

I heard a segment on NPR the other day about JAZZ.  
They were saying that Jazz is making a COME-BACK across

Our nation. Recording sales are up. JAZZ CLUBS are  
springing up.

Courses like JAZZ IMPROVISATION are popular on college  
campuses.

The ICONS and ROLE MODELS of this movement are the Jazz  
Greats

Who came along in the mid – twentieth Century.

Artists like Louis Armstrong, Ella Fitzgerald, and Cab Callaway and  
His Jazz Orchestra.

And especially the great Saxophone players, CHARLIE PARKER  
And JOHN COLETRAIN.////

There's a little story that comes from the JAZZ WORLD of the Early  
50's

That relates to our Gospel reading this morning.

One time back in the Early 50's, Cab Calloway and His Jazz  
Orchestra

Were playing at the famous Birdland Jazz Club in Manhattan.  
And one particular evening, Cab was introducing a promising  
young

Saxophone Player to the public.

This young man was making his Debut Performance.

As the young Sax Player finished his set. Cab came over and  
hugged him.

There was applause all around; and that young man was so  
radiant and

Proud ----

But a few minutes later a Newspaper MUSIC Critic came over,

And right in front of Cab, and some other professional  
musicians,

This Jazz Critic said to this young man,

“Son, I hate to say it, but you aren't that Good.

All YOU can do is play like CHARLIE PARKER.”  
 Cab Calloway heard this.  
 At that point, Cab Calloway very calmly took the young man’s  
 Saxophone  
 And handed it to the Critic.  
 “Here”, he said, “YOU play this Saxophone like Charlie Parker.”  
 The Jazz Critic returned the saxophone and walked away.  
 In today’s Gospel, Jesus is teaching in a Synagogue on a Saturday,  
 The Jewish Sabbath --- A Holy Day.  
 As Jesus is speaking, a woman comes in who has been crippled for  
 18 years.  
 She Slowly makes her way into the synagogue.  
 There is something severely wrong with her Spine.  
 And the result is that she is literally BENT DOURBLE ---  
 She cannot straighten up.  
 And you can only imagine the PROBLEMS a condition like this  
 would cause.  
 Not only would she have suffered years of PAIN;  
 There would have been secondary issues.  
 If you’re bent over all the time, you can’t look up.  
 And because this lady was physically doubled over all the time,  
 Just imagine the problems she would have with things like  
 Crossing a road, or caring for herself and her household ---  
 Problems DOING routine things you and I take for  
 granted like, Preparing and Eating a Meal, or simply moving  
 about through an normal day.  
 Also, there would have been some serious Emotional and Social  
 issues  
 In this lady’s life.  
 You notice that Luke never gives us this lady’s name.  
 This may be Luke’s way of implying to US something about the  
 Status  
 Of this Lady in her community, and at the Synagogue.

Persons who are physically challenged, or who have obvious physical

Issues often become DEFINED by their conditions.

Perhaps in her community, most folks probably knew this lady as

That CRIPPLE ---- or That Bent Over woman.

And so, for this lady, Her Physical Problem has not only taken away her

Ability to move and to function PHYSICALLY,

Now after 18 years, It MAY WELL BE that her physical Condition has also DEFINED her.

It has taken way her personhood.

Her VERY VISIBLE physical condition has robbed her of her God given DIGNITY.

That Old Crippled Woman. That BENT OVER Lady that comes to Synagogue.

And so, it is THIS lady who comes to the Synagogue on this particular Sabbath.

And she hobbles into the Synagogue PRECISELY while Jesus is teaching.

Slowly inching her way along the back wall --- back in the shadows

—

Hoping to be as quiet and as UNNOTICED as possible.

And so there she is. Huddled in the back of the room. Silent.

Inconspicuous.

But JESUS sees Her; He notices the shape she's in.

And JESUS calls her over. And Jesus lays his hands on her, and He says, "Woman, you are set free from

Your Ailment."

Immediately, for the first time in 18 years, this lady Stands Up Straight.

And she begins Giving Thanks to God --- because NOW she is healed.

What a Wonderful Day in this Lady's life.

She comes into that Synagogue Doubled over and in pain with a bad back;

But, now, in the Presence of Jesus --- She is healed.  
 She is set free from this horrible situation.  
 And now she can go home and live a Happy, Normal Life.  
 And I am sure that the other folks who saw this happen were  
 Happy FOR her. And the Lady and all those who were there  
 could

Celebrate this marvelous Day in ALL of their lives. ////  
 But our story is not over. Our Gospel takes a darker turn.  
 Just like that night at the Birdland Jazz Club after that young man  
 Played his saxophone.,

A Critic stands up. THIS CRITIC in our GOSPEL happens to be  
 the Leader of the Synagogue ---

A devout Religious figure in the Community.  
 BUT rather than calling for a celebration --- maybe a PARTY to  
 celebrate

This Lady's Healing ----  
 This Critic proceeds to Criticize Jesus for healing this Lady on the  
 Sabbath.  
 You see, it says right there in the Levitical Code, back there in the  
 Old Hebrew Scriptures, that unless an illness, or a wound is LIFE-  
 THREATENING ----  
 Healing is considered Work ---- and it should NOT be done on the  
 Sabbath.

And technically, according to the Law, the Synagogue Leader is  
 probably right.

But, then Jesus, ALSO quoting the law, makes his response;  
 He says to the Critic: "Well, the Levitical Code allows you to  
 UNBIND your livestock so they can be fed and watered on the  
 Sabbath.

Therefore, Ought not this Woman, a DAUGHTER OF ABRAHAM who has been bound for 18 years, OUGHT NOT SHE be loosed from the bond

Of HER deformity, And Set FREE, even on the Sabbath?  
As Jesus said THIS, as Luke tells us, Jesus' CRITIC was put to shame;

And all the PEOPLE rejoiced at the glorious things Jesus had done.

This little episode in Luke gives us a WONDERFUL insight into what Jesus is all about.

Jesus is all about showing us who God is; and what God is like. And when we crunch it all down, as Jesus makes clear ---- God is Love.

Another way to say this is to POINT OUT that Jesus TRANCENDS or Goes Beyond the Laws and the Traditions of the Old Order.

Now, sure, several times in many places JESUS AFFIRMS the law -- - basically the Ten Commandments --

And the Rules and Guidelines, and the vows we make are all important to us.

As Jesus might say, The Commandments provide structure, and the boundaries we need to maintain healthy

Relationships with God and with the people around us.

But the laws of our faith have their limits.

Sometimes, when the well-being and the dignity of a child of God comes

Into play, we must go BEYOND the law, and act out of the kind of

Compassion and empathy we see in today's Gospel.

And sometimes that is HARDER than simply following the rules.

Sometimes we are told that the Ten Commandments and the rules and

Guidelines of our Faith are like a roadmap for living.

The commandments show us the road. Like a map, they point us in the

Right direction. And that's true..

But, sometimes, storms come up. Roads get washed out. Traffic gets snarled, and accidents occur, Detours block our path.

And so sometimes, Regardless of the map, we have to find ANOTHER route –

We have to find ANOTHER road, regardless of what the map may say.

And when Human Dignity is at stake, or human suffering, or oppression

Comes into play ----

I think Jesus makes it very clear today,

That release from bondage, and the restoring of the Health and Dignity

Of a Child of GOD become the priority --- Not, the mere keeping of the Letter of the law --- or abiding by the rules, whatever their source.

Another thing to consider today is this:

Jesus makes it clear in today's Gospel that His First Priority --- His main mission is to restore the Health and the Dignity of each of God's children.

And that includes you and me.

And so, whatever in OUR lives is Bent or Broken ---

And whatever there is ABOUT US, or WITHIN US that causes us emotional turmoil, or physical pain,

God's desire is to find healing for us, and to bring about OUR RELEASE

And our Freedom from these things.

And so, like that bent-over lady in our Gospel today,

Just Like her, you and I make OUR way into the Presence of Jesus.

And we allow Him to touch us --- We open ourselves to the HEALING that Jesus offers.

We give JESUS Permission to To take away whatever it is that is binding us up,

Or holding us back, or making us sick.

And so, today we CELEBRATE the GIFT OF HEALING that JESUS offers to EACH of us this Morning.////

The other point we need to make is that this Gospel also calls us to

RESPECT the God-given DIGNITY of others.

In other words, today, JESUS is URGING us to see BEYOND the conditions, and the WOUNDEDNESS of the folks around us.

To DO this ---- that is ----

To see others through the eyes of our faith FREES us UP

To live according to Jesus' Vision of His Kingdom ----

To recognize the God-Given dignity of others OPENS THE DOOR, then,

For SELFLESS SHARING, the healing of Bodies and Relationships,  
A sense of JUSTICE,

And the Possibility of REAL Community.

May God grant us the grace to recognize that special son or daughter of God

Who is within ourselves, and who is within each person around us. Amen.