

LUKE 13 V 10-17 25TH AUGUST 2019

EYNSFORD & FARNINGHAM

Are we truly free in Christ or are we still in a state of bondage? I believe this is the focus of the Gospel reading this morning.

This woman had one of the worst illnesses recorded in the Bible. She had a severe malady, or ailment. The problem in the reading arose, not because Jesus healed her, but because He healed her on the Sabbath day. Jesus healing people on the Sabbath day was a reoccurring source of contention between Himself and the religious rulers. The ruler of the synagogue was a hypocrite because he treated animals better than he treated people. Suppose the woman did come to the synagogue on another day. Could he have healed her? According to the religious leaders of that wouldn't have caused so much of a problem.

Jesus healed the woman through word and touch. James (5:13-15) mentions faith, prayer and anointing oil. ¹³ **Are any among you suffering? They should pray. Are any cheerful? They should sing songs of praise.** ¹⁴ **Are any among you sick? They should call for the elders of the church and have them pray over them, anointing them with oil in the name of the Lord.** ¹⁵ **The prayer of faith will save the sick, and the Lord will raise them up; and anyone who has committed sins will be forgiven.** We, through our prayer ministry offer that within the Benefice during our communion service. All are welcome to come for a blessing, by the anointing with oils, a prayer for healing or a problem, or a prayer for thanks to God.

Faith is not, though, always mandated for healing. Paul sent (anointed) cloths to the sick (Acts 19:11-12). ¹¹ **God did extraordinary miracles through Paul,** ¹² **so that when the handkerchiefs or aprons that had touched his skin were brought to the sick, their diseases left them, and the evil spirits came out of them.** The Bible mentions many ways that healing was done. Look up the references in the back of your Bibles and read the many verses on all types of healing.

Let's just look again at our reading. Jesus set a woman free on the Sabbath day, but the synagogue leader could only see the day as a day of bondage to man-made rules of Sabbath observance. Jesus bluntly addresses the clear hypocrisy of the religious leaders, where cattle are set free to be watered on the Sabbath, sheep are looked after, and clearly this "daughter of Abraham" should be set free of her crippling disease

In verses 12 and 13 it says. The woman doesn't call attention to herself, crying out, "Lord Jesus, have mercy on me." No. Jesus notices her, Jesus calls out to her, Jesus frees her from her bondage. By freeing this woman from the evil spirit, Jesus demonstrates his authority over the spiritual realm. He demonstrates that the new kingdom has come. He demonstrates the truth that Satan has been bound and the kingdom of God is victorious.

In Matthew chapter 12 when the Pharisees accused Jesus of being in league with demons. In verse 28, Jesus replies, **28 But if it is by the Spirit of God that I cast out demons, then the kingdom of God has come to you.** Then he goes on to ask, **29 Or how can one enter a strong man's house and plunder his property, without first tying up the strong man? Then indeed the house can be plundered.** The strong man is Satan. Jesus has bound Satan, and Jesus unbinds those who trust in him, that is in Jesus. The kingdom has come and has freed us from spiritual bondage. Jesus will free us from the bondage of sin, from the bondage of Satan within us. It is only through Jesus that we can be set free.

In verse 14 of our Gospel reading. The synagogue leader responds in a very interesting way. He doesn't address Jesus; he addresses the crowd. He doesn't refute what Jesus has done; he says, **"There are six days on which work ought to be done; come on those days and be cured, and not on the Sabbath day."** What we see is a battle of two authorities: the synagogue leader desperately trying to hold on to his control by binding the people to his narrow interpretation of the Law, and Jesus proclaiming freedom - freedom to follow the intent of the law.

The Sabbath question is still one of heated debate today. Jesus' reply was that the Sabbath was not intended to prevent works of necessity or mercy. The application of this truth is, some jobs today require Sunday employment, such as hospitals, law enforcement, and fire-fighting. Most other jobs, however, can often be performed on other days, even though Sunday of itself is not to be kept as the Jewish Sabbath. As a rule, Sunday is regarded as a day of worship, and we should not needlessly violate that, even though we realize there are exceptions. The important thing is to learn not to argue about religion, but to learn to live it.

Christians are no longer required to observe the Sabbath in the ways that the Jews did. Early Christians began to worship on Sunday instead of the Sabbath, because the Lord was resurrected on Sunday.

Still, we could learn something from the Jewish Sabbath observance. We live in a 24/7 world. We always have time to work. We sometimes have time to play.

We have what seems to be a shrinking amount of time for family - or God - or anything else precious. Is there anyone [here] who believes that we are the better for our busyness? I certainly don't!

Today, we no longer need permission to do good on the Sabbath. We already feel free to do what we want on the Sabbath. Too free, I sometimes think! But there is still a lesson here for us - that we should temper all of life with compassion. Just as Jesus honoured God with this Sabbath healing, so we can honour God with compassion at our work. Just as Jesus honoured God with this Sabbath healing, we can honour God with compassion at home. An encouraging word! A helping hand! A shoulder to cry on! God calls us to do these acts every day of the week.

The Gospel reading this morning is, I believe, actually a story of two people in bondage, a crippled woman and a synagogue leader. The woman was in bondage to a crippling spirit. The synagogue leader was in bondage to human traditions and the letter of the law. Both needed a healing word from Jesus, one was the word "you are healed;" the other was an intervention.

During this time of interregna we as a Benefice must not be in bondage of the past, but we must look at what we have, where we are heading, and build upon it so that we can grow God's Kingdom within these villages. It's not going to be easy, but Jesus doesn't promise an easy life. What he promises, is that if we work together in unity, in His name He will be there amongst us. Matthew 18 v 20 **20 For where two or three are gathered in my name, I am there among them.**" How much more affective we are when we work together with each other.

Jesus came to set us free from sickness and enslaving human rules. Let us live in the freedom of Christ. The freedom to live as a child of God.