

Jesus Teaches in the Synagogue

Lesson #5 – Traditions vs. Kingdom

Luke 13:10-21

Jesus has been teaching in Judea and Perea. Great multitudes have gathered to hear Him along with His faithful followers. In this passage, we find that Jesus shifts the location of His discourse to a local synagogue. In this series of lessons, Jesus has been using illustrations, parables, truths of nature, current events, and now a live demonstration of His power. He will skillfully convey important information concerning the hypocrisy of the Jewish traditions and the truths of the kingdom of God. **Dr. Luke is the only gospel writer who has given us this discourse given by Jesus while ministering in Judea and Perea. Remember, Jesus left Galilee after traveling extensively for eighteen months, teaching, and healing. He made it known by words and works that He, the Messiah, had come. He returned to Jerusalem for the Feast of Tabernacles and once again offered Himself to the Judeans as their Messiah. Great crowds were receptive to Him, but the Religious Leaders were actively seeking to kill Him and had several failed attempts! As we end this series of recorded teachings, we find Jesus in “one” of the local synagogues, probably in Perea, east of Jerusalem. Though in a different location, we read that a “multitude” is gathered, and the themes of hypocrisy, confession of Jesus as Messiah, and the Kingdom of God continue!**

I. Healing in the Synagogue

“And he was teaching in one of the synagogues on the sabbath. ¹¹And, behold, there was a woman which had a spirit of infirmity eighteen years, and was bowed together (Lit. - bent double), and could in no wise lift up herself. ¹²And when Jesus saw her, he called her to him, and said unto her, Woman, thou art loosed from thine infirmity. ¹³And he laid his hands on her: and immediately she was made straight, and glorified God.” Luke 13:10-13

“he was teaching in one of the synagogues on the sabbath” – This is the last time we read of Jesus teaching in a synagogue, though we know it was His habit to attend a synagogue on the Sabbath. By this time in His ministry, He often became the “teaching Rabbi” for the day, as we see here!

“a woman which had a spirit of infirmity eighteen years” – As I have studied and taught this lesson, I’m finding that most ladies don’t know many of the details of this miracle. It certainly doesn’t lean toward a good Sunday School lesson for little ones. The severity of her deformity and the depth of Jesus’ teaching after the healing might both tend to be a bit over the heads of children. So, let’s take a look at what Dr. Luke had to say about this lady’s condition and get a better understanding of the wonder of this event!

1. **“spirit of infirmity”** – This is really interesting; it is the only illness Jesus heals that uses the term “spirit of infirmity.” Later, in verse 16, Jesus will refer to Satan’s role in her illness by saying, “whom Satan hath bound.” On Bible Gateway, we find many different ways English translations handle this thought: caused by a demon; disabled by a spirit; evil spirit; disabling spirit; illness caused by a demon; but, really, the most commonly used phrase is “spirit of infirmity.” Jesus did not speak to a demon when healing her, so there is something still different about this illness. We really don’t understand the spirit world and illnesses. But there is definitely a connection with the demonic world and this dear suffering lady.
2. **“eighteen years”** – that’s a long time; a really long time! Think about it...how old were you eighteen years ago? What was your life like then? For me, I had 6 kids at home, one not even in school yet! I had

two little ones in lower elementary, one in high school, and two in college. Life was so different for me then. That preschooler eighteen years ago just graduated from college this past weekend! You see, eighteen years is a long time, but for me it went so fast! But for this lady with the spirit of infirmity, I'm afraid those eighteen years dragged on. One agonizing year passed into another agonizing year.

3. **“bowed together”** – Literally, this means bent in half or double. She walked, looking down; she slept bent in half; she ate, drank, and conversed, staring at the ground. Perhaps she could turn her head from right to left, but good chance she could not. She was “bound” in half. Absolutely everything she did was a struggle for eighteen years. I'm sure it got to the point that she couldn't remember what it felt like to stand erect, to look someone in the eye, to enjoy the smile of a friend, or interact with normal anything. She was not normal; she could not do normal; she was bent in half and bound.
4. But she didn't give up on at least one normal. On the Sabbath, **she was at the synagogue**. Wow! She did not allow herself to use the excuse of being bent in half to neglect hearing the truth of God! Wow! What a great lady! Just thinking about that, don't you just love that in her! But, how determined are you to hear the Word of God! What keeps you away? snowflakes, snuffle, pain in the hip, knee, neck, foot, head, too hot, too cold, too windy, too tired, too far, a ball game, school work, favorite show, traveling, fishing, camping... How easy is it for you to set aside the opportunity to hear preaching for something else? This lady could have had an excuse... she was bent in half! But there she was, in the synagogue on the Sabbath, exactly where she needed to be and....

“Jesus saw her, he called her” – We are told Jesus was “teaching” in the synagogue that day. This was not a healing service, but a preaching service. But this passage says, “When Jesus saw her, he called her to him.” She didn't initiate a healing by calling out to him, by standing in a healing line, or by pushing close and touching His garment. Jesus saw her, called her to himself, and said simply....

“Woman, thou art loosed from thine infirmity. And he laid his hands on her” – Wow! “loosed” what a great term! She had been bound in half, and now she is loosed! But notice the order of progression here: Jesus saw her, called her, said, “thou art loosed...” and then, my favorite part, “laid his hands on her!” Wow! Why the hands on her? Shouldn't Jesus' words have been enough? Well, absolutely, but Jesus knew she needed to feel a touch, a personal, compassionate touch, a faith-building touch of a loving Messiah God! and....

“immediately she was made straight, and glorified God” – You see, Jesus is always more powerful than Satan. Don't forget, Satan was somehow behind her debilitating deformity! Here, we're told she immediately stood up straight AND “glorified” Jesus. Well, actually Luke said, she “glorified God” but that is exactly who Jesus proved He was – God in the flesh! Sadly, going forward, instead of wonder, worship, and faith being found in the synagogue over this tormented woman being released from the bonds of Satan, there was instead....

II. Scolding in the Synagogue

“And the ruler of the synagogue answered with indignation (Lit. - confused, perplexed, hesitant, uncertain, greatly pained, angry), because that Jesus had healed on the sabbath day, and said unto the crowd (Lit. – multitude), There are six days in which men ought to work: in them therefore come and be healed, and not on the sabbath day.” Luke 13:14

“ruler of the synagogue” – Who is this foolish man? Wow! A synagogue ruler was a layman responsible for conducting meetings, caring for the building, and supervising the teaching. He was not the teacher, but the overseer. He would have been the one who invited Jesus to speak.

“answered with indignation, because that Jesus had healed on the sabbath” – Remember, the verbs of the Greek language are a combination of action and emotions. And this is what we are seeing with the word translated “indignation.” Within this man’s anger was filled with the emotion of confusion and an uncertainty about how to handle the lady’s healing. He was a layman, a Religious Leader in training. He knew this was not parodical of the precious traditions of the elders; he had probably heard about Jesus’ disruptions of their Sabbath traditions, but he lacked the know-how to handle an amazing healing on his watch! And instead of just keeping quiet and not saying anything, a good decision when we don’t know what to say, he.....

“said unto the people, There are six days in which men ought to work: in them therefore come and be healed” – Please, pay special attention to how ridiculous this statement is! These are definitely the words of a confused, flustered man! “People, don’t you know, there are six days you can work! Come on one of those to be healed, not on the sabbath!” There are so many layers of stupid in this statement, but let’s just uncover a few:

1. Notice the **cowardly act of speaking to the people** and not to Jesus! His anger would have been toward Jesus and His healing of the woman on the Sabbath, but he indirectly addressed Jesus by speaking to the people.
2. He **told the people not to come for healing on the Sabbath!** First of all, this lady didn’t come to be healed; Jesus called her. And as far as we know, no one came for healing! There was no group waiting for a healing service; Jesus, in His compassionate mercy, called her to Himself and healed her.
3. This ruler completely **missed the wonder of the dear lady**, bound by Satan in half, being able to now stand erect, **being completely healed**. He understood Jesus could heal, but in his spiritual blindness, he saw it as a work rather than a wonderful act and power of God!

III. Ashamed in the Synagogue

“The Lord then answered him, and said, Thou hypocrite (Greek is plural – more than one person), doth not each one of you on the sabbath loose his ox or his ass from the stall, and lead him away to watering? ¹⁶And ought not this woman, being a daughter of Abraham, whom Satan hath bound, lo, these eighteen years, be loosed from this bond on the sabbath day? ¹⁷And when he had said these things, all his adversaries (more involved in the ruler’s argument with Jesus) were ashamed : and all the people rejoiced for all the glorious things that were done by him.” Luke 13:15-17

“on the sabbath loose his ox or his ass from the stall, and lead him away to watering” – The synagogue ruler may have spoken to the people, but Jesus answered him! There was a known allowance in the elders’ traditions for one to water and attend to domestic animals. Actually, a doctor could not attend to a needy person, but an animal could be cared for. Their traditions put a higher value on animals than on people in distress! Kinda sounds like the 21st century! The purpose of the Sabbath had been totally corrupted! The Sabbath and its rules were not to dictate life to man. But as Jesus said in Mark 2:27-28, “...The sabbath was made for man, and not man for the sabbath: Therefore the Son of man is Lord also of the sabbath.” Jesus was openly reclaiming the sabbath by every one of His sabbath healings! And in this passage clearly says so.....

“ought not this woman....be loosed from this bond on the sabbath day” – Every time Jesus healed on the sabbath, the Religious Leaders never saw God’s work being done, but their rules broken! To Jesus, this bound woman was His obligation to heal, just as animal owners saw watering their animals as an obligation! Don’t miss Jesus’ use of the word “loose!” As man would “loose” and animal to water it, so He needed to “loose” the bondage of this woman. Though not all English translations use “loose,” it is the same Greek word! Here, Jesus is highlighting the hypocrisy of the Religious Ruling class, and His logic was completely in line with the principle of the sabbath being a blessing, not a burden! And the people, all the people, understood it, because....

“all his adversaries were ashamed” – Jesus not only silenced the stupid in the synagogue but also put the “religionists” to shame. Jesus’ answer made them feel the foolishness of their words and attitudes! So, while the healed woman was glorifying God, and the ruler and those sympathetic to his argument were feeling ashamed...

“all the people rejoiced” → “all the glorious things that were done by him” – Lots of emotions in this synagogue that day. And here is one more, the people rejoiced over Jesus’ work of healing! The people realized Jesus had done a “glorious thing,” but Jesus had a lesson for them all about...

IV. Growth in the Kingdom Oh, I wish I had a dollar for every time I have heard or read about the occasional “randomness” of Jesus’ teaching. But nothing is further from the truth. As we study Jesus, we must realize that within a teaching session, there are connecting factors to bring growth and understanding to His listeners! It is our responsibility to carefully seek the connections and apply them to our hearts! Here we have two repeated parables of Jesus. He gave these parables over a year before in Galilee! They are found in Matthew 13:31-32/Mark 4:30-32. At that time, Matthew 13:51 tells us that the disciples understood the meaning of these parables. So why did Jesus repeat them? The Judean crowds to understand the kingdom of God! So, Luke simply says, “Then said he,” and Jesus drew a breath and added....

- Parable of the Mustard Seed

“Then said he, Unto what is the kingdom of God like? and whereunto shall I resemble (Lit. compare) it? ¹⁹It is like a grain of mustard seed, which a man took, and cast into his garden; and it grew, and waxed a great tree; and the fowls of the air lodged in the branches of it.” Luke 13:18-19

“mustard seed” – This is speaking of a black mustard seed. At the time of Christ, a black mustard seed was the smallest seed planted in a domestic garden. The plant’s seeds were used as a condiment, and the leaves as a vegetable. It is obvious that the main driving point of this parable is the extensive growth of a mustard plant in one growing season, from the smallest seed to the largest plant in the garden – 10-15 feet! Luke even calls the full-grown mustard plant a “tree,” but in the purest sense, we would instead call it a bush with a stem 4-6 inches thick! In the same way, I think of the growth of sunflowers or of field corn – so tall and strong in one season!

Jesus begins this parable with a direct comment that it is a comparison to the kingdom of God. Just as a tiny mustard seed grows to a very large bush, big enough for even birds to come and make a nest, so does the kingdom of God. It started with a very small beginning, but it will eventually be like a large plant that provides shelter and protection and benefits many. At the time Jesus gave this parable, His work seemed small and insignificant; it was making little visible headway. The Jews had expected a grand rise to world domination under their Messiah, but Jesus was saying, “Don’t be disheartened, it will grow and have a worldwide impact!”

At the time of the early church, believers were already having a great impact on the world! Acts 17:6, "...these that have turned the world upside down are come hither also."

One of the huge issues on the minds of Christ's followers was the great difference they were seeing between Jesus, whom they believed was the Messiah, and the Messiah they had learned about from the teachers of their day! Jesus didn't look, act, or teach like the Messiah they had heard about. That day, with this parable, He simply said, "A small beginning will end great!" The second parable about leaven Jesus gave much the same interpretation as the mustard seed!

- Parable of the Leaven

"And again he said, Whereunto shall I liken (Lit. - compare) the kingdom of God? ²¹It is like leaven, which a woman took and hid in three measures of meal (Gk - measurement *sata*), till the whole was leavened." Luke 13:20-21

"leaven" – Here, Jesus is using the baking of bread, a common event from the lives of His listeners, to make a comparison with the kingdom of God! Leaven is generally anything that makes dough or batter rise; it causes a foaming action that lightens and softens the mixture. In this one-sentence parable, the leaven is like a sourdough-type clump that is mixed with flour to make bread. Though the measurement of *sata*, a Greek word, evolved over the centuries, most scholars believed Jesus was speaking about a woman's task of baking a week's portion of bread for her large family. She would mix this lump of sourdough into the flour, and soon the whole portion would be leavened! This past weekend was Mother's Day, and my family was together at my daughter Holly's home. Over the past several weeks, Holly has been proudly telling us about a new skill she has developed – the art of sourdough bread. In the middle of the afternoon, after a fabulous sit-down meal for 18 of us plus yummy desserts, Holly popped two loaves of sourdough bread in the oven for all of us to try! We were far from hungry, but the great smells, the beautiful light-brown crusts, and the steaming, light texture drew everyone into the kitchen for a sample or two! Holly told us more than we wanted to know about all the mixing, and adding, and pouring, and waiting, that was needed for her precious bread to rise and turn into the beautiful, tasty result! And here, I love that Jesus is using this woman's domestic task to illustrate His kingdom! A Rabbi in His day would never draw from the life of a woman, but we know Jesus was very different in this way. He had women followers, talked one-on-one with ladies, and actively sought to comfort, teach, and minister to them. Using a female-directed parable absolutely fits His character. Jesus ministered, saw women as important in the kingdom, and actively included them!

In this interpretation, leaven is seen simply as an influencing agent. Though the lump of dough seems small and insignificant, the leaven permeates everything quickly and quietly, much as what was taught in the parable of the mustard seed. There, we saw external growth, while the leaven showed an irreversible internal force. Again, at this time, the kingdom was not to be a big military overthrow, but an influence that would transform the hearts of those who would believe in Jesus! Warren Wiersbe had this to say about the interpretation of these parables, "By using these parables, Jesus is saying, 'You Jewish Religious Leaders may hold to your dead traditions and oppose the truth, but God's living kingdom will still increase. Satan will be defeated!'" p. 182

Believers' Application:

1. Why did Jesus heal this lady in the synagogue? What do we learn from this event?

- Compassion for this suffering woman – Jesus knew every hour this woman had suffered over the past eighteen years, and He cared for her. She was in her place in the synagogue, not having come to seek out

healing, but to hear from God. Knowing her heart, Jesus called to her, spoke the word, and tenderly laid His hands on her, and she was loosed from her bondage. Because He had compassion on her. How's your compassion toward others? Are you willing to engage with the needy? Take time out of what you are doing and help others? Do you love and show compassion like Jesus? Here's Paul's teaching concerning the believer's life with other believers and unbelievers! **Col. 3:12-17**

- Opportunity to teach concerning the Sabbath – Jesus used this last recorded time in the synagogue to give another lesson contrasting the Jews' traditions and His Kingdom. While the Jews loved their carefully prescribed rules and regulations for almost every aspect of the sabbath, Jesus desired the truth of God and His character to be highlighted. How do you view God's prescribed day for Bible preaching, Sunday? Do you see the preaching of God's Word as important? Let's remember what was taught in Hebrews 10:25 about the importance of Sunday and church involvement. "Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together as the manner of some is; but exhorting one another:" Is that important to you, too?
- Visual to Jesus' desire for Israel – Jesus' desire for Israel was for them to "walk uprightly" with God. The law was given to them so they might be holy before God, knowing His ways. Yet they disobeyed God's commandments and rejected loving and serving Him. But He was willing to heal them as He healed this woman. Just as Jesus called her to Himself and she came in faith, He was calling Israel to come for healing, to walk uprightly" with their God. Throughout His ministry, Jesus actively called the people to come to Him. He desired to give them "rest for their souls." Yet, they would not.

Have you come to Jesus? Has His love for you driven your soul to Him? Just like this lady was bent in half, the Psalmist says sin does the same to our souls. **Read Psalm 38:4-6.** Only Jesus can set you free! Let's finish with Jesus' words concerning this freedom in Christ!

2. For just over 2000 years, the kingdom of God has expanded and influenced the world. Christ's little humble band of followers grew in their faith and saw Jesus die, be resurrected, and ascend back to His Father. Then they received the power of the indwelling Holy Spirit and went out and changed the world forever! We have the same Spirit and power if we believe and are born-again followers of Jesus. It is our time to influence the world around us! Let's be reminded of our mandate from Christ!

Matthew 4:18-20 – **Follow Christ and fish for men!**

Matthew 5:14-16 – **Influence the world like salt (preserves, heals, adds flavor) and light (dispels darkness)!**

Matthew 22:37-39 – **Love God and fellow man!**

Matthew 28:18-20 – **Go out and give the gospel to the world!**

Luke 9:23-24 – **Be willing to sacrifice to follow Christ!**

John 13:34-35 – **As believers love one another!**

John 15:16-17 – **Bear fruit in your life and love one another!**

Let's finish with more words of Jesus concerning the freedom we all can have in Him. John 8:31-36

Ladies Studying Jesus Homework – Vol. 6 #31

Read Luke 13:11-21. Be prepared for your final 10-point quiz of the year!

1. In what kind of building did this miracle take place? **Synagogue v. 10**
 2. How long was the woman afflicted? **18 years v. 11, 16**
 3. What was her affliction? **She was bent over and could not stand up straight. v. 11**
 4. T or F She stood in line to be healed for 7 hours. **False v. 12**
 5. T or F Jesus spoke the word, “and immediately she was made straight.” **False v. 13**
 6. Who did the ruler of the synagogue speak to? **The people v. 14**
 7. Jesus spoke about the traditions of the elders, allowing the care of animals on the Sabbath. What were Jews allowed to do for their animals on the Sabbath? **Lead them to water v. 15**
 8. and 9. Name the two parables’ topics that Jesus gave in the synagogue that day. **Mustard Seed and Leaven**
 10. What were these two topics compared to? **The kingdom of God**
- Bonus: How many measures of meal did the woman take? **Three**