



“Kingdom Victory”  
Luke 13:10-21

**Idea:** Jesus demonstrated the ongoing victory of the Kingdom despite human and Satanic opposition.

**Intro:** Wilma Rudolph was born prematurely, which produced complications that resulted in her contracting double pneumonia twice and scarlet fever. Worse than those infections was her bout with polio, which left her with a crooked left leg and a foot twisted inward. Metal leg braces, stares from neighborhood kids, and six years of bus rides to Nashville for treatments could have driven this young girl into a self-made shell, but she refused.

Wilma kept dreaming. She was determined to not allow her disability to get in the way of her dreams. Maybe her determination was generated by the faith of her Christian mother. She would often say, “Honey, the most important thing in life is for you to believe it and keep on trying.”

By age eleven, Wilma had decided to “believe it.” And through sheer determination and an indomitable spirit to persevere, regardless of the difficulty, she forced herself to learn how to walk without the braces. At age twelve, she made a wonderful discovery: girls could run and jump and play ball just like the boys! Her older sister Yvonne was quite good at basketball, so Wilma decided to challenge her on the court. She began to improve. The two of them ultimately went out for the same school team. Yvonne made the final twelve, but Wilma did not. However, because her father would not allow Yvonne to travel with the team without her sister as a “chaperone,” Wilma often found herself in the presence of the coach.

One day she built up enough nerve to confront the man with her magnificent obsession – her lifetime dream. She blurted out, “If you will give me ten minutes of your time every day – and only ten minutes – I will give you a world-class athlete.”

The coach took Wilma up on the offer, and the result is history. Young Wilma finally won a starting position on the basketball squad; and when that season ended, she decided to try out for the track team. What a decision!

In her first race, she beat her friend. Then she beat all the girls in her high school. Next, she beat every high school girl in the state of Tennessee. Wilma was only fourteen, but she had become a champion.

Shortly thereafter, although still in high school, she was invited to join the Tigerbelle’s track team at Tennessee State University. She began a serious training program after school and on weekends. As she improved, she continued winning short dashes and the 400-meter relay.

Two years later, Wilma was invited to try out for the Olympics. She qualified and ran in the 1956 games in Melbourne, Australia. She won a bronze medal as her team placed third in the 400-meter relay. It was a bittersweet victory. She had won a medal, but she decided that next time she would “go for the gold.”

Wilma realized that the victory would require an enormous amount of commitment, sacrifice, and discipline. To give her “the winner’s edge” as a world-class athlete, she began a do-it-yourself program like the one she had employed to get herself out of those braces. Not only did she run at 6am, 10am, and 3pm every day, she would often sneak down the dormitory fire escape at night and run the track from 8-10pm before bedtime. Week after week, month in and month out, Wilma maintained the same grueling schedule for over twelve hundred days.

Now, it was time for the 1960 games in Rome. As a sleek, trim, and twenty-year-old lady walking onto the field in that arena, Wilma was ready. She had paid the price. Even those eighty thousand fans could sense the spirit of victory. It was electrifying. As Wilma began her warm-up sprints, a cadenced chant began to emerge from the stands, “Wilma...Wilma...Wilma!” They were as confident as she that she could win.

Win is exactly what Wilma Rudolph did. She breezed to an easy victory in the 100-meter dash. Then, she won the 200-meter dash. Finally, she anchored the U.S. women’s team to another first-place finish in the 400-meter relay. She won three gold medals in Rome. She was the first woman in history to ever win three gold medals in track and field, and each of her victories set a new world record.

Wilma Rudolph was victorious in Rome because she trained and prepared so diligently. She possessed a keen awareness of her disabilities, but she was determined to never allow them to prevent her from achieving her goals. Her story is an incredible story. Today, you and I hold in our hands another incredible story of victory. The Lord Jesus was victorious. His victory in life and death is different from Wilma’s. He was not victorious because of His commitment to training and discipline but because of who He was as King. From our passage in Luke 13, we will see victory on full display. Jesus demonstrated the ongoing victory of the Kingdom despite human and Satanic opposition.

Read Luke 13:10-21.

**Inquiry:** Luke tells us that in the synagogue where Jesus was teaching on the Sabbath, a short woman came to worship God. This text presents the very last time we will read of Jesus ministering in a synagogue. The lady’s shortness had nothing to do with her inherited stature. It was, instead, due to a crippling disease that left her bent over. Many believe she suffered from what is medically referred to as *spondylitis deformans*, which causes the bones of the spine to fuse into a rigid mass. There is no suggestion that she was demon-possessed because no demon was cast out of her, but according to Jesus she had been under demonic attack for eighteen years. That spiritual attack left her bent over with her face toward the ground. The life she lived was a miserable one. Walking was difficult. Looking up was painful. Conversations with others were awkward. Since her eyes constantly faced the dirt, she missed much of the beauty around her. For these reasons and many others, it would have been much easier for her to just stay at home, but to her great credit she sought the solace of worship and the Word.

Luke is the only Gospel writer to include this particular story. He places it in this middle section of the Gospel with its emphasis on the Kingdom of God. Well, it fits perfectly because Jesus demonstrates His Kingdom power and victory in her life, and He uses the miracle as opportunity to further teach on the victory of His Kingdom. The synagogue ruler was offended by the Lord’s actions. He scolded the worshipers who had gathered in the synagogue that day, warning them to seek their miracle on any other day other than the Sabbath. Jesus, though, rebuked his hypocritical and graceless mindset.

The Lord’s miraculous healing of this woman and His teaching on the Kingdom gives us a clear understanding of Kingdom victory and what it looks like. There are three truths about it that I want you to see.

## 1. The Kingdom of God sets people free from slavery to Satan. (vs. 11-13, 16)

Luke provides background information on this woman's condition in verse 11. Her physical suffering was the result of a spiritual influence. Jesus further clarifies the situation in verse 16 by stating that it was Satan who had bound her.

As she worshiped in the synagogue that day and listened to Jesus' teaching, He saw her in her infirmity. He saw her spiritual condition. He saw her need. Hear me today, Jesus always sees people as they are and knows every need. Seeing her suffering at the hands of Satan, Jesus graciously called her to Himself (vs. 12). He offered her an invitation to come and believe. Surely, she had stories of Jesus' miracles. She knew of people being healed of disease, blindness, and deafness. She had even heard that the dead had been raised by Him. Jesus' invitation to come to Him was an invitation to believe on Him in faith.

When she came to Him, Jesus pronounced her healing (vs. 12). What a declaration! *“Woman, you are freed from your disability.”* Then, with a loving touch, Jesus placed His hands on her and gently straightened her up. This woman who had not known what it was like to stand up straight for nearly two decades was now looking straight ahead into the eyes of the King. Her healing was immediate, recognizable, and glorious. As such, the woman could not help but shout, “Glory!” (vs. 13).

The miracle we see take place in this lady's life demonstrates for us the truth that the Kingdom of God sets people free from slavery to Satan. This woman was bound and, in many ways, controlled by the Enemy, but Jesus set her free. Today, the same bondage this lady was in and under is the same that binds many, but Jesus stands ready to set people free. This is exactly what He came to do.

*<sup>18</sup>The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me to proclaim good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim liberty to the captives and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty those who are oppressed, <sup>19</sup>to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor.* – Luke 4:18-19

Kingdom victory is seen in the freedom Jesus gives as He brings people out from under the rule of Satan and sin. Have you experienced this victory in your life?

Satan's purpose is to steal, kill, and destroy you, but Jesus' purpose is to give you life and life abundantly (John 10:10). He wants to set you free from the kingdom of darkness and bring you into His Kingdom of light.

The synagogue ruler missed this invitation into God's Kingdom and its blessing, so Jesus offered two parables to describe the Kingdom. Let's look at the next truth.

## 2. The Kingdom of God grows up and out, reaching all nations. (vs. 18-19)

This Kingdom starts small just like a mustard seed, but it grows up and out into a massive mustard tree whereby the birds can nest in its branches. That seed is so tiny it is almost invisible to the eye, yet it becomes a tree so mighty that no one cannot not see it. You see, the Kingdom of God, which began so insignificantly, will continue to grow up and out, touching all nations. Every nation (ἔθνος), every people group, will be reached through the gospel and be represented before the throne of God (Rev 7:9-10).

Satan's rule over the world and the people in it (Job 1:7; 2:2) is limited. Through the preaching of Kingdom, which is the gospel message, the Kingdom grows up and out. It retakes territory that was lost to sin. There is coming a day when all the nations will declare, *“Salvation belongs to our God who sits on the throne and to the Lamb!”*

Lest we mistakenly think this movement is military in nature, let's consider the third truth.

### 3. The Kingdom of God grows in and through people, profoundly affecting all. (vs. 20-21)

The parable in verse 21 compares the Kingdom to yeast that is worked into the dough and affects every aspect of the baked bread. It is invisible but influential. It works from the inside but affects everything.

Obviously, we should never see the Kingdom from an earthly perspective. We are not talking about a piece of real estate. For this reason, we dare not get hung up on what happens in Israel as a nation-state. The Kingdom of God is not of this world (John 18:36). It rather exists within the life of the believer, through the Church. Therefore, as Jesus preached the gospel of the Kingdom, He had in mind the reign and rule of God that breaks into the world and breaks the power of Satan. It sets free all who have been held hostage by the Enemy's power.

As we read this parable and the one before it, Kingdom victory is on full display. The Kingdom will grow up and out to all nations. It will grow in and through people affecting all nations. We celebrate this, knowing that our God wins, and as a result we win with Him. These parables, however, do not teach triumphalism. They do not teach us that one religion will displace all others. Religions will continue until all things are put under our Lord's feet (1 Cor 15:25). We are not reading here a Christian version of Islamic imperialism. Rather, we are reading that the growing Church as the Kingdom of God transforms society through the gospel.

In America, this is difficult to see. The Kingdom's influence does not seem to be having much of an influence in society. Rather than seeing the shackles of sin and shame being broken, we are witnessing more and more people being bound by them. In America today, we call the things that are good bad, and that which is bad we call good. We have become inventors of evil and delight in it. The percentage of people who claim to be members and attenders of church is declining each and every year. America has become a Godless, idolatrous, and immoral nation. Long ago, we removed any talk about God, the Bible, and prayer from our schools and public life. Are we any better for it? No, families and individuals are ravaged by our cultural decision to divorce ourselves from God. Today, we talk a lot about the mental health crisis that we are facing. We like to blame it on the COVID restrictions. While they might be partly to blame, I suggest that our mental health has much more to do with how we relate to the God who created us than how we relate to a face mask and quarantine.

As Christians we look around and see little that looks like Kingdom victory in America. Instead, we see a people who delight in sexual immorality. We see a people who live for money and pleasure. We see a people who have no concern for God and the things of God. Yet all is not lost. The wickedness that we see should not surprise us. It is exactly what happens when Christians fail to be salt and light.

**Conclusion:** As we look out over the spiritual and moral landscape of our community and nation, it seems pretty hopeless. It kind of feels like Wilma Rudolph's situation as a young girl. She was never supposed to walk without braces, much less run her way to three Olympic gold medals. The way our world looks today, the Kingdom of God is never supposed to rule and reign, yet it will. Like a mustard seed it is growing up and out, reaching all nations, and like yeast it is growing in and through people, profoundly affecting all. How does this happen? It works as Jesus calls sinners to Himself and frees them from Satan's grip on their lives.

Today, God wants to free sinners from the bondage of their sin. Will you respond in faith like the lady in the story? Will you allow Jesus to change your life?

Christian let's remember that God is using us to grow and expand His Kingdom. Are you allowing the life of Christ to grow up and through you? It starts with you sharing the gospel message with those in your circles of

influence. It continues as you stand for what is right and true. Being willing to hold the line in a culture that ever works to change the rules.

If we endure, we will see kingdom victory one day around the throne of God. What a day that will be!