

A Good Day for Healing  
Dr. Patricia L. Hunter  
Seattle First Baptist Church  
August 21, 2016

Luke 13:10-17

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

The word of God for the people of God. Thanks be to God.

Before I get too far into my message, I want to thank you for the privilege of serving on the pastoral staff of SFBC. It has been a high honor to be with you for these 13 months. I have learned so much from you and I hope you have learned a few things from me. I will be eternally grateful to Pastor Tim for taking a chance and asking me to serve in this interim capacity.

I realize I am the only thing between you and lunch. So, I must move things along. There is a picnic waiting for each of us right outside those doors. So let me hurry this up so we can get to the bouncy house, face painting, and burgers.

The story of the bent over woman is a powerful, exciting text for me. Yet, let me put a disclaimer here. I know there are medical conditions that cause many to be stooped or bent. I am not addressing medical conditions, but will focus on the New Revised Standard Version of Luke that reads, ***this woman had a spirit that crippled her***. We most certainly pray God's comfort and healing for those who suffer the pain associated with a curved spine. But for our message today I will focus on spiritual conditions that may have physical or emotional consequences.

Now I could preach a whole sermon just on these two sentences, ***she had a spirit that crippled her. She was bent over and unable to stand up straight***. This woman whose name we do not know, had a spirit that impacted her physically. How many of us carry spiritual, psychological, or physical pain that weighs us down? Frequently, we want to segment our bodies, thinking the emotional part of us, has nothing to do with the intellectual, that has nothing to do with the physical, that has nothing to do with the spiritual. But the truth is, all our systems impact one another. When our back aches or we have a migraine, it is hard for us to think clearly. When we are mad at the world and mad at God, we may not think clearly and engage in risky behavior—inappropriate relationships, eat food we know is not good for us, or stop coming to church. All bodily systems can work well together or we can be our worst enemy.

Our spiritual condition can impact us physically. Some of us carry the spiritual pain of relationships that ended poorly or we carry the pain of verbal abuse where mean-spirited, insecure Christians said horrible things to us. We may be crippled by the untimely death of loved ones—particularly if our children predeceased us. We are weighed down by spouse abuse, child abuse, and gay bashing.

We carry the spiritual afflictions of low self-esteem that feeds into drug addiction, compulsive eating, and compulsive shopping. We are bent over with worry from being under employed, from not having enough money to make ends meet, from being afflicted with cancer, or caring for loved ones with terminal conditions. Like the woman in the text, some of us know what it feels like to be bent over by a spirit that cripples us.

Jesus saw this woman while he was in the synagogue. Although we do not know her name, Jesus saw her and her condition. She was not jumping up and down trying to get Jesus' attention. She did not reach out and touch the hem of his garment. She was minding her own business when Jesus saw her. What comfort to be reminded that no matter our condition, no matter our age, no matter our physical, or mental ability, **God sees us**. Isn't that one of the most satisfying things in life—to be seen. No one likes being ignored or overlooked. We may not need to be the center of attention, but we certainly don't want to be ignored. Even introverts want to be seen—every now and again. All my introverts say Amen.

Jesus **saw** her and **touched** her and **healed** her. There was no mention of her past, or the number of husbands she had, or how much money she spent trying to get well, or any other sin or transgression. Jesus didn't try to make an example of her, he just wanted her to be free of what bound her. Her past didn't matter to Jesus. Whatever caused her to be in this shape didn't matter to Jesus. She was a child of God who needed to be healed. Jesus saw a condition he could fix, and he did. End of story.

Sometimes we get stuck in what happened yesterday that we can't move forward and claim our healing today. We can be so stuck in the pain of what happened 10

years ago, that we cannot receive today's blessings. Here is a newsflash my sisters and brothers, we are not going to receive an apology from that man or woman, or parent or child, who treated us like crap 10 or 20 years ago. It is not going to happen. So, somethings we have to just let go. That was yesterday's drama/ trauma. God wants us to be free of that which weighs us down, so that we can receive today's blessings.

Sometimes un-forgiveness stands in the way of our healing. I was taken aback last year when so many family members of those killed during the prayer meeting at Mother Emmanuel AME church in Charleston, SC forgave the white supremacist who took the lives of their loved ones. I thought to myself, it is too soon to forgive. How can you forgive when so many of us are filled with rage? There has been no justice. But, soon I realized that sometimes there is no justice. There is no appropriate justice for those who murder children in school, or murder God loving people at prayer meeting, or murder LGBTQ folks at a nightclub. And, there may never be an apology. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. said, he who is devoid of the power to forgive is devoid of the power to love.

We have to decide how long the pain of being wronged or the pain of injustice will rule our lives. Forgiveness is not for the perpetrator of the harm. It is to release the one who has been harmed from the choking grip of anger and despair. Jesus sees our pain, our brokenness, our loss, and longs for us to be released from that which cripples us—from that which holds us back, and that which holds us down.

This morning, Jesus is telling some woman and some man, you are free of that which ails you. You are free of insecurities that hold you back. You are free of that self-doubt that has you believing you are not worthy and thinking less of yourself

than you ought. You are free of that which cripples you. Stand up and claim your healing and your blessing. It doesn't matter what happened yesterday. Today you are healed.

Now, one would think that whenever a child of God is healed and released from her burdens that all would rejoice. One would think...but it ain't necessarily so, as the song says.

The leader of the synagogue was outraged at Jesus and those who wanted to be healed. I think if you read between the lines, the leader was angry that all those people were there on the Sabbath to see Jesus. Do you think the religious leader could have been a wee bit jealous that he was not the center of attention? The leader tried to wrap his indignation in religious dogma. He said over and over again, six days you can come for healing, but the seventh day is the Sabbath and no work is to be done on the Sabbath. I imagine Jesus did a double-take and said, now what sense does that make. You want all these hurting people, curious people, God loving people, to go home and come back later in the week, just to make you happy?

Religious literalism can be dangerous. The letter of the law is held up when the spirit of the law is desecrated. Jesus said, you tithe, dill, mint, and cumin, but the weightier things, the more important part of the law you ignore—like doing justice, being merciful, and walking humbly with God. Jesus said, it doesn't matter what the day is on the calendar, **today** is a good day for healing. Today is a good day to walk tall. And, Monday is a good day to be healed too—so is Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday, Friday, Saturday and Sunday. And whatever is your Sabbath day, that day is an especially good day to be healed and be set free.

When you decide to get sober, or start exercising, or get some therapy, or start praying, or live within your means, someone is going to be unhappy. Generally, it will be someone close to you that will be mad about it! As soon as you sign up for Weight Watchers, here comes a half gallon of chunky, chunky, chocolate chip ice cream through the door. You see when we decide to get healthy—others may feel judged regarding their behavior. But you have to do you. Go forth and claim your healing anyway. Let your detractors deal with their stuff.

When Jesus healed the bent over woman, she went away praising God. When God heals, the only appropriate response is praise. It may be a loud praise of hallelujah, or it may be a quiet praise. Just give God the highest praise. Maya Angelou, had it right, *As soon as healing takes place, go out and heal somebody else*. Once you get your finances in order, help someone else. Once you get your exercise routine down, take a friend with you on your next walk. As soon as healing takes place in your life, go out and help someone else get their house in order. Let someone else know that the God you serve, is willing and able to heal and to make the wounded whole.

Yes, we are partners in Christ's service. So let us be instruments of peace, instruments of love, instruments of joy, and most of all instruments of God's healing.

Let us stand and sing our closing hymn, Called as Partners in Christ Service #495.