

Bible Study Guide: Week of 8-15-2022

1. Read through the passage below
2. Read my notes and commentary
3. Read the questions at the end and ponder or discuss with others

Pastor Andrew

Luke 13:10-17

¹⁰Now [Jesus] was teaching in one of the synagogues on the sabbath. ¹¹And just then there appeared a woman with a spirit that had crippled her for eighteen years. She was bent over and was quite unable to stand up straight. ¹²When Jesus saw her, he called her over and said, “Woman, you are set free from your ailment.” ¹³When he laid his hands on her, immediately she stood up straight and began praising God. ¹⁴But the leader of the synagogue, indignant because Jesus had cured on the sabbath, kept saying to the crowd, “There are six days on which work ought to be done; come on those days and be cured, and not on the sabbath day.” ¹⁵But the Lord answered him and said, “You hypocrites! Does not each of you on the sabbath untie his ox or his donkey from the manger, and lead it away to give it water? ¹⁶And ought not this woman, a daughter of Abraham whom Satan bound for eighteen long years, be set free from this bondage on the sabbath day?” ¹⁷When he said this, all his opponents were put to shame; and the entire crowd was rejoicing at all the wonderful things that he was doing.

¹⁰Now [Jesus] was teaching in one of the synagogues on the sabbath. ¹¹And just then there appeared a woman with a spirit that had crippled her for eighteen years. She was bent over and was quite unable to stand up straight. ¹²When Jesus saw her, he called her over and said, “Woman, you are set free from your ailment.” ¹³When he laid his hands on her, immediately she stood up straight and began praising God. ¹⁴But the leader of the synagogue, indignant because Jesus had cured on the sabbath, kept saying to the crowd, “There are six days on which work ought to be done; come on those days and be cured, and not on the sabbath day.”

Luke last told us of Jesus’ teaching in a synagogue on the sabbath back in chapter 4. There, Luke told us going to the synagogue on the sabbath was Jesus’ “custom.” This, then, is one of many times Jesus attended and taught in a synagogue on the sabbath. There in chapter 4, Jesus’ opening sermon was based on Isaiah 61, specifically the passage which reads, “The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me to bring good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim release to the captives and recovery of sight to the blind, to let the oppressed go free, to proclaim the year of the Lord’s favor.” This is, in essence, Jesus’ mission statement in Luke’s gospel. His whole ministry will about doing this work foretold by Isaiah.

Though Jesus attracted praise upon saying that “this has been fulfilled in your hear” at that time, the people soon turned against Jesus. Then later in the chapter (4:31ff) Jesus teaches at another synagogue and cast a demon out of a man in attendance there. That story has a few parallels with the one here in chapter 13, but some differences, as well. Also after casting out the demon, Jesus went and healed Peter’s mother-in-law who was sick with a fever that sabbath day. There, the religious leaders did not challenge Jesus either because they didn’t know about the healing or because in some Jewish communities emergency healings for sudden illness were permitted on the sabbath, whereas healings for chronic illnesses would not be allowed. Peter’s mother-in-law had an acute illness; the woman portrayed here in chapter 13 suffered from a chronic illness. The illness is described as lasting 18 years ties in with the mention of 18 people killed in a tower collapse earlier in chapter 13.

This healing is different from many of Jesus’ healings in that the woman doesn’t directly request assistance. She merely “appears.” Jesus is the one who summons her and offers her freedom. That word is key—freedom. This is the proverbial “release to the captives” as described in Isaiah 61 and in Jesus’ sermon in Luke 4. The woman’s

response is typical of those helped and healed by Jesus in the gospel of Luke—she immediately is made well and begins praising God. The synagogue leader, however, concerned with good order and with the proper observance of the law, rebukes Jesus and implores the crowd to keep the sabbath properly by not requesting healing on the sabbath.

¹⁵But the Lord answered him and said, “You hypocrites! Does not each of you on the sabbath untie his ox or his donkey from the manger, and lead it away to give it water? ¹⁶And ought not this woman, a daughter of Abraham whom Satan bound for eighteen long years, be set free from this bondage on the sabbath day?” ¹⁷When he said this, all his opponents were put to shame; and the entire crowd was rejoicing at all the wonderful things that he was doing.

Although the synagogue leader is right to be concerned with proper observance of the law and proper keeping of the sabbath, he misses the larger point that Jesus makes clear: A daughter of Abraham has been set free to praise God. Is not that worth working for on a sabbath? Jesus reasons from lesser to greater: Of course any of the people there would help a “bound” animal on the sabbath. Why would they deny this “woman” and “daughter of Abraham” the same dignity and help that they would provide a mere animal? Jesus is pointing out that mercy and wholeness outweighs considerations of keeping the sabbath, as important as that commandment is. What truly matters is the intention of the commandment—indeed, of all of the commandments. The intention is that God be honored and praised and that people be made whole. That mission was accomplished by Jesus here not by rigidly applying the law, but rather by bending it in order to do the right thing.

Discussion/Reflection Questions:

- 1. Why do you think Jesus chose to intervene in this woman’s life when she herself didn’t approach him for help as people often did?**
- 2. What do you think was the synagogue leader’s motivation in telling the crowds to come another day for healing? Do you think he had good intentions or bad intentions?**
- 3. Why do you think Luke and Jesus characterize this woman as having “a spirit that had crippled her” and as “bound by Satan”?**