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~ **The Crooked Woman** ~

You can learn much more about this story by doing these three things:

1. Read Luke 13:10-35
2. Discover key cultural and historical insights.
3. Answer the reflective questions.

1. Read the text of the story.

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Luke 13:10-35 NASB	Luke 13:10-35 NLT
<p>¹⁰ And He was teaching in one of the synagogues on the Sabbath. ¹¹ And there was a woman who for eighteen years had had a sickness caused by a spirit; and she was bent double, and could not straighten up at all. ¹² When Jesus saw her, He called her over and said to her, “Woman, you are freed from your sickness.” ¹³ And He laid His hands on her; and immediately she was made erect again and <i>began</i> glorifying God. ¹⁴ But the synagogue official, indignant because Jesus had healed on the Sabbath, <i>began</i> saying to the crowd in response, “There are six days in which work should be done; so come during them and get healed, and not on the Sabbath day.” 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 stall and lead him away to water <i>him</i>? ¹⁶ And this woman, a daughter of Abraham as she is, whom Satan has bound for eighteen long years, should she not have been released from this bond on the Sabbath day?” ¹⁷ As He said this, all His opponents were being humiliated; and the entire crowd was rejoicing over all the glorious things being done by Him.</p>	<p>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. ¹² When Jesus saw her, he called her over and said, “Dear woman, you are healed of your sickness!” ¹³ Then he touched her, and instantly she could stand straight. How she praised God!</p> <p>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 the crowd. “Come on those days to be healed, not on the Sabbath.”</p> <p>¹⁵ But the Lord replied, “You hypocrites! Each of you works on the Sabbath day! Don’t you untie your ox or your donkey from its stall on the Sabbath and lead it out for water? ¹⁶ This dear woman, a daughter of Abraham, has been held in bondage by Satan for eighteen years. Isn’t it right that she be released, even on the Sabbath?”</p>
<p>¹⁸ So He was saying, “What is the kingdom of God like, and to what shall I compare it? ¹⁹ It is like a mustard seed, which a man took and threw into his own garden; and it grew and became a tree, and THE BIRDS OF THE AIR NESTED IN ITS BRANCHES.”</p>	<p>¹⁷ This shamed his enemies, but all the people rejoiced at the wonderful things he did.</p> <p>¹⁸ Then Jesus said, “What is the Kingdom of God like? How can I illustrate it? ¹⁹ It is like a tiny mustard seed that a man planted in a garden; it grows and becomes a tree, and the birds make nests in its branches.”</p>
<p>²⁰ And again He said, “To what shall I compare the kingdom of God? ²¹ It is like leaven, which a woman took and hid in three pecks of flour until it was all leavened.”</p>	<p>²⁰ He also asked, “What else is the Kingdom of God like? ²¹ It is like the yeast a woman used in making bread. Even though she put only a little yeast in three measures of flour, it permeated every part of the</p>
<p>²² And He was passing through from one city and</p>	

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village to another, teaching, and proceeding on His way to Jerusalem. ²³ And someone said to Him, “Lord, are there *just* a few who are being saved?” And He said to them, ²⁴ “Strive to enter through the narrow door; for many, I tell you, will seek to enter and will not be able. ²⁵ Once the head of the house gets up and shuts the door, and you begin to stand outside and knock on the door, saying, ‘Lord, open up to us!’ then He will answer and say to you, ‘I do not know where you are from.’ ²⁶ Then you will begin to say, ‘We ate and drank in Your presence, and You taught in our streets’; ²⁷ and He will say, ‘I tell you, I do not know where you are from; DEPART FROM ME, ALL YOU EVILDOERS.’ ²⁸ In that place there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth when you see Abraham and Isaac and Jacob and all the prophets in the kingdom of God, but yourselves being thrown out. ²⁹ And they will come from east and west and from north and south, and will recline *at the table* in the kingdom of God. ³⁰ And behold, *some* are last who will be first and *some* are first who will be last.”

³¹ Just at that time some Pharisees approached, saying to Him, “Go away, leave here, for Herod wants to kill You.” ³² And He said to them, “Go and tell that fox, ‘Behold, I cast out demons and perform cures today and tomorrow, and the third *day* I reach My goal.’ ³³ Nevertheless I must journey on today and tomorrow and the next *day*; for it cannot be that a prophet would perish outside of Jerusalem. ³⁴ O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, *the city* that kills the prophets and stones those sent to her! How often I wanted to gather your children together, just as a hen *gathers* her brood under her wings, and you would not *have it*! ³⁵ Behold, your house is left to you *desolate*; and I say to you, you will not see Me until *the time* comes when you say, ‘BLESSED IS HE WHO COMES IN THE NAME OF THE LORD!’”

dough.”

²² Jesus went through the towns and villages, teaching as he went, always pressing on toward Jerusalem. ²³ Someone asked him, “Lord, will only a few be saved?”

He replied, ²⁴ “Work hard to enter the narrow door to God’s Kingdom, for many will try to enter but will fail. ²⁵ When the master of the house has locked the door, it will be too late. You will stand outside knocking and pleading, ‘Lord, open the door for us!’ But he will reply, ‘I don’t know you or where you come from.’ ²⁶ Then you will say, ‘But we ate and drank with you, and you taught in our streets.’ ²⁷ And he will reply, ‘I tell you, I don’t know you or where you come from. Get away from me, all you who do evil.’

²⁸ “There will be weeping and gnashing of teeth, for you will see Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, and all the prophets in the Kingdom of God, but you will be thrown out. ²⁹ And people will come from all over the world—from east and west, north and south—to take their places in the Kingdom of God. ³⁰ And note this: Some who seem least important now will be the greatest then, and some who are the greatest now will be least important then.”

³¹ At that time some Pharisees said to him, “Get away from here if you want to live! Herod Antipas wants to kill you!”

³² Jesus replied, “Go tell that fox that I will keep on casting out demons and healing people today and tomorrow; and the third day I will accomplish my purpose. ³³ Yes, today, tomorrow, and the next day I must proceed on my way. For it wouldn’t do for a prophet of God to be killed except in Jerusalem!

³⁴ “O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, the city that kills the prophets and stones God’s messengers! How often I have wanted to gather your children together as a hen protects her chicks beneath her wings, but you wouldn’t let me. ³⁵ And now, look, your house is abandoned. And you will never see me again until you say, ‘Blessings on the one who comes in the name of the LORD!’”

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2. Discover key cultural and historical insights

- The Pharisees laid down numerous laws about what one could and could not do on the Sabbath. In general, anything that could be done before the Sabbath should not be done on the Sabbath. Thus, the synagogue leader says, “there are six days for work. Come on them to be healed.”
- Rabbinic law allowed medical help on the Sabbath when a life was in danger. But if a life was not in danger, two schools of thought debated if medical help could be provided on the Sabbath. The School of Hillel permitted prayer for the sick on the Sabbath. The School of Shammai did not allow it. The School of Shammai was the more dominant of the two.
- Villagers often kept their animals inside their houses at night to protect from theft. It would be unthinkable to keep an animal indoors during the day. Every owner would therefore naturally untie his animal and lead it outside for water even on the Sabbath.
- Rabbis argued over whether it was permissible to rescue animals on the Sabbath. The Essenes did not allow it. At the most, some rabbis would allow indirect assistance so an animal could free itself. But here we are dealing with poor people in a general audience and to lose one animal would be a severe economic blow to them.
- Illness in antiquity was social along with physical. Healing therefore would be restoration to the community. Jesus identified the woman as a “daughter of Abraham,” thus showing that she belongs.
- The mustard was proverbially used to indicate smallness. These kinds of plants could grow to 5-8 feet high. But Jesus says it becomes a tree, large enough for birds to nest in it. This indicates that the kingdom of God, though starting small, has an unexpected and supernatural result due to the power of God. Trees in the ancient world represented kingdoms and birds nesting represented people and nations taking shelter under a great empire.
- The amount of dough in the story is about 60 pounds. Bakeries would work with this much dough. A housewife would not have that much dough or enough yeast to permeate that much dough. But the supernatural power of the kingdom enables her small amount of yeast to permeate the entire lump. Again, the lesson is that God’s kingdom begins small but has supernaturally large results.
- Table fellowship was a sign of belonging to a social group in the ancient world. Thus, when the people in the story say, “we ate and drank with you,” they are saying they are part of the master’s social group and should be allowed in.
- The Jews expected a great banquet to accompany the Messianic kingdom. Because they were descendants of Abraham, they expected they would participate in the banquet.
- The last first and the first last is a way of saying that the poor, downtrodden, and oppressed would be exalted. The Jews expected their nation, oppressed by Roman power and Greek culture to be exalted in the kingdom of God.
- Herod was called a fox. Foxes were considered cunning, shrewd, and harmful to small livestock.

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- Taking the people under his wings comes from the OT idea of God sheltering his people under his wings. See Psalm 17:8; 36:7; 57:1; 61:4; 63:7; 91:4.

These insights from the NIV *Cultural Backgrounds Study Bible, Social Science Commentary on the Synoptic Gospels* by Malina and Rohrbaugh, and *Jesus Through Middle Eastern Eyes* by Kenneth Bailey.

3. Answer these reflective questions.

Luke 13:10 says that Jesus was teaching on the Sabbath. Based on your reading of the stories of Christ, what do you think he was teaching? Does Jesus' action for the woman give us a clue about Jesus' teaching?

Why did Jesus call the woman a daughter of Abraham? Why was this important in the story? How do you think that made the woman feel?

In what way is the kingdom of God like a mustard seed? In what way is it like yeast? What was the result of the mustard seed and of the yeast? What do these things teach us about the kingdom of God?

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Jesus said we must enter through the narrow door of the kingdom. Why do you think he compared the path to life as a narrow door?

Why do you think Jesus wept over the city of Jerusalem?
