

**Jesus Heals a Crippled Woman on the Sabbath**

<sup>10</sup> Now he was teaching in one of the synagogues on the Sabbath <sup>11</sup> And just then there appeared woman was there with a spirit that had crippled her for eighteen years. She was bent over and was quite unable to stand up straight. <sup>12</sup> When Jesus saw her, he called her over and said to her, "Woman, you are set free from your ailment." <sup>13</sup> When he laid his hands on her, immediately she stood up straight and began praising God.

<sup>14</sup> 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."

<sup>15</sup> 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 to water? <sup>16</sup> 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?"

<sup>17</sup> When he said this, all his opponents were put to shame, and the entire crowd was rejoicing at all the wonderful things being done by him.

"To Do the Good We Can" Karen Percy (Candidate for Ministry)

This morning's gospel reading from Luke presents a story about Jesus performing a miracle on a Sabbath. He healed a woman who has been unable to stand straight for eighteen years. At first glance, Luke's story seems like it might be the making of another miracle story. Yet it is more than Luke simply retelling a miracle story. Luke is showing us Jesus in a Jewish context, one where he is teaching in the synagogue on a Sabbath. It is also in part a pronouncement story built on conflict between Jesus and the opponents in the synagogue, not simply the leader. This is made known when Jesus uses the word 'hypocrites' it is in the plural form. The conflict arose because Jesus healed someone on the Sabbath. Jesus is teaching and sharing about God, he heals a woman on a Sabbath, and he questions maybe even challenges those present about what it means to

observe the Sabbath. It is also a story about being open to God working through us in unexpected moments.

In this story, we learn that this woman who struggled for 18 years to stand straight, did not request a healing. Instead, she was singled out by Jesus. In his noticing and speaking to her, we learn of a miracle that takes place by the mere uttering of words. Jesus lays his hands on this woman in the moment between announcing she was healed and the action of her being healed. The power of this miracle is that Jesus sees the woman, announces she has been set free with a word. It is after the woman is cured that Jesus places his hands on her.

Jesus rebuking those in the synagogue about performing a miracle on the Sabbath pushes us to see that being called to be a follower of God is not simply limited to specific days of the week. We are called to do the good we can – when we can. Or put another way, God nudges us throughout our days to see the one before us as also being a beloved child of God. When we are attuned to these nudges, it is then that hearts are stirred and moved into action so that we may become agents of hope in a hurting world.

This stirring into action will look different for each of us as we are not all called to do good in the same way or at least at the same moment. Putting our faith into action is definitely not straightforward. Yet, it is the very thing that we are called to do.

One day after class this summer, I was driving back to my rental place. As I was slowing down to stop at a red light, I noticed someone walking on the passenger side in between the two lanes of traffic. As the person approached my car, I noticed all my windows were open and sitting on the front passenger seat was my backpack. In it were my keys, wallet and laptop. Though I never felt threatened or an ounce of fear, I did put up my window. The light changed, and I drove away questioning my actions. I struggled with seeing myself as a Christian and one who tries to lead with my faith and yet I distanced myself from this person. I put up my window to distance myself to protect my possessions. I know rationally it was wise to do so but in my Christian heart I am disappointed that I did so.

A few days later, I found myself at a red light with my windows down when a lady approached me looking for change. I told her I was sorry I had

nothing to offer. She responded, "That's ok." She stayed talking with me while the light was red and when the light changed, we both said, "God bless you." It was a profound reminder of truly seeing the one before you, recognizing that the Christ light is found in others even in our differences. We are no more, no less in the eyes of God despite the realities of our different situations. One thing that was clear was God was indeed at work in both of our lives that day.

We as individuals and a caring community of faith are called to serve and share God's light differently in the world. Some of us have been called to help with food insecurities in our community and give to the Brookfield Community Food Cupboard. Some of us have been called to offer music during worship as a way of helping others to connect with God. Some of us share our love of reading and books with others while helping to support our church.

Where do you sense God calling you to do the good you can do? What is preventing you from acting on this?

These last few months, I am sensing that God is at work in my own life nudging me in a couple of areas. One such area is to evangelize. Not to convert others but simply share my faith and what it means to me. Jesus' healing of the woman in Luke's story was unplanned and unexpected just like many times in our own life when we sense God nudging us to do the good we can do in a particular moment. Jesus did not forego the desire to show God's healing power simply because it was not the right day.

While in a taxi in Halifax, the driver and I were having a great conversation. He surprised me when he asked, "What was it that made you want to be a minister?" To say I was surprised was an understatement. I had a choice to make. I could risk answering him and potentially opening myself to an onslaught of criticism or I could see this as a God-inspired moment; a moment to share my faith and what it is that God means to me.

Similar moments have followed me throughout my summer. I found myself speaking with someone on a plane. I truly cannot tell you how the conversation evolved to her disclosing some personal health struggles, her faith background, how she is unsure if she has faith. A little while later, we were talking about some of the harsh realities of racism and prejudice that our Indigenous siblings have endured and still endure. I sensed a Kairos

moment, a Godly moment, in the making. You see I was in the middle of my first course on Indigenous Culture and History. I shared how emotionally difficult it was learning of some of the atrocities that were done to the Indigenous Peoples. I spoke about how horrified I was to learn about Starlight Tours. A term I only learned of days before. A term given to what happens when an Indigenous person, frequently Indigenous men, but not only men, is picked up by the police at night and abandoned outside of the city limits in subzero temperatures. It was in that moment that she shared her husband was Indigenous and she adopted two Indigenous daughters. I tell you we both had tears when she explained how her daughter had experienced one of these Starlight Tours and shared some of the effects that it has had on their family. God was with me in that moment, to do the good I could do – to listen, to care, to share someone's pain, and to see the one struggling before me.

On the return flight, I had a diverse conversation with a gentleman who had shared his faith background, how he has lost faith and has been walking past a United Church of Canada for some time and wondered about it. He spoke how in the past he considered taking courses at the Atlantic School of Theology. He asked me if I could share some details as he knew nothing of The United Church. Let me tell you, at that moment, I gave a silent prayer for having completed a course on United Church history as well as United Church doctrine. Yet again, God was encouraging me to do the good I could do.

In ordinary moments, God nudges us to do the good we can do. Doing the good we can do will look different for each of us. When Jesus healed the woman in Luke's story, he challenged those present by calling them hypocrites! Reminding them that they respond to the need of their animals on a Sabbath. For when the ox or donkey is thirsty, they untie it and lead it to water. Jesus questioned, why then could the same response not be given to this woman, a daughter of Sarah and Abraham, a human in need. Was he to really forego doing the good he could do just because it was the Sabbath?

We do not always get to see the result of these moments of doing good. Maybe we are not meant to. Maybe it is enough for us to find peace in the moment of knowing we did the good we could do. Imagine the world we could create if we could see the other with the eyes of Jesus! Luke tells us Jesus saw the woman when most likely others would have simply

ignored her, discounted her voice and her opinions. Jesus saw her and she was healed. That is the transformative nature of being seen.

Are we ready to accept where God is leading us to follow Jesus' example of truly seeing the other? Will it be easy? Probably not. There will be times, for a plethora of reasons, where we are unable to do good. What Jesus has taught us though is that God gives second chances, we are gifted with grace and mercy to try again to do the good we can do. So let us go out in the world, ready to see with the eyes of Jesus, ready to change the world one small act at a time, doing the good we can do whenever we can. Amen.