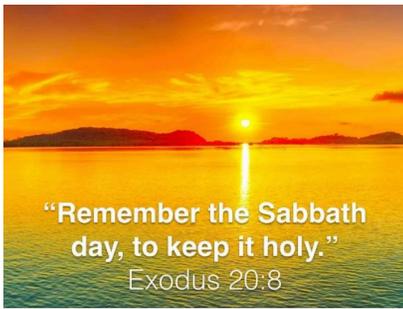


# Sunday, August 24, 2025

## 11th Sunday after Pentecost

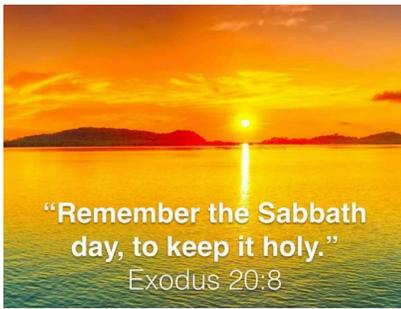
You know, I had the honor of working at several assisted living facilities here in Nassau County as a clinical social worker, and I want to tell you about one of my patients, her name is Geraldine. And when you sit across the table from Geraldine, you don't notice anything amiss. She's spry, in a sparkling example of an 89-year-old at its best. She sits up, looks, looks you in the eye, makes conversation with clever wit, and on any topic, nothing is out of place. And then, until she stands up. It is then that the 89-year seemed to drop on her body like a heavy weight, born about the shoulders and crushing weight bearing down on her small and yet frail-looking body. And the deterioration of the spine, the results of years of the degenerative disease has taken its toll, and it has left Geraldine bent and broken. But as she stands the sparkl kind of goes out of her eyes, and the breath is drawn to the little more intense labor. Is it possible, you know, to attach a string to the top of her head like a puppet, and to help pull her up straight, you know? But her body is not bent, but gripped with pain. Yet, without complaint, she labors to the door opens it and lets me out of her room. I think of her, and I pray for her, body, mind, and spirit. Although I know my body is not bent like that, there are parts to me, indeed I would say, if we examined ourselves, there are parts of all of us that are on the inside of us that feel bent. Feel bent and that we have a broken nature, not visible to any but the most trained of eyes, perhaps visible only to the eyes of God. So many of us are like the woman in our gospel to listen today, like Geraldine bent over, bound by some evil or some hurt. And the rest of us simply out of shape, not as God intended, seeking somehow to be set free.



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The passage from Luke is all about how Jesus sets us free. As we watch Jesus deliver this sick woman from the bondage of her illness, we get a picture of what he can do for us. This is the woman who liked Geraldine was in severe physical pain. Her body was bent double at probably at the waist, and every day it seems was a struggle for her for 18 years. She found herself in a condition that prevented her from looking up. She couldn't see the sun or the faces of those she loved without some effort or pain. All she could do is see the ground and her feet below her, and she could not by her own power overcome her condition. And sadly, many of us have found ourselves in a spiritual state where we cannot look up either or let alone mentioned our world around us, which is crippled and cannot look up and see the fullness that exists around us. So, we are totally unable to see past the torment we are experiencing in our lives. We too are bent over and somehow cannot get to see those possibilities that exist around us. This bent over woman in the gospel lesson is one of the most powerful pictures of faith and faithfulness in the New Testament. She's had this condition for 18 years. If she has been to the synagogue every Sabbath for those 18 years, she has attended some 1,000 meetings there. She's been sick for a generation. She's not been healed, but yet she still believes in God. She prays, and even when it seems like God isn't going to answer, she remains faithful. She comes to the services and spite the fact that no one would think a thing about it if she did not. She attends services even though she's in pain. She makes it a priority in fact. She persists in her faith even when life doesn't go her way because she loves the Lord. She

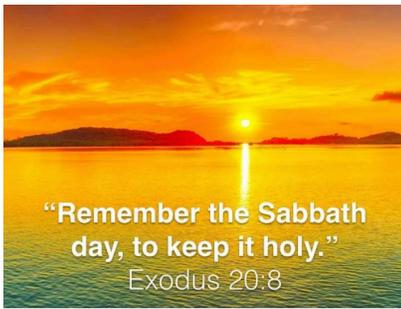


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continues to be faithful because she knew that God knows best. She loves Him and she will continue to worship Him in spite of the obstacles she faces. Like Geraldine, she's an example of living faithfully in the midst of chronic adversity.

You can take a page out of her book, right? This woman wasn't the only one who came to synagogue to worship. Jesus was in attendance that day. He came to worship as well, and the Bible says he saw her. Jesus initiates the healing, not her. And when Jesus sees her, he calls to her. When she struggles to get to where he was, he spoke to her and calls her woman. Others may not have recognized her significance, but Jesus did. And he loves her like she was and he speaks those words that must have thrilled her soul. Woman, you are free from your ailment. He says as he touches her so gently. What she or anyone could not have accomplished, Jesus did by his word. So, when this miracle occurs, the people in the synagogue begin to rejoice and this woman herself immediately begins praising God. This is what true Sabbath looks like, being able to be set free in our hearts and to praise God as a result. However, the ruler of the synagogue tells the people that they can be healed on the other six days of the week. He's implying the Sabbath was more important than the needs of the people. And this ruler was showing how crippled he was, in fact, right? He was crippled in heart because he could not rejoice as well that this old woman's healing. His religion was a crippled form of the law. And Jesus tells this man that he's placing the needs of animals above the needs of people. And Jesus calls him a hypocrite, someone who processes one thing but whose actions or



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words say another. This leader loves his religion more than he loves God or God's people. In contrast, Jesus calls this healed woman a daughter of Abraham. No wh else does this phrase appear in the New Testament. It means that Jesus sees her as an intricate member of the covenant community, a loyal descendant of Abraham, the father of the Jewish people. She is precious in God's sight. She is worthy of healing, just like each one of us. Life will never be the same for her again. Her condition is forever changed. She's now whole and straight. She's free from the bondage of her condition. That is the power of Jesus's touch. It is life changing and it is powerful. And when God touches us and strengthens out what is wrong and gives us his healing, we too will never be the same again.

We can take the confidence that Jesus is already moving towards us this day. So, we ask ourselves, as the scriptures prompts us to, is there something in our life that has us bound or crippled? Is there some past hurt? Some secret sin, some guilt over things long gone, some bitterness or unforgiveness that has wedged itself in our hearts. And the passage tells us that even in the face of all of that, Jesus calls us, calls our crippled world to come to him and be freed of whatever suppressing our lives. So today, may Jesus touch you wherever you need it most. I mean, we all together stand straight up through the power of our Lord and praise God as children of Abraham, set free indeed. Amen, my friends.