**Thesis:** Life can bring all sorts of reasons to be tired. Work, school, family, church, repeat. How many times have you responded to the question, “How are you?” with “I’m tired. But I’m good.” Be honest with yourself. So how do you find rest in all of this? When Moses is speaking with the Lord about leading his people, the Lord tells him in *Exodus 33:14 “My Presence will go with you, and I will give you rest.”* No matter where we are or what’s going on in life, God’s presence is with us and he will give us rest.

**Introduction:** You’re listening to The Jesus Podcast, a year of stories showcasing the depth of Christ’s love and the glory of God’s truth. I’m \_\_\_\_ your host from Pray.com. Thanks for returning for another captivating story! Be sure to follow the podcast as we work our way through the miracles of the Messiah!

**Context:** Today’s story highlights another miracle of Jesus taking place on the Sabbath. It will begin with Jesus teaching in the synagogue, but will quickly turn into an important lesson for the religious leaders. One that only adds more wood to the fires that burned in their hearts against Jesus. For the Jews, the Sabbath was meant to be a day of rest. But through years of religious ramifications, it had slowly transpired to be a day of rules. Not rules that called one to action but rules that explicitly limited one from them. Through the years, the Pharisees, scribes, and rabbis had continued to create preventive measures that stopped anyone from doing any form of work that they considered to be sinful; work that they deemed to be in conflict with honoring the Lord. But it seems that the religious leaders had forgotten what it meant to truly remember the Sabbath and keep it holy. Bring your tired and weary hearts before the Lord today as we learn what it really means to find rest for our souls in the presence of Jesus.

**Message:** Do you remember that teacher in high school that made learning fun? They were edgy, cool, and making their lessons interactive? This was the type of teacher Jesus was, only like a million times better. In our story today, Jesus is performing his role as Rabbi by teaching in the synagogue on the Sabbath. The lesson starts as any other teaching would, a reading from the Torah, the first five books of our Old Testament in the Bible, sometimes called the Pentateuch. But Jesus isn’t like any other rabbi. Though he would begin by reading from the Scriptures, he would speak of deeper truth with authority as the Word of God, and would do whatever it took to drive his point home.

The Pharisees had many problems with Jesus, but the easiest way for them to catch him in what they considered wrongdoing was to wait for him to do what they classified as work on the Sabbath. We know that Jesus lived a sinless life in perfect adherence to the law.

In the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus says in *Matthew 5:17 “Do not think that I have come to abolish the Law or the Prophets; I have not come to abolish them but to fulfill them. 18 For truly I tell you, until heaven and earth disappear, not the smallest letter, not the least stroke of a pen, will by any means disappear from the Law until everything is accomplished.”*

This means that anything Jesus did on the Sabbath wasn’t in contradiction to God’s law, only the additional rules that the religious leaders had added to it in their fruitless search for self-righteousness. What’s ironic is that in their search, they were only adding more chains and bondage to themselves and the people that they taught. But in coming to fulfill the law, Jesus also came to free them from the weight of the law caused by its judgment. No amount of additional rules could outweigh the sin nature we’re born into and the sinful thoughts and actions we all fall victim to. What the Pharisees failed to understand is that sin isn’t a result of what we do or don’t do, it’s an issue of the heart growing distant from God and following the desires of the flesh.

We read in *James 1:14 “...each person is tempted when they are dragged away by their own evil desire and enticed. 15 Then, after desire has conceived, it gives birth to sin; and sin, when it is full-grown, gives birth to death.”*

This is a major distinction between the work of the Pharisees and the work of Jesus. The Pharisees wanted to control people’s actions to avoid sin. Jesus wanted to capture people’s hearts to completely set them free from sin. This was no easy task and it required Jesus to grab people’s attention that had long been drawn away from God by rabbis and Pharisees who had wandered from the truth laid out in God’s word. To do that on this Sabbath day, Jesus gives them an example they couldn’t miss. He calls a woman out of the gathering who had been tormented by a demon for eighteen years. This woman would have been known in her community for her affliction and there would be no doubt that it required power directly from heaven to make a difference in her life. This wasn’t a matter of medicine. Her affliction needed something greater. Freedom for her required the miraculous work of the Messiah. So when Jesus saw her, he called her forward. And without asking a question about her condition or asking if she wanted to be healed, he simply declared that she was set free from her infirmity. While the Pharisees might have seen any form of work on the Sabbath as unholy, Jesus knew that there was never a wrong time to do good.

It’s an interesting choice of words that Jesus uses here. For many of his other healing miracles, Jesus used phrases like “You have been made well”, addressing their state of health having been changed. But on this day, he uses the phrase “you are set free”. On the surface, we can attribute this to the woman feeling trapped in her condition, tormented by this demon, finally set free from her metaphorical prison. But if we dig deeper, we find something even more magnificent in Jesus’ words. Jesus was offering this woman greater peace than just physical health. He had released her from her spiritual bondage. On this Sabbath day, being in the presence of the Messiah had finally brought this woman true rest for her soul.

But additionally, Jesus' words were indirectly addressing the Pharisees who had problems with his teaching. Though they were angry with him for breaking the rules, Jesus was trying to get them to see he wanted to free them from the weight of the law. Jesus knew the purpose of the Sabbath was meant to give rest to God’s people, but in their wicked ways they had only created more of a burden for their souls. They saw the law as a way to be with God, when in reality they needed to be freed from the law to have any hope of growing closer to the Lord’s heart.

When Paul addresses the Galatians and their problem of falling back to the law after coming to Christ, he tells them in *Galatians 5:1 “It is for freedom that Christ has set us free. Stand firm, then, and do not let yourselves be burdened again by a yoke of slavery.”*

We might see the Pharisees as the enemy of Jesus, but the Lord loved them just as much as he loves you and me. There was nobody that Jesus didn’t want to see free for the sake of freedom. His heart was heavy for these men who had lost their way and were causing others to stumble as a result. So while it may seem like an attack on the Pharisees, what Jesus was actually doing was attacking their sin.

In talking about Sabbath rest coming from Jesus, the author of Hebrews concludes his thought by saying, *“12 For the word of God is alive and active. Sharper than any double-edged sword, it penetrates even to dividing soul and spirit, joints and marrow; it judges the thoughts and attitudes of the heart. 13 Nothing in all creation is hidden from God’s sight. Everything is uncovered and laid bare before the eyes of him to whom we must give account.*

If we want to experience the rest associated with freedom, we have to first address our sin so that Jesus can eradicate it from our lives. Though Jesus’ words towards the religious leaders were often sharp, his aim was not to cut them down, but to pierce them to the heart that he might cut out their sin. Unfortunately the Pharisees don’t respond in the way Jesus hopes. Rather than repenting, they only dig their heels in deeper and begin plotting against him. But there is one person in our story who understood Jesus’ message of freedom. We’re told that after the woman is set free from her infirmity, she straightens up and praises God. What a beautiful example for us to follow! When Christ sets us free, the first thing we should do is praise God! Without fear of others' judgment or making our healing about ourselves, our primary focus in our newfound freedom is bringing God all praise, glory, and worship now and forever!