Jesus Wants You to See His Face

(Luke 13.10-17)

At Issue: Sabbath Interpretation.

Do you know those panels on the news where they discuss the political implications of different issues? The latest one is the Alberta referendum on separating from Canada.

In today's text, the Sabbath is at issue. For the synagogue leader, what Jesus did was a form of work—you should not heal or lay hands on someone on the Sabbath. From Jesus' perspective, what the synagogue leader calls "work," Jesus calls "fun"!

Behind this lady's story, there is a precious lesson we can take to heart: While legalism wants to shame us, Jesus wants to show us his glory.

1. Her Shoes

A) This year, I spent two weeks in the hospital with my wife due to a virus. Before she was admitted to the hospital, she spent a week suffering at home. Once she was discharged from the hospital, we thought that she would be just fine and that life would go back to normal smoothly; but the virus had left some side effects in her body that lasted for several months of affliction. That whole experience felt like a whole year to us!

How much more must this lady have suffered! She had been bent over for 18 years, unable to look up. If you have had back pain, you know how awful the pain is and how incapable you feel when the nerves trigger the pain.

Eighteen years—there's nothing symbolic about this number, unlike 12, 7, or 3. Usually, these are meaningful numbers in Scripture. The 18 years just show you that her condition had lasted a long time!

She feels hopeless. She has questions: "Why me?" "Does God love me?" "Am I a daughter of Abraham?" "Should I even come to the synagogue/'church'?" "Does God see me?" "Do the people around me in this synagogue care about me?"

I bet you we have all been there: seasons of questions, feeling hopeless, feeling that God is far away and is not looking at us, feeling that nobody cares about our suffering…

Thanks be to God, He looks at us, gives us His Word, and touches us.

B) With one word, Jesus heals her. Yes, He touched her, but even before that, His voice was sufficient. As you may know, there is some cheap theology that tells you, “There’s power in your words”; “Claim it, and you will receive it.” Basically, it gives creative power to human words. But I am sorry to disappoint this theology: the only powerful word that exists is Jesus’ word. God is not accountable to the words of the preacher; He is accountable to His Word. He heals her with His Word.

If you pay attention to the text, her illness is not the result of a fall or a damaged bone. At its root, her illness is spiritually oriented. The devil has been afflicting her for 18 long years.

Scholars agree that this is not a classical case of demon possession because she is (1) a “daughter of Abraham,” (2) attends the synagogue, and (3) praises God. This is an oppression similar to the one Job suffered: despite being a godly man, he suffered a lot, and his suffering was caused directly by Satan himself.

Jesus *touches* her… She is not demon possessed, she is family: A daughter of Abraham.

C) I believe we have a lot to learn from her life. She attended the synagogue despite all her circumstances, while we sometimes skip services when we could actually go the extra mile.

She is healed, she is praising God, and she is looking at the glorious face of Jesus! Revival has come to the synagogue. The story is supposed to finish here with glorification, am I correct? Unfortunately, no. As she rejoiced, the religious people got offended.

2. The Synagogue Leader’s Shoes

A) As she looks up, the religious leader wants to shame her and make her look down once again. Unfortunately, the story did not finish with our sister praising God; the synagogue leader took the chance to lash out at Jesus: “There are six days on which you may work. On those days, you may get your healing, but not on the Sabbath.”

At first glance, you think this may be a theological issue—which it certainly is. However, you can look into it, and you will find that there is something else going on: his anger.

The Bible says that he was “indignant.” In Greek, Latin, Portuguese, and English, this word portrays the same thing: anger toward someone or something. His ego got hurt.

Why is he so upset? This is a classic “synagogue ownership syndrome” situation. It is “his way or the highway”; his doctrine or no doctrine. He may say, “Jesus, I invited

you here to preach, not to heal." In his society, the lady should not speak, so why is she praising God out loud? She is breaking his protocols.

B) Last week, I gave you the example of the young people who come to the pastor looking for answers, but find none—just a burden. They feel guilty simply because they have questions and doubts and see things differently than we do; they feel as though they are walking on eggshells.

That's what is happening right here in this text. The synagogue leader shows the poison of his legalism: (1) He doesn't rejoice in her blessing. (2) He will make sure she feels awful about what she has received. (3) He doesn't like it when his protocols are not followed.

C) I wonder if his mom, daughter, wife, or sister had been healed; would he have reacted that way? I wonder if her story finished here? I wonder if the last voice she heard was the synagogue leader's voice? I wonder if, instead of rejoicing over her blessing, she had to pity her healing?

She had been in the synagogue this whole time, and nobody could ever help her; but at the very moment she is helped, someone wants to crush her blessing. Thankfully, Jesus doesn't want her to look at legalism, protocols, or rituals. He wants her to look at Him!

3. Jesus' Shoes

A) The Lord's reasoning is so simple: priorities.

People are worth more than animals and protocols. It seems so obvious what He is saying, but it is actually important that we remember it. How many times do we use people to get stuff instead of using stuff to win people?

A decade ago, the Brazilian law regarding hit-and-run incidents read like this: If you fail to provide assistance to a person in a car crash, you are at fault and pay X amounts in penalties. If you fail to provide assistance to a pet, you pay double the amount in penalties. So, if you end up hitting a lady walking with her pet, you had better give first aid to the pet instead of the person!

That's the absurdity of the synagogue leader's claim. Jesus quickly reveals his hypocrisy: "If you untie your ox to feed it on the Sabbath, I untie this lady from the bondage she has been trapped in for long years on the Sabbath."

B) Theologically speaking, the word "deliverance" rings a bell regarding the Exodus of the people of Israel.

In Egypt, the people worked 24/7, nonstop and oppressively, bound to Pharaoh. When God delivered the people, He set them free to rejoice in Him. The Sabbath was given as a celebration, a remembrance that the yoke of God is much lighter than the yoke of Pharaoh.

The synagogue leader wants to bind her as if she were a slave. Our Lord Jesus sets her free, just as He set the Israelites free in the Exodus account. One wants her to look at the floor; our Saviour wants her to look at His glorious face.

C) That reminds me of a story I once heard: A believing man was ill in bed, and he was so loved by people. Many were praying for his healing. He said this: “If God hears your prayers, you all will see His glory; but if God doesn’t hear your prayers and I die from this illness, I will see His glory.” No matter what happened, God would show His glory!

Upon hearing Jesus’ teaching, the leaders were humiliated, and the lady was vindicated. She could once again look up, look at Him, and rejoice in Him.

Conclusion: Our Shoes

What does her story teach us? We must learn from it in two ways: passively and actively.

A) **Passively:** Jesus wants us to look at His face. That message is for you: Jesus wants to save, heal, restore, and give you dignity. That’s what He does best.

B) **Actively:** We are sons and daughters of Abraham. What happened in this story shows you two kinds of mentalities in the church:

- The synagogue leader has the Law, with Moses as the mediator of his covenant with God. God gave us the Law, rituals, and protocols, and WE follow, WE obey, WE are the big deal.
- The lady is a daughter of Abraham. She receives God’s blessings not on the basis of what she does or what she can give to God, but solely on the basis of God’s grace and God’s promises.

Her life is founded not on the weak foundation of her actions, but on the firm foundation of God’s grace and love for her. It is important that she loves God—there’s no question about that—but it is WAY more important that He loves her.

Unfortunately, there are many of us who live like the synagogue leader: we think that “Moses” (our obedience) grants us approval before God. But that’s just not true. That sort of legalism actually makes us self-righteous, arrogant, and blind—and people go away from us after all!

Our spiritual life should be lived with the assurance of His grace: we are sons and daughters of Abraham. We are sons and daughters of God!