

Luke 13:10-17 NRSV & LBA

Now he was teaching in one of the synagogues on the sabbath. And just then there appeared a woman with a spirit that had crippled her for eighteen years. She was bent over and was quite unable to stand up straight. When Jesus saw her, he called her over and said, "Woman, you are set free from your ailment." When he laid his hands on her, immediately she stood up straight and began praising God.

Jesús estaba enseñando en una de las sinagogas un día de reposo, y había *allí* una mujer que durante dieciocho años había tenido una enfermedad causada por un espíritu; estaba encorvada, y de ninguna manera se podía enderezar. Cuando Jesús la vio, la llamó y le dijo: Mujer, has quedado libre de tu enfermedad. Y puso las manos sobre ella, y al instante se enderezó y glorificaba a Dios.

But the leader of the synagogue, indignant because Jesus had cured on the sabbath, kept saying to the crowd, "There are six days on which work ought to be done; come on those days and be cured, and not on the sabbath day." But the Lord answered him and said, "You hypocrites! Does not each of you on the sabbath untie his ox or his donkey from the manger, and lead it away to give it water? And ought not this woman, a daughter of Abraham whom Satan bound for eighteen long years, be set free from this bondage on the sabbath day?" When he said this, all his opponents were put to shame; and the entire crowd was rejoicing at all the wonderful things that he was doing.

Pero el oficial de la sinagoga, indignado porque Jesús había sanado en día de reposo, reaccionó diciendo a la multitud: Hay seis días en los cuales se debe trabajar; venid, pues, en esos *días* y sed sanados, y no en día de reposo. Entonces el Señor le respondió, y dijo: Hipócritas, ¿no desata cada uno de vosotros su buey o su asno del pesebre en día de reposo y lo lleva a beber? Y ésta, que es hija de Abraham, a la que Satanás ha tenido atada durante dieciocho largos años, ¿no debía ser libertada de esta ligadura en día de reposo? Y al decir Él esto, todos sus adversarios se avergonzaban, pero toda la multitud se regocijaba por todas las cosas gloriosas hechas por Él.

SUMMARY:

Jesus heals physical and mental ailments; and Jesus heals age old prejudices by going where folk would not go, eating with, serving, acknowledging and celebrating those whom society of his day would not count among those worthy of their time and energy. He breaks rules and boundaries and causes a stir for one reason and one reason alone – to tear down walls and build up hope that NOTHING gets in the way of God's LOVE. This is the way to the JUSTICE God is seeking and it is a way which resides in LOVE - Are we letting this ethic of LOVE guide our journey? Are we aligning our actions with LOVE? Are we, even amid life's contradictions and struggles, conflicts and challenges – humbly learning to grow through our difficulties and discomforts?

*Everyone needs compassion, Love that's never failing; Let mercy fall on me!
Everyone needs forgiveness, The kindness of a Saviour the hope of nations!¹*

I was on the phone with Laurence from NPT last night as we worked through the lease agreement – he said he'd not been to a church service in decades and he felt really good after worship last Sunday. Refreshing. Refreshing is how he said he felt and how he saw our ministry – He said he really enjoyed hearing about the Scandalous Jesus! And so here we are in another space and another gathering being confronted by yet another of Jesus' Scandalous encounters.

You see he is there sitting in the speaker's chair at a Sabbath gathering and in the middle of his message a woman who enters in. She comes in, hunched over, tried to quietly makes her way into the gathering... she heads for her place – and in the middle of his Message Jesus stops -
and

SEES

Her.

Jesus SEES her for who she is – a child of God; a daughter of Abraham – a person in need of compassion, a smile or simple touch to remind her of who and whose she is – a sing of love and grace that resurrects hope and faith in herself!

*Saviour, You can move the mountains;
Our God is mighty to save - You are mighty to save!
Forever, Author of salvation;
You rose and conquered the grave - Jesus conquered the grave!²*

He not only pauses, he actually sets aside whatever it was he was talking about and going to talk about. As she interrupts the well ordered, well planned message – and interrupts the comfortable, well ordered and well planned gathering of the faithful. He reciprocates and chooses to step aside and take action rather than merely think, speak, sing, or pray about faith – An opportunity for grace has broken in and he takes it.

Now, there is a reason I'm sure she is bent over, why her spirit is heavy burdened; why for 18 years she is looking

¹ Mighty to Save © 2006 Hillsong Publishing Ben Fielding & Reuben Morgan

² ibid

down.

We don't know – we can speculate... Perhaps it is a physical ailment – a disease she inherited or a something she acquired working in the fields or working the street corners – perhaps it is a disease that is revenging her body or an illness messing with her mind; or Perhaps it has been easier to face the ground than to face the unkind glances of peoples looking down at her... perhaps she is bent over because the spirit that has crippled her is a profound sense of worthlessness and shame and blame and guilt, gossip or innuendo.

And Jesus sees her. He recognizes her for who she is. Stops. Looks up and for once and for all she encounters someone – who courageously interrupts this customary pattern – breaks from conventions and expectations. He acknowledges her as valuable and worthy. He raises his voice *"Woman, you are set free from your ailment."* And raises his hands. And *and raises her sense of self-stands in solidarity with her.* Immediately her spirit is lifted and *she stands up and begins praising God for the first time in 18years.*

**So take me as You find me All my fears and failures -Fill my life again
I give my life to follow Everything I believe in - Now I surrender³**

And in this healing and in his stance he raises the spirit of the congregation and the anger of the authorities and leaders. He breaks their well ordered liturgy; and breaks a whole bunch of rules: Heals on the Sabbath. Violates the gender barrier. Acknowledges a woman in worship. Ignores long-held stance on segregating the sexes. Recognizes and gives voice to one who has moved through life looking downward rather than facing down those who looked down on her. She's an underling, a pauper, possibly a widow, perhaps even a prostitute.

In one brief moment he sees her, acknowledges her, is present with her and resurrects her sense of humanity, self-worth, meaning and purpose – and standing in the community!

He turns their place and time of comfortable worship into a place of celebration and healing – and they are angry with him!

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Our God is mighty to save - You are mighty to save!
Forever, Author of salvation;
You rose and conquered the grave - Jesus conquered the grave!⁴**

³ Ibid

⁴ ibid

Like the president of the gathering – for too many and for too long our worship gatherings have been anything and everything but a place of healing! We come in sing songs, say a few words, recite prayers by rote, move through the liturgy and the lectionary and leave unchanged in our minds, bodies and spirits.

We can hear their story And we can think gosh that’s nice for Jesus there was no time like the present to offer a healing touch. – but I’m not a bent over widowed field worker and I’m not Jesus. And we can sing a song and celebrate this onetime event and as the last of the notes float off into the ether their ends the lesson and the story and the stories impact on our lives and our journeys.

**Shine your light And let the whole world see
We're singing for the glory Of the risen King**

However this is Jesus – this is Rule breaking Love making Rabble Rousing Jesus – Jesus who moves mountains as he shatters conventions, consorts with the marginal and outcast. And this is what it means to follow – to break rules so God’s grace and love can flow unfettered into our lives and the lives of others – no matter how low or lowly or heavy burdened or bent over we may feel. To let surprising moments of grace interrupt the comfortable and predictable and orderliness of our lives. To be present. To shatter conventions.

- To follow the Rule Breaking Love Making ways as we consort with the marginal and outcast (e.g., the woman at the Well John 4:5-28, The Beatitudes Matt 5:1-11 and Matthew the tax collector Matt 9:9-13).
- To follow the Rule Breaking Love Making ways like Jesus who heals indiscriminately urgently in the now of our action (e.g. on the Sabbath Luke 13:10-17; Matt 12:9-14, the centurion’s Pais Matt 8:5-13, the demoniac Matt 5:28-34; 14:34-36, denying patriarchy healing the bleeding woman Matt 9:20-22, Healing the masses Matt 9:35-38).
- To follow the Rule Breaking Love Making ways as we live and worship in gratitude and thanks giving of the God whose love knows no bounds! (e.g., Love of Enemies matt 5:43ff & 6:12; The greatest Commandment Matt 22:34-40)

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Forever, Author of salvation;**

You rose and conquered the grave - Jesus conquered the grave!⁵

So for too many of us, and for each of us who in one way or another find our spirits so crippled by the burdens we carry – for 18 hours, or 18 days or 18 weeks, or months or 18 years or more – that we are afraid to look up... that we've become accustomed to facing downward and looking down at our own lives... for each of us who have feared encountering the Spirit of the Living God – in this book – worship – in our lives - in the smile of another – this is the Jesus who calls to you where you are none-the-less!

I KNOW that many of us are carting around QUESTIONS – profound questions – of faith and spirituality – of what to and who to and why to believe what we believe. We are afraid to even broach the subjects, to ask the questions for fear of being seen as silly or stupid or shunned as a lunatic or a heretic – all looking down. No one able to look up to help others.

And worse yet... when we hit a challenge, when we are depressed, when the questions of faith and spirit and reality run up against these long held assumptions and beliefs we don't look up and praise GOD – we hunker down and hide and tremble and meekly try to walk away and we look down – on others and on ourselves to try to distract from the long held burdens that keep us looking downward. Rather than being a place of healing and hope the place of worship is the place we come to see one another, check in on the community, grab a cup of coffee and a bite to eat, perhaps enjoy a little worship-tainment and go on our way no less burdened down then when we first set foot in the place.

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Our God is mighty to save - You are mighty to save!
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You rose and conquered the grave - Jesus conquered the grave!⁶**

Are we ready to be the community that breaks the conventions shatters the prejudices – that in our worship and in our gatherings – Are we ready to live and work in a way where the Spirit can live in the question – Are we ready to follow where Love can thrive and together we can experience the gospel – the good news of the God who meets us where we are – sees us for who we are – loves us there and says look up!

⁵ ibid

⁶ ibid

Remember Laurence from NPT? While I was on the phone with him he said after worship, not only did he feel better, he said the entire space – the entire building – felt somehow lighter because of our presence – because of the brief time where we celebrated the immense love of this rule breaking love making rabble rousing God. That in the brief time of our worship – he said – it was as though a great healing had taken place.

Together we are creating community and a new “kind” of church where Love is a blessing, diversity a gift, worship a celebration and life a journey!?