

Sermon

When Jesus Saw Her...

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We live in a world overflowing with noise and distraction—where being overlooked doesn't require effort, only existence. A toddler reaches for her father's face, pleading with tiny hands and urgent words: "Look. Look. Me. Me." But in a house humming with screens and notifications, her voice competes with a dozen devices. A man enters the break room at work, hoping for connection. He sits among colleagues, yet no one greets him, no one draws him in. He is present, but he is alone. A teenage girl shares a photo online, hoping for affirmation. The silence that follows is louder than any comment could be. She wonders if her friends are trying to say something by saying nothing at all. Sleep escapes her.

No one longs to be invisible. No one chooses to be unseen. And yet, many know this ache intimately—the ache of being passed by, ignored, forgotten. If that's you, hear this: you are not alone. In Luke 13, we meet a woman who lived with that ache for eighteen long years. Bent over, physically and socially, she moved through life unnoticed. But on one Sabbath day, in one sacred moment, Jesus saw her. And everything changed.

Jesus notices the woman before she speaks, before she vies for his attention. His notice of her is powerful, it is merciful and tender. Jesus' attention of her restores this woman, body and soul. His notice of her, his energy flowing in her direction, restores her dignity and allows her a full

Inspired by [workingpreacher.org](https://www.workingpreacher.org) commentary on Luke 13:10-17 by Rev Jared Alcantara.

restoration to the community. Yes, because of Jesus' importance within the Temple structure, but much more than that, when *she* receives Jesus fully, she is then healed by being seen, accepted and loved. Her life is completely transformed but just by Jesus look but by her own acknowledgement of knowing she is that important so therefore, her posture changes. When we truly believe we are valued, we are loved, we are needed and part of the community, our posture, our energy and our dreams change.

The man who tried to engage with his colleagues likely limped away from the lunchroom that day, but if he had been acknowledged, he would have left with a giggle perhaps sharing in a funny story or joke, feeling part of the workforce, not on the outside looking in.

Jesus heals on the Sabbath, which as we know was challenged by the Temple leaders. Do we too often fall into social or religious “norms” and question when anyone challenges that? In our lifetimes alone, there have been changes in how we govern, how we interact socially with one another certainly – radically in some ways. Yet, when we listen to one another, when we question things that perhaps leave people on the margins, unnoticed in their pain, leave them unnecessarily alone – shouldn't we lean into love and mercy? Are we more concerned with rules than people?

Jesus does not just heal the woman, he liberates her! She has been restored body and soul, and restored to the community – who rejoices with her. But not all were rejoicing – the Synagogue leaders continued to protest. Which leads us, as I see Jesus teaching us here, to a choice. We can either celebrate healing or resist it. Are we communities of welcome or

gatekeepers of grace? Can we be open to seeing others in a new way, not in the way we have been taught or have assumed?

Sabbath is not just a time of rest – it is a time of grace and mercy. It is a time of restoration. I challenge you this week to find those who are alone, who are feeling a little out of sorts. Like those I mentioned at the beginning of my sermon today, is there a child who isn't receiving the attention they need? Are you looking at a device instead of their beautiful little face? Is there a friend or neighbor who lives alone – maybe you could stop over with some cookies or a book you enjoyed to share?

As you go through your week, notice people, really look at them, say hello and smile. All welcoming and inviting ways of engaging even with people you only see for a moment. At home, maybe try a digital “fast” or a time you put your phone or device down and engage with others – even your pets!

In a world where people often feel invisible—ignored by family, overlooked at work, or lost in the noise of social media—Luke 13 reminds us that Jesus sees what others miss. The bent-over woman, unnoticed for eighteen years, is not just healed physically but restored emotionally and spiritually. Her story reveals the heart of Christ: one who prioritizes compassion over convention, who liberates the bound, and who calls His followers to do the same. This message invites us to be people who truly see others, who extend mercy even when it's inconvenient, and who celebrate healing wherever it happens.

Isaiah 58: 9-14 is God's response to a people who are outwardly religious but inwardly disconnected from His heart. Jerusalem was in ruins—physically,

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emotionally, and spiritually. The temple had been destroyed, and the people were trying to reestablish their religious identity and national life. God tells them that true worship is not found in ritual alone, but in acts of compassion and justice. When they remove oppression, stop pointing fingers, and care for the hungry and afflicted, then their light will rise in the darkness. God promises guidance, strength, and restoration. He even says they will rebuild ancient ruins and be called “repairers of the breach.” Honoring the Sabbath becomes not just a rule, but a delight—a way to honor God by living differently.

You see, we have seen the light. We have heard the teachings of Christ and cannot remain the same. We cannot “unsee” those who are in need. We cannot remain silent in the face of injustice. We must reach out with a helping hand, even when we don’t entirely understand how or why someone ended up in the trouble they are in. We aren’t here to judge or condemn – we are here to love and uplift people. Celebrate their growth, even in its smallest measure. Encourage during setbacks. And patiently wait.

Both passages confront the tension between religious tradition and compassionate action. In Luke, Jesus heals a woman on the Sabbath, challenging the idea that rules should override mercy. In Isaiah, God rebukes empty ritual and calls His people to a Sabbath marked by justice and joy.

Together, they say this: **God sees the unseen, heals the broken, and calls His people to do the same.** True worship is not just what happens in the sanctuary—it’s how we treat the bent-over woman in our midst, how we respond to the invisible, and how we live out mercy in the everyday.

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In both Luke and Isaiah, we encounter a God who refuses to ignore suffering. In Luke, Jesus sees a woman bent over by years of pain and invisibility—and He calls her forward, touches her, and restores her. In Isaiah, God calls His people to stop going through the motions and start living with mercy: to loose the chains of injustice, to feed the hungry, to rebuild what's been broken.

These are not separate stories. They are one unified message: **God sees what others overlook, heals what others ignore, and calls His people to do the same.** The Sabbath is not just a day of rest—it's a day of restoration. Worship is not just a ritual—it's a lifestyle of compassion. So let us be a people who notice the bent-over woman in our midst. Let us be repairers of broken walls, restorers of dignity, and carriers of healing. Because when we live this way, Isaiah promises that our light will rise in the darkness—and Luke shows us that heaven rejoices when one person stands tall again.