

“All Bent Out of Shape”
Sermon delivered 8-22-10
Immanuel Lutheran Church
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Luke 13:10-17

10Now [Jesus] 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.

Hot Button Issues

What situations in life get you all bent out of shape? What are the hot buttons in your life that set you off? What do you do when someone pushes your buttons, disrupts your perfect little world, where you are minding your own business? They say when we get our nose all bent out of shape it doesn't take us long to react to another person, sometimes within 3 to 7 minutes. Can you remember the last time you got all bent out of shape? What was the situation? Can you remember?

Our Gospel this morning introduces a woman who is bent over. The 'spirit' crippled her for 18 years. Jesus declares her to be healed, lays hands on her, sets her free, and she praises God. But...Did you hear/read the BUT in the Gospel? "But the leader of the synagogue, indignant because Jesus healed on the Sabbath...." He didn't speak to the woman or Jesus, but to the crowd, saying "There are six days on which work ought to be done, come on those days to be cured, and not on the Sabbath day."

The issue here doesn't seem to be the healing of the woman who was bent over for 18 years, the issue seems to be with the leader of the

synagogue, who got all bent out of shape with Jesus healing on the Sabbath. I can understand him getting all bent out of shape. The woman suffered for 18 years. What is one more day? What is the point of it all? Who doesn't understand the leader of this church being all bent out of shape? After all, we have rules. The rule about the Sabbath is in BIG TEN. So, who is this visitor from Galilee, and what does he think he is doing healing on the Sabbath?

Why not wait?

Synagogues were houses of prayer. They didn't have Altars for sacrifice like in the Temple. They would have a service like we have, up to Holy Communion, with Psalms, lessons, prayers, and a sermon. Jesus, a Galilean, was an outsider from up North, our equivalent being from the South, basically caused a ruckus in a Judean synagogue. This isn't the first time he has healed on the Sabbath. He did it in Luke, Chapter six, healing the man with the withered hand, and he will do it again in Luke, Chapter 14, healing a man with swollen legs. Could Jesus have just waited another day? I suppose so. This begs the question why? Why not wait?

You know the commandment to Honor the Sabbath and keep it Holy. The conflict between Jesus and the leader of the synagogue revolves around this commandment. As you know, the 10 commandments appear in Exodus 20 and Deuteronomy 5. The difference between the two hinges on the commandment regarding the Sabbath. The Sabbath according to Exodus reflects the Genesis story of the Lord God resting on the 7th Day. The Deuteronomy account reflects the liberation and the escape from the house of bondage and slavery in Egypt with the emphasis being on freedom and being set free. Jesus is running with the Exodus understanding of the Sabbath, and the Leader of the Synagogue is running with the Deuteronomy understanding of restriction and oppression.

Challenging the System

This story is more than just about a healing on the Sabbath. This story is about the picture one holds of God. The Ten Commandments can be seen as restricting life on the Sabbath, or setting life free through rest, re-creation, healing, and a time for prayer. This contradiction brought Jesus into conflict with the leader of the synagogue. Jesus knew sitting down and talking about the different understandings between the

Exodus interpretation and the interpretation from Deuteronomy would be useless. So he heals the woman on the Sabbath instead of talking about change. He challenges the system. Most people don't like the system, particularly their system, to be challenged. The Leader of the synagogue is operating in a system he grew up with, understands, and obeys without question. He doesn't know how to address Jesus when he healed the woman. Not only is he all bent out of shape, but he has also lost face. So, he addresses the crowd, not Jesus, saying "there are six days on which work ought to be done..."

Then Jesus uses a rabbinical style of dialogue, by illustrating through a debate, regarding the untying of an ox or a donkey on the Sabbath for water. He also compares the untying of a woman whom Satan has bound for 18 years, the daughter of Abraham. You would untie your animal, yet you have a problem untying this daughter of Abraham? The Leader of the Synagogue was as bent over in his life as the woman was bent over in her body. The woman was set free, and the leader wasn't. So, this begs the question for our own lives. Look at what has us all bent out of shape today? What are you in bondage to this morning? What needs to be lifted from you so you can stand up straight?

The Last Word?

This story, and the healing, are about more than just a physical healing on the Sabbath. It is about one who wasn't healed, and experienced shame, a lost of face, and humiliation in front of those with whom he had honor. Honor, as in how one sees themselves, as well as how others perceive them. Jesus dishonors him, and he experiences the shame in the eyes of his congregants. A time and place for new life to begin, but doesn't. The entire crowd "was rejoicing at all the wonderful things, he (Jesus) was doing."

This is a time to remind ourselves again that we live in a time and a place where Evil is present, but doesn't have the last word. The last word is life. The last word is freedom. The last word is love. Anything that is anti-life is evil.

No matter how bent out of shape you find yourself this morning, you are a child of God, marked with the cross of Christ just as this woman was a daughter of Abraham, and as the leader of the Synagogue was a son of Abraham. You are created in God's image. You can get back into shape

by the love and the power of God, who is in the business of restoring people to the fullness of life. This is what being saved is all about. God addresses you this morning as one who may be bent over by the power and the forces of darkness and evil. God sees those of you who are all bent out of shape because of the challenges of his Word, and invites you to a new and different life other than just being the scorekeeper, the moral cop of your universe, or the gatekeeper. He lifts this burden from you, inviting you to hear you are a son and daughter of God.

Forgiveness is a cornerstone of this new life, and being set free from being all bent out of shape. As we forgive those whom we perceive as messing up our lives, we become free from bitterness, anger, and resentment. We become accepting of God's forgiveness of us. We become free to start over, for in the cross Jesus bends down and takes the world into himself. He bends down and is broken for you and me.