dreary,
I know my Savior cares.

(Public domain)

IV. THE DELIVERER

We see in this passage the tender care and compassion that Jesus showed the woman, bound in this terrible condition. It may be that you are bound in something that only Jesus can free you from. He is bidding you to come to Him today and be free from whatever it is you are bound to.

Does Jesus care? He demonstrated it when He came to earth and then went to the cross.
Galatians 4 – because of Christ we are no longer slaves.

Romans 6:6-12

II Corinthians 5:17

Does the Lord care for you? Hebrews 4:15 tells us we have a High Priest who sympathizes with our weaknesses.

Inscribed on a plaque affixed to the Statue of Liberty is this poem by Emma Lazarus:

Give me your tired, your poor,
Your huddled masses, yearning to breathe free,
The wretched refuse of your teeming shore,
Send these, the homeless, tempest tossed to me,
I lift my lamp beside the golden door.

Does the Lord care for you? Psalm 40:1-3 tells us He hears our cry and lifts us out of the slimy pit and sets us on a firm rock.

Jesus came seek and to save the lost. Jesus bids you to come and receive a Sabbath rest.
Are you carrying some infirmity that is difficult to bear? Are you bent over by the load of sin?
Jesus says come to Me all you who are burdened and heavy laden and I will give you rest. (Matthew 11:28)

Does the Lord care for you? John 6:37 says that anyone who comes to Him, He will not cast out. The Phillips Translation says He will not refuse anyone who comes to Him.

Jesus provides a Sabbath rest for your soul.

Frank Graeff wrote this beautiful hymn asking the rhetorical question *Does Jesus Care*.

Does Jesus care when my heart is pained
Too deeply for mirth or song,
As the burdens press, and the cares distress,
And the way grows weary and long?

Does Jesus care when my way is dark
With a nameless dread and fear?
As the daylight fades into deep night shades,
Does He care enough to be near?

Does Jesus care when I've tried and failed
To resist some temptation strong;
When for my deep grief there is no relief,
Though my tears flow all the night long?

Refrain:

Oh, yes, He cares, I know He cares,