

Jesus is Mindful of a Severely Disabled Woman

Read Luke 13:10-17

I. THE LOCATION AND SITUATION (verse 10) – Where was Jesus? What was He doing? What day of the week was it? What is the significance of these factors?

II. THE WOMAN'S CONDITION (verse 11) – What do we know about her? What don't we know?

Key points: We know from verse 16 that the spirit causing this sickness was evil, but we don't know whether this evil spirit still plagued her, or if it had left her sickness behind as a lingering consequence. We don't know if a particular sin in her past had left her open to evil spiritual influences, or if she was still practicing sin. We also don't know whether she knew Jesus was going to be the speaker that day or whether she had hopes of being healed by him. We can only speculate that, by attending the synagogue, she was now trying to follow God and perhaps accepting what Jesus said as God's word.

Key comparison: Earlier, Jesus had healed another woman of an "issue of blood" or hemorrhage (Luke 8:43-48, Matthew 9:20-22, and Mark 5:25-34). According to Mark's account, this woman had "endured" or "suffered" under the care of many physicians and spent "all she had." Doctors had not helped her at all, but instead her condition had worsened. Sadly, this can be the experience of many people with chronic illnesses. The woman with the constant hemorrhage must have been very discouraged, and we can surmise that the woman in Luke 13 might have felt similarly.

III. THE ACTION BASED ON COMPASSION – Luke 13:12-13

A. Compassionate vision: What did Jesus do? Why is it significant to know that Jesus saw her?

Key points: Even though Jesus was in the middle of teaching, He was not so intent on what He was doing that He couldn't take notice of individuals in the crowd around Him. He was also willing to interrupt Himself for someone else's sake. He noticed this woman and everything about her.

Key comparisons: In Genesis 16:1-15, Hagar expressed amazement that God saw her. She said of Him, "You are the God who sees me." In Jonah 3:10, God saw the penitent actions of the people of Nineveh and relented of the disaster He'd threatened. Gospel writers record what Jesus saw:

- *Matthew 14:14 – Saw a large crowd, had compassion on them, healed their sick*
- *Mt. 9:36 – Saw people, had compassion, told His disciples to pray for more workers*
- *Mark. 6:34 – Saw a large crowd, had compassion on them, taught them many things*
- *Mk. 10:14 – Saw children being turned away, became indignant, and rebuked His disciples*
- *Mk. 10:21 – Saw the rich young ruler, loved him, invited him to follow*
- *Luke 7:13-14 – Saw a widow, His heart went out to her, and He raised her dead son to life*
- *Lk. 17:14 – Saw 10 leprosy men and healed them*
- *Lk. 19:5 and 41 – Saw Zacchaeus up a tree and went to his house; saw Jerusalem in the distance and wept over it*
- *Lk. 21:2 – Saw a poor widow making her gift at the temple and honored it*
- *John 5:5-9 – Saw a man who'd been ill for 38 years and healed him*
- *Jn. 9:1-7 – Saw a man born blind and healed him*
- *Jn. 11:33-35, 43 – Saw Mary and others weeping, was deeply moved, and raised Lazarus*

Discussion: How well do we pay attention to the people around us? Do we notice changes in their mood, behavior, or needs? What prevents us from really seeing each other? Is sight a fixed ability that can't be improved, or can our eyes be trained to see better? How?

What does compassion have to do with seeing people and their needs? What gets in the way of compassion? In general, do you look at people with compassion, or with feelings such as suspicion, impatience, or annoyance?

B. Compatible teachings: Two of Jesus' parables, also in Luke, have to do with seeing people and having compassion for them:

Lk. 10:25-37 – Parable of the Good Samaritan, who saw the injured man, took pity on him, and cared for his needs (in contrast to the priest and Levite)

Lk 15:20 – Parable of the Prodigal Son, whose father saw him from a long way off, was filled with compassion for him, and ran to embrace him

Discussion: What do these parables say about God? What do they say He wants us to do?

Key points: People who love God also love their neighbors. Love for neighbors includes caring whether they live or die and helping them with their physical needs. God loves us the way the father loved his prodigal son. Having compassion involves action as well as feeling.

C. Result: What was the result of Jesus declaring freedom for the woman in the synagogue and laying His hands on her? What affect did His ministry have on her life?

Key points: Her sickness and/or the spirit had kept her in bondage, hindering her from enjoying life abundantly. With Jesus' touch, her life was radically changed. Released from a debilitating condition, her body was restored and strengthened. She could now stand erect and look people in the eye. She could also obey and serve God more freely and fully. She began giving glory to God.

IV. THE UNCOMPASSIONATE REACTION – Luke 13:14

Discussion: What was the synagogue official's reaction?* At whom did he aim his rebuke? Why?

*According to the *New American Standard New Testament Greek Lexicon*, it was the duty of the synagogue ruler to "select the readers or teachers in the synagogue, to examine the discourses of the public speakers, and to see that all things were done with decency and in accordance with ancestral usage" (<https://www.biblestudytools.com/lexicons/greek/nas/archisunagogos.html>).

Key points: Consider James 1:19-20, "Everyone must be quick to hear, slow to speak and slow to anger; for the anger of man does not achieve the righteousness of God." Human anger and indignation often go off course, and may even be directed at God. Righteous anger is reserved for those who are oppressing people and in favor of ones who are being oppressed, not the other way around.

V. THE HEART OF THE MATTER – Luke 13:15-16

Discussion: What does Jesus' response to the ruler tell you about the root of the problem? To whom were His words addressed?

A. Key comparisons:

1. Oxen and donkeys – Did society value this woman more than, equal to, or less than an ox or donkey? If they would help an ox or donkey on the Sabbath, but not a person, what does that say about them?
2. Abraham – Did society see this woman as a daughter of Abraham or a slave of Satan? When Jesus called her a "daughter of Abraham," what did that do for her?

Key points: They may have viewed her as less valuable than an ox because they focused on all the things she could not do in her condition. If she could not work or care for herself she may have required the help of others. She may have been viewed as a drain on community resources.

Calling her a "daughter of Abraham" elevated her in their eyes. She was one of them, part of the community, and should be valued more highly than they had before. Jesus healed her so she could fulfill her God-given capacity as a woman made in the image of God. But there was a lesson for all of them in her healing, something they may have missed otherwise: Jesus had demonstrated God's love for the weak, broken, and helpless among us.

B. Application: Since we cannot heal as God does, beside praying for their healing, what can we do to help people with disabilities and chronic conditions? Think of ways you can do this for people who are members of your church, or people from outside who might want to attend church services and events and may need to put their trust in Jesus. What would the Good Samaritan do? How might their lives be revolutionized by being noticed and included?

Key points: We can uphold a disabled person's dignity, no matter what condition they're in. We can include them in daily life as much as possible. We can notice them, greet them, remove obstacles blocking their participation, and provide help and support as we are able.

As a result, they will feel as though they belong. They may be drawn to Christ and encouraged in worship. They will be valued simply for their presence.

VI. THE RESULT – Luke 13:17

Discussion: What was the effect of Jesus' response? Why? What does it mean to you that Jesus was mindful of this woman?

- A. The mindfulness of God.** In Psalm 8:3-4, David marveled that, for all the grandeur of the created universe, God is still mindful of people and cares for them.
- B. A contemporary counterfeit.** "Mindfulness" is a common word in modern psychology and Eastern religion, usually used to describe a state of "living in the moment," undistracted by thoughts or worries. A "mindful" person is supposedly able to fully enjoy the present without dwelling on the past or future.

Key points of comparison: In the life of Jesus, mindfulness was oriented toward God's will and the needs of others. Jesus was always in tune with what His Father wanted Him to say and do. He was constantly aware of His purpose and not distracted by what others wanted Him to say and do that would waylay Him from it. Jesus was also supremely in tune with the needs of others around Him —what they were doing and thinking, how they were feeling, and whether they were oppressing someone else or being oppressed themselves. He was always ready to help them. Jesus' mindfulness brought joy to the woman He helped and delighted onlookers.

Application: It's easy to feel overwhelmed by the many needs of people around us. What are some helpful take-aways from our study of this passage?

- People with chronic illnesses or disabilities often live with discouragement.
- God notices everyone.
- We can interrupt "important" tasks for the needs of people without risking God's displeasure.
- We can learn to see people compassionately.
- Wrong attitudes toward people can lead to misplaced anger.
- Sometimes it's helpful to just include people who've been on the outside.
- God's character shows us how to behave toward people who are weak and helpless.

Related resource: Watch "Jesus is Mindful of a Severely Disabled Woman" (a 4:29 minute video) at <https://vimeo.com/303586441>.