



## **Lent reflection for Tuesday, March 21<sup>st</sup>**

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Luke 14:1-6

On one occasion when Jesus was going to the house of a leader of the Pharisees to eat a meal on the sabbath, they were watching him closely. Just then, in front of him, there was a man who had dropsy. And Jesus asked the lawyers and Pharisees, 'Is it lawful to cure people on the sabbath, or not?' But they were silent. So Jesus took him and healed him, and sent him away. Then he said to them, 'If one of you has a child or an ox that has fallen into a well, will you not immediately pull it out on a sabbath day?' And they could not reply to this.

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Today's reflection is by Mandy Ripley

I work in a hospital providing outpatient substance abuse treatment, so I'm very familiar with the concept of having to get permission to heal someone. When somebody sits in front of me asking for help, some of the questions I have to ask myself include: Do they have insurance? Can I convince their insurance to pay for this? Do they meet the criteria for the diagnosis? Are they too high-risk? Too high-functioning? And so on. All of these rules about who I can help, and when, and for how long, are an exhausting and depressing part of my work. It sounds to me that the rule against healing on the sabbath was a similar kind of rule. It makes sense to rest on the sabbath, of course. But as Jesus points out, if you stick to the rule too rigidly, you go against common sense and basic human compassion.

One of my favorite sayings is, "It's easier to ask forgiveness than permission." I learned it from the pastor of the church where I grew up. People usually laugh when I tell them I learned the saying from my pastor, because on the surface it sounds like he was giving me permission to sin freely. But I actually think it's a very Christian concept. I think he meant that it's OK to break the rules sometimes, when you're following your own conscience. If you ask the authorities for permission, then they are forced to respond by telling you the rules. But if you just do what you

think is right, you don't put the authorities in the position of having to say no. And if it turns out you were wrong, you can always admit it and ask forgiveness.

Our rules here on earth are human—they're imperfect, limited, and often based in greed or fear. As Christians, we should try to make decisions based on our own values. If we have the chance to help another person, I think we should err on the side of bending the rules, especially when the rules are unkind.

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