

Jesus Changes Everything: For a Disabled Woman

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[0 : 00] Welcome back to a short time of worship with us here in Becluse. We continue to look through Luke's Gospel, see Jesus meeting a variety of different women and considering how Jesus, by his grace, changes everything.

So we'll be there in just a couple of minutes, but let's begin hearing from Psalm 130, a couple of verses there, verses 6 and 7. Though the Lord is exalted, he looks kindly on the lowly.

Though lofty, he sees them from afar. Though I walk in the midst of trouble, you preserve my life. You stretch out your hand against the anger of my foes.

With your right hand, you save me. Let's pray to the God who sees us now. Lord, we praise you that you are the high and the exalted one, the glorious one, the God who deserves all praise and honour.

We thank you too that you are so full of kindness, that you look down on those who are low, those who are struggling, those who are weary.

[1 : 19] We thank you that you are the God who sees us. Just as Hagar, way back in the book of Genesis, when she was struggling and feeling alone, and you came to help her.

She could confess, truly, you are the God who sees me. Lord, we thank you for that reality. We thank you that in your mercy, as you saw the misery that sin would bring, you established that plan to save us in and through the sending of your son, Jesus.

We thank you that you have stretched out your hand to save us. And so we pray that we would take comfort and hope that we would look to you as the one who sees us.

That we would recognise more of your character and more of your love, that we might be drawn to you. And so we pray that you would work through your word today to soften our hearts, to cause us to praise and worship you.

We ask in Jesus' name. Amen. Now, let's read together a short reading from Luke chapter 13.

We're going to read from verse 10 to verse 17.

[2 : 42] Let's hear God's word together. On a Sabbath, Jesus was teaching in one of the synagogues, and a woman was there who'd been crippled by a spirit for 18 years.

She was bent over and could not straighten up at all. When Jesus saw her, he called her forward and said, To her, woman, you are set free from your infirmity. Then he put his hands on her, and immediately she straightened up and praised God.

Indignant because Jesus had healed on the Sabbath, the synagogue leader said to the people, There are six days for work. So come and be healed on those days, not on the Sabbath. The Lord answered him, You hypocrites!

Doesn't each of you on the Sabbath untie your ox or donkey from the stall and lead it out to give it water? Then should not this woman, a daughter of Abraham, whom Satan has kept bound for 18 long years, be set free on the Sabbath day from what bound her?

When he said this, all his opponents were humiliated, but the people were delighted with all the wonderful things he was doing. So today, let's see how Jesus changes everything for a disabled woman.

[3 : 56] One of the highlights, I guess, for me during lockdown was the chance that I had to talk about the church and to talk about Christianity with our school's primary fours.

As they were doing their religion topic, I got to be part of a rather chaotic Zoom call across three different classes to about 100 P4s.

And they were so enthusiastic and they had so many questions. Questions about what I did, questions about what was the church like, what do we do in church, do we have a holy book.

It was really interesting to talk with the P4s. There was a sense that they were understanding that faith has a set of beliefs and that those beliefs then influence practice on how a person lives, in our case, Christianity.

Those practices, those beliefs should shape how we live. The focus of today's encounter for us is on the one hand, that this synagogue ruler who we meet, who should have known what God and his word is all about, but he didn't.

[5 : 14] And as a result, he was cold and he was indifferent to the needs of this woman and no doubt other sufferers do. But then there's Jesus, whose actions and words stand as a reminder that God is merciful.

He is the son of God and he is expressing the mercy of God. He shows mercy and he cares and he heals the woman who was crippled, who was disabled. I was thinking about this, strangely enough, this Wednesday morning.

I don't know, boys and girls, if you remember walking to school on Wednesday morning, but I was absolutely chucking it down, wasn't it? And so I'd done the drop-off and I was walking, I was almost home and I was soaked to the skin.

And then I realised, I actually had an umbrella with me. I just never thought to use it. In a sense, it's a picture of the religious life with no heart.

The synagogue ruler, he had what he needed. He had God's day, the Sabbath. He had God's word being taught to him, but he wasn't using it.

[6 : 21] He did not have God's love and God's mercy. And so in these two figures, Jesus and the synagogue ruler, we get portraits, we get the beauty of mercy as we see it in Christ.

And we see sort of the ugliness of indifference, of a loveless religion, of loveless Christianity on the other. And so my prayer for each one of us is that we would be drawn to Jesus to find mercy from him and that having been drawn in to receive mercy, we would then be merciful as people.

That we would see the warning of the synagogue ruler, that we might repent of our coldness, of our lack of mercy, and that we would together celebrate the power, the power of transforming grace that we see occur in this disabled woman.

Let's begin, first of all, with our setting. Now, setting matters. We know that certain settings go with particular qualities in a story.

So if you're, for example, if you're watching a war movie, some certain themes will be courage and brotherhood. If a story is set on the sports field, you are going to almost certainly encounter the determination of the underdogs.

[7 : 50] If your setting is a galaxy far, far away, you're going to be dealing with good versus evil and the saving of the universe. So what's our setting?

What's our context here? On a Sabbath, Jesus was teaching in one of the synagogues. Okay, so two things to notice.

One, it's on the Sabbath. Two, it's in the synagogue and the word of God is being taught and taught by none other than Jesus. So the question then is, what should we expect? If that's the setting, what should we expect of this story?

Well, for the synagogue ruler, Sabbath and synagogue mean laws and rules. For Jesus, Sabbath and synagogue mean the promise of rest, the hope of rescue and the reality of rejoicing.

And even just in that, we can see, can't we, good news. Good news that Jesus would save you and me from dull, lifeless, loveless religion.

[8 : 59] He brings the beating heart of God's love and mercy to bear in this situation and for this woman. And it's wonderful to see.

So let's think about setting just again. Sabbath, what was that about? There's, I think, at least two truths that we need to recognise when we think about the Sabbath. First, we can go to Exodus 20, where we read the Ten Commandments.

Exodus 20 at verse 8. Remember the Sabbath day by keeping it holy. Six days you shall labour and do all your work, but the seventh day is a Sabbath to the Lord your God.

On it you shall not do any work. For in six days the Lord made the heavens and the earth, the sea and all that's in them, but he rested on the seventh day. Therefore the Lord blessed the Sabbath day and made it holy.

So Sabbath is a chance for us to enjoy the gift of rest, to rest from work, to remember one's creator and to worship.

[10:07] But then again, in Deuteronomy chapter 5, as Moses again, he rehearses the Ten Commandments before the people, there's a different emphasis.

As he says in verse 12, observe the Sabbath day by keeping it holy. Six days you shall labour and do all your work, but the seventh day is a Sabbath to the Lord your God. And so there's the emphasis on resting.

But then in verse 15, remember that you were slaves in Egypt and that the Lord your God brought you out of there with a mighty hand and an outstretched arm. Therefore the Lord your God has commanded you to observe the Sabbath day.

So what's new there? Not just the gift of rest, but the gift of rescue. Every Sabbath they were to remember that God their creator was also God their saviour.

And so that's what should have been happening on this Sabbath. And then what about the synagogue? You went to a first century, what happened there in the synagogue? Well, there was worship. The people of God would gather to worship before God.

[11:12] God's word would be read. The Old Testament was what they had. God's word was read and taught and there would be prayers being made. The intention was, therefore, that there would be a reminder of their creator.

A reminder of the God who had entered into covenant with them, who had made promises to them. A reminder that God had been and would be their redeemer.

Of course, the synagogue, and as the word of God was read, would also be a reminder to them of God's holiness, that he is perfect and he is without sin and he is holy.

It would also be a reminder, therefore, of human sin. But then also, they'd be reminded of God's mercy in his forgiveness and in making a way.

In the Old Testament, it was through the sacrifices that would come to be, seem to be, about Jesus and his perfect sacrifice. But there's our setting, Sabbath and synagogue.

[12:18] And when you think about that, it's perfect for Jesus then to, as it were, to recreate this woman, to give her rest from her suffering, to bring rescue from her spiritual bondage so that she might rejoice in God's salvation and God's mercy.

Just before we move on, I think this matters for our Sunday, the Lord's Day for the people of God, changing from a Saturday to a Sunday because on the Sunday, Jesus rose from the dead and everything became new.

So God, in his kindness, gives us this weekly rhythm, a weekly rhythm, to rest, to say, do you know what, I'm going to trust God. I'm going to rest.

It's a chance for us to remember the gospel. As we gather every week in the name of the Lord Jesus who died for us and rose again, we remember God's gift of salvation.

And this weekly rhythm is a chance for us to refocus on our God, to be drawn back to him as we recognise how quickly we're drawn away from him and can grow cold to his love.

[13:46] It also matters for our Sunday, for our Lord's Day and for every day, really, when we think about our Bible teaching. Now, remember, in this story, Jesus was the teacher and we get indications through the Gospels of how Jesus read and taught the Old Testament.

He would say, all of these testify about me. He would say, these are fulfilled in me. All those great promises, they are about me.

So as we read the big story of God creating a world to know and enjoy his love, but of people turning to sin and falling and things becoming broken, and as we read of God's redeeming love and his covenant and his commitment to save a people for himself by his grace, and as we see that fulfilled in the sending of Jesus to come into our world, to die in our place and to rise for our salvation, and with the promise that Jesus will one day return from heaven to make everything new, to bring his people to be with him, we recognise in the big story of the Bible, Jesus stands at the centre.

And we are drawn into that story. There is to, and we'll see it throughout, I think this conversation that Jesus has with the synagogue leader, there's a warning about what Michael Wilcock calls fossilised worship, that it's very possible to have our Lord's Day or our reading of God's Word made lifeless by burying it under layers of rules and traditions.

It's what the Pharisees did. It's what man-made religion would seek to do. We want to hear God and allow him to speak in his word.

[15:56] That we would ask God to make Sunday in a very real sense the highlight of our week. To know that he would meet us in our gathering, that he would meet us by the Spirit in his word and that he would give us fresh mercy and grace for our journey of faith for our coming week.

So that's our setting. Now the woman is introduced in verse 11 and I want us to notice the response of Jesus.

Just read verse 11 again. A woman was there who'd been crippled by a spirit for 18 years. She was bent over and could not straighten up at all. Can we picture this woman?

Life being agonising, this crippling illness. Imagine the effort it would have taken her, hunched as she was, to get to the synagogue.

She obviously wanted to worship with the people of God. 18 years of suffering, feeling most likely like an outsider, perhaps with nothing much to offer.

[17:09] I came across a writer this week by the name of Stephanie Hubach. I don't know if that's how you say her second name. So she's an author but she's also the mother of a child with Down syndrome.

And she said this as she was thinking about the impact of the fall into sin from Adam and Eve back in Genesis 18. because of sin, our world became an abnormal world.

This world is not the way it was meant to be. Disability is simply a more noticeable form of the brokenness that is common to human experience.

A normal part of life in an abnormal world. Now what will Jesus do as he, the perfectly holy one, comes into this now abnormal world because of sin?

As he comes to establish his kingdom, as he comes to go to war against Satan and the forces of evil to defeat sin and to give signposts of what his future kingdom will be like, what will Jesus do?

[18:19] Verse 12. Jesus saw her. Jesus is the God who sees. Isn't that beautiful? This lady stooped so low as she suffers, she's not overlooked.

And it's noticeable that Jesus is the one who takes the initiative. He sees and he calls. Here is Jesus' heart of compassion and mercy going out again. So Jesus sees her and then Jesus spoke to her.

So again Jesus called her forward. It's as if he wants his power and mercy to be on full display and neon lights highlighted. And again knowing the heart of the synagogue ruler and his legalising tendencies, you'll be about mercy like God is.

And then verse 12. As he speaks, women, you are set free from your infirmity. He uses freedom, language. And of course what we see is that her healing, her cure, her freedom isn't just physical, though it is physical because immediately she's straightened up.

But it's also spiritual because in verse 11 she's crippled by a spirit. In verse 16 we discover Satan has kept her bound. So Jesus sees her, Jesus spoke to her and Jesus in a very real sense saved her.

[19:38] Here is one of the themes of Luke in this section of particular. Jesus is going into battle against Satan, against the forces of evil and here in this woman's life he wins a victory. A victory that anticipates the cross.

There Jesus will strike at the very heart of darkness as he takes sin on himself and as he defeats the power of sin. As he conquers it in his rising from the dead.

So her cure is both physical and spiritual. And the woman's response, immediately she straightened up. She praised God. She's rejoicing.

That rest promised in God's day, that rescue promised in God's day and in God's word has now become real in her life and so her instinct is to praise God.

By way of applying this to ourselves, let's take this first of all as a message of hope for us today. Maybe we're feeling small, feeling weak, feeling weak, feeling weak, feeling weak, feeling weak, feeling weak, in the middle of struggling and suffering, and perhaps that's long term, maybe overlooked by others, feeling like an outsider, recognise Jesus sees you.

[21:09] And who is Jesus? He is the Son of God, the one who is all powerful and also full of love and mercy. This is the Jesus who invites us, come to me all you who are weary and burdened and I will give you rest.

Jesus sees and he knows and he can help and he will be with you if we trust him. It's also a picture of the gospel for us, that's part of the hope I think, Jesus who sees, who saw the misery that sin would bring, recognising that we would be hopeless and helpless without him, came to be one of

us, to live in our place and to die for our sin, so that we might be forgiven, so that we might have peace with God, that we might have eternal life.

He extends mercy to you and to me and for us. Our response is to hear that call, is to be obedient to the Lord Jesus, to put our trust in him and then as we come to him and find forgiveness and we come to find life from him and healing then we praise him.

So it's a message of hope but it's also I think a call to action in a couple of ways. So some of the primary four, their questions, what is the church like? What is it that you do in the church?

Well, here are two answers from this text. We as the church, we should be merciful, shouldn't we? Jesus sees the unseen, the overlooked, Jesus sees us and extends mercy to us in the gospel and so should we.

[23 : 02] Churches then should be the most inclusive of places. That we should be eager to open our door and open our hearts and open our lives to share with others the mercy that God shows us in the gospel.

So we should be merciful in light of the mercy that we have received and we should worship.

Romans 12 verse 1, in view of God's mercies, present your bodies as living sacrifices.

So we can let God's day and let God's word keep calling us back to that reminder that we are called to live every day in every situation to the glory of God.

To present our bodies as living sacrifice, to deny ourselves, to say Jesus is Lord and to live for him to be somebody who would pass that mercy forward.

God. So that's the response of Jesus but we also need to look in verse 14 to 17 at the rebuke of Jesus. Now, for those of us who are listening who are parents and for you, if you're children, I wonder how often have you said or have you heard you really should know better.

[24 : 27] You really should know better by now. Jesus would be very entitled to say this to the synagogue ruler. So, so Jesus has just healed the woman and he's rescued her, given her rest.

What do we find from verse 14? Intignant. He's so annoyed because Jesus had healed on the Sabbath. The synagogue leader said to the people there are six days for work so come and be healed on those days, not on the Sabbath.

So he interrupts Jesus, totally changes the mood to rebuke the women who actually didn't come for healing in the first place. Jesus took the initiative and he's certainly rebuking Jesus.

Why are you working? This is a day for resting. We shouldn't do any work. Jesus responds with rebuke. He calls out his hypocrisy.

Verses 15 and 16. Listen, you care for an animal if it's thirsty, you give it a drink. How much more should you want mercy for this woman? This person made in the image of God with dignity and value, you should know better.

[25 : 36] As a leader of the synagogue, you should be a leader in extending mercy as a representative. God, you should know better. It's the Sabbath. It's a day of remembering God's mercy and giving rest from work, and giving rescue from slavery.

mercy. It's not a lot, it's a mercy. And you're in the synagogue. You're listening to God's word, you're listening to Jesus, the word made flesh, who's now teaching that word, and it's all about salvation and renewal.

This guy, he's big on law, but he's not big on mercy. And Jesus rebukes him. Verse 17, we discover that this synagogue ruler, he failed to read the room, didn't he?

When he said this, all his opponents were humiliated, but the people were delighted with all wonderful things Jesus was doing. Public opinion is with Jesus, because they can recognise cold, loveless religion is ugly, but mercy and love in Jesus, they're beautiful, and they see it, and they're drawn to that.

Here again is a warning to religious folks. we can be in God's word, on God's day, doing all kinds of religious duties and activities, and yet still be hard-hearted, still be missing the point, making it about us, or making it about rule-keeping, rather than celebrating God's grace and mercy and his salvation.

[27 : 14] salvation. It's a reminder that we must be both hearers and doers. There's also here, though, the promise of the gospel.

Look at verse 16. Should not this woman, a daughter of Abraham, whom Satan has kept bound for 18 long years, be set free on the Sabbath day from what bound her?

What does faith in Jesus bring? It brings freedom. Just as this woman was set free, faith in Jesus sets us free from the power of sin, from the reality of guilt and condemnation, from the certainty of eternal separation from God in hell.

Freedom to become a child of God, to enjoy life and peace with God, to have the hope of eternity with God. So faith brings freedom and faith brings family.

She's a daughter of Abraham. She's part of the people of God. And that's all, again, because of God's mercy to us in sending Jesus our Saviour.

[28 : 26] And so, as we leave this story, let's leave it in that sense with a call to us as the church. If you belong to Beclua, it's a call to Beclua if you're from another church, that we would be a place of mercy for those who are suffering, for those who are needy, for those who are lost and helpless, and that we would each play our part in extending that mercy.

That we would take heed of the needs of others and the needs of one another. That we wouldn't let laws and traditions come ahead of mercy and showing the love of God to others.

And that positively we would enjoy what God's day and what God's word calls us to. To enjoy rest. Resting from our work whenever that's possible and resting in Christ.

Not working for our own salvation but recognising he has accomplished our salvation so we're resting and we're trusting in him alone for salvation. that we would enjoy that rescue that we have received.

That we would celebrate the gospel and that we would share the good news that God has loved us and sent his son Jesus to pay the price and the penalty for our sin.

[29 : 50] And that we would rejoice. That if we have received mercy that we would praise him today and every day. That that would be our story. That would be the tone of our story that that's what we would be about as a church.

What is it that we're about as a church? What is it that you do? If someone asked us that question a P4 or anyone else we'd be about worship. We'd be about mercy.

We'd be about enjoying God's rescue. God's kindness and passing that on to others. Let's pray about that now.

Let's pray. Lord, thank you so much for the freedom that Jesus came to secure. That he gave his life on the cross.

That we might be set free. Thank you that Jesus, the son of God, loved us and gave himself for us.

[30 : 54] That we might become children of God. thank you that we can rest in knowing Jesus. That we can rest and take our burdens to Jesus.

Thank you that we can receive and enjoy rescue, redemption, deliverance. Lord, make us a people who rejoice in those realities.

and that we would share that mercy. That we would be a place and a people marked by mercy towards one another and towards those who are not part of the church.

We pray it for the glory of Jesus, our Saviour. Amen. Now, as we close, we will sing.

First of all, Glorious Things of Thee Are Spoken and then the first seven verses of Psalm 46.

Glorious Things of Thee Are Spoken Zion, city of our God, He whose word cannot be broken, form thee for His own abode.

[32 : 19] On the rock of ages founded, what can shake thy sure repose? With salvation's walls surrounded, thou may smile at all thy foes.

See the streams of living waters, springing from eternal love.

Well, supply thy sons and daughters, and all fear of want remove. Who can faint while such a river ever flows?

Their thirst to swage grace, which, like the Lord the Giver, never fails from age to age.

round each habitation hovering, see the cloud and fire appear, for a glory and a covering, showing that the Lord is near.

[33 : 50] thus deriving from their banner, light by night and shade by day.

safe they feed upon the manna, which He gives them when they pray.

Savior of Zion's city, I, through grace, remember, I'll let the world deride our pity.

I will glory in thy name. Fading is the worldlings' pleasure, all his boasted palm-baths show, solid joys and lasting treasure, none but Zion's children know.

God is our refuge and our strength, our ever-present aid, and therefore, though the earth gives way, we will not be afraid.

[35 : 37] Though mountains fall into the sea, though waters foam and roar, we will not fear, though mountains quake, as waves engulf the shore.

A river flows through streams delight the city of our God, the holy place in which the Lord most high has his abode.

God is within his holy place, the city will not yield, for God will come at break of day to be her help and shield.

The nations are in disarray, the kingdoms disappear.

God speaks, and at his mighty voice the whole earth melts with fear.

[37 : 13] The Lord Almighty is with us to strengthen and sustain, for Jacob's God, our strong defense and fortress will remain.

God ■■■■■■, shuk pen■