



## **“I Love This Story!”**

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### **Scripture (NRSV):**

#### **Luke 13:10-17**

<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.” <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.

### **Sermon:**

I love this story. Yes, I really do.

- I love the themes of and liberation and love. Jesus has a mission, he declared it in chapter 4 to “set the captive free”, and he is to be the messenger of God’s love and God’s labors for our freedom. Jesus knows his stories of the Exodus! And Deuteronomy 5:13. He knows that the Sabbath was created as a day to celebrate freedom

- I love the nerve of the woman! Ritually unclean and untouchable because of her sickness, she still comes out to hear Jesus on the Sabbath.
- I love the idea of being seen, and given an honorable name. “Daughter of Abraham”!
- I love the idea that God in Jesus sees us, even when we are so bent double that we can’t see them! How often have I thought I was desperately alone, only to realize that God SEES ME and I am never out of that loving Presence. How many ways there are to be “bent double” and unable to see, to look up, to know our worth, and our freedom?
- I love that Jesus sticks up for that woman! It is terrible to be the one passed over, the one “not good enough”, the one who is somehow defective. But not to Jesus! Not to God! He has a verbal smackdown with the Pharisees and schools them good!

I want to ask you: what stories do you love? Is there a gospel story that helps you, informs how you live? What stories from Hebrew scripture or Christian, grab you? Speak to you? Will you share it?

My daughter tells me some of her favorite stories are all about the brave, strong, clever women of the bible: Ruth, and Queen Esther. And Judith. Judith who slays the enemy general Holofernes after getting into his tent and getting him blind drunk. She then cuts off his head! And carries it back across enemy lines to her own people. She is, in my daughters words, “badass”.

She also likes the story of Jesus with the children. Since she works with children, overlooked and underappreciated children, I think it resonates deeply with her.

How about you?

My son-in-law’s favorite is the story of the Good Samaritan: the story of the enemy who is not an enemy. The story that turns the tables on who is good and who is bad. A great Jesus story.

My Texas granddaughter loves the parable Jesus tells about the treasure buried in the field. Because her children’s bible has a picture of a treasure chest filled with jewels, and boy howdy, does Addy ever love her sparkly stuff!

She also loves the story of short Zacchaeus the tax collector, up a tree to see Jesus. She now thinks that all rich people are tax collectors!

How about you?

I love the Song of Songs: 2:10-13. Passionately in love, hot after each other...this is the love poetry of inflamed and impulsive young people. I adore the fact that it is in the bible.

I enjoy the story of the resurrection in the gospel of Luke 24:1-11...the women aren't believed. Jesus has to scare everybody by appearing in their midst, before they understand it is him, not a ghost. I imagine the women saying, "Told you so!"

Or

In the gospel of John chapter 20...another resurrection account, with Mary weeping, and then, mistaking the risen Lord for the gardener. It says something to me about the nature of the resurrected, when they can be mistaken for the gardener!

What stories lift you up?

The first Genesis account of creation helps me balance out my unhappy response to the second Genesis account. In those very first pages of the bible we hear again and again that God created it all "good", even "very good". In spite of what church and culture say, women too are "good", even "very good".

One of my favorite psalms is 139... "you search me and know me...if I fly to the ends of the earth, still you are there".

Another, I heard sung by monks throughout my childhood, as they prepared for bed, so I would sing it to myself and my children too: psalm 91: "you that dwell in the shelter of the Lord and abide in his shadow for life, say to the Lord my refuge, my God in whom I trust".

Have you found such richness in this book of ours? Have you heard a story, heard a song, a poem, a dramatic prophetic exhortation that moved you?

This book is worth the looking and worth the listening!  
It is worth the study and the confusion, even struggles.

Both our children and our adults will soon have educational opportunities to dig into these stories that give strength and meaning to our lives. The stories of the bible, both good and bad, are deeply woven into the cultures of the west. They can be found in our literature, our laws, our poets. It is wise to know them, struggle with them, appreciate them, even.

Our Christian education begins again on Sept. 15<sup>th</sup>.  
I urge you to join in the exploration!