

## Sermon Notes Jeff Greathouse August 21<sup>st</sup>,

Sermon Text: Luke 13:10-17

In our story this morning, there is a woman that appears in the synagogue. She does not request any help or assistance. However, she does draw the attention of Jesus. Maybe it was her appearance of being hunched over. From the passage, we learn that she has been in this state for eighteen years. She does not have the ability to stand up right.

For the last eighteen years, she has been looking at the floor. That is about to change. Jesus calls her over to him and she accepts the invitation and walks over to him. Jesus and her remains there. Jesus engagement with her is in front of everyone. He extends healing to her. The healing comes through his words of proclamation and physical touch. She is healed. She stands upright and is able to look at Jesus in his eyes. With the healing, she praises God and the crowd all around her rejoices. With her restoration, the restoration of the community occurs as well.

Luke is the only gospel writer that shares this story. Luke was a physician, so stories of healing may have meant more to him than the other gospel writers. Now, for this story, it is very important to note that the healing occurred on the Sabbath. The healing on the Sabbath caused conflict. The leader of the synagogue became very angry and questioned Jesus on his intent and why he chose to heal her. He did not understand why Jesus could not simply wait one more day and heal her then.

This is not the first time that Jesus has done a healing on the Sabbath. It is actually the second healing that he has done. The first healing comes to us in chapter six of Luke where once again Jesus was in the synagogue teaching and he healed a man with a deformed hand. When he healed the man, the religious leaders became extremely angry and began a plotting scheme on how to kill him.

All of this anger seems to be so misplaced for us when all we see is Jesus showing compassion to both the man in chapter six and the woman in chapter thirteen. Shouldn't we all show the same love and compassion. Yet, the leaders were upset because they believed that Jesus was breaking the laws and laws are important to follow and Jesus, to them, was not a rule follower; so, something had to be done.

In the past, when I heard these stories, I have always heard them through the lens of Jesus coloring outside of the lines. However, in these passages, we can look at them as Jesus aiming to follow them more faithfully. He was not trying to abolish them or color outside the lines. I am then reminded of how his ministry began in Luke. Let's take a brief journey back to where it all began before we dive deep into the text at hand. When we hear and rest in those verses, we can see this is what he was always about.

Hear these words from the fourth chapter of Luke:

*16 When he came to the village of Nazareth, his boyhood home, he went as usual to the synagogue on Saturday, and stood up to read the Scriptures. 17 The book of Isaiah the prophet was handed to him, and he opened it to the place where it says:*

*18-19 "The Spirit of the Lord is upon me; he has appointed me to preach Good News to the poor; he has sent me to heal the brokenhearted and to announce that captives shall be released and the blind shall see, that the downtrodden shall be freed from their oppressors, and that God is ready to give blessings to all who come to him."*

*20 He closed the book and handed it back to the attendant and sat down, while everyone in the synagogue gazed at him intently. 21 Then he added, "These Scriptures came true today!"*

Human liberation was a key component to the ministry of Jesus. For us, as Lutherans, this is also why the baptismal promise of "*striving for justice and peace in all the earth*" is so important.

Let's jump into our text today and go straight to the issue at hand. Jesus and the synagogue leaders are debating the rules of Sabbath. We were not living in the time of Jesus, so we may not be aware of the fact that debating the interpretation of the Sabbath laws were common practice. In this debate, Jesus does not just haphazardly throw out his argument. Instead his debating words rest heavily on the words from Deuteronomy. In chapter five, verses twelve to fifteen, we hear the following:

*No working on the Sabbath; keep it holy just as God, your God, commanded you. Work six days, doing everything you have to do, but the seventh day is a Sabbath, a Rest Day—no work: not you, your son, your daughter, your servant, your maid, your ox, your donkey (or any of your animals), and not even the foreigner visiting your town. That way your servants and maids will get the same rest as you. Don't ever forget that you were slaves in Egypt and God, your God, got you out of there in a powerful show of strength. That's why God, your God, commands you to observe the day of Sabbath rest.*

This Deuteronomy passage connects Sabbath rest to Israel's liberation from Slavery in Egypt. He then takes the step and says, each of you takes care of your donkey or ox and gives them water. If that is the case, should we not also take care of a daughter of Abraham. In essence, Jesus argues **FOR** her healing on the Sabbath based on the great worth of the woman. He then believes that it is extremely appropriate to heal on the Sabbath. I mean, what better day to heal and bring freedom than on the Sabbath which is a day to remember freedom and liberation.

And with those words, everyone who was opposing Jesus were put to shame.

So, what should we be doing with this passage?

It may be important for us to realize that in a honor and shame society which definitely was the case for the first-century Palestine that a public shaming of a local synagogue leader is not good. This leader would now struggle and his ability to lead this religious and social community in this small village would be hampered. The hampering possibility could be seen almost immediately when the crowd is pleased with what Jesus has done.

Last week, we talked about division and Jesus coming and division would occur. Well, here we are today and we see a group of individuals being divided over Sabbath practices and the momentum has shifted. More individuals are now having a favorable action to Jesus.

When I sat back and reflected on this text this past week, my mind wandered quite a bit. As I thought about the interpretation of Sabbath laws and their debates, I thought about the debates that might be occurring in our church and in churches in general. In particular, I wonder what religious practices that we have put into place that might be a hinderance to inclusion. Inclusion is word that we need to be more aware of. This past Thursday, I sat in the fifth session for Door County's Diversity, Equity and Inclusion session where they community is wrestling with how we can make sure all are included. We, as a church, must do the same.

The ELCA at large wrestled with this aspect at the church wide assemble. I don't think that it is a stretch to say that we must be diligent to recognize what theological ideas we hold dear that disallow full participation from others.

Maybe we can look to Jesus for our example as we navigate these waters and wrestle with those questions. Jesus was not a rule breaker, even when I liked to think of him as a rulebreaker. Instead, he operated very well within the Jewish traditions of the day. However, he also made sure that he did not allow tradition to exclude people from access to the community and the potential for healing.

The last eleven weeks, we have been hearing from Luke and we will have nine more. We can see that he is a story teller. Not only is he story telling, but his stories are about community. For us, as we hear these stories of community, I think we can ask ourselves the following question:

What kind of community does Bay View Lutheran want to be?

This is a question that we as a community will need to wrestle with. Then, when we "land" on an answer then we must be willing to ask ourselves, do the religious traditions that we hold onto help us or do they hinder us?

God's blessings and peace as we wrestle with these questions together.