

### **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.*

I try, as best I can, to not apply various emotions to a gospel passage. After all, I wasn't there. I didn't hear the inflections and the emphases placed on the words. I wasn't an eyewitness and when the Gospel writers wrote down their eyewitness experience they didn't use exclamation points, or question marks, or any punctuation at all for that matter. So, for me to come up here and apply a particular feeling to Jesus, when it is not obvious, is dangerous. If I got into that habit, it could so often lead to my emotion, and my baggage, and my preferences being overlaid onto Jesus message and truth which would end up being simply the gospel according to Scott.

Today, however, is not one of those days. I think, punctuation or not, it is fair to say without much hesitation that Jesus is ticked! Can't you just hear this story being relayed on to various disciples by someone who was there when it happened? Speaking to seekers and future disciples, "Yes, Jesus was definitely a loving and patient man. Amazingly so. But let me tell you about the time when this leader of a synagogue that we were worshipping in challenged the Lord when he healed a woman right there in the synagogue, right on the Sabbath. It was not pretty."

"You hypocrites!" he said. "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?"

So, who's right? Yes, that is a rhetorical question. Jesus is right, of course. But wasn't that head of the synagogue just following the teaching of his faith? Wasn't he just adhering to one of the big ten that Moses brought down off of Mt. Sinai? Wasn't it true that for as far back as the Exodus from Egypt the Jewish people have been honoring God by setting aside one day a week to not do any work?

So what was Jesus problem? Well, maybe another look at the concept of the Sabbath might help us understand.

Genesis 2:1-3 is where it started. "Thus the heavens and the earth were finished, and all the host of them. And on the seventh day God finished his work that he had done, and he rested on the seventh day from all his work that he had done. So God blessed the seventh day and made it holy, because on it God rested from all his work that he had done in creation."

So what is the key word or phrase? Heavens and earth were finished? God finished his work? God rested? God blessed the seventh day and made it holy?

Well, God had finished the work of creation, but he was not done. All things were set in place, but there was so much more that would need to be done. So, that doesn't sound like it to me.

God rested? Well, that's ture. He did rest. But I am pretty sure that God wasn't dragging himself home after a long week of creatin' looking for a burger and a cold one. Even so, as physical beings, rest is important for us, so it has been adopted as a gift from God necessary for our proper existence. But is that all there is to Sabbath? Is God just some kind of like a union boss making sure that we get our time off of work.

What about God blessed the seventh day and made it holy? Now, I think we are on to something. This is what God is all about, isn't it? Blessing and holiness. Health and wholeness. Joy and peace for our lives. Yeah, I think we are definitely onto something now.

So, if this day is about holiness and blessing and health and wholeness, what does that mean for our understanding of Sabbath? Maybe it is there not to give us a just day off. Maybe it is about more than that. Maybe, instead of giving us a day off, it is all about giving us a day up. A day closer to God. I mean, isn't that the definition of holiness? If we are creatures made in God's image, are not our lives, our very existence, most enhanced by connecting deeper and more fully to our Creator? And so God set aside time for that. A time we call Sabbath. It is a time for renewal, rest, uplift, focus, and even mission and ministry with God.

So with that understanding of Sabbath, what does Sabbath look like. Well, maybe Sabbath is not just a time to avoid work, but rather a time to redirect our efforts and our focus towards God.

First, our Sabbath day should include worship. It should include worship of God by each individual. It is a renewal time for each of us each week. But, although individual time with our

Father is important, it is not, and cannot be, just an individual thing. It should also include worship within community. God made us communal creatures. We are relational beings. We are not fully us unless we are us together as children of God. God made it that way.

Our Sabbath time should be a time when we step back from the world, back from our work within the world, in order to engage a different kind of "work". In our Gospel today, Jesus wasn't making a table in his woodshop. If he was, I am sure that he wouldn't have been so hard on anyone who would have called him on that. He was doing God's work. He was Loving and healing and uplifting a woman who had been afflicted by Satan for eighteen years. He was bringing wholeness and health and joy. Sabbath time is not a time for us to hunker down in our homes afraid to scratch an itch because it might offend God. Sabbath time is a time for us to draw near to the mission of God for the sake of the world. That mission includes our own spiritual growth as well as the spiritual and physical needs of the world.

Sabbath is a time for family because that is God's desire for us. Sabbath time is a time for recreation and fun because God gave us a heart made for joy. Sabbath is a time for fellowship and relationship because that is a reflection within ourselves of our relationship with him.

And, although we have come to understand Sabbath as a weekly thing, the truth is that it is a constant thing. It is anytime that we intentionally draw near to God in order to be more fully who he made us to be. Sabbath time is each morning when we greet God for our new day and every evening when we thank him for the blessings that it brought. Sabbath time is when we share a hug or a smile, understanding that those hugs and those smiles are reflections of the presence of God in us for the world. Sabbath time is when an amazing group of walkers show up at Pleasant Valley Connection at 8:00 on a Saturday morning to embrace God's plan there, and walk miles through the neighborhoods to shine God's light there, and to wave at passing cars and residents to share God's heart there. That is all Sabbath time.

And Sabbath time is a time when we can just rest and renew, like yesterday after I had finished preparing this sermon, sitting in a rocker on my front porch, watching the rain fall, and thanking God for his amazing and beautiful creation.

The world and the church needs to understand that Sabbath is not a burden imposed on us by an overly controlling God. It is a gift to us so that we can fully be who we were made to be. Not embracing Sabbath hurts us, not God. It's a gift that you really don't want to leave unopened.

Amen