

Luke 13:10-17 - 8/21/22

Grace and peace be with you from God our Father and our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Amen.

I was reading the *Christ in Our Home* devotional Thursday night and I had to agree with the author – holy rest is really important. We need to rest, especially to rest in the Lord.

We need a day to just stop and remember that the world will go on spinning whether we do anything or not. The Sabbath reminds us that we are not God and that there are things that are literally beyond our control, like gravity and the weather.

On the Sabbath, we are also reminded that even God stopped working and rested on the 7th day of creation. Knowing that rest is important for us, God gave us that gift, to us and all of creation, setting an example before us. On the Sabbath, God says, “We’ve done good, now let’s just hang out, you and me. Let’s just spend time together, so that our relationship can grow – parent with children, not employer with employees.”

For just one day a week, we need to stop and not do anything but remember that the whole world is in God’s hands. If we don’t stop to rest, we forget that, and we put ourselves over and above God.

So, the third and first commandments go hand in hand – remember to keep the Sabbath Day holy, to rest in God on those days, so that you don’t forget that God is God and you are not.

And it’s also to remind us that God is not our individual God alone, but the God of all of creation – all of it – every single creature. So, we humans also need to take a break once a week for them. We just need to stop and rest – for ourselves and others.

We keep the Sabbath day holy by resting and remembering that God is God, and we are not. God is the Creator of all that exists, and as the Creator, God is also the Emancipator. God in Christ is the only one who sets all people and all of creation free from human sin and death by restoring our relationship with God.

In the Gospel reading we have for today, Jesus, as God’s Emancipator, has the ability to set the hunched over woman free, and so he does it. He set her free. As God, Jesus doesn’t need any person’s permission.

And setting people free is not a work for God. It is who God is. It would actually take God work to stop from doing it, to hold back. So, God sets the woman free in order to give her rest.

God sets us all free so that we can rest. No human prison can hold us captive when God is on the scene, which is literally everywhere. God is always on the scene, because the Holy Spirit is in, with, and among us.

In the reading we have for today, there are at least two people who need to be set free. 1, the most obvious, the hunched over woman. 2, perhaps less obvious, the synagogue leader. The synagogue leader needs to be set free, because he has major control issues, and in trying to control the situation, he is actually working harder than Jesus is in placing his open hands on the woman's body. It was really just gravity for him after all, because she was already bent over. He didn't even have to lift his hands. He just them fall onto her.

Have you noticed how much easier it is to just let your hand be open than it is to hold a fist? The synagogue leader was holding on to control so tightly that his knuckles were likely turning white! That's a lot of work.

I know Jesus saw the synagogue leader and was thinking, "Let it go, let it go!" The only person you can control is yourself, which the synagogue leader wasn't doing so well. The synagogue leader was not okay with letting it go – in letting Jesus set her free – as if he could stop Jesus.

But, the synagogue leader was holding on so tightly to his perceived control of the situation that it literally pained him. Isn't that funny? The synagogue leader is in pain because he isn't getting his way. Here is a woman who is literally in pain, hunched over, and he is the one crying because he doesn't want her healed.

Indignant means – to have physical pain because you cannot control the situation, or have it your way. So, who here has ever been indignant?

Perhaps you have had a clenched jaw, or fingernails digging into your palm, or you've stomped your foot, or felt the acid in your stomach rise, or felt your blood pressure go up, or felt that little bit of heat rise up off of the top of your head. That's indignation. That is the opposite of resting in the Lord.

The synagogue leader was indignant, "No work on the Sabbath!" But, he mistakenly thought that Jesus was working, when in all actuality Jesus was doing the total opposite.

In setting the woman free, Jesus was allowing the damn to break and the walls to fall down. He was releasing the energy that was holding his sister captive. He just allowed the ball to drop. So, the real issue here is not healing/working, but freedom. Jesus comes to set us all free – the least, last, lowly, and those bent over by a burden.

The woman in the gospel had been bent over for 18 years. Can you imagine walking around for 18 years where all you could see is your feet and the ground? Not to mention how hard it would be to get dressed or do any other normal human thing, including seeing others face to face.

This woman who was bent over could never look anyone in eye, and because others couldn't look her in the eye either, she likely couldn't build any real relationships. For people, seeing is as important as being seen, and so avoidance happens to people with disabilities all the time. People naturally talk to people to whom they can look directly in the eye and ignore all others.

After I broke my hip, my family and I went to Wild Lights at the Denver Zoo. They rolled me around in a wheelchair, because I couldn't walk very far with crutches - and it was as if I had disappeared. No one talked with me, except in a passing – “are you warm enough or do you need anything?” – and then they would point me off in a direction where I couldn't see anything, because they were so busy talking to each other. It was so frustrating.

So just imagine how this woman felt. She had basically been cut off from civilization for 18 years. She didn't fit in. She had become a no one, invisible, except to Jesus who sees her and he loves her. No matter what the spirit is that is holding her captive, Jesus loves this woman.

And, we can speculate as to what spirit made her hunched over. It could have been an illness, or it could have been shame. And if it was shame, isn't it interesting how at the end of the text things are reversed? The ones who keep her held captive are now the ones who are shamed.

Of course Jesus' forgives them as well, because everyone needs to be set free. No one is to be held captive.

And here is an important aspect of forgiveness – if you don't realize you are sinning, you don't realize that there is anything from which to be set free. This is why Lutherans are a law and gospel people. We believe that you can't only have

the gospel. We need the law so that we can fully understand the good news that is the gospel, and it also keeps it from becoming cheap.

Without the law, the 10 Commandments, we think we are God and that we can do whatever it is we want to do – that we are in charge and in control. With the law, we recognize that we are finite beings who are actually totally dependent on God. It is only with that realization that we can truly appreciate the gospel, rejoice in the freedom the Lord gives us, and to release from bondage those whom we have bound.

The Sabbath is a gift for us to remember the 1st commandment, so that we can let go of our control issues and just rest. It is a day to free and be set free from all bondages, including the shame that comes from knowing that we have sinned. This is why we start our Sabbath day off with confession and forgiveness – confession that comes from within us and the Word of forgiveness that come from outside of us.

The Word of forgiveness comes from the outside, so that we do not fall back into our control issues. Yes – we may know God forgives us, but to hear the Word is life giving – for us and others.

First we acknowledge that we have control issues, we really want it our way. Forgiven of that sin, we are then able to forgive others who have sinned that sin against us. Essentially control is the basis of all sin. That is the big #1. That's us thinking we can be God.

And so, any time we become indignant, we need to examine ourselves and see what control issue is holding us captive, and then also look at the one with whom we feel indignant to see how they might need to be set free from us.

In Jesus day, people only ate with those who were family or with whom they had an alliance. Jesus ate with sinners and tax collectors. And today, Jesus eats with us here at this table for all of eternity in order to give us God's rest – Sabbath rest – rest that can only be found in the Lord.

The woman who was stooped over and the synagogue leader who thought he was God are both welcome at this table. This is the feast of freedom from all bondage.

In Christ, we know that God sees us and loves us entirely, which sets us free and enables us to truly rest and be at peace.

Thanks be to God. Amen.