

45. Jesus Cured a Cripple on the Sabbath

In our last topic, we saw that we want to help our physical and spiritual children learn to understand that God is gracious and shows His mercy. He is even patient with those who are very evil and gives them many opportunities to repent before He brings judgment upon them. In our topic today, we are going to see that Jesus also took the opportunity to show mercy to a woman that had been crippled for eighteen years.

One Sabbath day, Jesus was teaching in one of the synagogues. A woman was there that day who had suffered with a crippled back for eighteen years. This crippled back caused the woman to be bent over so that she could not stand up straight. The verses in Luke 13:10-13 do not tell us whether this was a physical problem or a problem caused by a demon. However, since it mentions a spirit of infirmity, a demon is a possibility. Whatever caused this crippled back, it had made many things difficult for the woman for eighteen years.

Jesus saw the woman and immediately showed His compassion to her. Jesus asked the woman to come to Him. Then, He said to her “Woman, you are loosed from your infirmity.” The word translated “loosed” means *to be released or to be set free*. Then, Jesus laid His hands on the woman. At that very moment, the woman was able to stand up straight. She was no longer bent over. Then, the woman glorified God and gave praise to Him for healing her. The word translated “glorified” means *to honor or to express praise to*. Here, we see that this woman recognized that her healing was the work of God. 1 Corinthians 10:31 says, “Therefore, whether you eat or drink, or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God.” That was certainly what the woman did that day as she gave glory to God for what He had done in her life.

However, not everyone was pleased that she was healed. Luke 13:14-17 says, “But the ruler of the synagogue answered with indignation, because Jesus had healed on the Sabbath; and he said to the crowd, ‘There are six days on which men ought to work; therefore come and be healed on them, and not on the Sabbath day.’ The Lord then answered him and said, ‘Hypocrite! Does not each one of you on the Sabbath loose his ox or donkey from the stall, and lead it away to water it? So ought not this woman, being a daughter of Abraham, whom Satan has bound--think of it--for eighteen years, be loosed from this bond on the Sabbath?’ And when He said these things, all His adversaries were put to shame; and all the multitude rejoiced for all the glorious things that were done by Him.” Here, we see two very different responses.

The ruler of the synagogue was the man in each synagogue who was responsible to lead the synagogue. For the Sabbath day services, it was his responsibility to select the various readers of the Old Testament and also the teachers that would explain the Word of God in the service. Each Sabbath, he would select seven to nine men and teenage boys to read passages from the Old Testament. He would also select those who would be the teachers in the synagogue. We see that the ruler of the synagogue was very displeased when he saw that Jesus had healed the woman. This man had no compassion for a woman who had a great physical need for eighteen years.

This man wanted to control the people in the synagogue by imposing his rules on them. As a

result, he told the people in the synagogue, “There are six days on which men ought to work; therefore come and be healed on them, and not on the Sabbath day.” This man was actually accusing Jesus of working on the Sabbath because He spoke the words to release this woman from her infirmity. This is a good example of one form of legalism, because legalism often replaces God’s Word with man’s rules. Micah 6:8 says, “He has shown you, O man, what is good; and what does the Lord require of you but to do justly, to love mercy, and to walk humbly with your God?” God is looking for people who are just, merciful and walk in humbleness; those things are to be done every day, because they show what is in the heart.

As a result, Jesus told the ruler of the synagogue that he was a hypocrite. The word translated “hypocrite” spoke of a play actor that said one thing one minute and did the opposite the next minute. Jesus told the ruler of the synagogue that he untied his ox and donkey from their stall and took them to the water on the Sabbath. Here, we see that the ruler of the synagogue was condemning Jesus for speaking words on the Sabbath that would heal a woman that had a crippled back for eighteen years. At the same time, on the Sabbath, he was leading his animals to get water so that he would not need to carry the water the previous day and store it. It was certainly more work to untie animals and lead them to the well where the city or village got its water than to speak the words that would heal the woman who had the crippled back.

Then, Jesus spoke about the woman. Jesus said that the woman was also a daughter of Abraham. That meant that the blessing given to Abraham also applied to her. Satan had kept this woman in bondage with the crippled back for eighteen years. Suddenly, the ruler of the synagogue and all of those who had agreed with him were put to shame. The words of Jesus revealed the condition of their hearts. Jeremiah 17:9 says, “The heart is deceitful above all *things*, and desperately wicked; who can know it?” Proverbs 4:23 says, “Keep your heart with all diligence, for out of it *spring* the issues of life”. Jesus made it clear that those who were opposing the healing of the woman by Jesus needed to examine their hearts and get their hearts right with God.

In contrast, the rest of the people were filled with joy as they saw what Jesus had done for the woman. They realized that what had happened was a great miracle and that it had been done by God. The word translated “rejoiced” means *to be very glad or to be filled with joy*. This word is used to describe the apostles when they were beaten for speaking about Jesus. Acts 5:40-42 says, “And they agreed with him, and when they had called for the apostles and beaten *them*, they commanded that they should not speak in the name of Jesus, and let them go. So they departed from the presence of the council, rejoicing that they were counted worthy to suffer shame for His name. And daily in the temple, and in every house, they did not cease teaching and preaching Jesus as the Christ.” The apostles were filled with joy for the privilege of suffering for Jesus since He had given His life for them. If our greatest desire is to bring glory to God, we will also have that same joy when we suffer for the sake of Jesus.

Then, Jesus again explained what the kingdom of God is like. Luke 13:18-21 says, “Then He said, ‘What is the kingdom of God like? And to what shall I compare it? It is like a mustard seed, which a man took and put in his garden; and it grew and became a large tree, and the birds of the air nested in its branches.’ And again He said, ‘To what shall I liken the kingdom of God? It is like

leaven, which a woman took and hid in three measures of meal till it was all leavened.” Jesus said that the kingdom of God is like a mustard seed because a mustard seed is very small when it is planted. In fact, it was considered the smallest of all seeds. Matthew 13:32 says, “Which indeed is the least of all the seeds; but when it is grown it is greater than the herbs and becomes a tree, so that the birds of the air come and nest in its branches.” The word translated “least” means *smallest in size, amount or influence*. However, in the area around Israel, the mustard seed would grow about ten feet high and would have branches large enough for birds to sit on.

In Matthew 17:20, Jesus told the disciples, “Because of your unbelief; for assuredly, I say to you, if you have faith as a mustard seed, you will say to this mountain, “Move from here to there,” and it will move; and nothing will be impossible for you.” Jesus made it clear that a person does not have to have a big faith to do the impossible because it is not that person that does it. Notice the following difference. We can either say, “I have a big faith in God” or we can say, “I have very little faith, but that faith is in a big God.” Even if we have very little faith but that faith is in a big God, He is able to do the impossible in and through our lives.

Jesus also gave a second illustration of the kingdom of God. When a woman makes bread, she uses just a small amount of yeast. However, that small amount of yeast will spread throughout the bread dough and cause the entire piece of dough to increase in size. That is why Jesus compared the kingdom of God to the yeast in the dough. When Jesus returned to heaven, there were only about a hundred and twenty disciples in Jerusalem. Acts 1:15 says, “And in those days Peter stood up in the midst of the disciples (altogether the number of names was about a hundred and twenty)...”

In addition, there was a larger group of brethren, probably disciples in Galilee. 1 Corinthians 15:6 says, “After that He was seen by over five hundred brethren at once, of whom the greater part remain to the present, but some have fallen asleep.” However, the total of both groups was still a very small group. Yet through that small group of followers of Jesus, the kingdom of God has grown to include people from throughout the earth. This is why we have had the opportunity to hear the Gospel.

Jesus taught many things as He visited the various synagogues. He used even the opposition of people like the ruler of the synagogue to teach His disciples and the other people lessons like justice, mercy and humility. We also want to help our physical and spiritual children learn to apply the Word of God to the everyday situations that happen in their lives. May the Lord richly bless you as you help your children to know, understand and then learn to apply the Word of God to their lives.