

Luke 13:10-17

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[0 : 00] Let us hear the Word of God now as we find it reading in the Gospel according to Luke at the 13th chapter. Luke chapter 13.

Now there was some present at that time who told Jesus about the Galileans whose blood Pilate had mixed with their sacrifices.

Jesus answered, Do you think that these Galileans were worse sinners than all the other Galileans because they suffered this way? I tell you no.

But unless you repent, you too will all perish. Or those 18 who died when the tower in Siloam fell on them, do you think that they were more guilty than all the others living in introducing them?

I tell you no. But unless you repent, you too will all perish. Then he told this parable.

[1 : 22] A man had a fig tree planted in his vineyard, and he went to look for fruit on it, but did not find any. So, he said to the man who took care of the vineyard, For three years now I have been coming to look for fruit on this fig tree and haven't found any.

Cut it down. Why should he? Why should he use up the soil? So the man replied, Leave it alone for one more year, and I'll dig round it and fertilize it.

If it bears fruit next year, fine. If not, then cut it down. On a Sabbath, Jesus was teaching in one of the synagogues.

And a woman was there who had been crippled by a spirit for eighteen years. She was bent over and could not straighten up at all.

When Jesus saw her, he called her forward and said to her, Woman, you're set free from your infirmity. Then he put his hands on her, and immediately she straightened up and praised God.

[2 : 51] Indignant because Jesus had healed on the Sabbath, the synagogue ruler said to the people, There are six days for work, so come and be healed on those days, not on the Sabbath.

The Lord answered him, You hypocrites! Does each of you on the Sabbath untie? Doesn't each of you on the Sabbath untie his ox or donkey from the stall and lead it out to give it water?

Then should not this woman, a daughter of Abraham, whom Satan has kept bound for eighteen long years, be set free on the Sabbath day from what bound her? When he said this, all his opponents were humiliated.

But the people were delighted with all the wonderful things he was doing. May God bless our reading of his own word.

Let us join again in singing praise. We shall sing from Psalm 27, the same psalm, continuing to sing from verse 7 down to, did I say verse 14?

[4 : 10] Yes, from verse 7 to verse 14. Psalm 27 from verse 7 down to verse 14. The tune is Salzburg.

And this psalm, again, is where it was before, on page 236. O Lord, give ear unto my voice when I do cry to Thee. Upon me also mercy have, and do Thou answer me.

When Thou didst say, Seek ye my face? Then unto Thee reply, Thus did my heart. Above all things, Thy face, Lord, seek will I. It's quite a long portion, but I did want us to sing that from verse 7 to the end of Psalm 27.

Amen. Amen. Amen. O Lord, give ear unto my voice when I do cry to Thee.

Upon me also mercy have, When thou thou answer me.

[5 : 35] When thou didst say, Seek ye my face, Then unto Thee reply, Then unto Thee reply, Thus did my heart Above all things, Thy face, Lord, Seek will I.

Far from me, Hide not thou thy face, Put not away from me, Thy serpent in my heart, Thou hast thou ever been to me.

O God of my salvation, O God of my salvation, Leave me that thou art for me.

Though me thy heaven's course to away, Thee my depression, Thee my guard has to lead, The Lord will me uptake.

O Lord, instruct me in thy way.

[7 : 44] To me a leader be. In the plain path.

Because of those. That it is fair to me.

Give me not to whom I may be will.

For which yet let's not lie.

Against the risen heart. And sought thou free thou cruelty.

[8 : 50] I think that. Unless that I.

Believe that. That to see. The Lord's own goodness.

In the land. Of them that live in thee.

Wait on the Lord. And be thou strong.

And ye shall spread the Lord. And to thy heart.

[9 : 58] Be thou. At chapter 13. I haven't chosen a word or two for a text.

But I'd like us to think about. The incident we read about. The incident of the. Disabled woman. Whom.

Jesus. Healed. It's one of the less known. Stories. Of the.

New Testament record. For example. Archbishop Trench's book on the miracles. Doesn't even mention this story. And yet although it's.

So briefly told. It's. One which seems to me. To teach us. So much. One who's been a favorite of mine.

[10 : 52] For many years. I think ever since I. Read Spurgeon's sermon on it. Probably. Coming up to 40 years ago. The reason we can keep.

Turning again and again. To a story like this. Is because. It. Reveals to us. So much of Christ. So much.

Of. His glory. You remember. What the Apostle Paul says. Although. I am less than the least.

Of all God's people. His grace. Was given to me. To preach to the Gentiles. The unsearchable riches of Christ. The unsearchable riches.

Of Christ. And here we find something. Of the unsearchable riches of Christ. Christ. In this. Simple story. There are many sad things.

[11 : 55] About the world. In which we're living today. But. The saddest thing of all. Is that so many around us. Are blind.

To the glory of Christ. Indeed. It's that very. Blindness. To the glory of Christ. Which lies behind.

Every other kind of sadness.

That the human race. Experiences. Is. So. Whatever. Needs. We come with. Whatever. Desires.

We come with.

Before God. In this act of worship. Whatever prayers. Are in our hearts. We should especially pray.

That in God's word. We may see something. Of the glory.

Of Christ. Our Lord. God. Here then. Is. Quite a straightforward situation. Jesus has gone. To. One of the.

[12 : 51] Synagogues. Of the Jews. To worship. On the Sabbath. We know. That was his. Regular custom. We're not told. Where the synagogue was.

It just says. In one of the synagogues. But. Piecing together. The information. We have. In the other. Gospels. As well as this one. We're inclined.

To think. That this. Wasn't one of the synagogues. Of Galilee. Like. Nazareth. Or Capernaum.

Where we. Know of Jesus. Gathering.

With the congregation. To worship. This seems to be. In quite a long distance. Away. In Perea.

Away down. To the south. On the other side. Of the river Jordan. The east side.

Not in what we know. Today. As the nation. Of Israel. But in what we know. Today. As. Jordan. The synagogue ruler.

[13 : 49] Had invited Jesus. As a visitor. To. Read the scriptures. And expound them. And that's exactly. What happened. On the Sabbath.

On a Sabbath. Jesus was teaching. In. One of the synagogues. It was. It was something. That had happened. So often before.

A lot more often. Than. We. Read about. Obviously. Because. It was Jesus' habit. But. In this occasion.

Something. Different. Happened. There was a woman. In a congregation. Who was. Severely. Disabled. Medical people. Have. Suggested.

It was some kind of. Spondylitis. She was. Suffering from. And when Jesus. Had finished. His teaching. He. Invited her.

[14 : 42] To come forward. To the platform. Where he was. And he laid his hands. On her. And immediately. She was healed. Now it seems to me.

The way. This. Miracle. Is described. Although so briefly. Tells us. Many wonderful. Things. About our Lord. Indeed.

We could go on. Talking about them. For long enough. But. For simplicity's sake. I would suggest. We sum up. Like this. Here we see. That Christ. Is the greatest.

Carer. Of all. Here we see. That Christ. Is the greatest. Healer. Of all. And here we see.

That Christ. Christ. Is the greatest. Liberator. Of all. Here we see.

[15 : 40] What a wonderful carer. Jesus was. The greatest. Of all. And caring. Is a quality. That we appreciate. And admire. In other people.

Many of you. Remember. The. Sad story. Of. I think. It was. Dr. David Kelly. I hope. I remember. The name. Correctly.

Who. Was. Involved. At the time. Of. The controversy. Over. The alleged. Intelligence. Evidence. For weapons. Of mass destruction. In Iraq. And he came.

Under such pressure. At that time. During that controversy. That he took his own life. I recall. The comment. Of a journalist. Who deplored. The lack. Of understanding.

The lack. Of support. From. His employers. His colleagues. And we're going to say. But of course. The trouble. With our society. In general. Today. Is. That the area.

[16 : 35] Of. Too many people's. Concern. Doesn't extend. Beyond their own. Front gate. Now. I don't know. How fair. An assessment. That is. But. There's certainly.

A measure. Of truth in it. We're living. In a competitive. World. And. In a world. Like ours. Today. A lot of people. Are looking out. For themselves.

And for many. The interests. Of others. Come a pretty poor. Second. Against that. Kind of. Background. We appreciate.

All the more. People. Who do care. And we do meet them. Amongst our neighbours. In all walks of life.

We might meet them. Especially. In the. Caring professions. Some of the most. Dedicated people. In the caring professions. We can only admire. The. Genuineness.

[17 : 33] Of their caring. People in voluntary. Organisations as well. Whatever. Whatever we encounter. Real. Genuine. Costly. Unselfish. Caring.

It's something. We appreciate. And admire. So what can we say. About the Lord. Jesus Christ. Here. We read about.

The one. Who is the son of God. Become man. Going around. Amongst people. Like ourselves. With all their needs. Living a life.

Devoted. To unselfish. Caring for others. He says himself. Later on. In this gospel. As Luke records it. I am among you.

As one. Who serves. Such a simple statement. But so staggering. Coming from him. Now I know. He's speaking there. A little bit. About issues of status.

[18 : 30] About servants. And masters. But it's also more than that. Isn't it? It's a very accurate description. Of the life. Which the Lord of glory. Lived.

As a man. Amongst human beings. Like ourselves. I am among you. As one. Who serves. A life. Of unselfish.

Devotion. To caring. And helping. For others. Remember. The apostle Peter. How he was called. To go.

And. Explained. To the Roman centurion. Cornelius. More than he. Yet understood. Of the truth. About Christ.

And amongst other things. We're told. That what Peter said. About Jesus was. He went around. Doing good. And healing all. Who were under the power. Of the devil.

[19 : 29] Because. God was with him. God. God. And we know. Very well. As we open. The New Testament. And read it. That's what we read about. Over.

And over. Again. The story. Of someone. Who was. Wonderfully. Caring. Unselfishly. Giving himself. To providing.

For the needs. Of others. So. Now look at the. Quality. Of his caring. In this particular story. The first thing.

That strikes us. Is surely this. We're told. There was a woman. There. Who had been crippled. By a spirit. For 18 years. She was bent over.

And could not straighten up. At all. When Jesus saw her. He called. Called her forward. And he said to her. Woman. You're set free. From your infirmity. Why did Jesus.

[20 : 27] Single her out. Why did Jesus. Notice her. Wasn't because. She was an eminent. Member of the community. It wasn't because. She enjoyed. Advantages in life. That other people. Would envy.

One of the lucky ones. As people might say. Nowadays. No. Precisely. The opposite. She was an ordinary. Member of the community.

We're not given. Any other impression. The distinctive thing. About her was. That. She. Suffered. Disadvantages. In life. Which others.

Would be. Thankful. That. They didn't experience. That's exactly. Why Jesus. Took notice of her. He noticed. He had the awareness. Of a true carer.

Doesn't that speak. To us today. He's the same. Yesterday. And today. And forever. Just as he was. So aware.

[21 : 28] Of need. In his day. So today. Exalted in heaven. He's aware. Of our need. He doesn't miss anything. It can be one of the hardest things.

About. Our difficult experiences. In life. That we don't feel anyone else. Really understands. Even if they try.

We feel they can't really understand. But Jesus notices. He is the awareness. Of a true carer. He's the greatest carer of all.

Let's never doubt. That he knows. All our troubles. And all our afflictions. And all our needs. And he understands. He has that kind of heart.

Not only did he single her out. Because. She was. In this need. But. He was conscious.

[22 : 26] Of the details. Of the things that made it. Especially difficult for her. It's not just that her trouble. Was. A trying one.

But it had gone on. And on. And on. Troubles are more endurable. If we can see some hope. If they're coming to an end.

But when they go on. And on. And on. And there seems no end in prospect. That's so much harder. But Jesus didn't miss that either. How do we know?

Later on. When the synagogue ruler. Complained about what he'd done. He said. Should not this woman. A daughter of Abraham.

Whom Satan has kept bound. For 18 years. Be set free on the Sabbath day. I don't know where they. NIP gets the word long. Not in the original.

[23 : 27] But. 18 years. It's clear enough. Isn't it? Or not this. Daughter of Abraham. Whom Satan has kept bound.

For 18 years. Be set free. On the Sabbath day. Contrast that of course. With the attitude of others. And. Yes. By implication. Jesus. Says many others. But especially. The ruler of the synagogue. Wanted to safeguard. His position.

His authority. As a teacher of the law. But Jesus understood. And cared. So here then.

Is the one. Who though he was rich. Yet for our sakes. He became poor. That we. Through his poverty. Might be rich. If time wasn't running away. I'd refer to more scripture. But let's move on.

[24 : 24] The greatest carer of all. Let us never doubt it. Others care for us. Friends who really care for us. Dear ones who really care for us.

How they enrich our lives. But none of them can care. Like he does. The greatest carer. Of all. His whole story. Demonstrates it.

And this brief incident. Highlights it. Let's move on. To notice the fact. He's the greatest healer of all. Now as you remember. The Old Testament foretold.

That when Messiah came. He would be a great healer. I'm sure you love as I do. The imagery of the prophet Malachi. Who foretells.

Who foretells the coming Messiah. In these words. For you who revere my name. The son of righteousness will rise. With healing.

[25 : 22] In his wings. And you will go out. And leap like cars released from the stole. Something indeed.

To rejoice in. The prophet Isaiah. Especially. Develops this theme. That when Messiah comes. He will be a great healer. You remember. You remember.

You remember. How. Jesus. In the synagogue. In Nazareth. His own hometown. Taught in the synagogue. And he read. From Isaiah chapter 61.

Which spoke. Of Messiah's coming. As a healer. Amongst other things. And Jesus said. Today. This scripture. Is fulfilled. In your ears. This.

This. This. This. This. Verified. That he was indeed. The authentic Messiah. That he came to heal. He makes the same claim.

[26 : 19] Even more fully. When. You remember. John the Baptist. Was in prison. And. He became discouraged.

In prison. And. He began to. Wonder. If God had deserted him. He began to wonder. If all. His. Ministry.

As a herald of Christ. Had been in vain. Could the messianic age. Really have come. When he. The last of the prophets. Was languishing in prison.

That's the kind of thing. Obviously. That was going through. His mind. And. So. He sent his disciples. To Jesus himself. And.

They came to Jesus. And they said. John the Baptist. Sent us to you. To ask. Are you the one. Who was to come. Or.

[27 : 22] Should we expect. Someone else. At that very time. Jesus. Cured many. Who had diseases. Sicknesses. And evil spirits.

And gave sight. To many. Who were blind. So. He replied. To the messengers. That's John's disciples. Go back. And report.

To John. What you've seen. And heard. The blind. The blind. Receive sight. The lame walk. Those who have leprosy. Are cured. The deaf hear. The dead are raised. And the good news.

Is preached. To the poor. So that's the character. Of Messiah. As foretold. In the Old Testament.

[28 : 21] And. As. Jesus himself. Demonstrated. The authenticity. Of his claim. To be the Messiah. What does this say.

To us today. Obviously. It's got something. To say to us. To us. It's so prominent. A characteristic. Of the Messiah's mission.

It's so much. What we read about. Over and over again. As we read. The gospel story. Christ isn't present. With us. In the same way. As he was then. And we don't have.

The promise. Of healing. For all. Physical disease. But it tells us. Something about. Who he was. And he's the same.

Yesterday. And today. And forever. He has the same. Heart. For those. Who suffer. Disease. And so on.

[29 : 23] We should see. All medical care. As something. That's his gift. We shouldn't forget. That Christ.

Is the creator. Is not just the father. The work of the father. But Christ. Is the executive. As we sometimes say. Of the creation. And every good gift. In this life.

It comes from him. So. We shouldn't overlook that. But perhaps. Especially. The message. Is a spiritual message. And that's something.

That comes out. Particularly. In this parable. Because it's a miracle. Of. Physical healing. But it's also. A miracle. Of spiritual healing. This woman.

Had been crippled. It says. By a spirit. For 18 years. There was a spiritual. Source. Of. Whatever. Exactly. Was wrong. It wasn't only.

[30 : 20] A case. Of spondylitis. Or whatever. She was crippled. By a spirit. For 18 years. And. Delivering her. From her trouble. Jesus said. Should not this woman.

A daughter of Abraham. Whom. Satan. Has kept bound. For 18 long years. Be set free. You notice.

She wasn't demon possessed. There were cases. When. Christ cast out evil spirits. But quite clearly. This woman was not. Demon possessed.
Also. The evidence is. She wasn't particularly sinful. She's described as a daughter of Abraham. Now you might think. That simply establishes. That she's. A Jewish. A Jewish. A member of. A member of the Jewish community. And therefore. Entitled to consideration. As much as. Any other. Jew or Jewess. But.
[31 : 18] I don't think. There's any doubt. It means more than that. Many. Before me. And. I find the case. Completely convincing. See this.

As a description. Of one. Who was a true daughter. Of Abraham. The father. Of those who believe. Consider. The fact. That in spite. Of all. Her disadvantages.
And all the excuses. She could have had. For not. Regularly being. On. In the synagogue. On the Sabbath. To worship. But she was there. She didn't know Jesus was coming.
But she was there. Because she was always there. In spite of all the difficulty. In the way. Of her getting there. I think the evidence is.
So far. From being. A particularly sinful person. That this woman. Was a humble believer. In God. An Old Testament believer. If you like. Christ healed her.
[32 : 16] Both physically. And spiritually. And whether or not. We have the blessing. Of. Physical healing.

In answer to. Our prayer to him. This. Spiritual healing. Which stems. From the restoration. Of a right relationship. With God. Is surely what.
We learn. Christ can do for us. As the greatest. Of all healers. He heals. Not only. Bodies. And he does. He heals emotions. Damaged emotions.
And most people. Have damaged emotions. Damaged emotions. Which are healed. In good relationships. Friendships. Marriage. For example.
Heals many. Damaged emotions. Restoration. Restoration. To a right relationship. With God. Through Christ. Heals so many. Damaged emotions. But above all. It restores.
[33 : 16] Our spirits. It restores. Our souls. It brings. Health. To our spirits. Whether or not. We receive. Physical healing. Evelyn Oliver.

Whose. Funeral. We had here. On Friday. The striking example. Of it. In her last illness. She wasn't granted. The blessing. Of physical healing. But everyone.
Who knew her. Would say. That in spirit. She was. Made whole. Yes. And emotionally. Healed too. Someone. Who'd.
Passed through. Difficult experiences. In the course. Of her life. Emotionally. Healed too. Because she trusted. In the Lord. Jesus Christ. The greatest. Healer.
Of all. Lastly. And time. Hurries on. Christ is the greatest. Liberator. Of all. This aspect. Of. Of. The story.
[34 : 12] Comes out. In the. Discussion. Between Jesus. And the synagogue. Ruler. The synagogue. Ruler. Objected. To the miracle. Pretty illogical.

Way of doing it. Actually. He didn't say anything. To Jesus. He said. To the congregation. There are six days. For work. So come. And be healed. On those days. Not on the Sabbath. Well.
The woman. Who was healed. She didn't come. That day. To be healed. She was there. Along with the other. Worshipers. In any case. This mother said. It was cowardly. Of course.
He didn't take on. Jesus himself. He'd seen something. Of the power. And the authority. Of Christ. He was too frightened. To challenge. Jesus himself. In any case. He couldn't contest.
That the miracle. That had taken place. He could see it. With his own eyes. Just like everyone else. Who was there. So Jesus said.
[35 : 12] You hypocrites. Doesn't each of you. On the Sabbath. Untie his ox or donkey. From the stall. And lead it out. To give it water. Then should not this woman. A daughter of Abram. Whom Satan has kept. Bound for eighteen years.

Be set free. On the Sabbath day. From what? Bound her. Bound her. So.
This. Briefly described incident. Has. A unique place. In the New Testament record. Of Jesus. Miracles. It reminds us.
That the God of this world. Is. The source. Of. All the miseries. Of the human race. Miseries. Which. Human resources. Can't take away. But Christ. Is the great deliverer. Christ. Is the great. Liberator.

[36 : 14] We're living in a day. When people. In. Certain ways. Enjoy. Freedoms. They didn't have. In the past. Those of us.

Who lived through the second half. Of the. Twentieth century. Remember how the sixties. Was a time. When people. Claimed. To have found. New liberty. Of. Various kinds. It's mainly about liberty.

To please oneself. Isn't it? Young people. Nowadays. Have. So much. More. Freedom. Than they had. Well. When I was young. But what becomes of it.

With. Their addiction. To binge drinking. In many cases. What. Comes. Of. The. Sexual freedom. They have.

The. Sexually transmitted diseases. The unwanted. Teenage pregnancies. Those. Who. Have. The responsibility. For.

[37 : 14] Public health. Say. Well. We need. Better sex education. Well. We've been hearing about. Better sex education. For decades. And decades. But it doesn't solve the problem. The problems go on. And they increase.

People go after the illusion of freedom. Instead of the real thing. One of the kinds of liberation. Which of course. Has been prominent in people's thinking.

During my lifetime. Is women's liberation. And. Some of it's a thoroughly good thing. Women shouldn't have equal pay for equal work. For example. But it's not all good. By any means. I had an interesting interview.

With. Charlotte Rampling. The film star. Who starred in. In the iconic 1960s film. Georgie Girl. And. She. Said something rather striking. About. A lot of contemporary women. And she said. And the way. She said. This is not a story. This is real. It is true of many.

[38 : 17] She spoke about. And I wrote down her actual words. The incredible paradox. Of how. Seemingly. Together women. Good looking women.

Can be in such. Emotional misery. And can find. Nothing to satisfy them. What have they done? They pursued.

The illusion of freedom. They've missed out. On the real thing. So where is true freedom. To be found? Well. I've used the word liberator.

Christ. The greatest liberator. Of all. It's all tied in with the idea of redemption. Isn't it? Which runs right through scripture. Christ came into the world. As our redeemer.

To pay. All the terrible price. Necessary. To set us free. To set us free from what? To set us free from. Sin. In the first place.

[39 : 15] The power of sin. As Jesus said. Whoever commits sin. Is the slave of sin. All the sociologists.

And social workers. And psychiatrists. And all the rest. Who can be very helpful in many things. But they can't solve this problem. Of human sin. All the politicians.

All the reformers. They can't solve this problem. Of human sin. It won't go away. You try to deal with it in one way. And it crops up in another. But through Christ.

We pardon. For all our sin. Cleansing from our unrighteousness. The assurance. That one day. We will be thoroughly. Delivered from our sin.

As Jude says. Presented before the. Presence of God's glory. Faultless. With exceeding joy. What else does Christ. Set us free from.

[40 : 14] Well. There are. Certain ways. In which he sets us free. From God's law. It doesn't mean to say. That the law of God. Is no relevance. To the Christian life. As some would make out. New Testament.

Doesn't teach that at all. But it does teach. That we're freed. From obligation. To the law. As a way. Of earning our salvation. As the old theologians.

Would say. The law. Is a covenant of works. What a burden that is. It's what other religions. Are striving to do.

People are striving. To reconcile themselves. To God. By their own efforts. And the consequences. As we keep seeing. Over and over again. Are so sad. And frustrating.

And disappointing. But Christ. Has fulfilled all. Of God's law. For us. He's lived. The life of obedience. To God. Which we couldn't live. The merit of what he has done.

[41 : 11] Is credited to us. When we trust in him. This really is freedom. And of course. We're set free.

From the law's condemnation. There is now. No condemnation. To those. Who are in Christ Jesus. Paul says.

Paul says. And more fully. Let's just briefly read. Because really. You know. This is the foundation. Of all our freedom. This is what Paul says.

About all. Who have put their trust. In Christ. Romans 5. God. And. Therefore. Since we have been justified. Through faith. We have peace.

With God. Through our Lord. Jesus Christ. Through whom. We've gained access. By faith. Into this grace. In which we now stand. And we rejoice.

[42 : 06] In the hope. Of the glory. Of God. Not only so. But we also rejoice. In our sufferings.

Because we know. That suffering. Produces perseverance. Perseverance. Character. And character. Hope. And hope.

Does not. Disappoint us. Not this kind of hope. Does not disappoint us. Because God. Has poured out his love. Into our hearts. By the Holy Spirit.

Whom he has given us. What good news we have. For a world. Pursuing. The illusion of freedom. Instead of the real thing. This is the real thing.

Christ. Is the greatest. Of all liberators. And not only. Do we have wonderful. Good news. For those who have not yet. Believed. But for those of us.

[43 : 04] Who do believe. Isn't there the need. To dwell more. On those things. To pray that. Christ. Through his spirit. Would reveal to us. Day by day.

More and more. Of his glory. More and more. Of the wonderful truth. About him. So that we might. Really grasp. And realize. In our daily experience. He really is.

The. Greatest. Of all. The greatest. Of all. Carers. The greatest.

Of all. Healers. And the greatest. Of all. Liberators. Best. You. You. All.

You. You. You. Montreal. You. You. All.