

CIRCUIT SERVICE 21st August

Call to worship

The Lord God is a strong rock in whom we trust

All our confidence rests in Him

Deep in our mother's wombs, He knew us

Before our limbs were formed, He yearned for us

When we were still unseen, He cherished the thought of us.

Today, worshipping in a church building or at home or wherever we are

When we are silent, He understand our thoughts,

When we shout and rage, He hears our plea and our uncertainty,

When we stammer, He form the words in our mouths.

The Lord God is a strong rock in whom we trust

All our confidence rests in Him

Hymn All my hope on God is founded StheF 455 H&P 63

<https://youtu.be/W3LCGh02Vew>

Prayer

Almighty God, Father of all mercies, we do give you most humble and hearty thanks for all your goodness and loving-kindness to us. We bless you for our creation, preservation, and all the blessings of this life; but above all for your amazing love in the redemption of the world by our Lord Jesus Christ, for the means of grace, and for the hope of glory. We ask you, give us that due sense of all your mercies, that our hearts may be unfeignedly thankful; and that we show forth your praise, not only with our lips, but in our lives, by giving up ourselves to your service, and by walking before you in holiness and righteousness all our days. And this also, that in this holy fellowship to approach each other not as strangers but as pilgrims and travellers together in mission and service to the world. May each one of us have a fresh anointing of your Holy Spirit and know that we have heard you voice speaking to us. Amen

Lectionary Bible Readings Hebrews 12 verses 18- 24, 28-29 Luke 13 10-17

Hymn Master speak StheF 666 H&P 535

<https://youtu.be/raPJHiezEhw>

Sermon <https://drive.google.com/file/d/1ghEEEH0McTm7kBxiwIBJa6btMJggfYsR/view?usp=sharing>

One of most frequency heard phrases in our home is my saying "My back is really hurting." I had an injury 36 years ago. Most days it just an annoying achey pain and I am careful how I sit and move. Some days I have to resort to painkillers. On a few occasions nothing works and I gritting my teeth and 'getting on with it'.

But that is nothing compared to the plight of the Bent Woman in our lectionary gospel reading today. We don't know the origin of her disability, just that she was bent out of shape.

Imagine what that meant, apart from any pain she was suffering. Her only chance to gaze at the moon was its reflection in a puddle of rain. She saw the high Galilean hills only a reflection in the lake. How could she kiss a loved one or look into the eyes of those who would taunt her for her appearance?

The story says that Jesus set her free. She was healed. Immediately she straightened up.

Someone else in that passage from Luke's gospel is bent out of shape- and it's Jesus's exchanges with that person, the leader of the synagogue which gives us other insights into the meaning of the Bent Woman's healing. And it is in verse 16:

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?

The word translated ought is the Greek word *dei*. Which means MUST. We find it 101 times in the New Testament. Each time it is something which is necessary for the Kingdom of God to be accomplished.

Some examples:

- Luke 2: Jesus is 12 and lost. They eventually found him in the Temple. His mother said to him, "Son, why have you treated us like this? Your father and I have been anxiously searching for you."
- ⁴⁹ "Why were you searching for me?" he asked. "Didn't you know I **had to be** (DEI) in my Father's house?"
- John 10 v16 "I have other sheep, which are not of this fold; I **must** (DEI) bring them also, and they will hear My voice; and they will become one flock with one shepherd.
- Luke 9 v 22 **22** saying, "The Son of Man **must** (DEI) suffer many things and be rejected by the elders and chief priests and scribes and be killed and be raised up on the third day."

NOW THIS LINKS WITH THE DISPUTE ABOUT THE HEALING HAPPENING ON THE SABBATH DAY

The commandment To "remember the Sabbath" and keep it holy was the affirmation that God is Creator of the world 7th day looked at all he had made and it was good.

But it was wider than that.

The Sabbath is an affirmation of Israel's identity. The words of Moses to the people in Deuteronomy 5:12-15 demonstrate that, however much its rhythm reflects the order of God-created life in general, the Sabbath functions also to remind Israel of her specific origins. "Remember that you were slaves in Egypt and that the Lord your God brought you out of there with a mighty hand and an outstretched arm. Therefore, the Lord your God has commanded you to observe the Sabbath day." Here the acknowledgment that God is the Creator of life is intensified by the acknowledgment that he is also the saving presence in the history of the Jewish people, and by that means of the entire creation. Israel's keeping of the Sabbath was a reminder of her very identity as a people liberated from

THE SABBATH REST – TAKE SOME TIME OUT TO REMEMBER GOD AS CREATOR, TAKE SOME TIME OUT TO REMEMBER THAT GOD SETS YOU FREE

Unfortunately, it became bound up with all sorts of rules and regulations about what you can and can't do and the point of it easily missed.

And this all links with the number 18 in the story. Remember at the beginning it says the woman was crippled for eighteen years. In Jewish thought the number 18 is associated with the Hebrew word for life יָן (chai). It's all to do with the numerical value of letters which was common in Ancient Civilisations. So has arisen the custom in Jewish circles to give donations and momentary gifts in multiples of 18 as an expression of blessings for a long life.

WHAT BETTER DAY THAN THE SABBATH TO CELEBRATE GOD CREATOR AND FREER FROM SLAVERY TO HEAL THIS WOMAN 18 YEARS BOUND AND RELEASE HER INTO LIFE INTO CHAI, the blessings of a long life to come.

So what's that got to do with us? We may be here today feeling bent out of shape.

Perhaps you feel little worth within yourself, perhaps you long to be held in an embrace, perhaps you feel broken and diminished, or have fallen out of belonging with someone, perhaps a seed of bitterness has taken root or like the synagogue leader stuck in a place which has shut God out. Whatever your bent out of shapeness might be, it's not only the Gospel reading where we see Jesus able to straighten out that which is bent out of shape for those who turn to Him but in the Epistle reading almost at the end in verse 28 those amazing words

We are receiving a kingdom which cannot be shaken. That Greek word shaken also carries the meaning of cast down.

Friends in the Body of Christ, let us day by day reach out to God to receive that Kingdom that will mean we will not be cast down by our circumstances. For what result? Well we see it at the end of the Luke reading:

The entire crowd was rejoicing at all the wonderful things that he was doing.

Let that be us also.

Prayer

Lord God, for the times when we have allowed words said and words unsaid, and deeds done and deeds not done, to bend us out of the shape of holiness and righteousness which is your will for us, forgive us. We confess to you and before one another those things which drag down our shoulders with shame and the guilt within our hearts which makes us unable to meet your eyes. Thank you for the gracious word we hear in Scripture that those who come to you, you will never turn away. With gladly accept your forgiveness and with the promise of a new beginning so that all who meet us may see the wonderful things you are doing in our lives. Amen

Hymn either StheF 713 Show me how to stand for justice <https://youtu.be/l8CIU66oFMQ>

OR H&P 770 Go forth and tell <https://youtu.be/X0Fj3b6n5mE>

Intercessions

Lord God, the God of Abram, the God of Isaac and the God of Jacob: our strength and our hope; We praise you for all the stories of old where the power and healing love we see in Jesus brought new life.

Lord God, the God of Moses, Your saving Grace brought a people from dark captivity into a land of promise. We praise you that we too have stories of your enduring love, leading us from places of bondage which have bent us out of shape to a new start. So we ask you to give wisdom to all in authority; and direct this and every nation in the ways of justice and of peace that weapons of war and places of conflict will be things of the past. We pray for peace in places where even the silence is loudly voicing distress. May we honour each other and seek the common good as we care for one another and for our fragile planet.

Lord in your mercy, **hear our prayer**

Lord, we ask for a fresh anointing of your Holy Spirit to all your Church in the service of Christ, enabling us to live lives of holiness and righteousness; that we who confess your name may be united in your truth, live together in your love, and reveal your glory in the world. Bless the people of our circuit, young and old, ordained and lay, new seekers and those whose faith has travelled with them through many years, that the wonderful things you are doing through us and for us will be seen amongst us. Bless our Mission Action Plans as we live out our intent to be Nourished and Fed, Ready to Share.

Lord in your mercy, **hear our prayer**

Lord, we ask you to comfort and strength all those who suffer in body, mind, or spirit, giving them courage and hope in their troubles; and bringing to them the light and joy of your gracious presence. We pray that where harsh words have severed the ground between people and the seeds of bitterness have taken root, that there will be built the bridge of belonging and a new world of gentleness. Bless with wisdom and with fortitude those who care for the unwell and the dying. May those who mourn hold fast to the words of Jesus, that He has gone to prepare a place for us, so that where he is, we may be also.

Lord in your mercy, **hear our prayer**

We gather up all our prayers in the words that Jesus taught us:

***Our Father, who art in heaven,
hallowed be thy name;
thy kingdom come;
thy will be done;
on earth as it is in heaven.
Give us this day our daily bread.
And forgive us our trespasses,
as we forgive those who trespass against us.
And lead us not into temptation;
but deliver us from evil.
For thine is the kingdom,
the power and the glory,
for ever and ever.
Amen.***

Hymn God has spoken by his prophets SthF 157 H&P 64 <https://youtu.be/RoPiKqKTmbg>

Closing Prayer.

Brothers and sisters in Christ, lift up your heads so that you may face the rest of this day and all the days to come with the joy and the courage of those who believe in the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit.

Go in peace to love and serve the Lord.

In the name of Christ, Amen.