

11th SUNDAY after PENTECOST

August 21, 2022

COLLECT: O MERCIFUL GOD, that your Church, being gathered together in unity by your Holy Spirit, may show forth your power among all peoples, to the glory of your Name; through Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever. Amen.

THE LESSONS: First Lesson: Isaiah 58:9b-14

Psalm: 103:1-8

Second Lesson: Hebrews 12:18-29

Gospel: Luke 13:10-17

THE SERMON: The Old Testament lesson of Isaiah tells us that if we remove the yoke from our lives, the Lord will fulfill our needs and make us stronger. He will continually guide us and we shall flourish like a watered garden, like a bubbling never-ending stream.

Each person may have his or her own yoke. How am I defining yoke? I am saying it is anything that restricts or binds you., Anything that can keep you from enjoying life or reaching your full potential. A yoke can be pride, boasting, working too much, being depressed, even being envious of others. There is a myriad of things we can call a yoke. Some are self-imposed and some are imposed on us, such as a loss of job, homelessness and even illnesses.

I think most people seek to remove their yokes first through prayer. We ask Jesus to come into our lives and take away that which is binding us. We have come to know Jesus can and will remove yokes,

Today's Gospel of Luke has a wonderful story of a woman encountering Jesus and having her yoke removed. Her yoke has crippled her for 18 years. She is so bent over that she finds it difficult to walk. She can't stand up straight and while others are walking and passing her by, she just shuffles along. She would have to leave home early if she wanted to be on time somewhere.

At that time, people with illnesses or afflictions were thought to have it as a punishment. People thought the person must have sinned or done something wrong in their lives. Some thought an evil spirit was the cause.

At this point in Luke's Gospel, the woman is on her way to the synagogue or we may call it church. Any town that has 10 Jewish men can have a synagogue. Anyone could read from the first five books of the Hebrew Bible: Genesis, Exodus, Numbers, Leviticus and Deuteronomy. These are named the Torah. Other books: The Prophets and the Writings may also be read, but the Torah reading is a must.

Once the reader has read the Torah lesson, he then preaches or explains his thoughts on what he has read. On this morning, the reader is a rabbi passing through her town.

The woman has left home, early, so that she would get to the synagogue. In her bent over condition, it is a task for her. Now, the scripture doesn't tell us if she got there on time or if she was late. What it does tell us is that Jesus saw her in the synagogue and called her over.

Jesus didn't ask her any questions, he looked at her, laid his hands on her and said, "Woman you are healed from your ailment." Immediately, her

yoke was lifted. She felt a surge of power surge through her body, she stood up straight and began to loudly praise God.

I think people in the synagogue were surprised at the miracle they had just witnessed and they too, like the woman, loudly began to praise God.

All were joyful except the president of the synagogue. He was angry and indignant. He was angry that this healing occurred on the sabbath. He believed that the sabbath had been trampled on and like stated in the Old Testament lesson of Isaiah, God would not honor it. He believed that the rabbi had defamed the sabbath by doing this work on the sabbath. He loudly proclaimed to the congregation that there were six other days this could have been done, and if people wanted to be healed, they could come on those days.

Jesus said, "You are hypocrites. Wouldn't each of you, on a sabbath, untie his ox or donkey and lead it to or give it water? Why then can't this Jewish woman, this daughter of Abraham be healed on a sabbath?" Jesus saw them excusing the watering of their animals on the sabbath. They wouldn't think it was a violation. They would be kinder to their animals than to this woman.

Now the scripture doesn't tell us if the crippled woman was on time to the synagogue or late because of her shuffling. But what it does tell us is that she was on time for her healing. It also says that Jesus noticed her, he called her over and didn't ask her any questions. He knew she had faith and a belief in God. This she had shown by coming to the synagogue in her crippledness.

In what was a routine day or sabbath for her, she encountered Christ and he took away her yoke, that affliction that had bent her over for 18 years.

People of St Matthew's we can encounter Christ at any time, or any place. So, as we leave the church today, let us go in peace to love and serve the Lord and do the work he has given us to do. Today may be the day you encounter Christ as you show love to others. Amen.

Rev. Lionel Starkes