

## Sunday, March 17, 2024 | The Road to Redemption

### Week 17 | Luke 13:10-20 | "Humble Beginnings"

Last week, we learned about a group of people who died at the hands of a first-century tyrant and another who was crushed by a tower. The Jews at the time believed these people *deserved* their fate. They thought that because those poor people met with such horrific ends, they must've, in some way, been "worse sinners" than those who survived. This is not dissimilar to the modern concept of karma. But, unsurprisingly, Jesus disregarded such an interpretation. And though he did not explain why those tragedies occurred, he did have a lesson for the survivors: **repent or perish**.

Not every misfortune ought to be traced back to some personal failure; karma (for the most part, cf. Gal 6:7-9). The reality is that this world is broken; catastrophes happen. But, according to Jesus, those disasters should remind us that a much more fearful event is coming: *judgment day*. And although no one can avoid the bad days we can all avoid judgement day. God will judge the world; when he does, it will be worse than anything we've experienced. **Suffering is a part of this life, but repentance can save us from suffering in the next life.**

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Today, we'll be talking about humble beginnings. Microsoft, Apple, Amazon, and Google all began in a garage. Nike from the trunk of a car. Airbnb started out with no more than three air mattresses and a rudimentary website. Famously, Coca-Cola was first served in a small drugstore in Atlanta as a tonic to cure headaches. But arguably, the best example of something small becoming big is Christianity.

From a secular perspective, Jesus was little more than a roaming rabbi. Yet, amazingly, he started a movement that has all but encompassed the globe. That is quite a surprising feat, considering he also was executed in the most humiliating way possible. Think of it; Baltimore sits 5,800 miles from Jerusalem. What are the odds that we'd be talking about a teacher from the Middle East over 2,000 years later? Indeed, the greatest things often come from the humblest of beginnings.

There are **three** takeaways from this passage:

- i. **Jesus treats the marginalized with dignity.**

**READ:** Luke 13:10-13 (ESV)

<sup>10</sup> Now he was teaching in one of the synagogues on the Sabbath. <sup>11</sup> And behold, there was a woman who had had a disabling spirit for eighteen years. She was bent over and could not fully straighten herself. <sup>12</sup> When Jesus saw her, he called her over and said to her, “Woman, you are freed from your disability.” <sup>13</sup> And he laid his hands on her, and immediately she was made straight, and she glorified God.

Though we cannot be sure, this woman likely suffered from a condition called **ankylosing spondylitis (AS)**.<sup>1</sup> This ailment is a form of arthritis that predominantly affects the spine. It hardens the joints and ligaments, creating bone buildup. Unsurprisingly, it becomes more painful as time progresses.<sup>2</sup> And sadly, there is no cure, though there are ways to slow its progress and relieve symptoms (e.g., exercise).

Remarkably, the woman came to the synagogue of her own accord. She did not seek healing.<sup>3</sup> She was a true worshipper of God. Despite suffering for eighteen years, bent over and in pain, she did not lose her faith. That “she glorified God” due to the healing was not merely a continuation of her worship.

During the first century, people with physical maladies were expected to remain hidden, especially if they were women.<sup>4</sup> Yet, despite this, Jesus saw her, summoned her, spoke directly to her, and most shockingly, “he laid his hands on her” (cf. 4:40; 5:13; 8:54; 13:13; Mar. 1:41; 5:23; 7:33; 8:22, 23, 25). She was treated with the dignity deserving of a “daughter of Abraham.” She was a descendant of the Patriarch of Faith and was shown the respect due to her station.

His words, “You are freed from your disability,” are similar to those he spoke when addressing the paralytic: “Your sins are forgiven you” (Luke 5:20). **Jesus does not invoke God’s name before he performs miracles or forgives sins; he does so of his own accord.** Why? Since God can only do those two things, the only logical conclusion is that Jesus is God.

## **ii. Human life is more valuable than animal life.**

**READ:** Luke 13:14-17 (ESV)

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<sup>1</sup> Bock, Darrell L., *Luke 9:51-24:53*, The Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament, (Grand Rapids, MI; Baker Academic, 1996), p. 1215.

<sup>2</sup> Living with ankylosing spondylitis: Peter's perspective, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8c0rGYVeovc>

<sup>3</sup> Garland, David E., *Luke*, The Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament, (Grand Rapids, MI; Zondervan, 2011), p. 547.

<sup>4</sup> Edwards, James R., *The Gospel According to Luke*, The Pillar New Testament Commentary, (Grand Rapids, MI; Eerdmans Publishing, 2015), p. 395.

<sup>14</sup> 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.”

<sup>15</sup> Then 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? <sup>16</sup> And ought not this woman, a daughter of Abraham whom Satan bound for eighteen years, be loosed from this bond on the Sabbath day?” <sup>17</sup> 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.

Putting aside the fact that Jesus miracle was equated with human work, the ruler of the synagogue was “indignant” because Jesus healed on the Sabbath (cf. 8:41; Ac. 13:13-43; 18:8). The Sabbath day regulations became a yardstick with which Jews could gauge how righteous they (or others) were. As such, something initially intended as a gift to humanity became a burden by the first century. This was due in no small part to the fact that the Jews took the relatively few explicit commands regarding the Sabbath and expanded them to 39 different rules.<sup>5</sup> Of these regulations, an Israelite was, among other things, prohibited from carrying their own children, loosening knots, and even writing more than one letter.<sup>6</sup>

What’s more, if Satan was at work on the Sabbath, why not God? If darkness had caused that woman to be bent over for eighteen years, why could not Jesus undo all that evil in a single day?

Was it wrong for him to heal that woman on the Sabbath? Wouldn't it have been better to have healed the woman on another day, as the ruler of the synagogue suggested? No. Per his own justification, Jesus says, “Does not each of you on the Sabbath untie his ox or his donkey from the manger and lead it away to water it?” If there was an accepted and widely used exception to the Sabbath day regulations when caring for a donkey, why not for healing that woman? One was a dumb animal, and the other was “a daughter of Abraham whom Satan bound for eighteen years.” Unlike a donkey, for nearly two decades, that poor woman had not experienced even one day where she was not in pain and bent over.<sup>7</sup> To deny the woman even

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<sup>5</sup> Bock, Darrell L., *Luke 1:1-9:50*, The Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament, (Grand Rapids, MI; Baker Academic, 1994), p. 523.

<sup>6</sup> Edwards, James R., *The Gospel According to Luke*, The Pillar New Testament Commentary, (Grand Rapids, MI; Eerdmans Publishing, 2015), p. 177.

<sup>7</sup> Garland (2011), p. 549.

this kindness would be to treat a farm animal better. Unlike the ruler of the synagogue, Jesus is not willing to do that.

This should go without saying, but given our world, I think this is worth saying: It displeases God when we care more for animals than humans (cf. Lu. 12:7. To be clear, God is also displeased with animal abuse (cf. Deut. 25:4). Proverbs 12:10 says, "A righteous man cares for the needs of his animal, but the kindest acts of the wicked are cruel." But in the hierarchy of creation, human beings (as God's image-bearers) sit at the top of the food chain. And while we ought to take care of God's creation, we ought not to elevate animal life above human life. In fact, it is a sign of a culture's depravity when the needs of the animal kingdom are elevated above the needs of mankind (e.g., Sarah McLachlan ASPCA Commercial, Meat is Murder, extreme veganism, etc.).

In fact, as we'll see, valuing human life lays the groundwork for God's Kingdom. Those who serve to preserve the sanctification of life are allies of the Gospel, while anyone who opposes it is the enemy of Jesus Christ.

### iii. Though it has humble beginnings, God's kingdom will permeate the world.

**READ:** Luke 13:18-21 (ESV)

<sup>18</sup> He said therefore, "What is the kingdom of God like? And to what shall I compare it? <sup>19</sup> 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."

<sup>20</sup> And again he said, "To what shall I compare the kingdom of God? <sup>21</sup> It is like leaven that a woman took and hid in three measures of flour, until it was all leavened."

The "grain of mustard seed" is roughly the size of the tip of a ballpoint pen. Yet, despite its tiny stature, it will eventually grow large enough that "the birds of the air [could make] nests in its branches." Depending on the variety of mustard seed that Jesus refers to, the tree that comes from such a tiny seed could reach heights as tall as 25 feet or as small as 10 feet.<sup>8</sup>

"Three measures of flour" is roughly equivalent to sixty pounds and would make enough bread to feed more than 100 people.<sup>9</sup> And, as is comely known, only a small amount of leaven makes a lot of dough rise.

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<sup>8</sup> Bock (1996), p. 1215.

<sup>9</sup> Edwards (2015), p. 400.

Point of clarity: Jesus' parables illustrate God's sovereignty, not his strength; it's about, in the Lord's hands, small things lead to big things. The Lord was not highlighting the power of the Gospel but how God's kingdom will permeate the world despite its humble beginnings.

In God's kingdom, it is the weak who are strong, the last who are first, the fool who is wise. Why? Because God gets the most glory when he uses the most unlikely things to accomplish the most substantial things. **Small men can do great things when they trust a great God.**

The woman that Jesus healed may have been one, but you have to know she did not keep her healing to herself. From that point on, she must've told person after person about how she came to synagogue hunched over and left standing straight. She must've told everyone she could that a man, a rabbi no less, acknowledged her, called her, laid hands on her, and healed her.

## **Video Description:**

### **The Road to Redemption | Week 18 | "Humble Beginnings" (Luke 13:10-20)**

SPEAKER: Ben Hyrne, Pastor

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**Pastor's manuscript can be found here:**

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Season 38 | 17