



Sermon Outline

SEASON THREE - HURDLES AND HARBINGERS
ASSORTED TEXTS

COME
And SEE

The
CHOSEN



Hurdles and Harbingers

In Season Three, Episode 8, the creators of *The Chosen* imagine a moment in which a man with a broken (and infected) leg is healed by Jesus. This resource helps you interact with this scene. It includes the clip to show to the congregation, a suggested script for setting the scene before you show the clip, and a short sermon outline with main teaching points and pastoral prompts.

Sermon Title: Hurdles and Harbingers

Text: Assorted Texts

Dominant Thought: We're never to be a hurdle to the healing of others; we're only ever to be harbingers.

[Download the Episode Clip: Jesus Heals a Broken Leg](#)

Setting the Scene (suggested script)

Here's how John closes out his account of the life of Jesus—the very last verse: “Now there are also many other things that Jesus did. Were every one of them to be written, I suppose that the world itself could not contain the books that would be written.”

How on earth can you read those words and not wish you could hear every last one of those stories? Doesn't it make you a bit sad that they're lost to history? And have you ever found yourself imagining how one of those stories might have played out?

If you've watched the third season of *The Chosen*, you know that in the last episode of that season, the creators *do* imagine how one of those stories might have played out. And who knows—maybe one day we'll find out they weren't that far off! The imagined story is of Jesus healing a man with a broken (and seriously infected) leg. I want us to watch the moment of this man's healing but as you watch, pay attention to the crowd that has gathered long before this man limps onto the scene. Because *that's* who we're going to talk about...

***If you've never introduced your congregation to *The Chosen*, consider slightly tweaking the last line of the script above:** "*The Chosen* is a television series that explores the life of Jesus through the eyes of those who follow him. In the last episode of the third season, its creators imagine just one story that might be..."

Sermon Outline

Introduction

*Show the clip from *The Chosen*, using the suggested script above to set the scene.

*Moving from Clip to Sermon (suggested script):

It's incredibly moving to see this man find healing, all by just the touch of Jesus—to watch him find his way from limping along to running carefree. So I can understand why that might have been the only thing you wanted to pay attention to while the scene played. But did you keep your eye on the other people? On the disciples? On the folks who clearly are not big fans of Jesus at this point? It was moving to watch the man find healing. But if you had your eye on the others, wasn't it disheartening? To see how those gathered presented themselves as hurdles to this man's healing?

Sermon Body

I. It's easier than we think to become a hurdle to someone's healing.

Main Teaching Point: John's account of the life of Jesus has already been mentioned; it's worth a look at a second account—Luke's. It's a fitting one to spend time in for this teaching, because we learn in Paul's letter to the Colossians that Luke was a physician (Colossians 4:14). With his being a doctor, he had a special place in his heart for those who were suffering from all sorts of infirmities, and as a result he reserved several spots in his gospel to tell their stories. And in so many of these stories, Jesus and the one in need of healing are not the only characters. There's an additional cast of characters who, sadly, so often play the role of hurdles along the path to healing. The hurdles are there at the very start of his ministry. In Luke 4:14-15, Jesus stands in a synagogue and declares—by way of a reading from Isaiah—that "God has sent me to proclaim liberty to the captives and recovering of sight to the blind." You would

expect a giddiness to partner with Jesus in such a work. But, *no*. Many of those gathered were filled with rage *and they tried to throw him off a cliff*. It's a terrifying scene. It's also a sign of things to come. Consider these healings that are recorded in Luke's gospel:

- The healing of the paralytic in Luke 5
- The more spiritual healing of Matthew and the other tax collectors and sinners, also in Luke 5
- The healing of the man with the withered hand in Luke 6
- The spiritual healing of the woman who anoints Jesus in Luke 7
- The healing of the man with the unclean spirit in Luke 11
- The healing of the woman with the disabling spirit that left her half-bent as she walked in Luke 13
- The healing of the man with dropsy in Luke 14
- Once again, the spiritual healing of sinners in Luke 15
- The blessing ministry Jesus offers the children in Luke 18
- The healing of the blind beggar, also in Luke 18
- And one final time, the spiritual healing of Zacchaeus—that infamous tax collector—in Luke 19

At each of these healings, you find Jesus, the one being healed, *and those hurdles*—those folks who wanted to be nothing more than roadblocks to the healing that's needed. Sometimes you'll spot the religious leaders serving as hurdles. Other times, the disciples. Still other times it's simply "the crowd." It's why *The Chosen's* imagining of this man with the broken leg being healed is quite in line with what we have recorded in the gospel accounts. Did you see the disciples try to shout the man away as he limped his way toward Jesus? Did you hear the man from the crowd cry, "Unclean!", when he saw the man's festering wound? Did you see the others who looked at the man with sneering contempt—turning up their noses not just because of the smell, but because in their eyes, he was surely unworthy, lacking the blessing of God? They stood in the way of his healing. They were hurdles—which is an especially cruel role to play in the life of a man with a broken leg. And why do they behave the way they do in the scene from *The Chosen* and in all those moments in the Gospel of Luke? There are surely other reasons to explore, but three come to mind. First, it was quite easy for people at that time to think certain folks didn't deserve healing. Maybe those who were suffering were suffering because of their own sin. Why heal them when they couldn't care less about getting their act together? And why look to reverse what might very well be the judgment of God himself? This stretched beyond matters of sin, of course. Sometimes people stood in the way of healing because the person in need of

healing was, say, a Gentile and not a Jew. And that actually leads to the second reason people sometimes acted as hurdles to healing: it was quite easy for some to think *they* were more deserving of healing than other folks. It was quite easy to think there was a pecking order when it came to the miraculous work of God. First the righteous, *then*—maybe—the unrighteous. First the Jew, *then* the Gentile. First the disciple, *then* the folks still battling around whether or not they want to follow Jesus. (Did you catch the incredulous look on Simon's face in the scene from *The Chosen* when the man is healed? If you've watched Season Three, you know there's a lot going on in his own life, and he cannot fathom why this man with a broken leg gets to "cut in line," so to speak.) And that leads to the third reason so many sometimes acted as hurdles: what would the healing of another person of a particular type mean for the one who's serving as a hurdle to that healing? For so many at the time of Jesus, the healing of a seemingly undeserving person would have been nothing short of worldview-shattering. It would have called on them to reshape the way they viewed God and others and themselves. And that can be traumatic, can't it?

Pastoral Prompt: While we like to create a chasm between us and those we encounter in the gospel accounts who are prone to play the role of hurdles to the healing of others, it's best for us to just come clean: *it's easier than we think to become a hurdle to someone's healing*. It's quite easy, isn't it, to think certain folks didn't deserve healing? Because of what they've done or what they're doing or what we are *just certain* they will do again and again? Does a type of person come to mind for you? If they came limping toward Jesus, would you want their healing? Or would you be tempted to stand in the way? And the possibility of their finding healing is all the more frustrating if you yourself are limping along. Are *you* limping along these days, seeking your own healing? What would you think if *they* were going to get the opportunity to find healing first? If they were going to be given the option to "cut in line," so to speak? Would you stand in the way? And if they find healing, that's going to mess with your worldview, isn't it? We all of us like for things to happen for the right people at the right time—and *that's* when God is doing the right thing, *right*? Are you ready to have the way you view God and others and yourself tweaked a bit? Make no mistake about it: it's safer to play the role of hurdle. That doesn't mean it's *right*; but it *is* safer.

II. To be a hurdle to someone's healing, is to be a hurdle to our own.

Main Teaching Point: The most beautiful moment in the scene that's been shown from *The Chosen* is when the man breaks his crutch in half and then turns to run again for the first time in "so long." He almost throws his arms to his sides as if he's flying, doesn't he? It's beautiful. But the most *important* moment in the scene comes at the very end. It's the moment when *all* of the people who have gathered—every single man and woman who have taken up the role of "hurdle"—sit at Jesus's feet in unison. It's quite a statement they're making in one fell swoop. They are declaring Jesus as one who holds power that is not of the world they have known—that he has surely come from God and might very well be God himself in flesh. And what's more, they are all taking the typical posture of a disciple with their teacher. They are saying through their actions, "You, Jesus, are to be listened to and are to be yielded to." And it's quite possible that their worship and submission never would have happened if that man hadn't come limping along. Everyone peeking in on the miracle of the man's healing had their own hurdles they were trying to make their way past as they considered what on earth to make of Jesus, let alone what to do with him. They'd been wondering: *Is he the one we've been waiting for to save us? Does he truly possess the power that's needed to save us? His teachings hold such authority, but can they be trusted and obeyed?* All of these questions and concerns were hurdles to faith, *and there they were standing in the way of a moment that would answer those questions and address those concerns.* They were obstacles to the very thing that would lay low *their own* obstacles. They were serving as hurdles to a healing that could bring their own healing! So, it's a true grace that Jesus and the man with the broken leg *both* leap over the hurdles that healing might happen. And as a result—you see it in that moment when the people collapse to the ground in worship and submission—there's more than one healing that day. There's *several*.

Pastoral Prompt: It's easier than we think to become a hurdle to someone's healing. But to be a hurdle to someone's healing, is to be a hurdle to our own. Even as we refuse to accept that someone of some certain type should be allowed healing from God, we ourselves harbor our own doubts as to whether or not *we're* worthy. And so to see *them* healed—why would we rob ourselves of being told once more that *all* are worthy, that even we are worthy? Even as we seek to stand in the way of another person's healing, we entertain notions as to whether or not God has any real power to change the world, let alone one corner of it or one life within it. And so to see *them* healed—why would we rob ourselves of being told once more that God is all-powerful and still doing a powerful work? Even as we serve as a hurdle to the healing of another, we wonder whether or not we ought to remain a disciple—to yield yet again to the teachings of a strange rabbi who walked the earth thousands of years ago. And so to see *them* healed—why would we rob ourselves of being told once more that there is no other teacher at whose feet we should sit, because there's no other teacher whose words are backed up by stunning power encounters? To be a hurdle to someone's healing, is to be a hurdle to our own.

III. We're never to be a hurdle to the healing of others; we're only ever to be a harbinger.

Main Teaching Point / Pastoral Prompt: There's another troubling moment in the scene that was shown—when Simon angrily tells the man to limp away. Just after he does so, John tells him to simply ignore the man. “This is about us and Jesus,” he says. If you've seen the third season of *The Chosen*, you know why John's words are so troubling. Season Three explores that stretch of the gospels in which the disciples are sent out to assure that others might hear the good news of what Jesus is up to—that others might experience healing (see Luke 9-10 and Matthew 10). John and the rest of Jesus's disciples knew better than anyone that hurdles to healing were to be removed, not planted all the deeper. John and the rest of Jesus's disciples knew they were to be *harbingers*, not hurdles—forerunners who went ahead of Jesus to draw people to Jesus for healing. They were to announce and welcome in; they weren't shut up and shut away. While hurdles to healing are confronted, harbingers for healing are celebrated again and again in Scripture. Consider another list of healings from Luke's account of the life of Jesus, and with each, someone plays the role of harbinger:

- **The healing of Simon Peter's mother-in-law in Luke 4**
(Simon Peter and the disciples bring Jesus to her)
- **The healing of many people in Capernaum in Luke 4**
(people bring those who are hurting to Jesus)
- **What happens in Capernaum happens again in Luke 5**
(people bring those who are hurting to Jesus)
- **The healing of the paralytic in Luke 5**
(his friends bring him to Jesus and lower him through a ceiling to assure his healing)
- **The healing of the Roman centurion's servant in Luke 7**
(the centurion and several Jews advocate for the servant's healing)
- **The healing of the boy with the unclean spirit in Luke 9**
(his father brings him to Jesus for healing)
- **The little children are blessed by Jesus in Luke 18**
(their parents bring them to Jesus that he might lay hands on them)

At each of these healings, you find Jesus, the one being healed, and harbingers—folks who thought nothing of being hurdles, but rather brought Jesus to those in need of healing or brought those in need of healing to Jesus.

Pastoral Prompt: Earlier, when you were asked to think of certain folks who you struggle to believe deserve healing, because of what they've done or what they're doing or what you're *just certain* they will do again and again—who came to mind for you? Who is it that you think has no right to “cut in line” ahead of you or someone you love dearly? Did a face flash before you of someone whose possible healing would rattle your very view of God, of others, of even yourself? Could it be you're to play the role of harbinger—to be the one who brings Jesus to them for healing, or them to Jesus? The answer is clear by way of the scene we've watched from *The Chosen*, which is imagined out of several scenes from the account of Jesus's life: we're never to be a hurdle to the healing of others; only ever a harbinger.

Conclusion

*The pastoral prompt above is meant to close out the sermon, driving the congregation to consider the missional work before them. An appropriate closing would be to pray a prayer of commissioning over the people.

