November 8, 2026 - Luke 13:10-21 - "Liberty for Captive Hearts"

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Date: 08 November 2026

Preacher: Rick Deschenes

[0:00] Please turn to Luke 13. We're going to be reading verses 10 to 21.!

When Jesus saw her, he called her over and said to her, Woman, you are freed from your disability.
And he laid his hands on her, and immediately she was made straight, and she glorified God.
But the ruler of the synagogue, indignant because Jesus had healed on the Sabbath, said to the people, There are six days in which work ought to be done. Come on those days and be healed, and not on the Sabbath day.
And the Lord answered him, You hypocrites! Does not each of you on the Sabbath untie his ox or his donkey from the manger and lead it away to water it?
And ought not this woman, a daughter of Abraham, whom Satan bound for eighteen years, be loosed from this bond on the Sabbath day? As he said these things, all his adversaries were put to shame, and all the people rejoiced at all the glorious things that were done by him.
[1:21] He said, Therefore, what is the kingdom of God like? And to what shall I compare it? It is like a grain of mustard seed that a man took and sowed in his garden, and it grew and became a tree.

And the birds of the air made nests in its branches. And again he said, To what shall I compare the kingdom of God? It is like leaven that a woman took and hid in three measures of flour, until it was all leavened.
This is the word of the Lord. Thanks be to God. All right. You ever dissected a butterfly?
Yes. Yes? You ever try to put it back together? No? Right? It's kind of how I feel when I'm preparing a sermon.
Taking God's word, beautiful butterfly, dissecting it into little pieces, and then trying to put it back together into something that makes sense.
[2:26] But I've accepted it will never be as beautiful as the butterfly I started with. But I bring this up because as we look at these verses, it can be easy to lose sight of the beauty here in these verses.

Right? Lose sight of this woman, her 18 years of disability, that for us passed by in a moment, and are forgotten as we move on to the parable about mustard seeds and leaven.
And, but, there's a woman here who suffered for 18 years. And Jesus was in the synagogue like I am here teaching.
And he saw her, and he just stopped what he did. Interrupted his teaching, called her forward, and healed her. I think part of the reason he did is, that was the point of his message.
The point of his message was his power to heal, his power to restore, and more importantly, his power to change not only the physical creation, but the spiritual one.
[3:50] And so, as we explore these verses, I don't want to lose sight of this woman, or Jesus' compassion. As an introduction, I want to let you know of the custom in Jesus' day, that a traveling rabbi visiting a town would often be invited, as the guest speaker, to read the scripture for the day, and to expound on its meaning, to teach the meaning.

And if we recall from more than a year ago, when we were in Luke 4.14, we see that Jesus starts his ministry, traveling from town to town, teaching in the synagogues, and being glorified by all.
And then, a little bit later, he goes to Nazareth, he goes into the synagogue, on the Sabbath day, in Luke 4.18, and he reads from Isaiah, Isaiah, the spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me to proclaim good news to the poor.

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He has sent me to proclaim liberty to the captives, and recovery of sight to the blind, to set at liberty those who are oppressed, to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor.
And then he said, today this scripture has been fulfilled in your hearing, meaning that now is the year of the Lord's favor, and that his ministry to the poor, the captives, the blind, and the oppressed has begun.
[5:25] In Luke 7.21, we see that he healed many people of diseases, and plagues, and evil spirits, and on many who were blind, he bestowed sight.

Throughout Luke's account of the road to Jerusalem, we find many more instances of Jesus healing, and teaching in synagogues.
We see many thousands of people crowding together around him, trying to touch the hem of his garment, or digging through the roof of a house to get to him, in hope of receiving healing.
But we're also, perhaps like many, frustrated by how limited his effect was. He was one man in one place at one time, and he could only heal, it seemed, those who made it before his attention.
But what I think Luke wants us to see in 13.10, or perhaps to pave the way to see in the Gospel of Acts, is that his ministry was just the humble beginning of a world-shattering revelation that's set to transform the very ends of the earth.
[6:49] In these verses, we'll see how the ministry of Jesus and those who follow him liberates captive hearts and fills the earth with the glory of God.

Father, grant us open ears to hear your word and to be moved. Christ Jesus, grant us soft hearts to receive your word where you will nourish it and it will grow.
Holy Spirit, grant us transformed minds to discern what is good and acceptable and perfect. Amen.
My first point, I've titled Liberty to the Captives, and we're going to be looking at verses 10 through 13.
We start out in our verses today with Jesus again teaching in one of the synagogues on the Sabbath day. This was his custom. And as he was teaching, as we saw, he noticed a woman somewhere amongst the congregation and she had an obvious disability that prevented her from standing up straight.
This wasn't just a little hunched over back. It was a deformity that bent her over entirely to where she couldn't stand up straight.
[8:24] She was constantly uncomfortable or in pain. And so, he couldn't help but notice her. When he sees her, he interrupts his teaching.

He calls her forward. I imagine this would have drawn a lot of attention because in her condition, she probably moved quite slowly and it would have taken her quite a while to walk to him.
It leaves me wondering why he didn't walk to her, but I think he wanted the attention to be where it was. Reflecting on this interaction, a few things stand out.
First, as is most painful to us, corruption exists in God's creation. This is a reality we've reflected on at great lengths last week in the first part of chapter 13 and also throughout the book of Habakkuk that we've spent a lot of time in recently.
But we see this here, that God's creation is corrupt, that this woman had a disabling spirit for 18 years. We learn a little bit later in verse 16 that she was bound by Satan and so prevented from standing.
[9:49] And we learn from this that she had experienced a lifetime of pain because she was born into a fallen world. Nothing is mentioned about why she was bound.

Nothing is mentioned about anything she had done or her parents had done or the people around her had done. simply that she was bound. We must remember that the fall meant not only suffering but a war between the children of God and his people.
Back in Genesis 3.15 when God cursed the serpent he put as it's written in the English or literally ordained enmity, war between humanity and Satan.
he put us at war with Satan and this is a good thing. How much worse would it be if he made us his allies? The fall was a curse with a promise.
Right? Romans 8.20 Paul writes for the creation was subjected to futility not willingly but because of him who subjected it in hope that the creation itself will be set free from its bondage to corruption and obtain the freedom of the glory of the children of God.
[11:17] The hope is freedom from bondage to corruption. Not only that of a fallen creation but the corruption of sinful desire itself.

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This is our hope. And in these verses as demonstrated by Jesus we see that it is him who brings this freedom from the bondage of corruption.
He interrupted his teaching to free this hurting woman from her disability demonstrating that he is in fact the fulfillment of righteousness and the undoing of the curse.
Where Jesus is present suffering finds purpose and brokenness is made whole. His ministry was to teach good news which is what he is doing on the Sabbath in the synagogue and it was to bring freedom to the oppressed which is what he did for this woman.
After 18 years of suffering suffering that we really can't grasp unless we've experienced it ourselves this woman was free.
[12:32] I'm sure in those years she had prayed many times for healing questioned why God would allow her such suffering struggled with pain and discomfort but now her immediate response simply to praise God.

She had seen first hand that Jesus has command over creation but also authority over disabling spirits and so she glorified God for what Christ had done.
We see in these verses where that where Jesus is present there is freedom from bondage and in this God is glorified. I wonder when you see a person with disability with disease do you feel a sense of compassion?
Do you feel a sense of compassion a desire to see them healed? At least in my experience and hopefully in yours too the spirit of Christ within us it moves us to compassion.
Right? Sometimes viscerally in a way that we can physically feel in our chest and our stomach.
Right? It's a powerful experience to be moved by something so deep that it feels foreign.
[14:01] and it can be frustrating to see disability and corruption in the world and wonder why doesn't Jesus just heal everyone?

It doesn't seem like it would be that difficult for him to just speak a word and everyone to be healed.
Why does he heal some and not others? I'm not sure.
I don't have a good answer for that. But I am confident that it is not because some are more deserving than others or because some have more faith than others.
This lady's worth, her faith are never mentioned in Luke 13. but I'm reminded of Exodus 33 19 where the Lord is talking to Moses and he says that I will be gracious to whom I will be gracious and will show mercy on whom I will show mercy.
It is God's sovereign choice to heal who he will and when he will and we trust that in this he is merciful and gracious.
[15:26] But we do learn something from this reality, this reality of corruption. We're reminded that we are physical beings created in the image of God and that we can't see the spiritual world with our human eyes.

Deformity and disability are a physical reminder of the brokenness of this fallen world, of the consequence of sin. They're a glimpse of a spiritual reality that becomes visible in the physical world.
And they find purpose in Jesus who heals the broken and through this brings glory to God. I'm reminded of what he said in John 11 4, what Jesus said regarding Lazarus, this illness does not lead to death, it is for the glory of God so that the Son of God may be glorified through it.
And then what happens to Lazarus? He dies. Right? He means it does not lead to the second death, does not lead to destruction, destruction.
It leads to life. As we reflect on this lady's condition and apply this to our own lives, yes, we do and should pray that God will heal the physical bodies when we have disability, disease.
[17:03] We trust that he will and we praise him when he does. But we also praise him when he does not. We praise him when he does not heal because through this he has opened our eyes to a spiritual reality that our flesh cannot see.

And when he is gracious, that brings us, as we saw last week, to repentance, to faith, to trust in Christ. Yes, there is suffering for this lady 18 years.
But even if she alone or one other believes, then it was good because God is good. Moving into my second point, I've titled this an unarmed opponent.
In verses 14 through 17, we see a surprising response from the ruler of the synagogue. We find him angry, not praising God, but angry that Jesus had healed on the Sabbath, furious that Jesus would break the Sabbath tradition by doing work that is forbidden.

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But more than this, what we really see is that he feels threatened by Jesus. Something about Jesus threatens him. we see that in this ruler's mind, in verse 14, strict observance to the law was more important than healing this suffering woman.
[18:43] He says, it would be better, I'm paraphrasing or putting it in my own words, it would be better if she just came back tomorrow, right? The Sabbath traditions are important and her injury is not life threatening.

Why does she have to come today and cause this scene? He says, there are six other days when work can be done, why must you come on the Sabbath to be healed?
Frustrated at her, it seems. In fact, healing was never forbidden in the Sabbath law. It was by tradition listed as one of the 39 types of work that could not be done on the Sabbath.
The only exception, life threatening injuries can be treated on the Sabbath. In other words, urgent care and emergency department can be open but not the clinic, right?
But this was never the intent of the command regarding the Sabbath. And so Jesus points out the hypocrisy of this leader. They had found loopholes in the law where it served their own interest.
[19:51] The example Jesus gives is you can't untie a permanent knot on the Sabbath day, but you can untie a temporary one. So if your ox or donkey is tied up on the Sabbath and the water runs out and you don't want them to be a little bit thirsty for the rest of the day, you can untie them and lead them to water.

After all, it would be forbidden. Actually, you would be put to death for carrying water to the animal but not the other way around. It's quite ridiculous when you think about it, right?
But that's Jesus' rebuke. This leader was more concerned with the letter of the law than with loving others. He demanded strict legalism even if that meant this woman could not be loosed, literally untied until tomorrow.
Jesus uses a play on words here, reminding them that she can be untied, that's not forbidden by your law, even if it is the Sabbath. The hypocrisy of this leader was evident.
He was never worried about honoring the Sabbath. He instead was opposing Jesus. He came up with whatever excuse he could to oppose Jesus' ministry.
[21:13] He felt threatened by Jesus because Jesus refused to uphold the hypocritical legalism of the day and he put this ruler's power in question, especially as we'll see a little bit later when the people praise Jesus for what he does.

We'll see in Luke 14 3 that this same interaction happens again. Jesus asked the Pharisees, is it lawful on the Sabbath to do good or to do harm, to save life or to kill?
But they were silent. If you look at the law, not the law of Moses, but the law of the Pharisees, the governing principle behind the law is saving a soul.
I was going to say it in Hebrew, but I decided it's better to just say it in English. Saving a soul. It's the foundational principle of the Jewish law. And so what does Jesus do when they give no answer, when they were silent?
He answers his own question by healing on the Sabbath. He shows compassion even when that meant breaking from tradition and disobeying hypocritical rulers.
[22:34] I want to focus on this last part of verse 16 where he really asks a rhetorical question.

Ought not this woman, a daughter of Abraham whom Satan bound for 18 years, be loosed from this bond on the Sabbath day?
He reminds this ruler of a couple things. She's a daughter of Abraham, a sister in culture, worthy of your compassion.
She was bound for 18 years. Shouldn't you be compassionate? Right? And who was it who bound her?
Satan. Shouldn't you be rejoicing that the power of Satan has been overthrown? But in this, Jesus demonstrates that regardless of the day of the week, he alone has authority over creation and over Satan, who he came to crush.
[23:54] We see that receiving this rebuke in verse 17, all his adversaries were put to shame. All his adversaries were put to shame.

Not only this hypocritical ruler, but also Satan was put to shame. And that witnessing Jesus' authority over both creation and Satan, the people rejoiced at the glorious things that Jesus had done.

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And so in this sharp exchange between Jesus and the ruler, we're reminded what stood out to me, that the law of God is an expression of love for God and love for others, as we saw in Luke 10, 27. The law is love for God and love for others. This legalism had granted the Pharisees limited fleeting authority over the people of God, but their hypocrisy only served to make evident for everyone to see the true power of Jesus.
And so for you, for me, for us today, have you put tradition before compassion? Maybe not now, maybe in the past, maybe tempted in the future.
[25:25] Hypocrisy remains a battle for Christians as it did for the Pharisees. We are tempted to elevate strict adherence to tradition over love of God and love of others.

Perhaps we seek a sense of righteousness before God by obeying the law of God and the church, and yet in doing this, we manage to neglect the poor, the captive, blind, and the oppressed that Christ has sent us to serve.
Jesus calls out our hypocrisy when we neglect the hurting in order to satisfy the comfortable. Yes, our tradition is important to us.
The law of God was important to Jesus. Jesus does not expect us to break or even bend the law of God by no means, Paul would say.
But I think he expects us to discern through eyes of compassion what is the will of God, what is acceptable and perfect. He expects us to be watchful, to stand firm in faith, to act courageously, to be strong.
[26:38] And as 1 Corinthians 16, 14 says, let all that you do be done in love. when faced with a decision on which traditions and doctrines are primary, no room for compromise, and which are secondary, matters of debate, when we make these decisions, let all that we do be done in love of God and love for others.

Now, this is the direct context of these verses today, but I think we could also apply this to the opposite.
When we elevate worldly traditions, the traditions of the culture, and use the same as an excuse to neglect those whom Christ called us to serve.
Now, clearly in these verses, tradition has gone too far. when we refuse healing to a woman tortured for 18 years in order to keep up appearances, but in a more subtle way, I think we refuse healing to lost sinners when we act hypocritically, when we live like the world for six days a week, and then act like Christians on Sunday.
We live as hypocrites in the world when we proclaim the good news to one another on Sunday, but not to the unborn children of God on Monday. And we teach the world that Christianity is little more than a social club for the self-righteous.
[28:30] Instead, we ought to be salt and light in the world with the same love and compassion and mercy and godliness on display every day of the week.

Or as R.C. Sproul would say, a woman bent over in half can be made straight. A culture twisted and distorted in half can be turned right side up when the people of God become the people of God.
Jesus calls us to proclaim good news, implore the lost to be reconciled to God, to see the hurting in their infliction while keeping ourselves unstained from the world.
Turning to the third section, I've titled this A Little Leaven, R.C. Sproul's sermon that I just quoted from. If you want to go look it up, it's on these same verses.
As expected, it's fantastic. Turning now to Luke 13, 18-21, Jesus ends his teaching with a parable about mustard seeds and sourdough starter.
[29:55] The two parables we'll see are parallel and they reinforce the same idea. The repetition indicates emphasis and the parallel structure reveals a small difference.

We notice that the seed is planted with care in a garden where it is protected and nourished until it grows and blesses the birds with a place to make a nest.
This mustard seed was a common simile in Jesus teaching. He uses the mustard seed in reference to faith as well. But it indicates something very small.
It's pretty tiny and perhaps valuable. After all, seeds were not as abundant as they are in our day. You couldn't just go to the gardening section and buy a bunch.
You had to preserve them from last year in order to have some for this year. But we see that the small seed grows into a tree that provides a place for many birds to nest.

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[31:09] And it's likened to the kingdom of God, which starts out small and grows to bless many. The leaven is similarly taken and placed with care into the flower, protected and nourished until it spreads to all of the flower.

Leaven is another common simile in Jesus' teachings in reference to teachings that spread to affect many. This small amount of leaven was sufficient for three measures of flour, about 50 or 60 pounds for us today.
That's a lot. My mom used to buy flour in 50-pound bags, and I remember carrying it in the house when I was a teenager. It's a lot of flour. It can make a lot of bread. I had nine siblings, so 50 pounds lasted us a couple months.
Probably last most people a couple years. But anyways, the leaven grows and spreads until all of the flour is leavened. And this dough would be sufficient to make bread for many people.
And so the kingdom of God will grow, and it will fill, and it will bless many. We see the similarity here that the kingdom of God starts out profoundly small.
[32:25] applying this to us as an individual, the gospel seed is planted in a human heart where it is protected and nourished. It grows until the entire person is changed, and their life produces fruits that bless many.

But I think in a broader context, Jesus is saying that the kingdom of God started with him, and then his disciples, and soon the church, and then the world.
His healing was never meant to be found in one place. It was meant to be found in all the earth. Where the kingdom of God spreads, broken people are made whole, and in this God receives all the glory.
God's love. I ask for those here today, has the seed of the kingdom of God been planted in your heart? When Jesus started his ministry, he said, the kingdom of God is at hand.
Repent and believe in the gospel. We live in a fallen world. Our hearts and minds are corrupted and deformed by sin, even if we can't see it, even if we're not aware of it.
[33:50] But Jesus sees us, just like that woman in the crowd. He sees your heart and your mind. He knows the hurt and the pain, the brokenness and the sin.

His power to heal goes much deeper than broken bodies. He has power to create clean hearts and a right spirit. And so he calls out, you are free.
Repent. Turn from your sin. Believe the good news. We will soon find in Luke's gospel that it is Jesus' death that bought once for all our freedom from the slavery of sin and of death and replaced brokenness with the fullness of joy.
To those who have received, who are living in faith, God's spirit. may not have the gift of healing, physical disability that Jesus had, we do have the gift of the good news.
We have the same gospel message. We have the message of freedom from sin and from death and the message of eternal life. The Spirit of Christ moves us to show love to the poor, the captive, the blind, and the oppressed.
[35:14] Jesus has power over creation. He has power over human hearts. He has power over Satan. And his kingdom will spread to the ends of the earth.

And so I encourage those who serve the poor, whether through the outreach ministry or the food pantry, let this reality of Christ's work empower you with a deeper sense of mercy and care for those you serve.
For those in our church and elsewhere who care for their disabled family members, their sick family members, let this reality invigorate your service with a deeper sense of compassion and patience.
For those who pursue the lost in your family, in your friends, in your community, let this reality renew your ministry with a sense of love and hope that the lost will be found.
For those who visit the orphans and the widows, let this strengthen your comforting with a deeper sense of grace and joy. Strive, as far as it depends on you, it to spread the leaven of Jesus' teaching.
[36:41] But beware the leaven of the Pharisees, which is hypocrisy. Be encouraged. God's glory will fill the earth as he liberates captive hearts.

Let's pray. God's glory will let's pray. God's glory will up to you. God's glory will down the fear and hold on to you. God's glory will come to you. God's glory will come to you.
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