

**Luke 13:10-17**

Now Jesus 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.

Have you ever had a confrontation with someone, a friend, or even a rival, and you didn't have the words to make your point? But then later, maybe after dinner, the house is quiet, and you replay the events in your mind and come up with the best come back! I bet the leader of the synagogue had that moment after Jesus healed this disabled woman on the Sabbath, and they confronted him.

Here on the Sabbath, we have Jesus teaching in the synagogue (which is not work) and healing a disabled woman (which is work). So, this situation is about healing on the Sabbath, more specifically, confrontation about the interpretation of the law that says to keep the Sabbath holy. What's the big deal? Let's turn to scripture and see.

God rested on the seventh day after creation was complete (Gen 2:1-3), and then the legislation of the Sabbath was handed down in Exodus 20:8-11 [<sup>8</sup> Remember the sabbath day, and keep it holy. <sup>9</sup> Six days you shall labor and do all your work. <sup>10</sup> But the seventh day is a sabbath to the LORD your God; you shall not do any work—you, your son or your daughter, your male or female slave, your livestock, or the alien resident in your towns. <sup>11</sup> For in six days the LORD made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that is in them, but rested the seventh day; therefore the LORD blessed the sabbath day and consecrated it.]

Later, the law is given consequences. Exodus 31:14-15 [<sup>4</sup> You shall keep the sabbath because it is holy for you; everyone who profanes it shall be put to death; whoever does any work on it shall be cut off from among the people. <sup>15</sup> Six days shall work be done, but the seventh day is a sabbath of solemn rest, holy to the LORD; whoever does any work on the sabbath day shall be put to death.]

So, Israel rests because God rested on the seventh day. Because if you are caught working, you die! But what constitutes work? It seems like this could be a critical distinction.

I keep coming back to the issue of work. I believe, like most things, it will become too complicated if we overthink an issue. Let's look at Work. Now we have discussed what Jewish orthodoxy seems to constitute work as being. But let's look at our modern-day definitions.

M/W dictionary says that work:

- M/W Vague 1: is an *activity in which one exerts strength or faculties to do a task or perform something.*
- M/W Clearer 2: is an *activity one engages in regularly to earn a livelihood.*
- Lay terms[it's a transactional activity]: an *activity one does to gain something in return. Working for oneself to improve yourself, your house, or working for someone else to get paid.*

What does Jesus get for healing the woman? Some back talk from the leaders in the synagogue? That is less than what a person would get from watering their animal on the Sabbath. At least the animal will become food or can be sold later.

Jewish law is extensive when interpreting the Torah. God doesn't go into details when giving out the laws. It was left to the religious leaders of the day to debate and decide what was considered work. So, the priests and scribes debated; there were obvious things like working the fields, moving the herds, or working around the house. Then there was the not-so-obvious, cooking, making fire, and traveling (which also meant walking more than a certain distance).

Illustration about elevators in orthodox hotels in Jerusalem.

Jesus turns the tables on the religious leaders in the synagogue. The synagogue leader's argument is about what constitutes work, as the debate had been for hundreds of years. There is no doubt that one should not work on the Sabbath, but the definition of work can always be adjusted. The religious leaders seemed to err on the side of caution so as not to send Israel into unintentional sin.

Jesus changed the discussion to what is the definition of the Sabbath. He shifts the argument from asking what is legally permissible on the Sabbath to, what are the obligations of the Sabbath. How are we supposed to treat those unseen in society; as good Jews and later good Christians? Those whom others walk past in the crowd and even subconsciously don't even see as fully human. Because that's what the religious leaders saw, or rather didn't see, in this woman that Jesus healed. She was considered less than human.

Jesus demonstrated in the synagogue that to keep the sabbath holy, we must keep the holy sabbath. And by Holy Sabbath, I mean the peace of Christ. The woman in question did not seek Jesus for healing; he called to her, pulling her out of the crowd. Maybe to make a point, perhaps to give her some peace from her pain. Maybe he knew her heart; perhaps he knew she was a daughter of Abraham [that is what he called her] and therefore was worthy of God's healing grace.

However, when we look at the Sabbath as having obligations instead of restrictions, then we see that the peace we find in Jesus Christ through the Holy Spirit only grows more abundant. When we scan the crowd and see the person that the rest of the crowd doesn't see; when we help them find that peace; That is what Jesus did that day. We may only be able to sit and hold their hand, listen to their problems, or maybe even pray with them. When we do things like this, we facilitate the Holy Spirit to enter the situation. That's what Jesus did when he looked at you and me in the crowd and offered us the peace that we cannot get by following a law.

Jesus called the woman a daughter of Abraham, and later, he called Zacchaeus a son of Abraham; two people shunned by society because they were considered unclean. There but for the grace of God go I.

I have tons of books on theology, and one theology I love to read about and contemplate is the *Imago Dei* or the Image of God. This theology claims that we are all created in the image of God. [Gen 1:27] and Paul, when he wrote to the church in Corinth said, "... *the god of this world [meaning the devil] has blinded the minds of the unbelievers, to keep them from seeing the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God.*" Pair that with Jesus' teachings in Matthew, "*I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty, and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger, and you welcomed me, <sup>36</sup> I was naked, and you gave me clothing, I was sick, and you took care of me, I was in prison, and you*

*visited me.’<sup>37</sup> Then the righteous will answer him, ‘Lord, when was it that we saw you hungry and gave you food, or thirsty and gave you something to drink?<sup>38</sup> And when was it that we saw you a stranger and welcomed you, or naked and gave you clothing?<sup>39</sup> And when was it that we saw you sick or in prison and visited you?’<sup>40</sup> And the king will answer them, ‘Truly I tell you, just as you did it to one of the least of these who are members of my family, you did it to me.’”*

In the light of the lesson given in the synagogue that sabbath day. And knowing the gospel lessons as all of us good Christians do. I think we can put together the Obligations of the Holy Sabbath is, for us to facilitate an environment where the HS can thrive. By seeking Christ in the places where only Christ would dare be, among the least of these. Do you agree? Does this seem like good theological reasoning? Then why is there still hunger? Poverty? War? If Jesus has pointed out the obligations of the Holy Sabbath, why are not all Christians doing more to achieve those obligations?

I can't know your heart. I can't know how you justify your life to God. I don't know how any of us could. I do know that by the grace of God I have been forgiven, you have been forgiven and from this day we have a clean slate. We can be the blessing we are called to be. It starts right here, right now. Praise God who made us in the image we are, praise Jesus for showing us the way, and praise the Holy Spirit for transforming our lives like the woman in the crowd. Let us pray.