

Luke 13:10-21

Are You Bound or Free?

A pastor once met the comedian Groucho Marx. "Mr. Marx," said the clergyman, "I want to thank you for all the enjoyment you've given to the world." Marx replied. "And I want to thank you for all the joy you have taken out of it!"

I know they don't mean it the way it sounds because they're a good church, but there's a sign out front of one of our area churches that says "Religion won't keep you from sinning, but it will take the fun out of it."

I have to admit, that doesn't draw me to want to find out what's going on inside that building.

For many years that's what I thought of religion. I thought it's sole purpose was to take the fun out of life.

And you what? In a way that's true.

God wants to straighten out our lives and fill us with joy, but religion wants to rob us of joy.

To see this radical contrast, I'd like you to **turn with me to Luke 13:10, Pg 1009**

All of Luke chapter 12, and the first 9 verses of Chapter 13, take place out in the open while Jesus taught in the midst of a enormous crowd. Now were going to shift gears a little.

Read vs 10

The setting is in a synagogue. This is quite different from the Temple. There was only one Temple and it was located in Jerusalem; but there were many synagogues. Any town or village that had at least ten Jewish men could establish a synagogue. This was the place where the people would come together each Sabbath day to worship and to pray and to sing praises and to hear the Scriptures.

God had commanded worship festivals at the temple in Jerusalem that involved holy days. He never commanded the Jewish people to worship every Saturday or to build synagogues.

Synagogue worship started during the time when the people had been carried away to Babylon by invaders and the temple in Jerusalem was in ruins. By the time of Jesus

600 years later the synagogue worship had become somewhat equivalent to our church services.

There was no official participation by priests or Levites, and no sacrifices were offered. Instead, services were conducted by ordinary members of the community.

The Sabbath service began with the congregation standing, facing toward Jerusalem, and reciting prayers beginning with the Shema (Deut. 6:4).

After the prayers came the reading of the Torah. The hazzan (attendant) of the synagogue took the scroll from the ark and offered it to the first of seven selected readers.

Following the reading of the Law and Prophets, a sermon was given by someone invited by the hazzan. Preaching was not the privilege of any one group or class of people.

The person who spoke then closed the sermon with a brief prayer. On leaving the synagogue service, it was customary for each person to give alms for the poor. Since presents as well as money were acceptable, the porch of the synagogue might be littered with various gifts.

Jesus made it His practice to attend the synagogue on the Sabbath. Because He was known for His teaching and preaching ministry, He was asked to teach on this particular Sabbath. We don't know the subject of His sermon. We don't know what Jesus said. What we do know is what Jesus did.

Read vs 11-13

There are two crippled people we're introduced to in this particular synagogue. The first is a precious lady whose suffered for 18 long, hard, years.

Luke the medical doctor, paints a very vivid word picture of the lady. She's described as being so physically bent over she couldn't raise herself to look up. Looking at the ground was her view of life.

When she was in the synagogue she only heard Jesus, she didn't see Him. --CH Spurgeon writes: "She lived in a posture of forced humility." Warren Wiersbe says, "If I had been crippled for eighteen years, I wonder if I would have been faithful to worship God week after week in the synagogue?"

This lady wasn't suffering from just bad posture. It wasn't that she didn't listen to her mom when she said, "Sit up straight or your going to be like that for the rest of your life." Luke describes her condition as two fold,

He says in verse 11 she had a spirit of infirmity ... That word means "sickness, disease, frailty" and in verse 16 he says she's bound by Satan.

The Bible is clear that not all infirmities are caused by Satan. In the gospel of Luke we've seen Luke differentiate. But in specific cases Luke tells us there was a spiritual cause for a problem that was physically manifested.

Medically, this disease is probably what physician's today would call Ankylosing Spondylitis, or Marie-Strumpell Disease, a fusion of the spinal bones. According to The Merck Manual, Ankylosing Spondylitis is a chronic progressive form of arthritis distinguished by inflammation and stiffness -- and in some patients even ossification of joints -- especially in the lower spine. Onset is usually in people aged 10 to 30 years.

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 a patient might be bent almost double, as the lady in our passage.

She is bound with invisible chains, chains of calcium now hardened in her spine -- in her case the work of an evil spirit.

I'll be the first to admit I don't fully understand the demonic element in sickness, but Jesus found that some people who need healing also need deliverance from demonic involvement.

John Piper paints this picture for us: *This woman in the synagogue has been bent over for 18 years. What's that like? It's horrible. That's what it's like. People stare. People think you've committed some terrible sin. Kids laugh and make jokes. You can't look anyone in the eye. People don't know how to make conversation. You can't have normal physical relations with your husband. You feel like you're an embarrassment to everyone you're with.*

The scriptures tell us this lady caught Jesus' eye. Seeing her He stopped teaching and called to her to come to Him.

What if I just stopped in the middle of a sermon and pointed at someone and said, "Excuse me. You in the second last row on the left, third seat in, I have a message for you."

You know how everybody has to watch if someone gets up in a service or comes in late. You can just imagine the silence and the heads looking around to see who Jesus was addressing.

How about the lady. Maybe she thought He wanted to point out her infirmity as others had probably done. But that wasn't it at all. Jesus didn't want to expose her, He wanted to help her.

Others raised their heads & look around, she couldn't.

She could only make her way toward the voice of the One who was calling her to come. Jesus saw her before she ever saw Him.

Jesus said to her, "Woman you are loosed from your infirmity." You have to wonder if Jesus bent down and looked in her face. Maybe He had a big smile on his face.

I can't say for sure how Jesus did it, but I know He did it! The lady had been set free from the disease and spiritual affections that ruled over her!

And don't miss this point, Jesus called her... a daughter of Abraham. We can only imagine what she had been called in life, but Jesus called her "daughter."

Jesus placed His hands on her and the immediate response was, the lady was made straight and she began to praise God! This bent out of shape lady experienced the "lifting love" of Jesus and she praised God!

Psalms 40:1-3 I waited patiently for the LORD; And He inclined to me, And heard my cry. He also brought me up out of a horrible pit, Out of the miry clay, And set my feet upon a rock, And established my steps. He has put a new song in my mouth; Praise to our God; Many will see it and fear, And will trust in the LORD.

Let me ask you this morning, what's keeping you bound up? Many, if not all of us, are bent out of shape from a number of things in our lives. It's like there are invisible cords that keep us bent over.

Dave Russell writes, "When we feel that the weight of the world is on our shoulders, we may be bent over. Worry and anxiety can do that to us. Abuse can leave us bent over. Physical abuse, emotional abuse, carrying around dark secrets, shame can leave us bent over. Heartache, pain, frustration, poverty, can leave us bent over. Being unemployed, facing financial worries, being the object of gossip, dealing with grief and loss, dealing with despair. Being trapped in sin makes us bent over."

Without denying the historicity of this event it's obvious that Luke includes this account at this point because of it's symbolic value. It was Jesus mission among the people of Israel to loose them from the crippling influences that had held them down as a nation. God had so many blessings for them and they were missing out.

Here was a graphic example of what the touch of Jesus can do to a nation or to an individual.

As Jesus did for this lady, I believe He desires to do for you and me today, this very day!

Jesus saw the lady, she didn't have to get His attention. Jesus sees us in our infirmity long before we ever see Him.

Jesus sees you and me bound up and bent over in our infirmities and the oppression by Satan who wants to keep us that way. Jesus longs for us to know He sees us and wants to free us.

Jesus called to the lady, and she made her way to Him. He's calling to you today. What hinders you from listening to Jesus?

Have you resigned yourself to think "this is just the way its going to be? I'm going to go through life beat down by my circumstances?"

Jesus Christ sets us free.

The same God who was so willing to set this woman free from bondage is still offering the freedom from sin, guilt, and death to anyone today who is willing to come to his Son Jesus Christ and ask him to set them free from their present bondage. The Apostle Paul would later write to the Colossians who had placed their faith in Jesus as their personal Savior, *He has delivered us from the power of darkness and conveyed us into the kingdom of the Son of His love, in whom we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins.*

That's the Christ we worship, who sets us free.

Have been set free by trusting Jesus Christ as Savior? Then why are you walking around bent over with your troubles and your loads, as if you've never realized that you've been made free.

There's someone else in our story though, besides Jesus and the woman.

The other person is bound up too. But not by disease.

Read vs 14

Just as Luke paints a descriptive word picture of the woman, he also paints with words to give us the dark overtones of the bent out of shape leader in the synagogue.

I can see the picture now . . . Jesus heals the lady and she begins to praise God, others join in the praise. It's more than the leader can stand and so jumping to his feet he yells to those rejoicing, "Be quiet!"

"There are six days on which men ought to work; therefore come and be healed on them, and not on the Sabbath day." He was referring to the 4th Commandment.

Exodus 20:8-10 Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy. Six days you shall labor and do all your work, but the seventh day is the Sabbath of the LORD your God. In it you shall do no work: you, nor your son, nor your daughter, nor your male servant, nor your female servant, nor your cattle, nor your stranger who is within your gates.

The ruler of the synagogue was jealous for the sabbath. He was sure he was guarding God's commandment from being violated.

Come back the other six days and you can be healed! Hey, this lady had been coming for 18 years and she wasn't healed. The ruler of the synagogue sure wasn't going to heal her.

See the woman was bent over by the physical illness she had. this guy was bent over by his legalistic attitude which put ceremony and decorum over the needs of people.

and this whole thing was so amazing, and so unexpected that he was totally caught off guard.

C. S. Lewis wrote, *"Surely what a man does when he is taken off his guard is the best evidence for what sort of man he is. If there are rats in a cellar, you are most likely to see them if you go in very suddenly. But the suddenness does not create the rats; it only prevents them from hiding. In the same way, the suddenness of the provocation does not make me ill-tempered; it only shows me what an ill-tempered man I am."*

How does Jesus respond to the synagogue ruler chastening the crowd?

Read vs 15 & 16

Here's the hypocrisy of legalism exposed: They cared more about their agenda than people's needs. Jesus says, "You'd do the work of loosening your donkey and taking him for a drink, but I can't loose a woman from the bondage she's been under for the past 18 years!"

Rules are fine. Not one of us would want to live in a country with no rules. Could you imagine in there were no rules against murder, rape, robbery, assault. What kind of place would it be? We'd be in complete chaos.

God has rules that He established for our own good. His rules protect us and teach us.

In one of our Peru trips we drove with Don Bond along winding roads that went along the Pacific coast. At some places the edge of the road was a cliff, hundreds of feet down. Every curve was lined with little crosses. Each of those crosses marked the place where someone had died going over the edge in an accident.

Now suppose the Peruvian government came along and erected a guard rail and lives were saved. Do you think anyone would complain and say the guard rails were too restrictive? That it's crimping people's style to prevent them from hurtling to their death in an accident? Obviously not.

Well, many of God's commands are like guard rails. They're designed to keep us from disaster. God says "keep sex in marriage" and people say "that's too restrictive." Today almost 56 million Americans have some form of sexually transmitted disease, many of them incurable.

Rules aren't all bad.

God commanded His people Israel to keep the Sabbath. It wasn't originally designed for worship, but for rest. The leaders in Israel turned the Sabbath into a burden for others. They had page after page of rules about how the sabbath should be kept. We saw a few weeks ago they even had rules on how to spit.

That's not just rules, that's legalism. Here's the deal about legalism: Legalism always wants to make rules for someone else to follow. When's the last time you heard someone say, "We need to pass this rule or this law so that I will stop doing something that I shouldn't be doing"? Legalism always has its focus upon others. In this case, this man wanted his rules to limit the power and the grace of God, but he was doing it under the guise of serving God.

Now look at the result of the healing: **Read vs 17**

This is what the Sabbath is all about. It is to be a time of rejoicing over the works of God. The Pharisees wanted the Sabbath to be a time when no one had any fun. But it can be fun to worship the Lord. There's joy in worshiping our God.

The woman had glorified God at the healing. The multitude was now rejoicing over the glorious things that were happening. There was only one person who wasn't rejoicing - the synagogue official. Legalism is not known for its rejoicing. Legalism says, "Don't have any fun; it's time to be religious." But see God delights in the laughter of the redeemed.

God wants us to be serious about His truth, but He wants us to rejoice in it.

Listen to these Psalms:

But let all those rejoice who put their trust in You; Let them ever shout for joy, ...Let those also who love Your name Be joyful in You.

You will show me the path of life; In Your presence is fullness of joy

...I will offer sacrifices of joy in His tabernacle; I will sing, yes, I will sing praises to the LORD.

Weeping may endure for a night, But joy comes in the morning.

Be glad in the LORD and rejoice, you righteous; And shout for joy, all you upright in heart!

...Play skillfully with a shout of joy.

Then I will go to the altar of God, To God my exceeding joy; And on the harp I will praise You, O God, my God.

The joy of the whole earth, Is Mount Zion on the sides of the north, The city of the great King.

*Restore to me the joy of Your salvation...
Oh, let the nations be glad and sing for joy!
He brought out His people with joy, His chosen ones with gladness.
Those who sow in tears Shall reap in joy.
...let Your saints shout for joy.*

Joy's not a sinful thing. In 1593 William Kethe, an English Puritan song writer, set Psalm 100 to music. He wrote the words of a classic hymn that was eventually printed in the Scottish Psalter in 1650 and soon became known as "Old Hundredth." It is a beautiful rendition of the message of Psalm 100 and has been sung for 350 years. The opening verse he wrote reads:

"All people that on earth do dwell, Sing to the Lord with cheerful voice. Him serve with *mirth*, His praise forth tell; Come ye before Him and rejoice."

You know how that song reads in our hymn book? The same as in every other hymn book you'll pick up:

"All people that on earth do dwell, Sing to the Lord with cheerful voice. Him serve with *fear*, His praise forth tell; Come ye before Him and rejoice."

Isn't that fascinating?

We associate the Puritans with sternness, black clothes, and sour expressions when the truth is, They said, "serve Him with *mirth*" and we changed it to "serve Him with *fear*."

What is it that gives us this kind of joy?

God's truth stands in the midst of an ever growing evil.

Read vs 18-21

This is the third time Jesus used these two parables. You'll find them in Matthew, Mark, and Luke.

Here Jesus showed his disciples by using the mustard seed how the kingdom of God would grow. The right kind of mustard seed can grow a plant 12 to 15 feet tall in one season.

The kingdom of God was going to grow in spite of people like the ruler of the synagogue. I have to believe that it would grow there there in town as the woman who was loosed told everybody what happened and they saw her changed life.

It would permeate like yeast in dough because God's truth is eternal.

There's joy in knowing God's truth because God's truth gives us life.

There's a problem between us and God. The Bible tells us that since God is holy and just, He must punish sin.

Let no man deceive you with vain words, for because of these things comes the wrath of God upon the children of disobedience. Ephesians 5:6

For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of man. Romans 1:18

God's justice requires that sinners must pay for their sins by suffering God's eternal punishment. But here's the amazing love of God in action. It involves three steps:

Step 1: CHRIST TOOK OUR SINS UPON HIMSELF

The first step in the redemption of mankind was for Jesus Christ to bear the sins of the world in His own body. When Jesus hung on the cross, God took all the sins of the world (past, present, and future), and placed them on Christ.

And the Lord has laid on Him [Jesus] the iniquity [sin] of us all. Isaiah 53:6 Who His own self bore our sins in His body on the tree. I Peter 2:24

Step 2: CHRIST DIED IN OUR PLACE.

Since God must punish sin, He poured out His wrath upon Jesus in our place. Jesus became our "substitute." He was punished for our sins and died in our place.

But He was wounded for our transgressions, He was bruised for our iniquities. The chastisement for our peace was upon Him. Isaiah 53:5

Step 3: CHRIST'S DEATH PAID IN FULL FOR OUR SINS, THEREBY SATISFYING GOD'S ANGER AND JUSTICE.

Since Jesus died in our place for our sins, God's justice was satisfied. Jesus paid for all sin, so any one who chooses to accept that payment will never have to experience the eternal wrath of God which must come upon all sin. Jesus paid in full for all of our sins!

...Jesus...said, "It is finished, " and He bowed His head and gave up His Spirit. John 19:30

The phrase "it is finished" was actually an expression used in Rome in the time of Christ when a debt had been paid in full. When Jesus shouted this just before He died, He was declaring that He had made a perfect, complete and final payment for sin.

Here's why we have joy. Jesus has torn down the barrier between God and man by paying for our sins through His own death.

Are you bound or are you free this morning? God wants to set us free. he wants us to be loosed to serve Him and enjoy Him forever. wont you trust Jesus Christ as your personal savior?