

# NORTH MAIN UMC SERMON AUGUST 24, 2025

11th Sunday after Pentecost

## Scripture Readings:

On the Sabbath, Jesus was teaching in the synagogue, and a crippled woman was healed. This is one of the laws that Jesus broke... it was illegal to heal on the Sabbath..but **Jesus set her free**. After he touched her, she rose up and praised God. This brought hope and joy... Thus, the liturgical color green that is on the alter today stands as a symbol of hope and growth.

**Our response to all Jesus Christ has done for us, is doing for us, and will do for us is simply gratitude and worship**  
**Luke 13:10-17**

## Jesus Heals a Crippled Woman on the Sabbath

<sup>10</sup> On a Sabbath Jesus was teaching in one of the synagogues, <sup>11</sup> and a woman was there who had been crippled by a spirit for eighteen years. She was bent over and could not straighten up at all. <sup>12</sup> When Jesus saw her, he called her forward and said to her, “Woman, you are set free from your infirmity.” <sup>13</sup> Then he put his hands on her, and immediately she straightened up and praised God. <sup>14</sup> Indignant because Jesus had healed on the Sabbath, the synagogue leader said to the people, “There are six days for work. So come and be healed on those days, not on the Sabbath.” <sup>15</sup> The Lord answered him, “You hypocrites! Doesn’t each of you on the Sabbath untie your ox or donkey from the stall and lead it out to give it water? <sup>16</sup> Then should not this woman, a daughter of Abraham, whom Satan has kept bound for eighteen long years, be set free on the Sabbath day from what bound her?” <sup>17</sup> When he said this, all his

opponents were humiliated, but the people were delighted with all the wonderful things he was doing.

The Word of God for the people of God...

One of the six miracles unique to the Gospel of Luke is the healing of a crippled woman on the Sabbath. Luke is the only Gospel writer who records this event in the life of Christ. But Luke, being a physician, would have been drawn to a story like this. The reading from the Gospel of Luke (13:10-17) tells the story of the stooped woman who is healed by Jesus in a synagogue on the Sabbath. **There were two ways of**

**worshipping in 1st-century Palestine... the Temple in Jerusalem**, where people offered sacrifices. It was a sacred place and access was limited **And the Synagogues**, where people met to discuss Scripture. There were thousands of synagogues in Palestine, where people could talk, pray, argue, share information and sing. Visitors were welcome. Sacrifices were not offered. **There might be a leader of the synagogue, but any man who could read, who knew the Scriptures, and was respected by the community could be a speaker.**

Jesus fits this description. He was teaching in a synagogue, on the Sabbath. Jesus spoke from the middle of the room, reading the Scriptures and offering comments; then there was a **discussion of the text he had read. There was a debate about whether healing was allowed on the Sabbath.** The leader of the synagogue reminded Jesus that curing of the sick was only permitted on the Sabbath to save a life. After all, there were six other days in the week when healing could be done. **Jesus argued that the Sabbath was a day set aside for praising God, and that it should benefit people, not burden them. There was a woman there, listening to Jesus. She had been crippled for eighteen years with a spinal deformity that left her body twisted. She may have had acute arthritis. However, the people of the time thought that she was crippled**

because her body had been taken over by a spirit or demon.

**What was wrong with her? How was she suffering?**

The woman in the story could not straighten her body, so she could not look upwards or forwards. The shape of her body, always bent over towards the ground, was a **symbol of people who are stunted by ignorance, prejudice, anger or malice.**

**As it was, she could see only the dirt at her feet, as many people can see only bad things.**

She could not look up and see the possibilities before her.

She could not see the smiles on people's faces.

She could not see the sky.

**She could only see downwards to the dirt.**

Jesus called her over into the center of the synagogue, from the side where she had been standing. This was an unusual thing to do. Women usually stayed in the side area of the synagogue, sitting on masonry benches against the wall. They were not allowed to read as Jesus did. **Jesus must have walked across and led her to the center of the room** because she could not have done it alone. As we already have said, the people of the time thought that the woman was crippled because her body had been taken over by a spirit or demon.

**Spirits and demons** appear frequently in Luke's gospel, in different guises.

Jesus is conceived by the Holy Spirit (1:35);

at Jesus' baptism, the Holy Spirit descends on him in the form of a dove (3:21);

Jesus is tempted in the desert by a spirit or demon (4:1-13);

Jesus teaches that 'the Spirit of the Lord is upon me' (4:18);

Jesus frees people from unclean spirits and demons that cause cosmic disorder.

But ...Jesus called her over into the center of the synagogue, from the side where she had been standing. He did not single her out, he was drawn to her for a reason. He told her that she

was free from whatever had deformed her body. He put his hands on her, and immediately she was able to straighten her body.

**Now she could look upwards, and see forwards. It was not just her body that was healed, but her mind as well.**

Indignant because Jesus had **healed on Sabbath**, the synagogue rulers pounced on the woman and on Jesus and said to the people, "There are six days for work. So come and be **healed** on those days, not on the **Sabbath**." The man responsible to oversee that particular synagogue was himself bound by legalism. He witnessed Jesus ministering healing to a woman with an obvious need, but instead of glorifying God, he was angry. He was more concerned about adhering to the letter of the law and which day it was than the fact that God had just set this woman free from an eighteen year disability.. and then the ruler of the synagogue spoke to the crowd, as if to get them to agree with and side with him, but Jesus spoke directly to the man and not to the crowds, and Jesus answered him publicly.

**"You hypocrites!...Jesus argued that if you could water an animal on the Sabbath (which was allowed) then you should be able to help a woman who was ill. Surely the men who argued with Jesus watered their animals on the Sabbath. Jesus was not alone in holding this opinion that it was permitted to the benefit of people. Several other Jewish rabbis at that time taught that the Sabbath was made for people's benefit, and should not be a burden for people. What Jesus did is right. He has observed the true purpose of the Law, because people praise God as a result of what he has done. The crippled woman was healed ... Her immediate response was to praise God.**

The story underscores that, for Jesus, our concern (our actions of justice) for fellow human beings takes precedence over observance of the Sabbath. In one of the Lukan passages it

warns us that the new realm inaugurated by Jesus brings divisiveness. That kind of divisiveness is evidenced here in the dialogue between the synagogue leader and Jesus. The leader of the synagogue takes issue with Jesus' violation of Sabbath rules to heal the woman. Jesus responds by saying that we should do more for this daughter of Abraham than we would already do for an animal on the day of Sabbath. We should do justice. Jesus' response echoes the cry for justice. We should set the woman free of her illness. It is always more important to free up a human being from whatever binds him or her than it is to blindly follow the letter of the law. The crowd who observed the interplay of Jesus, the leader of the synagogue, and the woman rejoiced "at all the wonderful things that he was doing" ..

Herein is another invitation to find joy and here, especially, that joy is found when justice—doing the right thing—is displayed. Some of the thoughts about messages that we can gather today are that God promises a future that builds and plants—a future of hope. Faith in God, especially through difficult times, brings joy to our lives because it is grounded in hope. Joy is found when justice to the afflicted takes priority in our actions.

Joy and justice are two sides of the same coin. When we "cease to do evil, learn to do good; seek justice, rescue the oppressed, we find joy. John Wesley exhorted followers to follow the simple rules of do no harm; do good; and stay in love with God. There is deep satisfaction of following these simple rules in life. Doing justice in our relationships with our neighbors, community, country spreads joy around and makes the world a better place.

**As Jesus does in many of his parables, he is showing us that the woman's twisted body symbolizes people who lack hope, or see only the negatives. With Jesus' help we can lift our vision upwards towards God, and be hopeful.**

The story inspires us to mentally straighten ourselves to a standing position, where we see upwards to God for inspiration.

Jesus teaches that rules (like observance of the Sabbath) should be treated with respect, but they should not be a straitjacket either.

We need to be reminded that people of the ancient world lived in a religious culture. Religion was completely integrated into their daily lives, so that everything they did, said, ate, thought and made had religious implications.

The laws that governed their lives were not state laws as ours are, but laws laid down by God.

But Jesus' laws were different.. While this Scripture reading is a story of controversy between Jesus and the synagogue leader, at its core is a healing that demonstrates Jesus' power and his compassion. Today's Scripture shows that Jesus was not afraid of division. This division will persist throughout Jesus' journey to Jerusalem. Jesus came to wake us up. He did not come to rule us, but to free us. He didn't come to give us time off on the Sabbath. He came to give us time on for the Sabbath.. time to rejoice and be glad and help others. The Sabbath is also about bringing healing and peace to everyone who gathers in his name....Amen