

I don't know her name. I don't know where she comes from. I don't know why she appears in the synagogue on the particular day; but I can picture her. A weary woman, resilient and resigned. A woman "bent over," and "quite unable to stand up." A woman who spends her long days staring at the ground, her feet, staring at the dusty sandals of those who pass her by and pay her no mind.

I wonder if she showed up for worship every weekend during those exhausting two decades. I wonder if anyone noticed her. I wonder what hope or meaning or solace the weekly ritual afforded her — if any. I wonder what sort of life she shuffled home to, afterwards.

It's my understanding that the woman in today's story represents someone struggling with their spiritual life; and her being bent over is the physical side effect. St. Paul told us in 2 Corinthians 4:16 that "though our outward man [person] is perishing, yet the inward man is being renewed day by day". We must continue to praise God even when our bodies are failing – because it's the inside of the person that is continually renewing.

But, what if the opposite were true? What if those of us who are not “right” with God, actually showed those terrible “conditions” for the eyes of all to see.

What if those of us who are weighed down, trapped and ensnared by some of our sinful habits walked around bent over as if we were bound in chains from which we would never be able to free ourselves? What if those of us that feel incapable of living the life that God wants for us to live, were actually laying on the ground motionless and helpless – as paralyzed on the outside as we are on the inside? What if some of us came here today shuffling slowly, ho humming down the aisle, like Eeyore from Winnie the Pooh is our spirit animal. What kind of a sight would it be if people showed up to church – reflecting the outward appearances of our souls?

It may be that many of us here this morning can be grateful that no one can see our inward realities. But God does. He knows each of us through and through. He knows exactly how many hairs are on your head...or how many are not...He sees the truth. He sees the hearts. And I believe that the Holy Spirit sees fit to allow each of us to learn from this brave woman’s story – a story in

which her outward appearance illustrated her inward, so that we could learn about our own need for Jesus' rich love and mercy.

We read in verse 11, "And behold, there was a woman ..." The way the story is being told to us, suggests that she might be a "stranger" to Jesus (but is anyone *really* a stranger to Him - don't forget, the number of hairs on your head - He knows); but, in fact, would probably not have been very easy to spot her in the crowd because she would have been bent over – out of the direct line of sight from the others. Luke (who was a doctor) wrote that she was "a woman who had a spirit of infirmity eighteen years, and was bent over and could in no way raise herself up." Notice first that Luke lets us know that the woman is suffering from "a spirit of infirmity". A *spiritual diagnosis* if you will.

We have to remember that not all illnesses or afflictions are the product of Satan's attacks on us or the world; and it would be cruel to suggest that they were. But clearly, some afflictions *are* the devil's handiwork. We can see and learn in the Old Testament with the Story of Job; and apparently, so does this

woman's story. She appears to be a woman who was oppressed by the devil physically – and spiritually. We need to look at her holistically. That which affects the body, will eventually effect the mind and soul. If we do not work on our emotions, they will work on us. She is a picture to us of how the enemy of our souls - can attack and harass a person; making them his slave; binding them in chains of guilt and sin and shame.

Then, we're told that she was in this horrible condition for eighteen years.

WOW, that's a long time to struggle with a physical condition back then since they didn't have the medical advancements we do today. This affliction may have robbed her of the very best years of her life and eighteen years would have been plenty of time for her to have sought the help from doctors. And yet, nothing seems to have helped her. I've been there...have you?

Now; this woman was not only suffering from a horribly painful physical condition – but a spiritual condition as well – but that didn't stop her from getting up, and bringing herself to the synagogue that morning. She did what she could, with what she had; and went to worship.

And it was good that she went that morning; because Jesus was teaching and preaching that day. And like our own Sanctuary, the one He was in probably

had an elevated platform which meant that despite the woman being bent over and out of sight from many others, Jesus would have had a different point of view from where He was standing. He could see over the heads of others and saw her.

In verse 12, Luke goes on to tell us that, “Jesus saw her ...” I suspect that this act of ‘seeing’ was far more, than simply an accidental glance. He, *saw her*. His look was an act of deliberate love and mercy.

We read, “He called her to Him ...” It may be that she didn’t want to be seen or noticed, that she might have just wanted to *blend in* – unnoticed...unseen.

Eighteen years of crippling affliction may have made her very shy about being seen in public. On her own, she may never have come forward to ask Jesus for anything; but He didn’t wait for her to come to Him. He took the initiative. He called her to Himself – as He does with all of us – and I don’t know about you, I’m just happy that Jesus didn’t wait for me to come to Him, to love me.

Jesus called her forward so everyone could see her; and then He said to her, “Woman, you are loosed from your infirmity”. What wonderful words those must have been to hear! He knew the real nature of her condition. She had been

cast down and He, with but a command, “Woman, you are loosed...” set her free.

Then we read, “And He laid His hands on her, and immediately she was made straight ...” She had a personal, immediate, direct relationship with Jesus; and it was only *then* that she was made completely well and loosed.

Dear friends; we must always try to remember that! If you feel the crippling weight of sin, of doubt, of anxiety, of sadness, of fear – if you are being held in some kind of bondage to something that no longer serves you - you cannot be released from that burden and forgiven by some formal, clinical, non-personal association with Jesus apart from real contact with Him. Sad to say, but trust me, many people try; hell, I’ve tried. They seek to simply use the mere ‘things’ of Jesus. They claim His promises. Recite His words. They think thoughts about Him. And they hope that such things alone will set them free. But that won’t work. That amounts to trying to do the work of Jesus – without Jesus. If you want to be freed from the heaviness’s in your life, then you absolutely must come to Jesus Christ Himself by faith when He calls you; and you absolutely must have direct contact with Him in a personal way. Only through

a personal relationship of love with Christ by faith can anyone be freed from their spiritual burdens. “Come to Me, all you who labor and are heavy laden,” He said, “and I will give you rest” (Matthew 11:28).

And I even wonder if when Jesus placed His loving hands on her, did He Himself tenderly bend down to help straightened her upright. Everyone saw that it was done by Him and Him alone. And I love what we’re told about her at the end of verse 13, we’re told that she was made “immediately” straight. “IMMEDIATELY”. BOOM. GONE. DONE. SHE IS UPRIGHT. SHE IS HEALED. She wasn’t like us when we’re not well having to jump through insurance hoops. There was no slow, gradual recovery. There wasn’t a process of physical therapy, and there weren’t any scheduled trips to the chiropractor. She was straightened immediately ...“and glorified God.”

Wouldn’t you have loved to have been there that day? Wouldn’t you have loved to have heard the gasps of the crowd as they saw her? And what about her praises to God? I’d have to admit to ya, I would have loved to have been there that day. I get chills thinking about it.

I love this woman for her story; don't you? I love her because she shows me the burden I bore in my own sin and shame and guilt apart from Jesus. I love her because she also shows me how burdens are taken away by Jesus, how He frees the devil's captives; and makes the crooked ones straight. And I also love how Jesus, continues to show His mercy to such sinners, even in the place where people use those same religious rituals and rules to condemn and keep others away.

And I believe the best way to apply the lessons we learn from this dear woman's story is to come to Jesus just as we are; and to let Him set us free and take our burden away without any fear. As singer/song writer Josh Groban sang in his 2003 hit song:

*When I am down and oh my soul so weary*

*When troubles come and my heart burdened be*

*Then I am still and wait here in the silence*

*Until You come and sit awhile with me*



Josh Velez – August 24, 2025

*You raise me up so I can stand on mountains*

*You raise me up to walk on stormy seas*

*I am strong when I am on Your shoulders*

*You raise me up to more than I can be*

That is Jesus' invitation to us every day. He is knocking on the door to our crooked hearts – will we let Him in? be loosed my friends.

I wish you peace.