

## Holy Textures

Meeting Jesus in Matthew, Mark, Luke and John.  
Short, easy to use, faith-provoking insights.



## Luke 13:10-17

*This lesson invites all of us who seek to follow Jesus today to ponder the ways in which our own rules, customs, and habits of what is right and proper have in fact become "Bad News" for the poor, the blind, and the oppressed - and to break those bonds so that we might ourselves be proclaimers of Good News of release, recovery, and freedom.*



**Year C**

**Pentecost 14**

**August 25, 2013**

*Sunday Between August 21 and August 27 Inclusive*

*Proper 16, Ordinary Time 21*

Read the passage at the bottom of this post: [Luke 13:10-17, The Message](#) or [Luke 13:10-17, The New Revised Standard Version \(NRSV\)](#).

Click here, [Luke 13:10-17](#), for an easy to print or email Adobe PDF version of this note.

Sermon by the [Rev. Dr. George Hermanson](#), "to be added."

This is the second of 3 healings on the Sabbath that only Luke reports:

1. Luke 6:6-11. Man with a withered hand.
2. Luke 13:10-17. Bent over woman.
3. Luke 14:1-6. Man with dropsy (swollen legs).

These stories may have caught Luke's attention and not Matthew, Mark, or John because Luke himself is a physician. Or it may also be because, it is Luke alone who presents Jesus proclaiming a Year of Jubilee - a year-long Sabbath, Luke 4:18:

*The Spirit of the Lord is upon me,  
because he has anointed me  
to bring good news to the poor.  
He has sent me to proclaim release  
to the captives  
and recovery of sight to the blind,  
to let the oppressed go free,  
to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor.*

Questions about proper Sabbath observance will be a key source of conflict between Jesus and the religious authorities because Sabbath observance is the heart of Jewish practice - established by God in the very fabric of Creation; commanded directly by God to Moses in the Ten Commandments.

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New teachings about the Sabbath could only come from God - or one authorized directly by God.

Nothing is more challenging to any religious community than changes to its Sabbath!

In our modern ears, we tend to focus on the woman's symptom - she is bent over - and skip over the cause of her ailment - a spirit: "And just then there appeared a woman with a spirit that had crippled her for eighteen years." Eighteen years! A powerful spirit indeed.

As Malina and Rohrbaugh note (Page 281, see footnote below), anyone with a physical deformity would also be socially deformed - that is, they would be shunned and outcast - lose their family support and become poor.

In other words they were precisely the people for whom Jesus has come! See Luke 4:18 above.

**Verse 12.** Notice that Jesus sets the woman free. This is not "healing" as we understand it - it is freeing someone from what has bound them; it is having authority over powerful inner demons.

The process of healing-freeing begins with Jesus speaking to the woman - in so doing, he initiates a relationship with her that everyone else would have studiously avoided - this may have been the first time in 18 years that anyone has ever directly, personally spoken to her in public.

Jesus addresses both her, "Woman," and her reality, "you are set free from your ailment." And so he restores both her social and her physical well being. The social aspect of healing will be emphasized in **Verse 16** where Jesus further identifies her status as a member of the community, "a daughter of Abraham," that is to say, "one of us, as we too are all daughters and sons of Abraham."

**Verse 13.** Notice that the woman rightly praises God - not Jesus - for her freedom. Everyone in the room would have been awed by what has just happened, and they would be very aware that a powerful Holy Man, Jesus, was in their midst.

*Aside: Remember that at the time of Jesus it was dishonourable to boast, to draw attention to oneself, to claim higher status, power or authority than one was born with. And Jesus was born at the bottom of the social ladder. So as Jesus goes about preaching, teaching and healing - others start gossiping about him and his public status does grow. That is fine. Others can honour you, but you must never deliberately seek such honour or even explicitly accept it. And it is especially important for an honourable son to NEVER act as an equal with their Father. They must always and only be seen as acting on behalf of the Father, with the Father's permission. Thus when Jesus says, "You are set free," the woman, and everyone else, would understand that the authority and power to set free is God's alone - it is not*

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*Jesus, but Jesus on behalf of God. And so it is God, not Jesus, who is to be praised and thanked.*

**Verse 14.** However, since healing violates the Sabbath requirement for doing no labour, Jesus' action is a challenge that rightly provokes a response from the leader of the synagogue whose "job" is to enforce Sabbath laws.

**Verses 15 and 16.** Jesus meets this rebuke by first demonstrating his familiarity with Sabbath law - the permitted care of animals. And then asks an unanswerable question that silences his opponent.

**Verse 17.** Jesus' opponents are **NOT** ashamed because they have suddenly realized that, "Of course! How could we have been so stupid! Of course, it is OK to heal on the Sabbath!"

No. They are ashamed because Jesus has out-debated them; because he has crafted a legitimate question for which they can give no honourable response that would also be acceptable to the watching crowd.

Shaming authorities - those who control armies, police, and courts with force of arms - is dangerous today, and was more so at the time of Jesus.

This lesson invites all of us who seek to follow Jesus today to ponder the ways in which our own rules, customs, and habits of what is right and proper have in fact become "Bad News" for the poor, the blind, and the oppressed - and to break those bonds so that we might ourselves be proclaimers of Good News of release, recovery, and freedom.

Might the watching world - and God - also rejoice at all the wonderful things we were doing?

David Ewart,  
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Note: Historical background information is primarily from Bruce Malina and Richard Rohrbaugh, Social Science Commentary on the Synoptic Gospels (see link below), pages 281-282.

\* [Link to Amazon.com Bibliography for Bruce Malina, Richard Rohrbaugh, et. al.](#), Social Science Commentary on ... The Synoptic Gospels; The Gospel of John; The Book of Acts; The Letters of Paul; The Book of Revelation; and others.

### Luke 13:10-17 (NRSV)

<sup>10</sup> Now he was teaching in one of the synagogues on the sabbath. <sup>11</sup> 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. <sup>12</sup> When Jesus saw her, he called her over and said, "Woman, you are set free from your ailment."

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<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 away to give it 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 that he was doing.

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### Luke 13:10-17 (The Message)

<sup>10</sup> He was teaching in one of the meeting places on the Sabbath. <sup>11</sup> There was a woman present, so twisted and bent over with arthritis that she couldn't even look up. She had been afflicted with this for eighteen years. <sup>12</sup> When Jesus saw her, he called her over. "Woman, you're free!" <sup>13</sup> He laid hands on her and suddenly she was standing straight and tall, giving glory to God.

<sup>14</sup> The meeting-place president, furious because Jesus had healed on the Sabbath, said to the congregation, "Six days have been defined as work days. Come on one of the six if you want to be healed, but not on the seventh, the Sabbath."

<sup>15</sup> But Jesus shot back, "You frauds! Each Sabbath every one of you regularly unties your cow or donkey from its stall, leads it out for water, and thinks nothing of it. <sup>16</sup> So why isn't it all right for me to untie this daughter of Abraham and lead her from the stall where Satan has had her tied these eighteen years?"

<sup>17</sup> When he put it that way, his critics were left looking quite silly and red-faced. The congregation was delighted and cheered him on.

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