

Sermon August 24, 2025

Luke 13:10-17

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.

The Message

We come here, waiting for God's word to come down to us out of the darkness like a blazing fire, lighting up our sanctuary and our world with a new vision and a new hope. But if all we do is sit and wait for that glorious moment, then we are missing the point. God comes to us in so many ways... and most of them are much less dramatic than the fire and smoke we wait for. We experience God's presence in the soft touch of a friend's comforting touch, the sound of a prayer lifted, or the still whisper that we are barely conscious of, that reminds us of God's dreams and visions.

The fact is, God is already with us. Jeremiah tells us that God knows us before we are formed in our mother's womb... the Psalmist tells us that God knits us together... God knows us inside and out and loves us, warts and all, and knows exactly what we can do.

Isn't that amazing?

And it is even more amazing when we remember that God in Jesus chose to be with us. To be the one who offered that soft touch and to lift up those prayers in our name... to whisper in our ears when we forget how loved we are, so we can live into God's dreams and visions.

Today we hear of a woman who does not have the ability to live into any dreams or visions. Here spiritual life is limited by her physical disabilities. For 18 years she has suffered, barely able to walk. Her only view of the world is looking down... She has never had the ability to look out and imagine what lies just beyond the horizon. Her day-to-day life is made up of pain and careful steps, so that she does not make an insufferable existence worse.

And then, on one faithful day, in desperation, she does the unthinkable. On the Sabbath... the day of rest when God's Law forbids work and labor, she sets out on a quest. She is so desperate that she gets up and walks to hear this itinerant rabbi everyone is talking about. She hurts, every step is tortuous, but she does not stop -- on the Sabbath when she probably shouldn't have gone--she keeps on going.

She is so desperate. She just wants to hear him, to see him, to touch him, and maybe even to be touched by him. And when she gets there, he sees her! And he breaks the Sabbath too so that he can heal her!

"Woman, you are set free."

Why should you wait another day... another moment to feel such horrible pain? You are free... NOW!

Free from what weighs you down, free from that which is crippling you, free from that which is preventing you from being all that God dreams and intends for you to be.

Because God has a dream for this world and a dream for every man, woman, and child who walks upon the face of this earth. That's what Jesus is all about. That's what he's trying to get us to see.

God has a dream and a vision!

Jesus told us about God's dreams and vision from the very beginning. He tells us what we are called to do – its our mission statement. And today we are reminded once again, as God reaches out and touches our mouth and hands to empower each of us.

But before Jesus can tell us what God dreams for us, he has to get ready. As he comes up out of the baptismal waters, we are told that he has a vision. The heavens open and a dove descends. It is a vision of God's dream for this creation and for this world, and it is that vision that inspires him and sends him out into the world. Before he can proclaim God's dream and vision, he has to prepare himself. He fasts and prays in the wilderness. And there in the desert wilderness, fasting and praying, he is tested, to see if he will really live the dream God has given him. He is tempted to put his trust in other things... not in God... to not trust the vision that hovered right beyond the horizon. But Jesus resists! And in his resistance, he leaves the desert and goes to the synagogue in Nazareth where he preaches God's dream. Reading from the prophet Isaiah, he tells us from the beginning of his ministry what he was called to do. Listen again to God's dream:

The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me to preach good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim release to the captives, recovery of sight to the blind, to set at liberty all those who are oppressed, and to proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord.

God's dreams and visions continue today, People of God. These are not just words written in ancient books... this is our calling. This is our mission. This is what God saw in us when we were formed in the womb and knitted together and this is what God calls us to do as God touches our mouths and hands and feet today, to give us the power and authority of modern-day disciples.

Rocks

Vision

We who would follow Jesus of Nazareth believe that God has something better in store for the world. God has something better in store for every man, woman, and child who has ever walked upon the face of this earth. God has something better in store for God's creation and God's world. So People of God, go forth into that world and proclaim God's dream for us all. Go forth into that world and witness to God's love for us all. Go forth into that world and set this world free from its nightmare and free it by the dream of God for us all.

Hold fast the dream. Amen.