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Three ministers were out on a lake fishing one fine afternoon. A Protestant minister, an Episcopalian priest and a Catholic priest. They were sitting out in the middle of the lake and the Protestant minister said he had to relieve himself, so he got out of the boat and walked across the water to shore, relieved himself behind a tree. Then walked back to the boat. The Episcopalian priest did the same thing. The Catholic priest thought to himself, if they can do it, so can I. So he stepped out of the boat and promptly sank to the bottom. The other two looked at each other and one said "Do you think we should have told him about the rocks just under the water?"

Today we have a story of two people in bondage; A woman in bondage to a crippling spirit and a synagogue leader in bondage to human traditions. Both needed healing in different ways. One was released from bondage to a terrible disease, and the other one needed release from bondage to legalism.

In the synagogue on the Sabbath, Jesus saw a woman with a spirit of weakness. She had some kind of muscular disorder. Jesus set free from the sickness, touching her to encourage her faith. Then she was made straight and praised God for her healing. However, a synagogue leader was so angry because Jesus should have healed during one of the days of the week but not on the Sabbath. He was in bondage to the letter of the law.

We all struggle with something on every aspect of our lives physically, emotionally, financially, and spiritually. It can be called bondage and can affect everything in our lives. Someone battles addictions such as drugs or alcohol. Someone lives every day fighting the failures of their past. Someone does not rise

above the loss of a loved one or a past abusive situation. These issues cause unwanted actions or reaction.

A woman in bondage to a crippling spirit are symbolic of all of our bondages and needs. The way Jesus responded to her hurts is the way we can expect Him to respond to us.

In verse 12 the bible says, “When Jesus saw her, he called her over and said, “Woman, you are set free from your ailment.” I hope you all hear this voice from Jesus this morning. “You are set free from your pain, fear, shame, guilt, or despair.

We can see that Jesus was not indifferent to the hurt, pain and despair this woman was going through. He has an eye for her need. He reached out to her in the midst of her pain because He is aware and concerned with her hurts and all of our hurts.

We do not need to think that Jesus is not aware of our situation. Jesus is not indifferent to or willing to ignore our pain. Through Jesus’ life we know that God cares deeply for His people. We may not understand many things that we are going through, but God notices and cares about our lives. We have God who notices our bondage and has compassion on our burden.

Moreover, if the only thing God can do is sympathize with us, we would be hopeless. The good news is that God is not only compassionate but He is also powerful! He can heal our hurts; He can break our bondages, and He can change our situation.

Verse 13 says, "When he laid his hands on her, immediately she stood up straight and began praising God."

Although she had been in this situation a long time, this was not a problem for Jesus. I want you to understand that nothing you are going through or ever will go through is beyond the power of Jesus Christ to heal and restore.

There are Christians today who no longer pray for healing because they have lost their faith and don't think God will heal them. There are Christians today whose marriages are failing yet they have no real expectation for Jesus to restore their marriage because they think it is too late. There are people who have quit serving in ministry out of discouragement because they think their situation is beyond God's help. Our thinking needs to change if it is like this.

Tony Campolo tells a story about being in a church in Oregon where he was asked to pray for a man who had cancer. Campolo prayed boldly for the man's healing.

That next week he got a telephone call from the man's wife. She said, "You prayed for my husband. He had cancer." Campolo thought when he heard her use the past tense verb that his cancer had been eradicated! But before he could think much about it she said, "He died." Campolo felt terrible.

But she continued, "Don't feel bad. When he came into that church that Sunday he was filled with anger. He knew he was going to be dead in a short period of time, and he hated God. He was 58 years old, and he wanted to see his children and grandchildren grow up. He was angry that this all-powerful God didn't take away his sickness and heal him. He would lie in bed and curse God. The more his anger grew towards God, the more miserable he was to everybody around him. It was an awful thing to be in his presence.

But the lady told Compolo, "After you prayed for him, a peace had come over him and a joy had come into him. Tony, the last three days have been the best days of our lives. We've sung. We've laughed. We've read Scripture. We prayed. Oh, they've been wonderful days. And I called to thank you for laying your hands on him and praying for healing."

And then she said something incredibly profound. She said, "He wasn't cured, but he was healed."

I know many of you have questions of God and I cannot answer every question you may have, nevertheless I do encourage you to look at Jesus Christ, our Lord and renew your faith and expectations. Let your faith be strengthened by God's word. Keep your hopes up because Jesus still breaks your bondage.

You may have suffered for many years as this woman did but you can still be hopeful. There is hope because there is Jesus. He set this woman free from her infirmity and He can set you free from yours also. Never ever give up hope! No matter what type of problem, hurt, or bondage you may be facing, you can be hopeful because Jesus is powerful enough to break our bondage.

Psalm 40:1-3 say, "I waited patiently for the LORD; he inclined to me and heard my cry. He drew me up from the desolate pit, out of the miry bog, and set my feet upon a rock, making my steps secure. He put a new song in my mouth, a song of praise to our God. Many will see and fear, and put their trust in the LORD."

Luke 13:17 says that all Jesus' opponents were put to shame, but that the people were rejoicing at all the wonderful things He was doing. We also can rejoice because Jesus notices and cares for our bondage. Jesus truly offers the peace, comfort, love and stability needed to walk in true victory. He knows how to break our unwanted bondage. He takes pleasure in our healing and complete freedom.

Don't live your life weighed down. Seek the support and strength from Jesus Christ, our Lord.