

*Feed us, Lord; we are hungry for Your Word. Amen.*

When is it right to break a rule? When we’re setting someone free from unjust bondage. And Jesus didn’t break a rule. He rejected an overly rigid interpretation of the commandment to keep the Sabbath day holy. What could be more holy than bringing God’s love and power into someone? What could be more holy than healing?

Sunday, our Sabbath, is always meant to be a day for healing. This service of holy eucharist we celebrate is at its heart a healing service. Jim Glennon, an Australian Anglican priest with a powerful healing ministry, tells the story of a woman who came to see him. People came to see him all the time, seeking healing prayer, but this woman just talked about having been healed. Finally he interrupted and said, “I’m so glad, but if you’ve already experienced healing, why did you come to see me?” She wanted to tell him how she’d received healing. She said that after her diagnosis of cancer, every time she came to the communion rail she remembered the verse, “By his wounds, we are healed.” She knew that the bread and wine we receive are signs the broken body and shed blood of Christ. So as she received, she’d affirm, “By his wounds, I am healed.” And she was.

Why is this a healing service? Because at this table we encounter Jesus. In the Word read and proclaimed, we encounter Jesus. In our prayers, he is here. And at the table, he is here. In the bread and wine, he is here. And Jesus heals. Like that day in the synagogue, he doesn’t wonder if it’s “God’s will” – he knows illness and disability are not God’s intention for us. The very nature of God is wholeness, so healing will break out whenever and wherever God is ... and in that synagogue that day, God was there, in Christ, just as God is here today through Christ’s body, the church gathered, as God is with us in Word and Sacrament, in the power of the Holy Spirit.

What conditions and limitations do you just live with because you don’t think anything can be done (which is like saying that thing is more powerful than God...)? A physical pain or disorder? A long-term depression, or tendency to anger easily? An addiction or inability to lose weight or be as fit as you’d like? Even lack of faith can feel like something we’re stuck with.

If the Good News about tells us anything, it is that we don't have to be stuck with anything, from personal failings or disease, to injustice and systemic corruption. Today is the 400<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the first landing of enslaved Africans on our shores, not far from here in Virginia. The National Park Service has called for people to ring bells at 3 pm today to mark that sad event; people will be coming here to toll our bells.

If ever something called for healing, it is the ongoing wound on our nation and its people of this institution, and the legacy of racism we seem to be stuck with. Racial inequity and discrimination are so deeply woven into the fabric of American life, along with the privilege that people of non-color enjoy. Many southern clergymen defended this way of life with Scripture – you can support pretty much anything with our Bible, if you isolate passages.

This week we also mark the anniversary of the March on Washington and Martin Luther King Jr's "I have a dream" speech. King knew that Jesus is alive and still moving against evil, whatever form it takes. He knew that Jesus came to announce our freedom from everything we feel we're stuck with, and he invited Jesus to work through him. He said that day, "*... we refuse to believe that the bank of justice is bankrupt. We refuse to believe that there are insufficient funds in the great vaults of opportunity of this nation. And so we have come to cash this check, a check that will give us upon demand the riches of freedom and the security of justice.*"<sup>1</sup>

We're still trying to draw on that check. It wasn't safe, it wasn't easy – and the work is not done – but he and a lot of other brave people risked their lives and status to bring about a dream, a dream that, "*...one day this nation will rise up and live out the true meaning of its creed: 'We hold these truths to be self-evident that all men are created equal.'*" I hope Christ Church will be part of that healing process here in Charles County. We should not be afraid to pray for something that big and enmeshed. That is faith, to see what is not yet, and invite the power of God to bring it into being. That's what healing is – seeing what is not yet, and praying it into being in the life and power of God.

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<sup>1</sup> <http://teachingamericanhistory.org/library/document/i-have-a-dream-speech/>

We have been given tremendous power through our access to God in the Spirit. So when we encounter someone who is afflicted in body, mind or spirit, or we run smack up against injustice yet again, we don't have to think, "Oh, this isn't the time or place for prayer," or "I'm not the right person." It's not about our power. We don't have to be the right person – we know the right person. And he'll show up anytime we invoke his name. Come, Lord Jesus. That is the ancient prayer of the People of the Way, "Maranatha. Come, Lord Jesus.

What do you think you're stuck with that God can release you from? In prayer, we can invite the power and love that made the universe to be released in us, in our bodies, our minds, our spirits. We can pray that the power and love that made the universe be released in our country, in our elected officials, in our neighborhoods. And expect that the living water of God is flowing and bringing new life to you wherever you need it most. And it doesn't stop there – it'll flow through you to every place and person who needs it.

I had the honor of praying with about thirty people yesterday at the Kent Avenue Block Party – just stood there with a sign saying, "Want a prayer?" People came over. Kids came over. People crossed the street for prayer. The more we pray, the more God's life breaks out and restores the world. Every day. The power and love of God cannot be contained or constrained. God is with us seven days a week, 24 hours a day, at all times and in all places.

Every day is a good day for healing.  
Every day is a good day to stand for justice.  
Every day is a good day to set the captives free.  
Especially the Sabbath. Especially today. So let's pray!

*Amen.*

### **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.