

Lutheran Church of the Covenant



God's People:
A Covenant Community

15008 Cloverdale Road, Dale City, VA 22193 (703) 670-4242 Web Site: lccdalecity.org
Office Hours M-F 9 AM ~ 1 PM Email: LutheranChurch@comcast.net

Interim Pastor Tony Carpenter - Office Hours: Tue. and Thur. 10 AM ~ 3 PM
Email: PastorTonyLCOC@comcast.net Cell Phone: 317-260-1065

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Daily Discipleship

Luke 13:10-17

Stories of Discipleship: *A Freed Woman's Story*

Focus Question: *How do we share our joy in being freed by Jesus Christ?*

word of life

"When Jesus saw her, he called her over and said, 'Woman, you are set free from your ailment.' When he laid his hands on her, immediately she stood up straight and began praising God." Luke 13:12-13 (NRSV)

Read Luke 13:10-17

Jesus is a practicing Jew, so it is not unusual for him to be teaching in one of the synagogues on the Sabbath. He was brought up to be faithful in his religious practice.

1. *What is the significance of Jesus being a practicing Jew?*
2. *What do you know about honoring the Sabbath in the first century?*
3. *What could or could not be done on the Sabbath?*

A woman appears in the synagogue, but does not ask for anything. She appears to do nothing in particular to attract the attention of Jesus, and not much is known about her. Yet, her appearance catches the attention of Jesus. She is bent over and cannot stand upright. Her condition has lasted eighteen years. It is not clear if her condition has caused internal complications. In a time when people did not live long, eighteen years is a significant length for such a disease.

Jesus calls her over and extends healing to her through his words of proclamation and his touch. Immediately, this woman stands up without delay. After suffering eighteen years, this woman can look straight in front of her, rather than at the floor. Without making a request or speaking a word, she is healed! This miracle of healing is grace upon grace.

And so this woman praises God. Who else would be able to restore her health? Who else would be able to free her from binding illness? There is nothing to indicate this woman had a clue how her life would be changed on that day. Her transformation is remarkable and breathtaking.

4. *Describe the possibility of feelings experienced by the healed woman.*
5. *How might her life change after such a healing?*

The mighty power of God seems to be the point of this passage describing the story of a freed woman. Yet, the healing leads to conflict. The leader of the synagogue is indignant that Jesus would break the basic laws of the Sabbath and heal. He believes there are enough other days in the week for working, including healing. After all, this woman was bound by the illness for eighteen years, what difference would one day make?

Jesus sees through the hypocrisy. The Sabbath is intended to draw us closer to God. Is that not what happened when the woman was healed? Did she not immediately praise God? There was no doubt this woman connected her healing with God's blessing through Jesus Christ. She was drawn to worship God on the Sabbath with a depth and joy beyond any other Sabbath of her life.

The words of the psalmist captures it, "You have turned my mourning into dancing; you have taken off my sackcloth and clothed me with joy, so that my soul may praise you and not be silent. O Lord my God, I will give thanks to you forever." (Psalm 30:11-12 NRSV)

By the time Jesus finished his speech to the synagogue leaders, they were put to shame.

6. *Why could the leaders not rejoice with the woman?*

word among us

Rules are rules.

The chemistry teacher believed in rules and loved enforcing them. His parents always thought he would be a lawyer as much as believed in rules. Some might describe this teacher as rigid, but he understood himself to be consistent and orderly.

Then, one day his favorite student came out from the lab in a panic. He dashed to his teacher to whisper, "Come quickly, I think I invented a bomb." This boy was very cautious, but he thought he made an error – a big error. Now others were at risk.

The teacher ran to the lab, turned the corner, glanced at the bottles, and gave a sigh of relief. All was well. So, the teacher let out a big laugh – even though laughing was against the rules in his classroom. But he couldn't help himself. He felt such relief.

Calmly, he assured his student of their safety. Eventually, they laughed about the situation, but the teacher admitted that he was scared. He was actually terrified. That one situation led to some deep reflection on his life and his teachings. What if a bomb had been created and destroyed others as well as himself? What did a lot of his rules matter? Did those rules help foster learning in his classroom or was he just hiding behind all the rules?

1. *Are all rules necessary?*
2. *Give examples of rules which might not be unilaterally helpful.*
3. *Who gets to decide when there is an exception to the rule?*

Jesus healed a woman on the Sabbath. He broke the rules in front of the leader of the synagogue. He didn't even try to keep it quiet. He blatantly healed a woman who had been ill for eighteen long years. As she walked in the synagogue, it was clear her problem had been long in coming. In healing her, Jesus restored her life. She could function with greater ease and comfort.

4. *Can you think of any reasons not to heal this woman on the Sabbath?*
5. *Did the end justify the means?*
6. *Why did Jesus not wait one more day to heal this woman?*

Once freed, this woman rejoiced. Those aching, constricted muscles were released. Finally, she could stand upright and tall. Finally, she could look at people's eyes rather than their feet. Finally, finally! No wonder she began worshipping God immediately. It was her first response. She had been given new life.

7. *What can we learn from this woman who was healed?*
8. *What can we learn about Jesus from this story?*

Prayer

Loving Lord, free me to dance and rejoice with those who receive your gifts. Help me to see your surprises of grace in daily life. Amen.

Dig Deeper

Isaiah 58:9b-14

last word

Take joy in this day.

