

Fourteenth Sunday after Pentecost

STAND UP, STAND UP FOR JESUS

Luke 13:10-17

Fourteenth Sunday after Pentecost

Analysis by Timothy J. Hoyer

10Now he was teaching in one of the synagogues on the sabbath. 11And 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. 12When Jesus saw her, he called her over and said, "Woman, you are set free from your ailment." 13When he laid his hands on her, immediately she stood up straight and began praising God. 14But 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." 15But 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? 16And 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?" 17When 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.

Note: Luke 4.16-30 (Jesus reads from Isaiah and says that today that scripture is fulfilled); 4.31-41 (Jesus casts out a demon in the synagogue on the sabbath, and heals Peter's mother-in-law); 6.1-5 (Jesus' disciples pick corn on the sabbath and Jesus

says that he is Lord of the sabbath); 6.6-11 (in a synagogue on the sabbath Jesus heals a man with a withered hand); 13.10-17 (Jesus heals the bent over woman in a synagogue on the sabbath); 14.1-6 (Jesus heals a man with dropsy in a synagogue on the sabbath)

DIAGNOSIS: We Are Bent Over, Bound, and Shamed

Step 1: Initial Diagnosis (External Problem) : *The Spirit of Demands Bend Us Over*

One third of Americans have pre-existing medical conditions. One third of the people of the world are hungry. In the story of Jesus for this Sunday, one “woman had a spirit that crippled her for eighteen years. She was bent over and quite unable to stand up straight.” Yet she came to the synagogue as was demanded of her and her neighbors. Perhaps the day of rest was a great relief for her. Perhaps she came to listen to stories of God’s great deeds and be given hope by the hearing of those stories. Even Satan binding her for eighteen years did not prevent her from listening to the stories of God in the synagogue on the sabbath day. At least on that one day Satan did not prevent her from keeping the sabbath.

Many Christians still feel that there is a demand that they should go to church on Sunday to give God an hour a week, to worship God. But if church is to worship God, people feel they can worship God at home, at camp, in the woods, or on a golf course.

Step 2: Advanced Diagnosis (Internal Problem) : *Our Hearts Are Bound by Demands*

A great deed of God was done to the woman bent over by a spirit on that sabbath! She stood and praised God! Yet she was still bound, bound by the demands to do what was right. She was bound,

as all the people of the world are bound, bound to the demands that she prove herself right, and that she earn God's good pleasure by doing good deeds. The leader of the synagogue knew those demands quite well and with great insistence tightened those binds on the hearts of the crowd of people. He forcefully scolded, "Don't trust Jesus. Don't trust the benefits Jesus gives you. Keep trusting the law of Moses." It was as if the leader said, "Trust doing the right thing. Trust that doing right is the way to get God to think you are right. God does not give you God's grace. You have to do things to get God's grace. The most important way to get God's grace is to do right and so be right to God. Jesus can't make you right to God so don't do what he says."

So go to church on Sunday to do what you should and to earn your rightness to God.

Step 3: Final Diagnosis (Eternal Problem) : *We Are Shamed to Death*

The problem with insisting on doing what is right that one's god becomes doing right. That is seen in that when there is no trust in God then harm can be done to a bent over woman. The woman does not matter. Only doing what is right matters. Jesus uses the law to point out that harming a woman to do what is right is seen to be less important than helping one's animals get a drink on the sabbath. And people are shamed. They want to crawl away and die. For when one has failed to do what is right, failed to earn one's rightness to God, there is nothing one can do to change that. One is hopeless.

PROGNOSIS: JESUS RISES UP, UNBOUND, AND LOVED

Step 4: Initial Prognosis (Eternal Solution) : *Jesus' Sabbath Day Work Is His Own Death for Us*

Jesus used the sabbath quite often to give his benefit of mercy and healing to people (see note above). Jesus used another

sabbath to give us his benefits of life and forgiveness. That sabbath Jesus was in a tomb carved out of rock, dead from crucifixion. Jesus too was shamed—spit on, mocked, crowned with thorns. That shame was used to its utmost by killing him. And all again thought that there was nothing left but to do what was right to get God's grace. Yet on the first day of the week Jesus rose from death! Shame was now glory. Death became life. Condemnation was replaced with forgiveness. And demands were replaced with mercy—the very work Jesus had been doing on sabbaths all along.

Step 5: Advanced Prognosis (External Solution) : *Our Hearts Are Wrapped in Faith in Jesus*

Now, instead of a leader tightening the bonds of demands around our hearts, Jesus frees us from demands and gently wraps our hearts in his benefits, filling us with his Holy Spirit who gives us trust in Jesus and his promises of forgiveness and mercy and love given as a gift instead of earned. This is the freedom for which Jesus has set us free (Galatians 5.1).

Step 6: Final Prognosis (External Solution) : *The Holy Spirit Has Us Offer Mercy with a Bow of Service*

From this story, this witness to Jesus, we have two new ways of living that we can offer people. One is to treat people with mercy instead of judgment. When we have hearts that trust Jesus, our hearts can only do the work of mercy to others instead of blaming them for their wrongs. (There are plenty of people doing that, even that person's own heart is blaming them.) Remember, when giving mercy, we will be yelled at by others and mocked. Others will think we are being foolish, without sense, not following the rules. We are not greater than our Master. Even they are to be gathered with other people to be given the promises of Jesus, to be given his death and rising so that our hearts are given trust in Jesus, and thus peace and comfort with our Father. That being gathered together to be given Jesus'

Promises (Gospel) is what Lutherans call “church” (Augsburg Confession, Article 7). Church is not something we do for God, not something we do to earn being right, not something we do to fulfill a demand. Church is something God does for us—a way to give us Jesus’ benefits of faith and mercy and life. When church is where we are given Jesus and his benefits, then staying home, being out in the woods, do not give us what church does—all those benefits of Jesus, including the community of saints, who are all those people with us in church, people who are there and who are given hearts to love us, to forgive us, to have mercy on us and help us. To worship God is to trust Jesus’ Promise to forgive us as we go through the week at work and at home and all the other places that make demands of us. Yet even in those demands, we trust Jesus’ mercy for us. Then we can stand up to praise God for the mercy Jesus gives us.