

Sunday Morning Resources

Sunday 24 August 2025 - The Tenth Sunday after Trinity

Lectioary Readings (*depending on the kind of service you are leading, you may use one or more of the following readings – however, you **must** use the gospel reading, as this is what the homily is based on*)

Isaiah 58.9b –end; Psalm 103.1–8; Hebrews 12.18 –end; Luke 13.10–17

Homily

Today's homily has been written by Sue Nelms, Bishop's Advisor for Disability and LLM, The Lordsbridge Team (Benefice)

Have you ever thought about what life was like for the woman in this morning's gospel? For 18 years she has had to live with a spirit which has kept her bent double and unable to straighten up. 18 years of pain. Only being able to look downwards and seeing the ground and people's feet. Struggling to earn a living. Being the target of insults and mocking comments because she was different and looked strange, possibly simply being referred to as 'the crippled woman' because no-one was interested in her as a person.

Unlike many of the other accounts of healing in the gospels where people approached Jesus, the woman didn't even notice him in the synagogue. She might have seen his feet, but they probably didn't look any different from other people's feet. Perhaps she was drawn there by stories of what he was doing? We don't know. Jesus, however, did see her. Instead of looking away or insulting her like so many people might, he felt love and compassion for her and called her over. Putting his hand on her he told her she was healed, and she was. Set free from the spirit that had dominated her life for 18 long years, she was able to stand straight again, just like other people. For the first time in 18 years, she could see the whole beauty of God's creation. Even better than that, she could see God's son. Her life was transformed, and she immediately began to praise God for his goodness.

The leader of the synagogue was rather more mean-spirited. He didn't see the wonder of the woman's healing or rejoice that the spirit which had imprisoned her for 18 years was gone. He pointed out that there were 6 other days in the week for this woman to come and be healed; it shouldn't have happened on the sabbath. We don't know whether she had visited the synagogue at any other point during the previous 18 years, but it was certainly possible that she had. His implication seems to be that she could have been healed of the disabling spirit at any time. He may even have unjustly thought that one way or another she had brought her disability on herself.

The reality was that she didn't receive healing until she met Jesus that day in the synagogue. The synagogue leader had not freed her from the spirit. Perhaps he had previously ignored her because on that day he didn't appear to see a woman, a child of God, a person of worth. Instead, he seemed to see her as an inconvenience. Lower in status than members of society who lived by the rules. Lower than his animals. Not worth bothering with.

Jesus on the other hand had not lost sight of who the woman was. As he pointed out, she was descended from Abraham just as they all were in the synagogue. She had been struggling for 18 years, in need of help, and no-one seemed to care. As a child of God her needs were greater than those of a cow or donkey. The synagogue leader would have no problems leading his animals to water on the sabbath, but he wouldn't care for this woman, a fellow descendent of Abraham, in her time of need. Animals were considered valuable. This woman was not.

The woman understood that her healing had come from God and she praised him. The synagogue leader was too focussed on berating Jesus for breaking the rules rather than loving his neighbour, the woman, and reaching out to care for her needs.

How often do we lose sight of or disregard people who either look or behave differently from us, especially people who might be living with disabilities, either visible or invisible? Disabled people are not always treated kindly by society. Even our Bible reading refers to her as 'a crippled woman'; language that defines her by her condition rather than her identity. As churches we aim to be welcoming, but the attitude of the synagogue leader in the gospel reading doesn't give an impression of welcome for the woman who was bent over. At least not until Jesus healed her and then defended his action to everyone there. Suddenly they saw the situation with a new perspective and then they too rejoiced at the wonderful thing Jesus had done for the woman and for all of the other people whose lives he had transformed. Their joy must have been wonderful to witness.

How often do we lose sight of the love of God and the wonderful gifts he gives people, particularly other people? How often do we lose sight of people for who they are rather than defining them by a physical or even invisible mental trait? The synagogue leader was probably not a bad man. Perhaps he had been taken over by his focus on making sure that the rules were followed and obeyed. He may have thought that he was keeping the commandment to 'keep my sabbaths and reverence my sanctuary' (Leviticus 19.30) but by doing so he had lost sight of the voice of God that told him to 'love his neighbour as himself' (Leviticus 19.18). His failure to treat the woman as a beloved child of God because of her physical impairment showed a shortcoming that Jesus didn't share.

So often the religious leaders of the day were looking to trick Jesus into condemning himself through his own words – there are several accounts of such happenings in our gospels. Earlier in Luke's gospel there are various challenges which end with the scribes and Pharisees starting to cross-examine him in order to catch him in something he might say (Luke 11.37-53). This doesn't appear to be what is going on here. The leader of the

synagogue is upset by Jesus healing on the Sabbath. Jesus has broken the rules around observance of the sabbath, the holy day of rest and worship. Jesus has done something that the synagogue leader wouldn't. This event had become personal. We see this because after Jesus has spoken and challenged the leader, the leader appears to be convinced by Jesus's words in a way that those simply seeking to bring Jesus down aren't. 'When Jesus said this, all his opponents were put to shame; and the entire crowd was rejoicing at all the wonderful things he was doing (Luke 13.17).' The entire crowd. That has to include the synagogue leader.

It seems that there were potentially two lives transformed by Jesus that day. The first was that of the woman who had been bent double who would finally be able to experience the same life experiences as everyone else. The second was that of the synagogue leader who may have experienced the revelation that faith without love was not God's way. It is too easy to think that our way is God's way, but sometimes we all need that gentle reminder. Amen

Ways to Engage all Generations

When different generations are gathered together in worship there is an opportunity to build relationships and to encounter God in our conversations as we build relationships and learn from each other no matter what our ages, stage of life or faith and for all present to feel included. Adding some wondering questions to the service at an appropriate moment can help to do this.

Wondering Questions: Some wondering questions that may help to engage all generations to ponder and explore during the talk, service or during the week may include (three or so) of the following style of questions:

- I wonder what your favourite part of the story/passage is? I wonder why that is?
- I wonder who your favourite character is? I wonder why that is?
- I wonder how _____ felt or I wonder how _____ felt when _____ happened?
- I wonder how you feel about _____?
- I wonder where you are in this story?
- I wonder what part of the story is about you?
- I wonder what the [tree, pearl, coin] could really be?
- I wonder why _____ said _____?
- I wonder what we can learn about God in this story?

Suggested intercessions

Holy Father, we thank you for your Church here on earth. We are blessed with the opportunity we have to reflect on you and learn more about you every day of our lives. Not just on the Sabbath but on each day of the week. We pray that we will live by the spirit of your words rather than using them to enforce unreasonable rules. As you love us, help us to love others.

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

Creator Father, we thank you that you made for us the most wonderful world in which to live. But at the moment it is crying out to you in distress as we use and abuse it. We pray for people whose lives are destroyed by unexpected and unexplained floods, heatwaves, earthquakes, volcanic eruptions and other natural occurrences. Help us to care actively for the world you created, to take responsibility for looking after it rather than simply using and abusing it.

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

Merciful Father we pray for world leaders and people in positions of authority making decisions that affect the lives of many. We pray for the administrators and civil servants who put their decisions into existence. We pray that they will all act with humility, compassion, wisdom, honesty and a care for the impact that their decisions will have.

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

Loving Father we pray for our community, for the people who serve it to keep us healthy and safe. We pray for our children and young people, their teachers, schools and everyone involved in helping them to learn about their world and each other. We pray for older people, that their lives, experience and knowledge will be valued. We pray for families, and we pray for people who live alone; may we show the love of God wherever we go. We remember the teaching of Teresa of Avila and ask that we will remember that we are your hands and feet here on earth.

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

Compassionate Father we lift to you in prayer everyone who is ill in body, mind or spirit and everyone who cares for them, whether paid professionals or unpaid but loving family and friends. Like the woman in today's gospel, we pray for them to receive compassion, understanding and care from those around them, that their voice and wishes will be heard and respected. Our world tends to make people who are ill invisible, we pray that we will love them as you love them. We take a moment of silence to share the names of the people on our hearts.

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

Eternal Father, we pray finally for those people who are coming to the end of their earthly lives, and we pray also for those who are grieving, whether that grief is new and raw or older but sharp. We pray that you will welcome them into your loving arms and eternal peace. We ask that we will love and support those left behind as you love us.

Merciful Father, **accept our prayers for the sake of your son, our Saviour Jesus Christ. Amen.**

Suggested hymns/songs

10,000 reasons (Bless the Lord O My Soul)

Holy, holy, holy, Lord God Almighty

I cannot tell why he, whom angels worship

There's a wideness in God's mercy

We cannot measure how you heal

Purify my heart

All Hail the power of Jesus' name!

Dear Lord and Father of Mankind

For the healing of the nations

Now thank we all our God

Activities to accompany the service

If you are looking for resources to accompany the service for engaging younger children, then there are lots of online resources. The following free to access/download resources may be useful starting points:

- <https://flamecreativekids.blogspot.com/>
- <https://www.pinterest.co.uk/MessyChurchBRF/>
- <https://www.faithinkids.org/>
- [reflectionary.org](https://www.reflectionary.org/) – lectionary-based resources
- [engageworship](https://www.engageworship.org/) – in particular 'Area 52' for lectionary-based material
- <https://www.bdeducation.org.uk/product-category/primary-age-5-11/>
(weekly@ lectionary resource)