



## A Posture of Dignity – Touchpoint for August 20, 2025

### Luke 13:10-17 (NRSVUE) – A Posture of Dignity

<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 to 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 being done by him.

**Grace to you from the Mystery in whom we live and breathe and have our being.**

*“All his opponents were put to shame”*

Various Bible translations of this women’s ailment include a spirit of weakness, a sickness caused by a spirit, bent over with arthritis, and the best-selling Bible of the 1970’s The Living Bible says - an evil spirit or demon. The translation we choose matters.

The Greek describes this spirit of weakness is in the emotions of the soul. It is said to be lacking the strength and capacity to understand a thing, to do great things or to bear one’s own troubles.

As a teen, I became a spirit-filled Christian as we were called. The term identified those who believed in and practiced the charismatic experiences or manifested gifts of the Spirit. Those times were filled with great music and euphoric experiences. I value those times of my spiritual growth journey, but they also had harmful teachings much like many of the ones many Jews of Jesus time taught. Many Jews believed sickness was a result of sin and the synagogue system of laws took precedence over an individual’s suffering. During my years in the Jesus movement, it was common to believe Satan could have authority over people. These beliefs were big in the Jesus movement days.

*“Dear woman you have been loosed from your infirmity”*

In 1974 my mother was found having a grand mal seizure. I called an ambulance, and we went to the hospital. We were told she had an inoperable brain tumor. One doctor at Barrows Neurological Hospital said he could remove it. She lived until her 90’s. The one thing that she suffered from years after was occasional seizures. It kept us all on guard for her safety.

It breaks my heart to say this, but I too believed many of bible teachers who said demons and spirits needed to be cast out as frequently as emptying the trash.

It’s not easy for me to say this and it makes me very sad. But in my fear and anger over my mom’s unfair suffering, I once laid hands on her and shouted for a demon to come out of her while she was having a seizure.

I wanted the Holy Spirit to “loose” her from her demon. I thought I lacked enough faith when nothing changed. Her brilliant surgeon Dr Dvorak however, “loosed” the tumor and she eventually recovered, and the seizures were controlled with medication.

It was not a demon, and the illness was not caused by a sin. The doctors said it was long developing and was probably caused by enormous stress after my father died 15 years prior. I was mistaken. My dear mother did not have a demon.

Jesus showed compassion and respect to the woman who was bent over for 18 years. Jesus spoke directly to the woman.

When someone in the gospel stories was possessed by a demon, Jesus spoke directly to the demon not the person. He commanded the demon to stop the tormenting.

So, if this woman bent over for 18 years had a demon, Jesus would have commanded the demon to come out. He did not do this. He instead showed the woman she had the power to stand upright. One translation describes Jesus saying, “you are loosed from your infirmity.” I love that word. Loosed!

She probably still did not believe she was free and remained bent, so he moved her back and shoulders upright. I imagine it was an incredibly tender and powerful moment. The crowd in the synagogue cheered.

The only demon I see in this gospel story is a proverbial demon that may have for 18 years whispered in her ear, “you’re not enough”. Shame on you for existing.”

The synagogue ruler was indignant but didn’t address Jesus directly. He turned and spoke to the onlookers who were celebrating the miracle. He said, and I paraphrase, “Hey, don’t think you can be healed on the Sabbath! You will violate the law. Wait till tomorrow!” But Jesus said in effect, “Not one more day of suffering for this woman!”

Imagine a young adolescent girl who grows tall at a rate that makes her tower above her peers. The other kids may stare and call her names. Her self-consciousness causes her to slouch, stoop, and cower her way through middle school. It will eventually influence her physical health and her self-confidence. But if significant people come by her side and speak truth to her, reminding her of her beauty and significance, she may be lost from the spirit of her weakness and walk tall.

I still believe in the active power of the Holy Spirit. I also believe in the power of legalism, authoritarianism, religious manipulation, fear-based leadership, and the devastating effects of spiritual abuse, like the stuff the synagogue ruler was dishing out.

Over the years, it can rob a person’s posture of dignity.

To this day, I have never encountered a demon. I’ve only encountered people overtaken by shame, guilt, isolation, fear, and abuse. I have witnessed them find ways to numb the pain with substances and unhealthy relationships.

The solution is not shouting at demons; it's leading with the same compassion as Jesus.

May we be like that woman and come frequently to the place of being loosed from our self-doubt and insecurity. May we be authentic examples of the love and compassion of the not-so-religious Jesus who was willing to break the synagogue rules to relieve suffering.

May we remind others of the good news of Christ's love without caveat or agenda. That they may stand upright in their God-given posture of dignity.

Perhaps that was why Jesus went to church that day. To rescue that woman. Because apparently this was the last recorded time Jesus went to the synagogue.

*Amen*

## **Opening Songs**

### **Be Still**

(The London Fox Taize Choir, Remember Me)  
Be Still, know that I am God

### **Hearken to My Voice**

(London Fox Taize Choir)

Hearken to my voice, O Lord when I call. Have mercy on me and answer me.  
You speak in my heart, and say, "Seek my face". Your face, Lord will I seek.

## **Bible Passage**

*(A passage takes us from one place to another)*

## **Touchpoint**

*(Where God's story touches our life story)*

### **Come O Lord and Set Us Free**

(John L. Bell, The Wild Goose Collection)

Come, O Lord and set us free. Give/Bring your people peace.

Come, O Lord and set us free. Come Lord Jesus, Come.

1. And take our guilt away. Give us your pardon Lord.
2. Free from our self-obsession. Free from each fond possession.
3. Free to affirm each other...as sister and as brother

Reshape the world you made. Let what your hand created...be always celebrated.

## **The Meal**

### **Lord's Prayer**

(The Scottish Festival Singers)

## **Benediction**

### **A Blessing**

(Margaret Rizza, Kevin Mayhew Ltd. Complete Chants Vol.1)

May the Lord bless you.

May the Lord protect you and guide you.

May His strength uphold you.

His light shine upon you.

His peace surround you.

His love enfold you.

May the Lord bless you.

*Amen.*