



## Wednesday Prayer

11<sup>th</sup> Sunday after Pentecost – Set free from pain

**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.”**

**Luke 13:10-14**

When are we allowed to be set free from our pain? In this Gospel, Jesus heals a woman who has suffered for 18 years with a debilitating physical condition, her spine causing her to face downward, never able to straighten or gaze upward. It's hard to even imagine the pain let alone the isolation and vulnerability of her position. Jesus shows steadfast mercy, healing her on the Sabbath. The temple leader rebukes Jesus to the crowd for healing on the Sabbath, giving the rules greater significance than the pain of a human being.

When do the rules of our lives today keep us from sharing our pain? We may have been taught to hold it inside, smile through the grief, lock it away. We may have been invalidated or belittled when showing our pain, especially when it comes out in ways that make another uncomfortable. We may have been met with platitudes such as “God doesn't give us more than we can handle” when at the time we feel completely unequipped to handle the pain.

This woman in Luke's gospel showed herself to Jesus and he bore witness to her pain. He saw her. While he physically healed in this case, so many are hurting in ways that aren't physically seen. How can we bear witness to another's pain, be willing to see them and embrace their story? And how can we open up safely to our own pain, finding the strength to seek out God's love through another who will be present with us?

When reading this gospel, my mind focused immediately on the many survivors among us – the woman doubled over, unable to stand tall, forced to look downward due to her circumstance – a metaphor for the stories some survivors have entrusted to me. I've heard how they've literally fell to the ground when they were finally able to share their story. They get up and some weight has been lifted, and then the cycle continues. Trauma does not follow a linear path. As Jesus was able to see the woman in pain in front of him, I pray we are able to bear witness to pain, our own and others, in order to be set free.

**God of healing, hear our prayer to be set free from pain, and to bear witness to one another's pain. Help us to see and embrace all who are in need of your loving grace. Amen.**

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Written by Joy McElroy, Cherish All Children Executive Director.