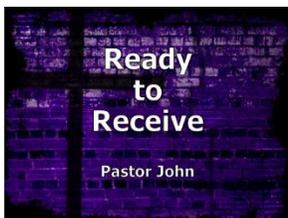


Ready to Receive

August 21, 2016

Luke 13: 10-17:

*10 One Sabbath, Jesus was teaching in a Jewish meeting place,
 11 and a woman was there who had been crippled by an evil spirit for
 eighteen years. She was completely bent over and could not
 straighten up. 12 When Jesus saw the woman, he called her over
 and said, "You are now well." 13 He placed his hands on her, and
 right away she stood up straight and praised God. 14 The man in
 charge of the meeting place was angry because Jesus had healed
 someone on the Sabbath. So he said to the people, "Each week has
 six days when we can work. Come and be healed on one of those
 days, but not on the Sabbath." 15 The Lord replied, "Are you trying to
 fool someone? Won't any one of you untie your ox or donkey and lead
 it out to drink on a Sabbath? 16 This woman belongs to the family of
 Abraham, but Satan has kept her bound for eighteen years. Isn't it
 right to set her free on the Sabbath?"¹⁷ Jesus' words made his
 enemies ashamed. But everyone else in the crowd was happy about
 the wonderful things he was doing.*



Today we begin with a story: A family from a remote area was making their first visit to a big city. They checked in to a grand hotel and stood in amazement at the impressive sight. Leaving the reception desk, they came to the elevator entrance. They'd never seen an elevator before, and just stared at it, unable to figure out what it was for. An old lady hobbled towards the elevator and went inside. The door closed. About a minute later, the door opened and out came a stunningly good-looking young woman. Dad couldn't stop staring. Without turning his head, he patted his son's arm and said, "Go get your mother, son."

Gentlemen, young men, I would not recommend trying this anytime soon. Especially if your sweetie is here today!! But seriously, how often do we see the grass as being greener on the other side? How often do we compare what we have with what others have? And on the flip side of that, how often do we settle for what we have? How often are we unwilling to dream of the possibilities of what could be? Today, as we wrestle with whether or not we are ready to receive God's touch in our lives, may the Holy Spirit work in our hearts and minds to prepare us all to receive this day what God has to offer each of us. Let us pray.

[Play "Listen Alone" video.]

Can you relate to this woman? Do you know someone who could relate to this woman? "The last time I trusted someone, I got hurt. I don't want that." "Why destine yourself for heartbreak?" These thoughts and emotions are common in our world today. Many people live outside of community because it is safer there, there is less risk. But did you catch her ending words? "I want to be loved." This is the way we are wired. We are naturally made to be in community, to be social, to be in relationships, to experience emotions. "I want to be loved." Like all who live life in isolation or are held captive by our past, she desires to be freed. She desires to be freed to experience community, fellowship, friendship.

"I want to be loved."



In today's passage, Jesus is teaching in the synagogue on the Sabbath. The Sabbath was a day set aside for God. There were many laws that detailed what you could and could not do on the Sabbath. Traditionally, in its simplest sense, it was a day of rest. The laws basically prohibited physical labor in any form. Honoring the Sabbath reaches all the way back to the people's time in the desert, just after the exodus from Egypt. If you will recall, God would provide manna for the people. On most days they could only gather enough for the day. Any more than that and it would spoil. But on one day they gathered a double portion. It was so that they did not have to gather any on the Sabbath. So there is a long, long history of honoring the Sabbath, of keeping it holy.

As Jesus is there in the temple that day, a woman comes in. She is bent over and cannot stand up straight. She has been this way for 18 years. Can you imagine? What would it be like to go through life for eighteen years, bent over and unable to stand up straight? Keep in mind that this woman bears not just her physical condition. She also bears the stigma, the social condition of being ostracized. Jews usually associated disease, illness, and physical ailments as punishment for one's sins or the sins of the parents or the sins of past generations. Many would have gasped as Jesus reached out to touch this woman. This woman who was bent over at the waist would relate to the woman in our opening video.

Jesus sees her. He calls her over. He has compassion. *"When Jesus saw the woman, he called her over and said, "You are now well."* For Jesus, it did not matter why she was bent over. He knew she needed healing.



Can you imagine what this meant to the woman? Can you imagine what changes Jesus' healing touch brought to her life? Can you imagine?

“The man in charge of the meeting place was angry because Jesus had healed someone on the Sabbath. So he said to the people, “Each week has six days when we can work. Come and be healed on one of those days, but not on the Sabbath.” The leader of the synagogue does not address Jesus directly. He does not even address the woman who was healed directly. Instead, he throws out a general condemnation of Jesus healing her on the Sabbath. But Jesus knows the man is talking to Him.

¹⁵ *The Lord replied, “Are you trying to fool someone? Won't any one of you untie your ox or donkey and lead it out to drink on a Sabbath?”* In Jesus' time these actions would have been permissible. The basic care for life was not seen as 'work' on the Sabbath. Jesus knew this. He understood the Sabbath laws very well. But He also knew how these Sabbath laws, like many other laws, had instead become burdens to the people. Instead of helping people to draw close to God and to keep the Sabbath holy, the laws became an end unto themselves. How in the world could it be wrong to offer love and healing and compassion on any day? How in the world could it be wrong to free this woman from what has bound her for eighteen long years just because it was the Sabbath?

“I want to be loved”. Is it ever wrong for someone to want this? Jesus went on to say, *“This woman belongs to the family of Abraham, but Satan has kept her bound*



**This woman
belongs to the
family of
Abraham...
Isn't it right to
set her free?**

for eighteen years. Isn't it right to set her free on the Sabbath?" Isn't it right to set others free, no matter the day?

Friends, our reality is that, like the woman, we are all children of God. All of us belong to the family of Abraham. All of us want to be loved. Just as this woman experienced healing at Jesus' touch, all of us want to be freed from whatever it is that binds us, from whatever it is that holds us captive. Each of us have things that bind us, that hold us captive. Like the woman in today's passage, what binds us and holds us captive may be physical. Like the woman in today's video, it may be emotional. For some of us, it may be spiritual. It may even be a combination of the physical, emotional, and spiritual. There is much that can hold us captive and bind us.

"Jesus' words made his enemies ashamed. But everyone else in the crowd was happy about the wonderful things he was doing." Jesus continues to be active and engaged in our world. Through the power of the Holy Spirit, Jesus continues to bring healing, continues to unbind and free people. He continues to free people from physical infirmities that hold them back, from social norms that isolate and separate, and from spiritual chains that keep them separated from God's love. Sometimes we are blessed and we catch a glimpse of the great and glorious things that God is doing. If we are aware of God's presence in our world, if we are out there as Jesus' hands and feet, we see that God keeps showing up, keeps drawing the circle just a little wider, keeps breaking the chains that bind. When we experience God's hand at work in our world, we celebrate and give our thanks and praise.



Maybe you have experienced Jesus' healing in your life. Maybe you have been blessed by His touch and have felt those chains drop off. You have been freed and now live a life of freedom in Christ. You live a life that is free from the chains of sin. If so, God calls you to share the story, to share the good news of what He has done for you. God calls you to use your story to help others and, through your experience, to find freedom. "I want to be loved". Are you ready to receive God's invitation to share the freedom and blessings you know with a broken world so in need of healing?

But maybe you are broken, maybe you are in need of healing. Maybe you are bent over and held captive, bound by something in your life. If so, hear the good news: Jesus wants to set you free. Jesus sees you. He calls your name. He wants to touch your life and bring healing and wholeness and freedom from all that binds, from all that holds you captive. In John 3:17, Jesus said, "*God did not send the Son into the world to condemn the world, but in order that the world might be saved through him.*" Hear the good news: Jesus loves you. In John 10:10, Jesus declares: "*I came that they may have life, and have it abundantly.*" Are you ready to receive Jesus' invitation to abundant life? He is calling. Come and receive. Let us pray.

