

August 25, 2019
Luke 13:10-17

Grace and peace to you from God our Father and from our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ!

Jesus was teaching on the Sabbath, a sacred day in the life of God's people, when suddenly he stopped after seeing a woman in need. He had compassion on her and healed her from a spirit which crippled her for 18 years, leaving her hunched over. Now, she is at last able to stand up straight and praise God.

We find similar accounts of today's story in Luke's gospel. In the fourth chapter we find Jesus teaching at a synagogue in Capernaum when a man with an unclean spirit entered. Jesus promptly healed the man. Shortly thereafter Jesus entered the home of Simon and discovered his mother-in-law in bed with a high fever and again Jesus healed her freeing her to return to her life of service to others.

Then in the sixth chapter of Luke Jesus is teaching in the synagogue on a sabbath when he encountered a man with some deformity in his right hand. We are told the religious leaders present watched Jesus, to see if he would heal the man, so they might find an accusation with Jesus. Already, the plan had been set in place to entrap Jesus as in the eyes of public opinion, he seems to be set on changing the way it's always been done and undoing a law set in place by the God of Israel. Nonetheless, Jesus healed the man while posing this question to those gathered, "Is it lawful to do good or to do harm on the sabbath, to save life or destroy it?"

Jesus does not act simply to create a stir over the law or undo it, but rather from each of these accounts he acts out of sheer compassion for a child of God. He acts to set these people free from something which binds them, threatens their life, and hinders them from praising God and serving others. Jesus brings about change. Quite literally, the woman stands up straight for the first time in years. Imagine what that

must have been like as she is now able to see the world in an entirely new way. A man's withered hand is restored. Specifying it is his "right" hand seems to imply this man may have used his hands to make a living and was probably right hand dominant. Thus, imagine the change in his life and ability to live into his calling whatever it may have been gaining full use of his hand.

In each case, in Jesus' viewpoint, these sabbath healings were done out of necessity. These ailments were deemed life-threatening. Jesus was not condemning the law of observing the sabbath; but rather, upholding it's meaning. The commandments were a gift, given to protect not only God's faithful people, but also one's neighbor. Healing this daughter in need and others Jesus was doing exactly that.

The sabbath is the perfect day for healing in the Son of God's eyes. It is a day of salvation. In Deuteronomy, Israel is reminded to remember their deliverance from Egypt by the Lord their God on the sabbath (Deuteronomy 5:15). Shortly in Luke's gospel, Jesus will undergo great suffering, die and on a sabbath evening be raised to new life.

Jesus counters the religious leader's objections with a question about taking their oxen or donkeys to a place of water to drink on the sabbath. In the arid and often warm climate in which they lived, doing so was probably done out of necessity, a matter of life and death. This sabbath "work" was not unlike the "work" of healing Jesus had done. It brought life. It changed the life of the one he touched.

We come to church on the sabbath also in need of healing from all that binds us. It is here Jesus meets us offering words of hope, comfort and forgiveness. It is here, in the life-giving waters of baptism which Charlotte will soon have poured upon her head we are given a new beginning. It is here in the bread and wine of Christ's broken body we find new life and freedom from sin and death. Jesus frees us, sets us upright, and equips us to see the world in a new way. He changes us just as he changed this crippled woman and he sends us out to change the

world and be signs of life in the face of whatever it is that ails and enslaves all God has created.

Earlier this week, I saw a story on the news of love amid a horrific tragedy, of goodness in the face of evil. Antonio Basco, whose wife Margie Reckard was one of 22 shot and killed at an El Paso Wal-Mart on August 3rd, was fearful no one would attend her funeral. The couple had no children together and no family in the area. So, he invited the community to attend, which they did. Hundreds showed up to pay their regards. He also received calls and flowers from all over the world. People who were strangers to him.

Then, just one day later, his car was stolen. It was soon recovered but had been vandalized to the point it was beyond repair. A local auto dealer (Casa Ford Lincoln) gave him a new car. But it started even before that, as some of the employees met Basco while visiting a makeshift memorial set up following the shooting, and learned his blue Ford Escape needed tires, brakes, and repairs to the air conditioning unit, which the dealership did free of charge. Ronnie Lowenfield, an owner, stated, "I just think that El Paso is a community of love. In the face of hate we respond with love. And love, I believe, will beget more love."

We too are called to love in the face of hate. We are partners with Jesus in changing lives and changing the world. In what ways has Jesus healed you? In what ways has he changed your life? In what ways might God be using us individually and as a congregation to be agents of healing, change, love and hope in our homes, congregation, workplaces, at school, in our community and in the world? Coming to our neighbor in their time of need and helping them stand up in the face of adversity, illness, sin and death.