

## FOURTEENTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST: August 15 – 21, 2016

### A Study of the Gospel Lesson

**Lectionary Readings:** Isaiah 58:9b–14, Psalm 103:1–8, Hebrews 12:18–29, Luke 13:10–17

**Prayer of the Day:** *O God, mighty and immortal, you know that as fragile creatures surrounded by great dangers, we cannot by ourselves stand upright. Give us strength of mind and body, so that even when we suffer because of human sin, we may rise victorious through your Son, Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord.*

This week's references come from the following sources. The appropriate resource will be referenced at the end of an entry by using the letters preceding each resource listed here.

- BB: Brendan Byrne, *The Hospitality of God: A Reading of Luke's Gospel*.
- BPS: Brian P. Stoffregen's commentary notes (Pr, Faith Luth, Yuma AZ) Crossmarks.com/brian
- DL: David Lose, Luther Seminary, *In the Meantime*, www.davidlose.net
- DT: David L. Tiede, *Augsburg Commentary on the New Testament: Luke*
- JS: John Shea, *The Relentless Widow (Luke)*
- L: Lectionary.com
- NISB: *New Interpreter's Study Bible*"
- SF: *Spiritual Formation Bible*, (Zondervan)
- SPMc: Stephen P. McCutchan, *Water from the Rock, Lectionary Devotional for Cycle C*
- WP: WorkingPreacher.org (Luther Seminary)
  - Jeannine K. Brown (2010), Prof. of NT, Bethel Seminary, S. Paul, MN
  - David Schnasa Jacobsen (2016), Professor of the Practice of Homiletics and Director of the Homiletical Theology Project, Boston University School of Theology, Boston, MA.
  - David Lose (2010), Luther Seminary, MN
  - David Lose (2013), *Dear Working Preacher*, now President of Lutheran Theological in Philadelphia.
  - Emerson Powery (2013), Prof of Biblical Studies, Messiah College, PA

Background information on this text:

- "This miracle/conflict story is unique to Luke. It is the fifth (out of six) Sabbath day events in Luke and the third (out of four) healings on the Sabbath  
Our text has some similarities with the final sabbath day healing (14:1-6). In that story, like our text, Jesus indicates that human beings are more important than oxen and donkeys.  
Last week we heard Jesus say that he came to cast fire on the earth and to bring divisions. This week we have an account of Jesus seemingly going out of his way to cause conflict and divisions -- the opponents are shamed and the crowd rejoices (v. 17). His means of dividing the people in our text is to do a good deed on the sabbath. He acts contrary to some people's expectations. He is breaking their rules." (BPS)
- "Just as 4:18-19 (4:16-30) sets the agenda for the Galilean ministry of Jesus and, indeed, for the whole of Luke-Acts, so in a more restricted sense 13:10-21 is programmatic for the narrative section that encompasses 12:10-17:10. This way of construing the importance of this episode within its larger co-text is dependent on our recognizing in Luke's scene a single, integrated account whose focal point is not the controversy between the ruler of the synagogue and Jesus (i.e., vv 14-16) but Jesus' encounter with this woman and his ensuing interpretation of her liberation as a necessary manifestation of the divine will, an outworking of the presence of the kingdom, on this day, the Sabbath. That is, the intrusion of the indignant synagogue ruler into Jesus' encounter with the woman bent over (v 14) provides Jesus the opportunity to interpret that healing as a fulfillment of God's purpose and, thus, of Jesus' mission (vv 15-21). (JG)

- “Luke locates his account of the healing of the bent-over woman adjacent to Jesus’ parable on the nature of the kingdom of God in order to show that Jesus’ ministry in the synagogue has been kingdom activity.” (NISB, 1880-1881)
- “Jesus has been teaching, prophesying, and talking almost constantly since the beginning of his journey toward Jerusalem in 9:51. Even his exorcism of a demon in 11:14 was only mentioned as the occasion for more instruction, but now Luke relates a healing story. The context is still that of Jesus’ **teaching** (v. 10), and the brief story (vv. 11-13) again prompts an instructive debate between Jesus and **the ruler of the synagogue** on the proper observance of **the Sabbath** (vv. 14-17). The evangelist has thus woven this healing episode into the fabric of Jesus’ extended discourse so that it now illustrates the sad state of division in Israel which Jesus had predicted and provoked (12:49-53, see 13:17).

Only Luke tells this story, and it fits well with his distinctive emphases. In 7:36-50, the healing of ‘this woman’ (7:44) provides an occasion for instructing Simon the Pharisee in the grace of the kingdom, and now the healing of **this woman, a daughter of Abraham** (13:16...) leads to Jesus’ exposition of the Scriptures for the **ruler of the synagogue**. Only Luke will also later identify Zacchaeus as a ‘son of Abraham’ (19:9), and these surprising identifications correspond with the warning and assurance of John the Baptist at the beginning of the story: ‘Do not begin to say to yourselves, ‘We have Abraham as our father’; for I tell you, God is able from these stones to raise up children to Abraham.’ (3:8-9//Matt. 3:9). Jesus exposes religious pride and labels it **hypocrisy**, putting his adversaries **to shame** and causing **the people to rejoice** (v. 17).” (DT, 249)

- “This story is similar to 6:6-11 (Mark 3:1-6), the story of a man with a withered hand, and 14:1-6, the story of a man with dropsy. In each of these three stories, Jesus heals on the Sabbath and is opposed by religious leaders.

What does it mean to keep the Sabbath holy? Christians today tend to treat the matter of holy observance casually. We would do well to recover a sense of holy time. If the ruler of the synagogue erred by being too legalistic about the Sabbath, it is possible that we err by being too casual about the ways and times that we honor God.” (L)

- Please note as you study this Gospel that “there are a number of ... words in this text that seem to be used in figurative rather than literal senses—thus leading to possible figurative interpretations of this woman, her ailment, and the cure. (This isn’t to question the historicity of the event, but to look at ways [to see meanings of the text for people today.]... Everything about this woman, her plight, and her healing, can be understood in a figurative sense.” (BPS)

## Day 1

### Luke 13:10-17

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

Read through the entire Gospel lesson:

- We invite you to continue journaling as a part of your devotional/meditative time.
- Jot down any words or phrases that stand out to you.
- What do you think God might be saying in this story? Record this in your journal.

## Day 2

### Luke 13:10-13

<sup>10</sup>Now he was teaching in one of the synagogues on the Sabbath. <sup>11</sup>And 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. <sup>12</sup>When Jesus saw her, he called her over and said, "Woman, you are set free from your ailment." <sup>13</sup>When he laid his hands on her, immediately she stood up straight and began praising God.

Background:

- 13:10-13 "This particular text . . . is a healing that leads to an important pronouncement. The purpose of understanding this, however, is that it might aid us in appreciating the uniqueness of the narrative itself: it is a miracle with something to say about God!" (Jacobsen, WP)
- 13:10-11 "Luke sets the scene in two ways. First, he describes Jesus as teaching in a **synagogue on the Sabbath**. The importance of the scenario Luke pictures is highlighted by the fact that this is the first mention of Jesus in the synagogue since the onset of the journey to Jerusalem in 9:51. Thus, even though the content of his teaching is not given, the frame is familiar to us from the Galilean ministry of Jesus. There, when teaching in a synagogue on the Sabbath, Jesus proclaimed 'good news to the poor,' 'the good news,' the kingdom of God'...Recalling that well established script, we may assume that Luke has chosen at this fresh point a departure in the narrative to remind us of the central concerns of Jesus' ministry and, thus, to present Jesus engaged in the characteristic activity by means of which he fulfills his divine mission.

The scene is further established by the presence of an unhealthy **woman** in the synagogue...Luke...is not really interested in a biomedical diagnosis. He attributes her condition, instead to a 'spirit.' In doing so, he uses language that might be taken more generally as 'a condition of weakness,' but in light of Jesus' remarks in vv 12 and 16 it is more appropriate to read Luke's description of her crippled state as grounded in satanic bondage.

... **Crippled** for eighteen years, she may well have come to regard as ordinary experience the social ostracism meted out to her in the village where she lived. In fact, the verb Luke uses to describe her symptom, 'bent over,' portrays her physical appearance and serves as a metaphor for her ignominious social position. From this point of view, the otherwise unremarkable words, 'there appeared a woman ... Jesus saw her' (vv 11-12), become significant indeed, for they portend the materialization of a person otherwise socially invisible." (JG)

- 13:10 "It is Jesus' custom to attend worship in the synagogue (4:16), and he is often invited to teach." (L)
  - "Luke introduces the **sabbath** question as directly as in 6:1-11, where Jesus was demonstrated to be the Son of man who is lord of the Sabbath and in 6:6-11 where he healed on the Sabbath... But he also presents Jesus once again teaching **in the synagogue** (see 4:14-30, 31-38, 44; 6:6-11). This is the fulfillment of the hopes of Israel, the Messiah teaching in the synagogues and later in the temple (19:47-21:38). But is it an occasion of joy or judgment?" (DT, 249)

- “Reentry into the **synagogue** is surprising. Jesus has not been associated with Jewish synagogues since the onset of the journey to Jerusalem in 9:51, nor will we find him again in a synagogue. Moreover, in 12:11...he had identified the synagogue as a place of prospective persecution for his followers. Why does Jesus move back into the synagogue?

Within the Lukan narrative, this return to the architectural space of a synagogue evokes the Galilean ministry of Jesus (e.g., 4:14-15, 43-44) and especially Jesus’ inaugural address at the Nazareth synagogue (4:16-30). As will become clear, such reminiscences as these are actually supported by Luke’s account, which brings to the fore not only the linguistic combination of synagogue + Sabbath + Jesus’ teaching, but also the highly significant portrayal of Jesus’ ministry as one of ‘release.’ What Luke records here is nothing other than ‘...a marked fulfillment of the programme of the ministry as announced in the synagogue at Nazareth.’” (JG)

- 13:11-13 “[The woman’s] bent-over condition reflects the general tendencies of a religion that uses its theology and laws to oppress people rather than liberate them. ‘For you load people with burdens hard to bear, and you yourselves do not lift a finger to ease them’ (Luke 11:46).

Jesus, through his words and deeds, immediately corrects the impact of the spirit of the synagogue. When he sees her and calls her to himself, she becomes visible. One of the latent functions of theological perspectives that subordinate females to males is that it makes women invisible. The bodily symbol of being bent over means the person is never at eye level. They do not see others face to face nor are they seen face to face. When Jesus talks to her, he breaks the custom of men avoiding women in public. His address of ‘**woman**’ is not simply a gender designation. It is a mark of respect. In the Spirit-driven mission of Jesus, the invisible become visible, the ones at the margins become the center of attention.

Also, when Jesus touches her, he overrides the theologically grounded fears of contamination from her Satan-induced crippled condition or from the possibility she may be menstruating... He is doing what God has done from the beginning—freeing people from what oppresses them...If no one else in the synagogue knows this, then Jesus and the woman do. When she stands straight, dignified, and whole, she praises God.” (JS, 240-241)

- “...several features of the story suggest that the woman’s condition may be seen as indicative of her diminished status as a woman; her condition is attributed to ‘a spirit of weakness,’ this weakness has left her bent over and unable to stand straight, Jesus addresses her with the general term ‘**Woman**,’ and Jesus answers the leader of the synagogue by contrasting what one would do for an animal with what he has done for the woman. In the end, Jesus confers on the woman a status of dignity: She is a ‘**daughter of Abraham**’ (see 16:22-31; 19:9). Jesus is in the process of releasing the captive, freeing the oppressed (4:18) and raising up children to Abraham (3:8). As in other scenes in Luke in which Jesus responds to the needs of a woman, this scene points to a new status for women in the kingdom of God. [p. 273]” (Culpepper, *Luke*, The New Interpreters Bible, as found in BPS)
- “The description of the woman as **daughter of Abraham** is unusual. It is placed first in the Greek sentence (v. 16), a position of emphasis. This description will be matched in 19:9 by Jesus’ insistence that Zacchaeus is ‘a son of Abraham,’ a point that Jesus makes against the crowd, which rejects Zacchaeus as a ‘sinner.’ Similarly, it is probable that Jesus insists the woman is a daughter of Abraham because she has been robbed of her rights as a member of the covenant people, since she is identified as the bearer of an unclean spirit. Her physical position -- **bent over** -- can be taken as symbolic of her social position, just as Zacchaeus’s short stature can represent his vulnerability before the crowd. [p. 218]” (Tannehill, *Luke*, in BPS)
- “Her ‘ailment’ is described literally as ‘a spirit of weakness’ (v. 11) and ‘weaknesses’ (v. 12). *Astheneia* is used in both verses. Its literal meaning is ‘weakness’ or

‘incapacitated.’ Often this inability to do something is caused by a physical problem, such as disease or illness.” (BPS)

- 13:11 Twice in our text we are told that the woman has had this illness for **18** years (probably a word connection with the **18** who died in 13:4). What difference would a few hours make? Why heal her on the Sabbath day and purposely cause all the conflict that such a ‘work’ would create? Note also that the word ‘**sabbath**’ occurs five times in our text.” (BPS)
  - “Luke fills us in on all the particulars of the woman’s disability, including the length and severity of the problem. . . . the point here is simply that she had suffered from a spinal disorder for a very long time.” (DT, 249-250)
  - “Her physical malady is presumed to be a punishment for sin. Her ailment puts her outside God’s care and outside the concern of people who hold this theology. But for Jesus, who sees God as actively restoring creation and renewing the covenant with Abraham, this daughter of Abraham is the center of God’s compassionate care.” (JS, 242)
  - “She had gotten used to looking at people out of the corner of her eye, by looking up and sideways.” (Brown, WP) “After eighteen years, she could hardly remember any other way of seeing the world.” (L)
- 13:11a “Literally, the woman has ‘a spirit of infirmity’ (*pneuma astheneias*). In verse 16, her condition is described as bondage to Satan, although Jesus does not treat the healing as an exorcism.” (L)
- 13:11b “A posture problem of this magnitude would interfere with everyday tasks and social relationships. She cannot look anyone in the eye.” (L)
- 13:12-13 “Luke positions Jesus at the center of attention, not only for Luke’s audience but also and more importantly, by naming Jesus as the teacher, for the people gathered in the synagogue. When Jesus sees her, he does not go to her but calls her to him, thus inviting her to join him in front of those gathered and so to join him at the focal point of this scene. Locating this woman of such low status thus is not unrelated to the healing moment, but is directly relevant as a symbolization of her restoration within her community.” (JG)
- 13:12 “... here **Jesus** took the initiative. He recognized her plight and addressed her directly which was probably a violation of synagogue customs in itself.” (DT, 250)
  - “Moments later, his words turned from teaching to invitation. He had caught her eye--no mean feat, given that he had to lean over and incline his head to do so.” (Brown, WP)
- 13:12a “The woman came for worship instead of healing, and does not approach Jesus or request healing. There is no mention of the woman’s faith.” (L)
- 13:12b “**You are set free:** *apoluo* is **not** a word usually associated with healing! Its general meaning is ‘to release’ or ‘send away.’ It is closely related to a word (*luo*) used twice in our text by Jesus: to ‘**untie**’ an ox or donkey (v. 15) and to ‘**set free**’ from bondage (v. 16).” (BPS)
- 13:13 “Then to heal her, he touched her. This is almost as shocking an act as when he touched the litter of the dead man from Nain (7:14) or when the woman with the flow of blood touched him (8:44-46). Luke’s sense for the human dimensions of these encounters is most impressive. We are drawn directly into the drama of the moment and instructed by her appropriate response, **praising God**. As the sermons in Acts will verify (see 2:22-24; 10:38), such healings are mighty works of God, and God is to be praised (see also the lame man in Acts 3:8).” (DT, 250)
  - “The result of Jesus’ pronouncement is *anorthoo* -- literally, ‘to set straight again,’ certainly a cure for this woman’s ‘bent-over-ness;’ but it also has the meaning ‘to restore’ or ‘to set right again.’ Figuratively, Jesus restores her to the Abrahamic covenant.” (BPS)
  - “. . . the healing happens in the form of the divine passive (‘she stood up straight’ actually reads in the Greek as she ‘was straightened up’ -- assuming God as agent). God not only ‘set free’, but ‘straightened’ her in the synagogue on the Sabbath. All

Jesus *did* was to lay on hands between the divine announcement and the divine action.”  
(Jacobsen, WP)

#### Reflection Question:

- An exercise from the Spiritual Formation Bible...  
“**Set Free:** The wounds of people’s infirmities rarely escape Jesus’ notice and he is always ready to offer a healing touch. Walk around the room bent over, as the woman in this passage does, to see how the world looks from her vantage point. How does it feel to walk that way? What are the burdens that weigh you down and bend you over? Take a deep breath and stand up straight, offering your burdens to God. Raise your hands in praise to God, who declares you have been ‘set free!’ Take note of any part of your body in which you feel tightness or pain—your neck, shoulders, lower back. Inhale and exhale deeply. From what does God want to set you free?” (p. 1375) Journal about your experience.
- Who are the people who are ‘invisible’ to you/to your faith community today? How might we come to ‘see’ these people as Jesus does the bent-over woman?

### Day 3

#### Luke 13:14

<sup>14</sup>But 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.”

#### Background:

- “The role of the **synagogue** ruler [**leader**] was to maintain the reading and faithful teaching of the Law. Since Sabbath observance was a central means for nourishing Jewish identity in the world of Luke, the way one interprets the Sabbath law (Exod 20:9; Deut 5:13) is crucial.” (NISB 1881) BB
- “It is the **synagogue leader** who calls Jesus’ actions ‘healing’ (*therapeuo* in v. 14 twice) -- and thus a ‘work’. He doesn’t see it as the fulfillment of Isaiah’s prophecy of releasing from bondage -- or a re-enactment of the Exodus journey from slavery to freedom.” (BPS)
  - “This beautiful moment of restoration the leader of the synagogue can see only as an offense against the Sabbath.” (BB, 135)
- “... the **synagogue leader’s** complaint is, on the surface, a faithful reading of the Torah: the seventh day was set aside by God for Israel’s rest, and work was prohibited on the Sabbath (e.g., Exodus 31:14).” (Brown, WP)
  - “Sabbath observance increased in importance during the period of the Second Temple as a central means by which to nourish Jewish identity. The role of Sabbath observance for the maintenance of Jewish identity and as an emblem of group solidarity is evident here, since the synagogue ruler does not so much argue for a particular interpretation of Deut 5:13 (cf. Exod 20:9) as assert what, he believes, everyone of genuine faith will affirm.” (JG)
- “... the healing provokes controversy ... It is important to note that Luke’s Jesus is not predisposed to dislike a **ruler of the synagogue**, since he had responded well to Jairus who had the same title (8:41). But now this **ruler of the synagogue** is **indignant**, and his ire has religious justification. He opens a public discussion by addressing the people with his objection drawn from Deut. 5:13 and Exod. 20:9-10. He is not specifically identified as a

Pharisee, and his zealous defense of the sanctity of the Sabbath would have found approval among other carefully observant traditions.” (DT, 250)

- “The **leader of the synagogue** is clueless. His theology is a boa constrictor that has squeezed all the compassion out of him. Instead of rejoicing at the liberation of the woman, he becomes indignant because his theological understanding of the Sabbath has been violated.” (JS,241)
- 13:14a “The synagogue leader does not rebuke Jesus or address him directly, possibly because he has heard that Jesus has bested other religious leaders when challenged directly. Instead, he addresses the crowd.” (L)
- 13:14b “The Fourth Commandment (Exod 20:8-11; Deut 5:12-15) prohibits work on the Sabbath. What constitutes work on the Sabbath is an ongoing discussion among rabbis.” (L)
- 13:14c This woman has been suffering for eighteen years, is not acutely ill, and is in no danger of dying. Why can't Jesus honor God by keeping the Sabbath holy (free from work) and heal the woman once the Sabbath is ended? Good question!

Every person in a position of authority struggles with appropriate limits and enforcement of standards. Where do you draw the line? Jesus calls us not to lose sight of the person in need. It is a Godly thing to help such a person. ‘The Sabbath was made for man, not man for the Sabbath’ (Mark 2:27).” (L)

#### Reflection Questions:

- Where do you draw the line in regard to the legality of the rule as opposed to the intention of the rule? Journal.

### Day 4

#### Luke 13:15-17

<sup>15</sup>But 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? <sup>16</sup>And 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?” <sup>17</sup>When 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.

#### Background:

- 13:15-16 “Jesus’ authority is reestablished immediately, at least for Luke’s audience, by the narrator’s reference to Jesus as ‘**Lord**’ ... Because the ruler of the synagogue had alluded to Deut 5:13, Jesus returns to the deuteronomistic co-text in order to remind his debate partner that the prohibition to work extends not only to human beings but also to oxen and donkeys (Deut 5:14). If this is so, why then are people allowed to untie their animals, and why are these animals allowed to walk to the trough for water? (It is not because the need is life-threatening!)

From this exegesis of the deuteronomistic law and contemporary practices based on it, Jesus is able to expose the ruler of the synagogue and those who think as he does as ‘hypocrites’ – that is, as persons who do not understand God’s purpose, who therefore are unable to discern accurately the meaning of the Scriptures, and therefore, whose piety is a sham.

... the fundamental issue at work in this scene is the divine legitimation of the character of Jesus’ mission—liberation and restoration for such poor persons as this woman of lowly status, through which activity he renders present the dominion of God in the present.

... [Jesus] regards his act of healing as an act of liberation from satanic bondage, as direct engagement in cosmic conflict, through which God’s eschatological purpose comes to fruition...If this breaks the boundaries of the practices of Judaism, this does not mean that the Scriptures are thereby nullified. Jesus had already associated his work with that of Elijah and

Elisha in order to show how God's grace was extended in surprising ways and to surprising people (4:25-28). What is more, Jesus' act on behalf of this woman was nothing more than the consummation of God's covenantal promise and the extension of God's covenantal mercy to Abraham (cf. 1:52-52, 73-75). She is 'a **daughter of Abraham**,' an appellation that might signal heroic faithfulness in some other literature, but with a profoundly different significance in the Lukan narrative. She is thus presented as one of those persons denoted by others as having no place among the people of God, normally excluded from social intercourse and certainly not highly regarded for their fidelity, and yet raised up by God as children of Abraham in the sense of becoming the recipients of the mercy reserved for Abraham by God. (JG)

- "... Jesus here does not supersede Jewishness with his claims about the Sabbath, but rather intensifies their theological grounding in the necessity of God and God's purposes to heal, liberate, and unbind. . . the narrator points to the mystery of God's action in this moment as a way of reframing Sabbath and relationships to all of the daughters of Abraham. . . we are led to the threshold of celebrating and praising God along with the Jewish crowd. . . The God who shows up does not lead us out of our fellowship, but more deeply into it. . ." (Jacobsen, WP)
- "Jesus constantly announces the coming kingdom in words and deeds that run counter to the people's expectations for the kingdom. He comes from Galilee, from where no prophet comes. He talks with a Samaritan -- and a woman, which no decent male Jew would do. He eats with tax collectors and sinners. He is accused of being a glutton and a drunkard. He directly confronts their understanding of the Sabbath Laws. Eventually he will die as an accursed criminal on a cross." (BPS)
- "Generally, when people are stuck in a system or a particular way of understanding, they need to be SHOCKED out of the old and into the new. Logic and reason usually doesn't work...Systems theory indicates that any time someone upsets the homeostasis--the comfortable way the people are used to, someone is likely to sabotage the plans and attack the one making them. Being pushed out of homeostasis causes anxiety. Anxious people can do all kinds of things that may not be helpful." (BPS)

- 13:15 "Jesus' response is equally sharp, and it is also based in a scriptural interpretation. The word **hypocrite** is biting, especially for those who were so preoccupied with consistency in observing the Law. In 12:1, Jesus had warned his disciples to 'beware of the leaven of the Pharisees which is hypocrisy' and in 12:56 he called 'hypocrites' those unable to 'interpret the present time.' He is not merely accusing them of being 'legalists,' but attacking a kind of scriptural interpretation which prevents them from discerning the present saving activity of God. They have boxed in the Law so closely that even God's healing of **this woman** cannot be praised." (DT, 250-251)

- "The hypocrisy of the synagogue leader has to do with his inconsistency. He believes that the Torah permits helping animals on the Sabbath — but not humans. He believes that it violates Torah law to free a woman from Satan's bondage on the Sabbath." (L)

- 13:16 "...thus Jesus is taking up this reasonable accommodation and arguing from the lesser case to the greater: if you would unbind an animal on the Sabbath, would you not the more unbind a **daughter of Abraham**?..."

The suggestion that it is **Satan** who has bound the woman in her disability is significant. Jesus is challenging the dominion of Satan, and those who are piously defending the Sabbath have not discerned what is happening. More is at stake than mere human religiosity. Jesus has suggested that his critics are in danger of aiding Satan in his reign of bondage." (DT, 251)

- "... the words for 'bound' and 'bondage' in v. 16 (*deo* -- used for the 'tied up' colt in 19:30, its only other use in Luke; and *desmos* -- used in references to chains and shackles in 8:29, its only other use in Luke) can only be used of illnesses in a figurative sense -- being bound by some force." (BPS)

- “**a daughter of Abraham:** This phrase occurs only here in the Old and New Testaments, but the phrase, ‘son of Abraham,’ occurs several times.” (L)
- “Does this text indicate that if we are to be offering new life to all people, it is likely to cause conflicts and divisions -- some will be shamed and others will rejoice? ... as we read last week, Jesus' came to cast fire on the earth and cause divisions.” (BPS)
- 13:17 “He has put them to ‘**shame**’ just as the makers of idols are put to shame and confounded upon the revelation of God as Savior in Isa. 45:15-16. By contrast, the people join the woman in joy [**rejoicing**] and praise to God, recognizing that Jesus has done glorious things.” (DT,251)
  - “When people’s minds are not in bondage to false ideas, they will naturally rejoice. So the crowds rejoice and spread the word. But opponents are inevitably shamed.” (JS,243)
  - “Jesus wins this round. His opponents are shamed, and the ‘entire crowd’ is glad. The crowd is made up of ordinary people who know what it means to suffer. They rejoice at this woman's release from crippling disease — and also at the synagogue leader's discomfiture. Ordinary people often suffer at the hands of rigid authority, and they have surely felt the sting of this man's pronouncements-from-on-high. They are delighted at seeing him put in his place.”
  - “Jesus' perspective on the Sabbath as a day for deliverance is vindicated, as Luke narrates the humiliation of Jesus' opponents and the joy of the crowds at his wonderful (healing) deeds (13:17). Although we do not hear about the woman who has been healed at the end of the passage, the praise she offers to God (*doxazo*; 13:13) reverberates with the crowds' rejoicing (*chairo*; 13:17). Both themes of praise and rejoicing are emphasized by Luke as appropriate responses to God's work in Jesus (e.g., 7:16) the one who brings the reign of God in healing power to those who most need it.” (Brown, WP)
- 13:17a “In an honor/shame society, like first-century Palestine, this public shaming of the local synagogue leader is not good ... for him or for his ability to lead this religious and social community in this small village.” (Powery, WP)
- 13:17b “... the crowd is pleased and Luke highlights their reaction, a reaction that would be indicative of the divide over Sabbath practices in general in first century Judaism. Everyone was not on the same page. Compared to the earlier account, Jesus is beginning to receive a much more favorable reaction from the crowd (13:11).” (Powery, WP)

#### Reflection Questions:

- What kinds of spirits cripple people today (i.e. spirits of anger, envy, fear of losing someone or something...)? What kinds of spirits have crippled you or are crippling you, have taken joy from your life? How is that manifested in your life? (journal)
- How are we freed from our bondage? (journal)

### Day 5

#### Reread the entire Scripture:

- Does anything significant or new stand out for you with this reading?
- After studying and meditating on this Scripture, what do you think God might be saying to you?

Reread the entire Scripture again.

- What prayer rises up in you (what would you like to say to God) after reflecting (listening to what God had to say to you) on this Scripture?

Reflection questions:

- "...where [do you] see God freeing and where [do you] still feel bound. ... where [have you] felt God healing and where [do you] still feel crippled. ... name God's mighty acts in [your life] and point to places of brokenness..." (David Lose, WP)
  - Ponder your answers to these questions and Journal.

- To think about . . . David Lose in *Dear Working Preacher*, Luther Seminary, 2013: "There are two sides to every story, and that includes this one. . . he suggests we spend more time and sympathize with each of the two characters with whom Jesus interacts:

Let's start first with the leader of the synagogue. That may be challenging, both by habit and because of the way the story runs. But inviting a sympathetic reading of this character is crucial to inviting people into this story. Why? Because what he offers is a clear and compelling reading of the law. He is, in other words, right: you are not supposed to do any work on the Sabbath.

Sabbath is a day for rest and renewal, and the rather negative view we take toward the various "restrictions" associated with the Sabbath would have been very foreign to the Israelites. Keep in mind that the law -- including laws about the Sabbath -- were given to the Israelites after their Exodus from Egypt. You remember Egypt -- where the Israelites were slaves and worked whenever their masters commanded them, likely never getting a day off. And so when they receive a command to rest -- to actually set aside one day of the week to rest their bodies and their livestock and retreat for a time of renewal and prayer -- trust me, they heard this only as good news.

Sometimes I wonder if we wouldn't be better off taking Sabbath more seriously. . . Life, for people at all levels of the economic ladder, is both hectic and demanding. Might we also benefit from a proscribed time of rest?

Which is what the leader of the synagogue is worried about. Once you start making exceptions for this reason or that, pretty soon no one is really keeping the Sabbath and it's lost its point altogether. And it's not just the Sabbath. The whole law is like that -- keep making exceptions and it's not really a law anymore; it's more like a suggestion, with little or no power to protect and preserve us.

Truth be told, we regularly agree with this leader. Perhaps not about the Sabbath, but most of us have laws that we think are particularly important and we get nervous if we see people not respecting them. . . there are some laws we feel you should just keep. Period. And if you don't, who knows what will unravel next?

And that's exactly what this well-intentioned, law-abiding leader of the synagogue believes. But his isn't the only perspective.

. . . let's turn to the woman, she who has viewed the world from waist level for years, she who hasn't been able to look anyone in the eye for as long as she can remember. She is, I imagine, also a faithful, law-abiding member of this very synagogue. After all, she's right there that Saturday, in spite of her condition, worshiping with her community.

. . . Yet whatever principles or resolutions she may have entered with, I have to imagine that they all took a back seat to a sense of overwhelming relief and gratitude when Jesus approached and healed her, when he called her a daughter of Abraham and restored her to full health.

. . . and notice that Jesus doesn't set aside the law but rather offers a different interpretation of it -- it must always bow to mercy, to life, to freedom. Law helps us live our lives better, but grace creates life itself. Law helps order our world, but grace is what holds the world

together. Law pushes us to care for each other, but grace restores us to each other when we've failed in the law.

- “The two parables which follow our text (and are not part of the Revised Common Lectionary) are meant by Luke to be read in conjunction with our text. Verse 18 begins with ‘Therefore.’ Jesus speaks these parables as a result of the preceding miracle.” (BPS)

From Davis Lose (2010), *Working Preacher*

“On one level, we might read this story as portraying a clash between two understandings of the law. The synagogue leader takes very seriously and fairly literally the manifold laws about keeping the Sabbath contained in the Scriptures. Yet Jesus contends that beneath the surface of those laws lays a deeper intent -- the welfare of those in need. You don't keep laws for the sake of keeping laws, Jesus seems to suggest, but rather for the greater intention they serve. So if keeping the laws impedes caring for someone in need, then the choice is easy -- you break the law in order to fulfill it.

But I think this is more than a clash between a conservative and liberal interpretation of law. Instead, I think the question concerns the very point of the day itself. There are, as you know, two traditions concerning the Sabbath. One, recorded in Exodus 20, links the Sabbath to the first creation account in Genesis, where God rests after six days of labor. As God rested, so should we and all of our households and even animals rest. The second tradition, in Deuteronomy 5, however, links the Sabbath to the Exodus; that is, it links Sabbath to freedom, to liberty, to release from bondage and deliverance from captivity. I think it's this tradition that Jesus is tapping into. He reminds his listeners of other instances of when releasing, untying, and setting free is allowed by law and then characterizes the woman's ailment as being "bound by Satan." *Of course* it is permissible to set someone free on the Sabbath, Jesus seems to say, for the Sabbath is *all about* freedom. The Sabbath Day -- whether the Jewish Sabbath on Saturday or the Christian day of rest and worship on Sunday -- reminds us...all of us, that we too have been captive and were set free, and therefore invites us to look around and see who else might still be bound and waiting for release.

From this point of view, our day of worship, while called ‘a Sabbath to the Lord,’ isn't finally *for* the Lord but is for us, for all of us who need rest and release, renewal and re-creation. Little wonder that Christians moved their celebration of Sabbath to Sunday, the day on which the Lord was raised, for this, too, is release and deliverance, but in an ultimate sense, as we are released from death itself.

So Sabbath/Sunday is about freedom ... I suspect that for many of us, Sunday is a day of religious obligation. It's about what we do for God. What if, however, Sunday was about what God can do for us and, recognizing that, what we can do for others. What if Sunday was about remembering how God has freed us so that we might free others? What if Sunday is about calling to mind the mighty acts of God that we might be encouraged to dare mighty acts ourselves? And what if Sunday was a day to remember that God has freed us from death itself so that we don't have to be afraid of anything so that we might share our Christian courage with others?”

- *Ponder the questions David Lose raises in the last paragraph. Journal.*

From Jeannine K. Brown (2013), *Working Preacher*

“While the point of view of the biblical author is the most prominent perspective in a text, imaginatively exploring the experiences of one or more characters can raise helpful interpretive

questions and contextual insights. Reading from the perspective of the bent over woman in Luke 13:10-17 is one such example.

A reading from this perspective emphasizes the healing as the crucial starting point of the story. While this pericope is a story of controversy between Jesus and the synagogue leader, at its core is a healing that demonstrates Jesus' power and his compassion. We hear the compassionate tone in Jesus' defense for healing on the Sabbath when he argues from lesser to greater: if compassion is shown to one's animals on the Sabbath by providing them water, "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?" (13:16). Although Luke has not provided this woman with a name in the story, he indicates that Jesus gives her a "name," the daughter of Abraham. This phrase does not occur elsewhere in Luke or in the rest of Scripture (cf. Luke 19:9, where Jesus calls Zacchaeus 'a son of Abraham'). This name stresses the woman's membership in the covenant community.

Another value of reading imaginatively from the woman's perspective is the raising of historical questions about her relationship to her (Jewish) faith and community. There is a tendency to read the gospels in ways that denigrate first-century Judaism and highlight Jesus over against his Jewish context.

We could do this rather easily with this passage by making the synagogue leader simply the 'bad guy' (13:14), without any exploration of why he interprets Sabbath laws as he does. Such a reading of the passage and of Luke more broadly may be common enough; but it does not cohere well with the more nuanced understandings of Judaism that have been offered in recent years in NT scholarship. According to the passage, Jesus offers the woman healing, not salvation from an oppressive socio-religious system. In all likelihood, the woman was cared for by her Jewish community of faith, the synagogue of which she was a part (she is there, after all!). Exploring the story from her perspective emphasizes the way her healing extends the kingdom of God as announced and embodied by Jesus' ministry in Luke.

The shape of Jesus' ministry is expressed by Luke when Jesus reads from Isaiah 58 and 61 (Luke 4:18-19) and then claims, 'Today this scripture is fulfilled in your hearing' (4:21). The freedom announced in Isaiah is actualized throughout Jesus' kingdom ministry and certainly in this woman's freedom from her physical bondage."

- *From what have you been liberated? From what do you desire to be liberated? Talk to God about your desire to be liberated and about what gets in the way of this happening. Listen to what God has to say to you and how he wishes to help you be free.*

From Emerson Powery (2013), Working Preacher

"Rather this is a story about the role and function of our religious traditions, our claims about what could and should be practiced on the 'Sabbath' or who is allowed within the walls of our synagogues and religious communities. Special religious practices may become hindrances to inclusion. We must be diligent to recognize what theological ideas we hold dear that disallow full participation from others.

And, Luke's Jesus could not be clearer or more consistent on this point. He's no Sabbath breaker! He operates well within Jewish tradition of the day. But he is also not one to allow the tradition to exclude people from access to the community and the potential for their healing. Many in the crowd agree.

**These are stories about community.** What kind of community do we want to be? And, do religious traditions help us to become that kind of community or do they hinder our desires? Will our traditions hinder the 'daughter of Abraham,' in our day, from joining us today?"

- *Ponder the questions Powery raises in the last paragraph. Journal.*

### **Psalm 103:1-8**

<sup>1</sup>Bless the LORD, O my soul, and all that is within me, bless his holy name.

<sup>2</sup>Bless the LORD, O my soul, and do not forget all his benefits—

<sup>3</sup>who forgives all your iniquity, who heals all your diseases,

<sup>4</sup>who redeems your life from the Pit, who crowns you with steadfast love and mercy,

<sup>5</sup>who satisfies you with good as long as you live so that your youth is renewed like the eagle's.

<sup>6</sup>The LORD works vindication and justice for all who are oppressed.

<sup>7</sup>He made known his ways to Moses, his acts to the people of Israel.

<sup>8</sup>The LORD is merciful and gracious, slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love.