Stewardship of Time

This Can’t Wait Until Tomorrow

A Time to Pause

I. Freeing You from Satan’s Power II. Leading You to Glorify Him

Luke 13:10-17

Dorothy, the Scarecrow, the Tinman, and the Lion did exactly what the Wizard of Oz had asked them to do. In order for him to help Dorothy return home to Kansas, and help the others get a brain, a heart, and courage, he had said that first they needed to go defeat the Wicked Witch of the West (confident that they wouldn't be able to do it). Of course, against all odds, they do! Dorothy melts the witch with a bucket of water and returns to the wizard. “We'd like you to keep your promise to us, if you please, sir.”

Shocked that they’ve actually returned and asked him to make good on his promise, he says, “Not so fast. Not so fast! I’ll have to give the matter a little thought. Go away and come back tomorrow.” “Tomorrow?” Dorothy asks with such disbelief and sadness. “Oh, but I wanna go home now!”

“Do not arouse the wrath of the great and powerful Oz! I said come back tomorrow!” shouts the Wizard, who is neither great nor powerful; he’s stalling, because he has no idea how he might help.

At the start of our gospel reading, the great and powerful Jesus is holding an audience. **“Now he was teaching in one of the synagogues on the Sabbath.”** All the usual suspects were there, the every-Sabbath worshipers, the synagogue ruler, the upstanding members of the community. But then, in walks a woman even more small and meek than Dorothy. We read she **“had a spirit of infirmity eighteen years, and was bent over and could in no way raise herself up.”** She’s singing no song about “if I only had a brain, or heart, or courage,” because she needs all of those things and then some. She doesn’t seek an audience; she’s done no great deeds, she’s slain no witch—she can’t do anything—she’s so bent over, her spine so curved and so damaged that she can’t even straighten up. She has no companions with her, no one to notice her—who would want to? In some way or another, she had been afflicted by a demon! And Jesus the great and powerful? Well, he’s busy—maybe she should just come back tomorrow.

But then this: **behold!** In other words, the Holy Spirit is saying, “Look!” Notice this woman. Her? Why? Because otherwise we wouldn’t. Sitting in the back pew—feeling she doesn’t belong like the others. Ready to duck out at a moment’s notice.

**Behold!** What?! Who sees her? **Behold,** the Holy Spirit says, telling us to look with the eyes of the main character here—and who is that? Not the synagogue ruler—he *would* prefer she comes back tomorrow. Not the pious listeners—they’re studiously ignoring her. Look with whose eyes? Those of Jesus. He’s not too busy with his sermon to interrupt it when he sees her. Who? Her? That woman? The woman with a spirit of infirmity for 18 years! Helpless, outcast, doesn’t belong—her?

**“But when Jesus saw her, he called her to him.”** *“Oh no, this is the part where he scolds her, right? He’ll say, ‘You’re dealing with a demon, this must be your fault. Take an example everyone—don’t be like this lady! Or maybe he scolds her—you don't belong here! Not in the synagogue, look at your clothes, your hair, your sickly figure. Why can’t you come when I’m teaching in the streets or something? Can’t this wait?’”*

No. What does Jesus say? **“Woman, you are loosed from your infirmity.”** What?! I'm sorry—what did you say? Without delay? No “come back tomorrow?” Behold as Jesus looks with his compassionate eyes. This can’t wait until tomorrow. He doesn’t want to wait one more moment to restore her. He calls her up to the front! “Yes, you belong here!” And Jesus the great and powerful says, “Woman, from this moment on—without a moment to lose—you are free!”

I don’t think she can believe it for a second. She can’t even react! She’s been hunched over for 18 years; she doesn’t know what it means to stand up straight. So, Jesus guides her: **And he laid his hands on her, and immediately she was made straight, and glorified God.**

Can you picture it? Jesus straightening her out—no, seriously, you can stand like this now! Look how tall you are! And notice what else happens? Until this moment, she has done nothing. We’ve heard nothing from her. She was just *there—hunched over, unseen, uncared for.* But what do we see immediately after Jesus preaches this living sermon? **Immediately she was made straight, *and glorified God.*** Not only is her body made straight. Through Jesus’ power and love her soul is raised up, and just as quickly as Jesus had compassion on her, she responds in praise to her God.

You step into church, maybe stepping into the back pew, not because it’s where you always sit, but because you don’t want to be noticed. Or you come to your normal pew and try to look normal, but inside you are hunched over with the demands and demons of this life, fighting against a soul that is curved in on itself because of sin and the devil. You are helpless. You don’t deserve to be here, in the audience of the great and powerful Jesus, not with all these other people who look like they have it put together. He’ll teach here, but it won’t be for you. Maybe you can try him again tomorrow.

**Behold.** For a moment, don’t look at your Sunday morning through your eyes, or the eyes of other people here, or the pastor’s eyes. Look through Jesus’ eyes. **Behold**. He sees you—oh, yes, all of you. Every last crack and creak of spine and soul. Look at your weekday morning through Jesus’ eyes. You open your Bible—the coffee hasn’t kicked in yet, you can barely see the words on the page. **Behold.** In every devotion, you have more of Jesus’ attention than he has of yours. You gather the family for a devotion; you feel self-conscious, “we’re not *that* family, we’re not put-together enough.” **Behold.** See yourself with his eyes. He sees how helpless you are without him, how you can in no way raise yourself up. So he doesn’t wait, he speaks! He has to—this can’t wait until tomorrow! He speaks with the living and active Word of God: **“Woman, man, child, you are loosed from your infirmity!”** And once again, from that moment on—you, yes you, even you, are free!

That’s always what the Sabbath was all about. That was the day when God led the Israelites to enjoy the rest only he can provide. That’s still what the third commandment is about—that we don’t despise preaching and God’s Word but regard it as holy and gladly hear and learn it, because in those things God gives us rest from our sin and infirmities. Jesus knows our every weakness, and so he knows that this can never wait until tomorrow—we need his presence every passing hour.

And if you want even more proof of that, look no further than the rest of the account here. Jesus does this incredible miracle, giving further testimony to the fact that he is the one everyone needs—that promised Messiah who would suffer, and die and rise so he could “**preach the gospel to the poor, to heal the brokenhearted and proclaim liberty to the captives” (Luke 4:18).**

And how does the synagogue ruler react? He’s indignant! “Why didn’t you come to be healed tomorrow!” This is proof that wherever Jesus’ word is; there is opposition. Wherever Jesus’ does something wonderful, the devil is working hard, and the sinful nature is working hard to ignore it, or avoid it, or put it off. The synagogue ruler isn’t the only one who comes with sorry excuses to tells Jesus that *he* should come back tomorrow. We can do that too!

In a cartoon series I used to watch as a child, one of the characters is a turtle who has a strange clock. His clock doesn't have numbers on it; it has pictures representing activities: five pillows (for naps), two meals, and three snacks. Kind of like a newborn schedule. Of course, in the show, the clock goes off at the seemingly worst possible times. “We need Skalman!” And then the clock strikes pillow, and he's asleep. “We’ll have to wait until he wakes up!” No matter when the clock goes off, it always seems inconvenient. That's how it can seem with Jesus. Every day, and every weekend, Jesus gives us a chance to pause and rest in his Word. But whenever the clock strikes Jesus, it seems inconvenient. Can’t this wait until tomorrow?

Jesus’ argument that puts the synagogue ruler to shame puts our excuses to shame too. **“Hypocrite, does not each one of you on the Sabbath loose his ox or donkey from the stall, and lead it away to water it? So ought not this woman, being a daughter of Abraham whom Satan has bound—think of it—for eighteen years, be loosed from this bond on the Sabbath?”**

In modern-day terms (this works if best if you’re a pet owner), “You wake up on your day off, and you want to sleep in, but your dog needs to go for a walk. That dog will not wait until tomorrow! Don’t you get up and let it out and give it water and food? So why should I wait, when I see not a dog but a person who needs to be led away from Satan? This woman was bound by Satan for 18 years—this can’t wait until tomorrow!”

We’re often better at putting off Jesus than we are putting off our pets. But today, **behold**, look through Jesus’ eyes. He sees your heart, and how Satan wants to bind you again. He sees how much difficulty you are facing in this world. He sees the sin at work in your heart and how helpless you are against it. And whenever he sees you, he knows: *This can’t wait until tomorrow.* The clock strikes Jesus! And when it does, it’s always the right time.

You know that turtle named Skalman? He always seems to do things at the most inconvenient time. But if you worry about it as you’re watching the show, you're always put to shame. Because no matter when he takes his pillow or meal breaks, it always winds up working out in the end. What do you think happens when your clock strikes Jesus throughout the day? If you think it’s not going to work out, like it will be too inconvenient—you’ll be put to shame just like Jesus’ adversaries were. But when Jesus breaks into your routine and does glorious things for you like he did here, you’ll find that not only was it at just the right time for him to help you, but also just the right time for you to glorify him.

In the *Wizard of Oz*, when the wizard tells them to come back tomorrow, Dorothy responds, “If you were really great and powerful, you'd keep your promises.” The Wizard of Oz isn't; he's a fraud. But Jesus is really great and powerful, and he keeps his promises. So come back to him day after day, weekend after weekend. Pause and seek the rest that only he can give—and as you see opportunities to glorify him in return you, too, will say, “This can’t wait until tomorrow!” Amen.