

ENCOUNTERS: Don't Miss Your Encounter

Scripture used: [Luke 13:13 \(NIV\)](#) and [Luke 13:14-16 \(NIV\)](#)

OVERVIEW

As we continue the Encounter series, in this message we hear an extremely moving testimony from NBCC's Director of Connections, Christina Alo. Like the woman we looked at last week, Christina had an encounter with Jesus that set her free from addiction and despair and literally changed the trajectory of her life. Pastor Hurmon reflected on Christina's story and continued to examine the story of the woman from Luke 13:13 that we looked at last week. He noted that the leader of the synagogue rejected the miracle, arguing that it was inappropriate that the healing occurred on the Sabbath. As we examine his response, we learn that when we are unwilling to surrender our own agenda, we can often miss out on encountering the life-transforming presence of the living God.

KEY POINTS

1. We heard NBCC staff member Christina Alo's moving testimonial, which you will definitely want to watch if you missed it. Her story reminds us that harm from others, the critical judgment we receive from authority figures as we grow up, and the bondage to addiction can all rob us of the life that God intends. And yet, God is always working in our lives and always seeking to set us free to walk in His plan and purpose. Even when Christina felt like her life was over, God was there to take her surrender and to begin a remarkable journey to walk with her, heal her, and work through her life in powerful ways.
2. Similar to how Christina shares about her lowest point, the woman in our Scripture in Luke 13 also "could in no way lift herself up." Yet, when Jesus intervenes and heals the woman, the first reaction of the synagogue leader was indignation, not joy or thanksgiving. Jesus' response was to call out the synagogue leader's hypocrisy. Why was the synagogue leader acting that way? There were deeper forces at play. He was concerned about the huge crowds Jesus was attracting, and the religious establishment's dwindling crowds. He felt his control ebbing away, and his corresponding loss of power, prestige, privilege, and prosperity. He was deeply worried about his status.
3. We often adamantly insist on being in charge of our story – and not letting Jesus in, not letting Him be part of the narrative as Lord; not surrendering control of our story. There is a sudden revelation in today's reading: the woman is bound by a harmful spirit that prevents her from being free, and the synagogue leaders are bound by a similar spirit, it's just harder to recognize. They also are not free to respond to God's purpose and power, because they are controlled by other priorities. At the end of the passage, it is the leaders who leave trapped in their own shame while others are celebrating the work of God's healing.
4. On any given day, at any moment, we can be touched by grace, and wake up in Jesus' story – going from failure to becoming more than conquerors, from gaping voids in our lives to knowing that with God we have everything we need. It is difficult, scary, and counterintuitive to move forward into freedom by surrendering to God, but when we recognize that God loves us with an everlasting love and He is for us and not against us, we can willingly choose to fully surrender our agenda to Him, and move forward into the life to the full that God intends.

DISCUSSION

- 1) **HEAR** - What has your life's experience with "surrender" or "giving up" been like? Often, "surrendering" has a very negative connotation; has that been the case for you? Have you ever experienced "surrendering" something to God and experiencing freedom or liberation from it?
- 2) **UNDERSTAND** - Consider [Luke 13:13-16 \(NIV\)](#). Contrast the experience of the woman with the synagogue ruler. What kind of mindset and attitude toward life would they have come into the Sabbath day with? what would have been their mindset and attitude toward life at the end of the day? Sometimes it is the "good" things in our lives - our own dreams, our career, or own expectations - that we hold onto and keep away from God, because we don't trust God to be for us as much as we are for ourselves, or we afraid of surrendering to God's agenda for our lives because we don't believe it can be better than our own. Do you think this is relevant in your life? Why or why not?
- 3) **DO** - Consider what it looks like to "fully surrender" to God at this moment of your life. Often, the discipline to "surrender" is something we have to do repeatedly at key moments in our lives. It isn't easy, but it is possible when we fix our eyes on Jesus and recognize God's goodness and grace in our lives.