

Gospel lesson

Traveling on in our Pentecost season, we continue following Jesus in His countryside ministry.



picture from <https://www.freebibleimages.org/illustrations/qnpi-066-stooped-woman/>; credit: Good News Productions International and College Press Publishing

Luke 13:10-17

(NRSV)

¹⁰Now he was teaching in one of the synagogues on the sabbath.

¹¹And 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.

¹²When Jesus saw her, he called her over and said, "Woman, you are set free from your ailment."

¹³When he laid his hands on her, immediately she stood up straight and began praising God.

¹⁴But 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."

¹⁵But 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?

“Week by week, we gather to sing, pray, and proclaim our praise of God and the good news of the gospel as a community.

~~How might you help your congregation connect that [does] the work of worship is also the work of building [our] home together in Christ?”~~

How many of you have ever hiked to a mountaintop?
<Let them respond>

What was the view like from up there?
<Let them respond>



picture from MMMS collection

My husband Keven and I climbed up to Castle Rock above Blue Mountain Lake this past week, and even on the cloudy day, the view was stunning. It being a popular tourist destination, there were a number of other people up there. Each group basically kept to themselves when we first got up there.

As I walked around the mountaintop rock taking pictures, there was a young couple sitting forward on the rock, preventing my framing the picture the way I wanted. What would you do in that situation?

<Let them respond>

I asked the young couple if they would like their picture taken from behind, overlooking the view. Surprised at the offer, they gave me their phone to take the picture on. I took a few shots and handed it

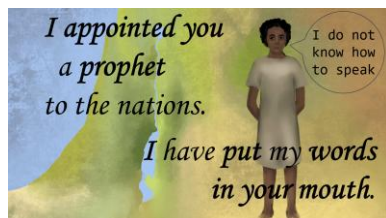
back to them. They liked what they saw, saying those were some of the best pictures they had of themselves. I did not get the exact picture framing I wanted, but I made them happier, so I was happier.

I noticed that other folks on that mountaintop were watching our exchange, so I offered to take their pictures too. Pretty soon I had taken a picture of everyone on the mountaintop for them, and more than one offered to take a picture of Keven and me up there. It was fun; we were all connected by picture-taking up on Castle Rock.

As Keven and I finally started down the mountain, we passed some people just reaching the top. I was delighted to hear, just before we got out of earshot on the winding trail down, someone offer to take their picture up there for them.

I hope the photo offers kept going all day. To me, it was God's beautiful handiwork around us inspiring strangers to share grace and trust a little bit, making all of our lives more enjoyable.

And isn't that the kind of thing God calls us to do, to build communities based in grace through whatever channels are before us? How well do we respond?



background picture from
<https://www.freebibleimages.org/illustrations/ab-samuel/>;
credit: Aleph with
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Jeremiah did not have a confident response when God first called him to prophesy to the nations. He made excuses: "I do not know how to speak, for I am only a

boy.” Unfortunately, back then (as now), there were wicked, “unjust and cruel” people (the psalmist tells us as much). It was dangerous to say things that those in power would not like to hear.

But God reassured Jeremiah that the Lord knew him intimately and would enable him to do as God called him to do. The really cool thing for us is that God knows us just as intimately and enables us to do as God calls us to do – maybe that is why I was able to take pictures of people on a mountaintop.

What are the little things God enables you to do for others, that makes you feel special for doing it? It may mean more to others than you may ever know.



pictures from <https://www.freebibleimages.org/illustrations/bpa-exodus/>; credit: BiblePathwayAdventures.com and from <https://www.freebibleimages.org/illustrations/gnpi-066-stooped-woman/>; credit: Good News Productions International and College Press Publishing

The author of the letter to the Hebrews pointed out that in Moses’s day, people feared God and were unable to approach the Lord closely; even Moses trembled with fear. However, Jesus enables us to know God’s love, to trust in God’s grace and enter God’s kingdom without fear of destruction.

The whole of earth and heaven will be shaken to remove what does not belong. God is the only true source of life; if we do not cling to our Lord, we will be lost. Sin will be burned away; if we cling to sin, we will get burned. The only way to survive is to trust Jesus and be part of God’s holy kingdom.

That can be challenging, especially when we want to

be in control and not have our shortcomings exposed. I expect the synagogue leader in Jesus's day did not want to have people coming to him (in front of all the worshippers) asking for him to heal them – just like Jesus healed the woman who was bent over – and then have the crowd of worshippers be disappointed in him and/or God when he (the synagogue leader) could not do the same for anyone else, let alone everyone else. So, he used the letter of the law to justify his setting boundaries and expectations.

However, we just heard about how God enables people to do as called. I wonder what ministerial blessings the synagogue leader turned away by not celebrating God's healing of the afflicted and trusting in the Lord's power before him.



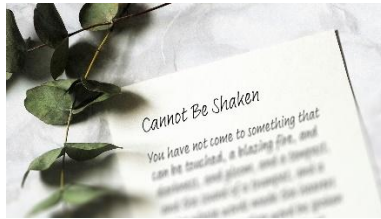
picture from <https://www.pexels.com/photo/woman-and-man-sitting-on-brown-wooden-bench-984949/>;
credit: Vera Arsic

Where are we making judgments about other people's actions instead of celebrating the grace God shows through them? Where are we putting up walls instead of building communities filled with the love of Jesus? Where are we neglecting the call of the Holy Spirit out of fear, ego, idolatry, or other sin?

This week, I want you to try putting aside your presuppositions about your annoying family and community members, and really look at things from their perspective.

† How can you interact with them so that they experience and recognize God's love more fully?

† What kind of grace is the Holy Spirit guiding you to share?



picture from

<https://www.umcdiscipleship.org/worship-planning/dear-children-of-god-dear-beloved-children/elevanth-sunday-after-pentecost-year-c-lectionary-planning-notes/elevanth-sunday-after-pentecost-year-c-graphics>

We can do random acts of kindness for strangers in the hope that God will make something more of it. But a community held together with the love of Jesus and the grace of the Holy Spirit intentionally applied in everyday living reflects God's kingdom, and that brings *shalom*, wholeness and wellbeing that cannot be shaken, a caring for others that supersedes sports or political alignments even when opposing sides meet.