

Gospel Luke 13:10-17

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.

His Healing Touch

***(Rejoicing: a monolog based on Luke 13:10-17** written by Rev. Kate Penney who is the senior pastor at North Christian Church in Fort Wayne Indiana, modifications by me)
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As I've considered how Jesus has been shaking things up over the last few weeks I decided I would do something a little different this morning. I'm going to share a wonderful monolog written by Rev. Kate Penny* this morning which I hope you will enjoy. I've added a few of my own lines as well. Kate is the senior pastor at North Christian Church in Fort Wayne Indiana.

It's sort of like having a pulpit swap. I'll be back later on...oh, by the way, it's a time traveling pulpit swap. So enjoy your preacher, I'm off to the first century!

(put on new stole and become Judah)

Hello. It's nice to be here today at Grassy Creek/Newdale Church. My name is Judah. I run things over at East Synagogue and I've come here to warn you about something that happened a few weeks ago over there. You see, just like here, teachers are welcome to come and share their insights into the scriptures. Sometimes it's the same teachers and sometimes new teachers come.

Well, one Sabbath there was this fellow teaching named Jesus. Now, I've seen this fellow Jesus before, but he was never more than a blip on my radar: he's from the country and we've never really moved in the same circles. This was the first time he'd come to East, and Jesus was teaching when a woman came in who was bent over. I don't know why she was bent over, whether it was a sickness, or whether it was stress. It was as though she carried the weight of the world on her shoulders and she was being bent in two. Whatever it was that caused her to be bent over, she was weak and nearly incapacitated.

Jesus called out to her, "Woman, you have been set free from your weakness." *Apoluo*. You have been set free. *Apoluo*, you have been untied. And then, this strange Galilean teacher went over to this woman and laid his hands on her.

And you wouldn't believe it. She stood up straight. Worse still, she began praising God.

Do you realize what happened? This dirty, long-haired carpenter had the audacity to cure on the Sabbath. Oh yes. And it is very clear that curing is work. And you know very well that THAT is NOT the way we do things. Oh NO IT IS NOT. So I got right up and I marched right up to the front of the crowd and I said, "Six

days. There are six days on which it is right for us to work. You should come on those six days to be cured. Don't come on the Sabbath day to be cured. You know better!"

I know I'm right. You know I'm right. It's such an important law that it's part of the 10 holy commandments. Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy.

Six days shalt thou labor, and do all thy work: But the seventh day is the Sabbath of the Lord thy God: in it thou shalt not do any work, thou, nor thy son, nor thy daughter, thy manservant, nor thy maidservant, nor thy cattle, nor thy stranger that is within thy gates:

For in six days the Lord made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that in them is, and rested the seventh day: wherefore the Lord blessed the Sabbath day, and hallowed it.

It is the way. It is the right way. It is what my scripture says. It is what your scripture says. It is the way we have always done it.

But THAT MAN. That man from Galilee. That long-haired, strange-talking, question asking, Sabbath-curing Jesus. I don't know what he is trying to do to me.

He interrupted me. I was trying to teach my people. I was trying to teach them why we don't seek curing on the Sabbath.

I wasn't even talking to him. But He butted in.

He called us all hypocrites! He said, "Well! Don't each of you untie your donkey on the Sabbath? Don't you set him free and lead it away to give it water?" Oh yes. He used that exact same word!!! He said, "Don't you *apoluo* your donkey? Well if you *apoluo* your donkey on the Sabbath and set him free, how is there any difference in what I'm doing? Shouldn't this precious woman, this daughter of Abraham, be set free from her burden on the Sabbath too? Is there any reason I shouldn't free this woman from her burden on the Sabbath when you would free a donkey on the Sabbath? No, I didn't think so. No one has to come back tomorrow to be set free. They can be set free right now!"

Oh yes. He did do that. He did say that! Jesus word-played me in my own pulpit. He interrupted me in front of my own congregation and he put me to shame. I blushed with shame. There was nothing else I could say. So I just sat there with my mouth hanging open.

But what he did wasn't the worst thing. Oh, no. The worst thing was what my people did. The worst thing was what our people did.

You won't believe it. They rejoiced. They were glad. They were delighted. They were jumping up and down, laughing. Hugging each other. Crying with joy. They were rejoicing because they believed that Jesus' disrespectful, rule-breaking, back-talking behavior was wonderful—they thought he was doing wonderful things!

So we've got a huge problem. This Jesus has been preaching for some time, but this is the first time people have rejoiced at Jesus' ministry. And now I'm hearing about other things he's saying. Just last week, he taught people that it was good to keep company with the most disgusting of sinners, and he told a story about a shepherd who found a lost sheep, and went home rejoicing. And another story about a woman who searches for a lost coin, and when finding it, goes out to her neighbors, and says, "rejoice with me because what was lost has been found." And Jesus tells this story because this is the kind of rejoicing that goes on in heaven when one sinner repents. And then he told a story of a father who had been through terrible struggle who, upon forgiving

a scoundrel of a son said, “We had to celebrate and rejoice, for the one who was dead is alive, he who was lost has been found.”

We have a problem.

This Jesus is changing everything. If this Jesus has his way, we are going to have to change everything. You better watch out. Jesus is on the loose and he’s headed this way.

/take off my stole and be myself again./

If Jesus came into our churches today, he’d probably do something that would have us acting like Judah too. He is true to his promise that he has come to bring division. To set the captives free. To bring healing and restoration to all people through God’s amazing love. He has come to set us free of those burdens that break our spirits and bend us over, and he calls us to do the same for others. And he doesn’t tell anyone to come back tomorrow or some other day when it might be more appropriate. Jesus is so passionate about bringing healing of body and spirit to everyone that he won’t hesitate. He won’t wait. And he won’t be deterred by the status quo or the way things have always been done. His passion will carry him all the way to Jerusalem where he will once again stand before those who use power to hold and oppress the weak and the powerless.

This is the work that God has called us to as well. So I hope you will take a moment and consider how you can be a part of this work of setting people free. Of helping others to maybe stand a little straighter. To bring a little dignity and hope to those who are bent over by life’s challenges and burdens. To see those around you and look them in the eye. To share the power of a smile and a sincere, “Hello.” To offer your time and gifts to those in need. To perhaps serve with one of many organizations here in the county who care for the least of these. To commit to pray for one person each day. To make a donation to those who’ve lost everything in recent flooding in Louisiana or maybe right here at home. To hear the stories of those who struggle. To share in the many ministries of the church or hear God’s call to begin something new which you are passionate about.

And when we do these things, both small and large, we will too will want to praise God and rejoice. We too will be filled with such joy that we won’t be able to hold back the laughter and tears as we rejoice in the wonder and power of God’s love moving through us!

The people rejoiced in this rule breaking, courageous, compassionate, healing radical. So, I warn you! You better watch out! Jesus is going to change everything! Thanks be to God! Amen.