



Sunday School Lesson
Luke 13:10-17
 by Lorin L. Cranford
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A Woman Healed



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With this lesson, the theme on worship continues with the emphasis upon how worship communicates divine truth. The scripture passage is the healing of the crippled woman on the sabbath in Luke 13:10-17. Although [Jesus healed](#) several women in his ministry and many of these events are recorded by more than one gospel writer, Luke alone records this particular event.

I Context

In this study we again begin with a focus on both the historical and literary settings for the scripture passage as important background aspects to correct and deeper understanding of the gospel text.

a. Historical

Regarding the compositional history of the Gospel of Luke, let me summarize a lot of Lukan scholarship by the following. William Beard in the *Interpreter's One Volume Commentary on the Bible* (iPreach online) summarizes the basic issue this way: "According to tradition this gospel was written by Luke, 'the beloved physician' and travel companion of Paul (Col. 4:14; Philemon 1:24; 2 Tim. 4:11). Actually the tradition is not very old. It appears first in the writings of Irenaeus, who was a theologian living in Gaul during the latter part of the 2nd cent. The Muratorian fragment (ca. A.D. 200), a document which presents an official list of Christian scriptures, supports the same conclusion." With the acceptance of this early church tradition -- although not all do and since the gospel itself makes no effort internally to identify its author -- then the issue becomes trying to locate a setting for the writing of this gospel. Again Bill Beard summarizes quite effectively these questions:

"The exact date and place of the writing of this gospel cannot be ascertained. Since the author uses Mark as a source and since he seems to have accurate knowledge of the destruction of Jerusalem by the Romans (19:41-44; 21:20-24; see pp. 1029-31) he evidently wrote after A.D. 70. He must have written before 140, when his gospel was included in the canon of the heretic Marcion. Since the situation of the church reflected in the gospel fits well the political situation of the reign of the Emperor Domitian (81-96), a date from about 85 to 95 is most likely.

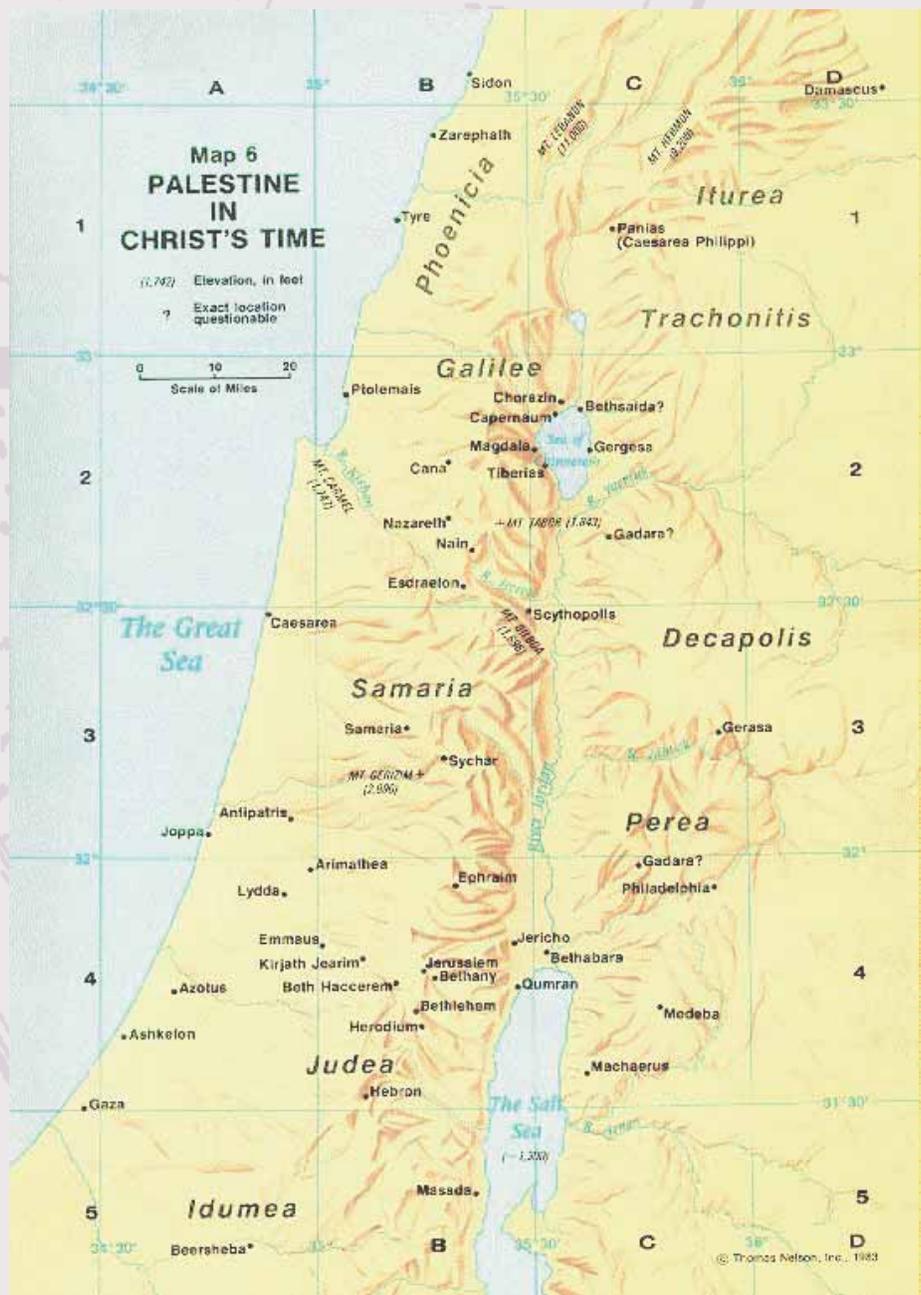
According to one tradition Luke wrote his histories in Rome. Another locates his writing in Greece. Since there is a correlative tradition that the evangelist died in one of the Greek provinces, this latter tradition has better support. Any of these locations assumes the traditional authorship and bears the same burdens. Perhaps all we can say is that the gospel was written from some locale where Greek was the primary language and where cultured readers like Theophilus (1:3) would be at home."

According to [Luke 1:1-4](#), this gospel -- and subsequently the book of Acts (cf. Acts 1:1) -- were dedicated to a Theophilus who as a patron supported the cost of producing these documents as well as the making of copies of them for distribution to various Christian communities in the late first century world. Evidently [Theophilus](#) was a wealthy Roman who had become a Christian and wanted to contribute to the spread of Christianity by supporting Luke's writing of these two documents. The gospel preface ([Lk 1:4](#))

suggests the purpose of the document was “so that you may know the truth concerning the things about which you have been instructed.”

The Gospel of Luke and the book of Acts together stand as a two volume testimony of the beginning of the Christian religion with its founder, Jesus Christ, and the first three decades of the beginning of this movement in its spread from Jerusalem to Rome from AD 30 to AD 61. The author was closely associated with the apostle Paul. For the gospel account Luke made use of a variety of sources, as he indicated in [Lk 1:1-3](#), since he was not personally present with Jesus during his earthly ministry. Modern scholarship generally concludes that among these sources are the gospels of Mark and perhaps also Matthew, although more likely the material in Luke, that is also found in Matthew, may very well be drawn from a common, unknown source. That is generally called the Q document from the German word Quelle meaning source. Thus with at least Mark and Q in front of him, along with notes from interviews with various people around the earthly Jesus, Luke set out to tell his story of Jesus in a way that would enhance understanding of the enormous significance of this Jewish carpenter from the little village of Nazareth in the northern Palestinian province of Galilee. As best as we can determine, this happened sometime in the 70s or perhaps early 80s of the first Christian century, possibly while Luke was living in Rome.

One important aspect here is the contextual setting for this event. From the outline of the [life of Christ](#) [<http://209.238.128.31/Christot.htm>] posted at Cranfordville.com comes the basic summary. The episode in our passage takes place during the beginning segment of the Later Judean-Perean ministry period. For a detailed discussion of this entire period (Luke’s segment is 9:57--19:28), see my Lecture Notes on the Public Ministry of Christ at <http://cranfordville.com/NT-Lec325.html#3.2.5.4>. [Luke’s gospel](#) records a number of events in this ministry period (pericopes ## 67 through 119), and our passage is #85 in the series. The exact location of this event is uncertain, but the larger contextual setting of Jesus’ ministry suggests that it was a synagogue somewhere in Judea. This context also suggests that the event would have taken place in late winter of AD 30. The time is a sabbath service, which in ancient Jewish tradition would have taken place on Friday evening after sundown, since the Jewish sabbath extends from sundown Friday to sundown Saturday, and



the worship service in the synagogue was at the beginning of the sabbath on Friday.

All this suggests for Luke's story that as Jesus approached the end of his public ministry the hostility of the religious leadership against him was strong. Yet, their opposition to him did not deter him from meeting the physical and spiritual needs of people whose path crossed his. Our passage is one of those events.

Additionally, this event is one of those uniquely Lukan narratives that doesn't have a parallel in any of the other gospel accounts. Although many of Luke's narratives do have parallels, the so-called Travel Narrative of 9:57-19:28 contains a high volume of exclusively Lukan material without gospel parallels. Luke inserted a significant amount of the material at this point, and without it our understanding of Jesus' ministry would have some significant gaps.

b. Literary

A major literary setting concern here has to do with the type of narrative that our passage sets forth. In describing a single episode, Luke details the healing of a woman who suffered severe physical illness. Of the [35 specific](#) miracles narrated in the four gospels, this one (#28) is the single miracle recorded by Luke during this period Early Judean Phase of the Later Judean-Perean Ministry segment. But it follows a similar pattern of sabbath controversy miracles that the Synoptic Gospels introduce at the beginning of Jesus' public ministry in Galilee.

Typically, a miracle narrative in the ancient world revolved around three basic segments: (1) the need for a miracle; (2) the occurrence of the miracle; and (3) the impact of the miracle on either the targeted individual and/or those who were present at the miracle. Our passage follows that traditional pattern and this will serve as the basis for the scripture study that follows.

II. Message

a. A Woman in Need, vv. 10-11

The Greek New Testament

3:10 Ἦν δὲ διδάσκων ἐν μιᾷ τῶν συναγωγῶν ἐν τοῖς σάββασι. 13:11 καὶ ἰδοὺ γυνὴ πνεῦμα ἔχουσα ἀσθενείας ἔτη δεκαοκτώ καὶ ἦν συγκύπτουσα καὶ μὴ δυναμένη ἀνακύψαι εἰς τὸ παντελές.

NRSV

10 Now he was teaching in one of the synagogues on the sabbath. 11 And 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.

NLT

10 One Sabbath day as Jesus was teaching in a synagogue, 11 he saw a woman who had been crippled by an evil spirit. She had been bent double for eighteen years and was unable to stand up straight.

Comments:

In a very generalized manner, Luke introduced the event with the simple declaration, "Now he was teaching in one of the synagogues on the sabbath." Earlier in 4:31-32, Luke had introduced a miracle of Jesus in Galilee using a similar expression (NRSV): "31 He went down to Capernaum, a city in Galilee, and was teaching them on the sabbath. 32 They were astounded at his teaching, because he spoke with authority." The connection with the preceding narrative ([13:1-9](#)) is not clear. The preceding passage stresses the need for repentance very forcefully. Perhaps our passage was intended to underscore the hardness of the religious leadership and thus the subsequent judgment of God upon them. I. Howard Marshall (*Luke, in the New International Greek Testament Commentary*, p. 557) calls attention to the fact that in Luke's narrative this is the final time that Jesus will be in a synagogue.

Normally, a teaching session in the sabbath service of the synagogue would have come after the reading the a selected scripture text from the Old Testament, and Jesus would have applied insights from that text to his mission and ministry. Here Luke is not focused on these kinds of details. Instead, he simply wanted to set the stage of a sabbath as the backdrop for the miracle and then the reaction of the religious leaders.

Into that service came a woman who was bowed over severely and thus in pain when walking or

standing. Luke attributes her problem to a spirit who had caused her to be crippled for eighteen years. The number eighteen surfaced in the [previous passage](#) (13:4), perhaps tying the two passages together. The point of Luke here is to stress the physical need of a woman, who came to the synagogue to worship.

The lesson for us is obvious: the compassion of our Lord comes through clear in these verses. In spite of a hostile atmosphere, of interests in other things by many of those present in church that day, in spite of the criticism that Jesus most likely anticipated -- in spite of all these things and possibly others, Jesus saw a woman who needed attention. He interrupted his teaching and addressed her needs. His example challenges us at the point of priorities. Central to this passage is the priority of people, and ministering to their needs.

b. Jesus Healed Her, vv. 12-13

The Greek New Testament

13:12 ἰδὼν δὲ αὐτὴν ὁ Ἰησοῦς προσεφώνησεν καὶ εἶπεν αὐτῇ, Γύναι, ἀπολέλυσαι τῆς ἀσθενείας σου, 13:13 καὶ ἐπέθηκεν αὐτῇ τὰς χεῖρας· καὶ παραχρῆμα ἀνωρθώθη καὶ ἐδόξαζεν τὸν θεόν.

NRSV

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

NLT

12 When Jesus saw her, he called her over and said, "Woman, you are healed of your sickness!" 13 Then he touched her, and instantly she could stand straight. How she praised and thanked God!

Comments:

In this instance Jesus took the initiative and called the woman to come to where he was. Ordinarily, women would not be allowed in the central hall of the synagogue where the men were worshipping, but instead would be confined to a side room where they could only listen and, if a curtain wasn't drawn, watch the worship of God as spectators. When Jesus spotted her, he called her to come to the center of the synagogue hall where he was seated while teaching, thus breaking rules of propriety. He pronounced her healed of her affliction and touched her with his hands. The effect of the pronouncement and the touch was instantaneous healing. In the [miracle narratives](#) in the gospels, one discovers a variety of approaches by Jesus to healing individuals: sometimes physical contact was involved but not always. On a few occasions he wasn't even present physically when the miracle took place. The point is that Jesus possessed unquestioned power from the Heavenly Father to heal people of severe health problems. That is what happened here. The attribution of the health issue to an evil spirit only adds an extra layer of assertion about the power of Jesus; he delivered people from the grip of Satan's hands. Although this aspect moves the narrative toward an exorcism, the language of the text doesn't follow the typical pattern of exorcisms. Thus it is better understood simply as a healing miracle with additional aspects.

The one point of this passage to us is clearly the power of Jesus to take care of problems. His compassion moves him to action, and that action is clearly superior to any challenge that presents itself. First century Jewish society tended to diminish the value of women in society, but not Jesus. In fact, Luke highlights the ministry of Jesus to women more than the other gospel writers.

When we come through times of severe need, the one person we can count on to care for us is our Lord. His example also challenges us to reach out to people in physical need.

c. Hostile Reaction, vv. 14-17

The Greek New Testament

13:14 ἀποκριθεὶς δὲ ὁ ἀρχισυνάγωγος, ἀγανακτῶν ὅτι τῷ σαββάτῳ ἐθεράπευσεν ὁ Ἰησοῦς, ἔλεγεν τῷ ὄχλῳ ὅτι Ἐξ

NRSV

14 But 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

NLT

14 But the leader in charge of the synagogue was indignant that Jesus had healed her on the Sabbath day. "There are six days of the week for working," he said to

ἡμέραι εἰσὶν ἐν αἷς δεῖ ἐργάζεσθαι· ἐν αὐταῖς οὖν ἐρχόμενοι θεραπεύεσθε καὶ μὴ τῇ ἡμέρᾳ τοῦ σαββάτου. 13:15 ἀπεκρίθη δὲ αὐτῷ ὁ κύριος καὶ εἶπεν, Ὑποκριταί, ἕκαστος ὑμῶν τῷ σαββάτῳ οὐ λύει τὸν βοῦν αὐτοῦ ἢ τὸν ὄνον ἀπὸ τῆς φάτνης καὶ ἀπαγαγὼν ποτίζει; 13:16 ταύτην δὲ θυγατέρα Ἀβραάμ οὔσαν, ἣν ἔδησεν ὁ Σατανᾶς ἰδοὺ δέκα καὶ ὀκτῶ ἔτη, οὐκ ἔδει λυθῆναι ἀπὸ τοῦ δεσμοῦ τούτου τῇ ἡμέρᾳ τοῦ σαββάτου; 13:17 καὶ ταῦτα λέγοντος αὐτοῦ κατησχύνοντο πάντες οἱ ἀντικείμενοι αὐτῷ, καὶ πᾶς ὁ ὄχλος ἔχαιρεν ἐπὶ πᾶσιν τοῖς ἐνδόξοις τοῖς γινομένοις ὑπ' αὐτοῦ.

Comments:

Ordinarily a typical miracle narrative would have ended at verse thirteen, but Luke added an additional section, which has the tone of a [pronouncement story](#). These narratives were structured to highlight a central teaching of Jesus about the Kingdom of God. Although this element is present in this segment, the general pattern of verses ten through seventeen is dominantly that of a healing miracle narrative.

The healing of the woman provided her a marvelous opportunity to worship God that day in the synagogue, which she took advantage of as Luke described (NRSV): "[immediately she stood up straight and began praising God.](#)" In sharp contrast stands the reaction of the synagogue leader (NRSV): "[14 But 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."](#) Instead of speaking to Jesus directly, he made his speech to those present in the service. His anger was based upon a perceived violation of sabbath regulation. He was right to be concerned about God's Law being carefully followed, but he made a huge mistake in interpreting the commandment to honor the sabbath, as set forth in [Exodus 20:8-11](#) (NRSV): "[8 Remember the sabbath day, and keep it holy. 9 Six days you shall labor and do all your work. 10 But the seventh day is a sabbath to the Lord your God; you shall not do any work — you, your son or your daughter, your male or female slave, your livestock, or the alien resident in your towns. 11 For in six days the Lord made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that is in them, but rested the seventh day; therefore the Lord blessed the sabbath day and consecrated it.](#)"

Jesus' response is central to the passage (NRSV): "[15 But 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? 16 And 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?"](#) His priorities were straight; a woman in need took precedence over man-made interpretative rules of God's Word. His charge of hypocrisy was based upon their valuing an animal over a woman in regard to the sabbath.

The general response of the crowd present that day brings the passage to a climax (NRSV): "[17 When 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.](#)" The great challenge here is the spiritual perception of the woman and the crowds to the presence of God. This stood in stark contrast to the lack of perception by the religious leaders.

What a lesson here for us! Do we stand with the woman and the crowd? Or with the religious leaders? May God help us to know when He is present and at work in our midst.

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the crowd. "Come on those days to be healed, not on the Sabbath." 15 But the Lord replied, "You hypocrite! You work on the Sabbath day! Don't you untie your ox or your donkey from their stalls on the Sabbath and lead them out for water? 16 Wasn't it necessary for me, even on the Sabbath day, to free this dear woman F62 from the bondage in which Satan has held her for eighteen years?" 17 This shamed his enemies. And all the people rejoiced at the wonderful things he did.