



## **“Rise Up”**

Pastor Andy CastroLang

August 21, 2016

### **Scripture:**

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

Now he was teaching in one of the synagogues on the Sabbath. 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. When Jesus saw her, he called her over and said, "Woman, you are set free from your ailment." When he laid his hands on her, immediately she stood up straight and began praising God.

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." 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? 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?" 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.

## **Sermon:**

It is wonderful to be with all of you again! I know that during my sabbatical, I was supposed to be present to the moments I was in, and neither worry nor imagine what you were up to, back here at Westminster.

But I admit, I cheated. I looked on our church Facebook page once or twice, I went to visit Hal at Hospice House when Pastor Jan called me and told me he was there. But I didn't worry about you. I did miss you though. It was especially odd if I was here in Spokane on a Sunday....my car almost drove itself to church once or twice!

Overall, it was a sabbatical of rest, of reconnecting and experiencing my more intimate community of family and friends. There was a wedding, and a baptism; there was the funeral of my father-in-law. There was travel to the ocean (twice), and a long trip to Texas to be with Brigid Taylor and baby Addy. I read a lot of books, most of which were not scholarly! I took a lot of naps. Messed about in my yard, at the lake, went kayaking, played with the grandbaby.

And I thought about mortality. I rewrote my "5 Wishes" booklet. In it I asked that this text be read at my memorial service!

For if there is anything I want to be remembered by, and I want others to remember, it is this:

The stories of Jesus, and the messages of Jesus are not about church structure, or history, or hierarchy.

The message of Jesus is a message of life and freedom from crippling. The message of Jesus, here in the gospel of Luke is the message of life lived fully, lived in freedom, in possibility, in life changing reality.

Jesus says, if you are crushed under a burden that keeps you looking at the dirt, feeling like dirt...Rise Up.

Jesus says, if you are an outcast and have been defined as less than...Rise Up.

Jesus says, if you are declared unclean, unwanted, invisible...Rise Up.

Jesus says, if you are oppressed, controlled by others in society because of your gender or sexual orientation...Rise Up.

This particular gospel story roared inside of me when I was a young woman and felt the multiple oppressions of my church; I was a woman and there was no future for me in ministry, no place for my gifts, no appreciation. I was invisible in the hierarchy, I was seen as unclean and unfit. I had no voice, except the voice of the psalmist who clings to God, asking help and support in a despairing and violent world. Jesus spoke-up for me against bullies.

And the gospel, the good news of Jesus, is that this crushing cruel world of the woman bent over, is a lie. There is life, and joy and freedom from bullies and oppressors, there is hope and celebration in being around Jesus!

This woman, crippled for 18 years...she is lifted up in healing, and her response is joy! Joy and praise!

God's intention for you, for me, for all creation is this kind of joy, and this kind of religion...the religion of love, of fullness of life!

Jesus knew Torah, he knew the commands and the teachings of Torah...and he knows Torah is not meant to keep one crippled, nor is the will of God for the keeping of pedantic laws, rather Jesus knows the law as taught by the prophets, like Jeremiah... ***the law of love that will live in our hearts so that we will be recognized by God, and we will recognize God.***

God looks deep within, with the eyes of Jesus, and he doesn't see an unclean woman, disfigured and horrible, untouchable and unworthy.

He sees his daughter. Daughter of Abraham. One of the countless millions, more than the stars...the children of God's love and promise.

And with all my heart and soul, I believe this vision of the world, as Jesus saw it and the gospel writers shared it: a vision of healing, and of joy. A vision where life is of ultimate value and it is to be lived in peace, in wholeness, in justice with mercy. Where none are excluded, and none are belittled. Where the life of community is wedded to the truth and beauty in each and every one here.

I know that in our own struggling way, we strive to build that sort of community here at Westminster.

It is not easy. We are burdened, and sick, and sad. We don't see as clearly as Jesus... either our own faults or the beauty of others, in the midst of their faults. We face terrific pressure from society, from our culture, from our own desire to be comfortable, or lazy, or even just plain old tired-out.

But you are the beloved community that I have missed these past 12 weeks, because I know you are trying to live like Jesus lived, and look at the world with the eyes of Jesus. You want to Rise Up!

You want to be the voice of Jesus, filled with love and power, to tell another burdened soul: Rise Up!

Together, we will. Together, with the power of God, we can.

It is good to be back! May God bless us, every one, as we seek to follow Jesus, rising up into life and life for the world. Amen.