

Luke 13:10-17

12th Sunday after Pentecost

August 23, 1998

I have an old testament heart. An Isaiah heart. I have a "tell me what I should do God to fix things up" heart. How I like that first lesson! All those "ifs"

If you remove the yoke from among you, the pointing the finger, the speaking of evil, if you offer your food to the hungry, and satisfy the needs of the afflicted, then your light shall rise in the darkness and your gloom be like the noonday. The Lord will guide you continually, and satisfy your needs in parched places and make your bones strong; and you shall be like a watered garden, like a spring of water whose waters never fail.

If ---- then. If you stop oppressing others, if you stop pointing the finger - all that blaming, if you stop speaking evil against others - the bitter vicious words of anger, if you offer your food to the hungry - your money for those who have little or nothing, - if you give your time for the suffering ones, the elderly and the widows and children who need a friend - then God will bless you.

Every week I could stand here and tell you what to do. Be better people. Do what God tells you. Stop being chaotic in your life, be focused, know where you are going and why - then your life will be better, every day better and better.

Through Isaiah the Lord made this promise: If you refrain from trampling the sabbath, from pursuing your own interests on my holy day, if you call the sabbath a delight and the holy day of the Lord honorable; if you honor it, not going your own ways, serving your own interests, or pursuing your own affairs; then you shall take delight in the Lord, and I will make you ride on the height of the earth.

It just makes sense - if you could just put God first - order your life around God and God's word - then God would bless you. If we as a nation could put God first - not our own desires and greed as we see happening everywhere - even in the White house - but God first - then a new day would dawn.

But then Jesus shows up and what does he do? He sees a woman who is bent over - a spirit of weakness - of infirmity has kept her from standing straight. "Woman you are set free from your ailment." Jesus touched her - she stood up straight. And not an "if" did he speak! Just freed her. He gave no instructions about how others could be set free - conditions to be met for God to bless. Jesus picked her for a blessing - and we will never know why - except I think he loved her.

And she began praising God.

Right then on the sabbath she began praising God.

Who knows - maybe ^{2 days} on Monday and Tuesday and Wednesday she was still praising God.

But the leader of the synagogue could not join in the praise. He was concerned that the rules about the sabbath were not being kept well enough.

What if everyone came to be cured on the sabbath? And Jesus healed. And the room would ring with the voices of praise?

I think I am on the side of that ruler of the synagogue. Give me a world of chains and rules for breaking them link by link. At least I will know how to spend my time until I die. At least I will be sure that my life has a purpose. But in Jesus' presence I am suddenly like a doctor in a world where there is no sickness.

Nothing to do but to praise God.

I keep looking for Jesus to teach me a religion - a pattern of living that I can follow that will lead me to God. But Jesus simply loves me. Speaks a word that frees me. Treasures me more than his own life.

Tell me what I can do, Jesus, to be saved?

You are saved - he declares - and not an empty word ^{not} by a word spoken with his suffering and death, shouted by his being raised from the dead.

Handwritten notes:
Healing people, Jesus, preached to the people
I don't know how many people were healed?
I don't know how many people were healed?

What can you do? Take and eat, this is my body given for you. Drink of it all of you, this is my
blood of the new covenant poured out for you and for many for the forgiveness of sins.

Stand up straight.

Thank you God
Kind of makes me want to smile and say thanks to God.