

Sermon: Don't Be Silly!

Text: Luke 13:10-17

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Introduction: As you may know, “Luke loves to incorporate women in his gospel account. He has forty-two passages with motifs related to women.” - Bock, *Luke*, p. 373, f.n. 2. I preached on one of those true stories last week (Easter). Luke has twenty-three stories that are unique to him about women Jesus encountered. This week we are looking at yet one more occasion.

Luke is fond of portraying women in a very positive light especially in their relationship to Jesus. On the other hand, you may have noticed that religious leaders do not typically fare as well. It is those dynamics I would like to explore with you, today.

The longer organizations exist, the more rules are made. The church is no exception to this. You see the silliness in church names that are made up to poke fun: “First Pentecostal United Methodist Baptist Church, where the spirit rules in an orderly fashion whether you like it or not”

In Jesus’ time there were all kinds of rules and regulations especially as it related to Sabbath activities. The synagogue was like a community center that provided for social and religious activities. The ruler of the synagogue, sometimes called the “president” may have lived in an adjoining quarters. At synagogue, during religious services, men would sit on one side and women were with the children on the other side. This is the last time Luke mentions Jesus taking part in the synagogue services. Jesus is on his way to Jerusalem. And one must remember that at the time Luke writes his gospel for the church, the temple in Jerusalem has been destroyed, but still there were synagogues in every city ([Acts 15:21](#)).

Let’s explore:

I. The Pattern to Jesus’ Ministry ([vv. 10-12](#))

[Luke 13:10-12 \(NIV\)](#) ¹⁰On a Sabbath Jesus was teaching in one of the synagogues, ¹¹and 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. ¹²When Jesus saw her, he called her forward and said to her, “Woman, you are set free from your infirmity.”

A. Jesus regularly attended synagogue.

It was Jesus' custom to attend synagogue every Sabbath. As a rabbi, many times he was asked to read OT scripture and comment on its meaning. Earlier in Luke we heard: **Luke 6:1 (NIV)** ¹One Sabbath Jesus was going through the grainfields, and his disciples began to pick some heads of grain, rub them in their hands and eat the kernels.

As a result, Jesus and his disciples are then chastised for breaking the Sabbath laws. In his defense, Jesus responds by speaking back Scripture story to them.

We also heard: **Luke 4:16 (NIV)** ¹⁶He went to Nazareth, where he had been brought up, and on the Sabbath day he went into the synagogue, as was his custom. And he stood up to read.

In many ways Jesus' ministry had been inaugurated in a synagogue setting in his hometown of Nazareth. Jesus' teaching was not always popular, though, because not everyone wants to hear the Truth.

Again, we find ourselves in the synagogue. This occasion for worship in **chapter 13** is similar to **Luke 6** where Jesus had declared himself to be "Lord of the Sabbath" (v. 5).

B. Jesus often healed there.

This is what Darrell Bock calls a "mirror miracle" because it shows what Jesus typically did. Virtually everywhere Jesus went he taught, and many times he would heal people. These miracles helped emphasize his teaching points. John called them signs, but everything Jesus did was to bring glory to God.

Right after the Nazareth sermon Jesus goes to Capernaum to the synagogue to teach and heals a demon-possessed man (**Luke 4:33ff.**), another synagogue lesson is followed by healing a man with a withered hand (**Luke 6:6**); Jesus had even healed the daughter of Jairus who was a synagogue ruler (**Luke 8:41**).

John has told us Jesus did many other miracles that are not recorded for us (**20:30**). Some were undoubtedly also done on the Sabbath. In our story Jesus merely spoke to the afflicted woman and she was healed. This is certainly a picture of God's grace. It was unsolicited. Jesus picked her out of the crowd, called her up to the front and healed her. She was immediately set free from the debilitating influence of an evil spirit she had suffered with for eighteen years.

Luke uses two interesting words in these opening verses. The first (**ασθενεια**) translated here “crippled” many times is rendered “weakness” or “sickness,” and many times may imply a spiritual as well as a physical condition.

When James says in his epistle: **James 5:14-15 (NIV)** ¹⁴Is any one of you sick? He should call the elders of the church to pray over him and anoint him with oil in the name of the Lord. ¹⁵And the prayer offered in faith will make the sick person well; the Lord will raise him up. If he has sinned, he will be forgiven.

He is very likely referring to both a physical and a spiritual condition.

The other interesting word (**απολυω**), translated “set free,” was probably used in a medical sense by Luke, the doctor, but he also uses the same word to describe missionaries being “released” to serve God’s purposes and being sent out with the gospel (**Acts 13:3**). After eighteen years of suffering, yet still faithfully coming to worship God, this now-healed woman had a story to tell of a gracious God.

I know it may seem silly, but I wondered what would have happened that day if she had felt too bad to go to synagogue. She would have missed Jesus’ healing her.

Now let’s explore:

II. The Response to Jesus’ Ministry (vv. 13-14)

Luke 13:13-14 (NIV) ¹³Then he put his hands on her, and immediately she straightened up and praised God. ¹⁴Indignant 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.”

Whenever Jesus was involved in the synagogue worship and spoke or produced miracles (signs), there was a mixed response. Not all appreciated his efforts.

A. Some praised God.

I can only imagine how the woman in our story must have felt. It’s easy (easier) to come to worship when life is going well, but when it is not - Doubt comes in and sits beside us and whispers in our ear. She had been coming for eighteen years throughout the whole ordeal.

When I saw my mother last Thanksgiving, she could barely walk as she moved from car to house. She was bent over at the waist at a nearly 90 degree angle. Pain and weakness is the companion of many of our elderly friends and family.

You would think that anyone who was healed would be thankful, yet Luke will remind us later in **chapter 17** - that is not always the case. Ten lepers are healed, and only one gives thanks - and he is a Samaritan.

Here, this woman, though, has no problem in praising him who healed her. She gives God the glory due His name. It is the very reason her health has been restored. She now could stand up straight and look people in the eye as she told others about Jesus. This woman had been a sign of pity and shame, and to some - God's displeasure, now she was whole and yet another example of God's grace.

B. Religious leaders were antagonistic.

You would think everybody would be in favor of people being helped. There is a group of people, though, that are so stiff and regimented they cannot vary from the way we have always done it. It is the difference really between law and grace.

You will also notice here that the religious leader does not even address Jesus directly, but in a controlling way tries to humiliate the people for their breaking of the law. In other words, "that's not the way we do it here."

I have seen emergency needs where a single mother, with children in tow, present themselves to be helped at a foodbank only to be told it is closed until Monday. All the time, the food, the paperwork and even the personnel to help are available that day! But that's the rules! "We're closed."

There is pride and ego involved here it seems to me. The religious leaders did not want anyone else dispensing God's provision or help in ministry, or someone else getting the credit.

Illus. I used to work for Beatrice Foods as a supervisor in their commercial drying operation. We were a union shop (Teamsters) which means that only union members can operate the dryer. One day, there was a serious and possibly unsafe situation that developed with the dryer. I had actually trained the dryer operators, so I stepped in, in the absence of the union operator, and fixed the problem. If I had not, there could have been a fire or an explosion followed by a loss of work and wages for those involved.

The union won a grievance against me and the company - even though I had saved their livelihood, at the least. Silliness!

Matthew 27:17-18 (NIV) ¹⁷So when the crowd had gathered, Pilate asked them, “Which one do you want me to release to you: Barabbas, or Jesus who is called Christ?” ¹⁸For he knew it was out of envy that they had handed Jesus over to him.

III. Jesus’ Response to Hypocrisy (vv. 15-16)

Luke 13:15-16 (NIV) ¹⁵The 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? ¹⁶Then 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?”

On his way to the cross, Jesus is calling the religious leaders to repent. The woman’s physical health had been affected by Satan. Satan was also actively influencing these religious leaders spiritually.

There is a great quote from C.S. Lewis in *The Screwtape Letters*. [Screwtape to his devil assistant says:] “It is funny how mortals always picture us [devils] as putting things into their minds: in reality our best work is done by keeping things out.”

“The leaders’ failure to respond reveals just how stubborn unbelief can be, even in the face of widespread testimony and evidence.” - Bock, *Luke*, p. 376

Hypocrites rarely enjoy having their masks removed. They never take them off without help or voluntarily.

A. Jesus challenged silly rules.

The utter absurdity of the religious leader’s opposition to Jesus was made clear in an argument from lesser to greater (minor to major). Jesus said, you allow for care of your animals by untying them and leading them out to get water on the Sabbath. Why wouldn’t you give aid to the crown and glory of God’s creation? The value is not even comparable.

Jesus is asking us to think and use the advantage we have over the animals. He is asking the synagogue leaders to recognize who it is in front of them.

Isaiah 1:2-3 (NIV) ²Hear, O heavens! Listen, O earth! For the LORD has spoken: “I reared children and brought them up, but they have rebelled against me. ³The ox knows his master, the donkey his owner’s manger, but Israel does not know, my people do not understand.”

Jesus was always more interested in the reason for the law. It was to glorify God. This was not the only time Jesus had challenged conventional thinking.

Matthew 23:23-24 (NIV) ²³“Woe to you, teachers of the law and Pharisees, you hypocrites! You give a tenth of your spices—mint, dill and cummin. But you have neglected the more important matters of the law—justice, mercy and faithfulness. You should have practiced the latter, without neglecting the former. ²⁴You blind guides! You strain out a gnat but swallow a camel.

Jesus is saying: your animals are bound and you release them so they can be cared for even on the Sabbath. Yet, Satan, our adversary, binds this woman and you do not want to release her. Something does not make sense.

B. Jesus applied biblical principles.

Mark 2:27 (NIV) ²⁷... “The Sabbath was made for man, not man for the Sabbath.

The sabbath was about God reaching out to his people. It is the climax of God’s creative work (**Genesis 2:1-3**). It was to be a day of blessing rather than a burden (**Matthew 11:29-30**). There is no wrong time for being made whole.

“Any time is appropriate for such a move towards restoration. It is what Jesus’ ministry -- and the church’s ministry today -- are all about.” - Bock, *Luke*, p. 377

Jesus is ever present and healing people whether on Thursday or Sunday. There are churches who hold worship services on other days of the week rather than Sunday (The Lord’s Day). I personally do not have a problem with that. I believe you can worship and take communion any day of the week even though the first day may be more symbolic.

When systems and rules come ahead of people’s health, the system is broken. We should take Jesus’ example: when presented with an opportunity to help someone, we should do it today rather than tomorrow.

Conclusion: **Luke 13:17 (NIV)** ¹⁷When he said this, all his opponents were humiliated, but the people were delighted with all the wonderful things he was doing.

There are really only two responses to Jesus. You either love him or you hate him. One response is life-giving; the other, brings death! People who choose the latter will some day be put to shame. Those who accept God’s grace, as offered in Jesus, will rejoice at his next coming.

There is a cosmic struggle going on just like what C. S. Lewis depicts in *The Screwtape Letters*. Paul speaks of it to Timothy:

II Timothy 2:25-26 (NIV) ²⁵Those who oppose him he must gently instruct, in the hope that God will grant them repentance leading them to a knowledge of the truth, ²⁶and that they will come to their senses and escape from the trap of the devil, who has taken them captive to do his will.

One of the most damning sins is pride. It was Satan's downfall and Adam and Eve's as well. Pride that keeps you from accepting the free gift of God is indeed silly.

Please come to your senses, today and accept Jesus as your Lord and Savior.