

14th Sunday after Pentecost
"The Gift of the Sabbath"
Luke 13:10-17
8/25/13

I'd like to take this opportunity to thank everyone who made Vacation Bible School happen this past week. I'd like to thank Mary for her leadership, all of our adult leaders, and all of our Sr. High and Middle School crew leaders and volunteers.

I'd also like to thank everyone who contributed supplies and offered their prayer support and financial support so that we can offer such an important ministry to our community. Without you it couldn't happen. Thank you.

One of the things I love about VBS is that we have a theme and a theme verse for the week and each day we build on that theme.

This year the theme was "Kingdom Rock: Where Kids Stand Strong for God." Each day this week we learned about how God is our King, and how God helps us stand strong through His Love, through our Friends and Family, through Prayer, through Trusting in God for Salvation through Jesus death and resurrection, and through God's Word.

There are so many things in our lives that weigh us down. There are so many things that come our way that bend us and sometimes threaten to break us, but God promises to never fail us or forsake us. God promises to heal us, forgive us, and restore us. When we feel bent and broken, God is there to build us up and help us to stand. (share together some of the things that break our spirit or damage us emotionally, physically, or spiritually).

Does this remind you anything you heard in today's Gospel?
That's right, Luke tells us about a woman with a spirit that had crippled her for 18 years. Verse 11, describes the woman as "bent over and quite unable to stand up straight."

And what did Jesus do, when he saw her?
He called her over and immediately healed her. He said, "Woman, you are free from your ailment." And when Jesus healed her, she "stood up straight and began praising God."

We don't know exactly what had caused her ailment, but Jesus tells us that it was something that Satan had used to bend and break her spirit. It was something that had kept her in bondage for eighteen years!!

And since Jesus describes Satan as a Liar and the Father of Lies I'm convinced that Satan had used some kind of deception to demoralize or humiliate this woman.

Maybe she was raised in a home, where she received nothing but shaming insults, and hate-filled words. Maybe she had been betrayed and abandoned by someone she loved.

Think about some of the cruel ways you've seen people treated.
 Think about some of the ways you've seen children treat other children.
 Think about some of the spiteful gossip you've heard at work or at school.

To this day can still picture a time when I was being teased and insulted on the playground at my elementary school, and I can remember the details like they were yesterday.
 Maybe you can think of a time like that.

Have you ever thought of experiences like those as a way that the Devil tries to deceive us, as a way he tries to tear us down and forget how valuable we are? He takes the accumulation of all the junk in our past and he keeps playing those tapes in our minds until we actually start believing some of those lies.

And here's how he takes those lies and tries to break our spirit:
 He uses those lies to make us think that we are only valuable
 ...when we can prove it by the list of things we've accomplished
 ...or the number of hours we work
 ...or the number of things we accumulate.

We keep trying to add one more thing to our busy lives until eventually our spirit becomes crippled and we are bent over emotionally, physically, and spiritually.

Dwight L. Moody once said, "If you have so much business to attend to, that you have no time to pray you have more business on hand, than God ever intended you should have."

So how do we decide, what God is calling us to do for his Kingdom?
 How do we tell the difference between what's truly important and all the other stuff that's just busyness? Between what God is telling us is needful and all the things that fall outside of His purpose for our lives?

First of all, God will help us decide which things to take on and which things not to, through a simple gift called, "the Sabbath." God gives us one day a week so that we can stop and remember that He is God, and we are not.

When we try to work or accomplish things 7 days a week what we're really saying is: "that we really don't need God to provide anything we can manage just fine all by ourselves." God gives us a Sabbath day of rest so that we don't get crushed under the weight of trying to take His place.

Did you know that even the hemoglobin levels in our blood go in seven day cycles?
 Even world champion athletes have to take days of rest, in order to compete at the highest level.
 Wagon trains in the old West that tried to push ahead seven days a week didn't make it while those that let their oxen rest, made it safely through the mountain passes.

And finally it helps to remember who we are.

The woman in today's Gospel had suffered for so long that people just referred to her as "the cripple." She was bent over, staring at the ground her back terribly contorted.

She doesn't appear to have a name that anyone remembered.

When they saw her coming down the street, eyes attempting to lift from the ground, they didn't say, "here comes Mary," or "Look it's Elizabeth"

They said, "here comes the bent woman, or the cripple."

But in verse 16, Jesus remembers her by a different name.

He calls her "a daughter of Abraham."

That was quite a change for her. To be a daughter of Abraham meant that she too had received Abraham's blessing. She too would be a blessing to the world. She too would be part of God's story of salvation.

The same is true for us.

When we lay aside all the things that we think we have to do

...all the ways we try to earn the approval of others.

...all the ways we buy into the lies of our culture.

When we remember whose son or daughter we truly are.

Then we will be blessed to be a blessing.

We won't take on things that just make us busy.

We won't take on things that we pursue for selfish gain, things that become idols.

When we remember whose son or daughter we truly are

the responsibilities that we do shoulder won't crush us.

They will give meaning and purpose to our lives.

They will give us joy in serving.

And we too, will be blessed to be a blessing.

I'd like to close by sharing with you again the words from Isaiah, in our 1st Reading:

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 upon the heights of the earth;

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. Amen.