

## Bent

1. Warm up: In the opening to Sunday's sermon, Jeff mentioned how he enjoys working out in the exercise room in his neighborhood. How 'bout you? What's one of your favorite ways to staying physically active?
2. On Sunday Jeff we continued our study of Helen Bruch Pearson's book *Do What You Have the Power to Do – Studies of Six New Testament Women*. Our focus this week was on the story of a woman whose body had been bent over for 18 years. Although this story is routinely treated as "just another miracle story," Pearson points out that there are much deeper layers to the story that become apparent when we realize that:
  - ✓ In the culture of Jesus' time, sick or disabled people were often thought to have be that way because they opened themselves to evil and became possessed by an evil spirit. As such, they were often shunned and ostracized.
  - ✓ Only men were allowed into the main chamber of synagogues, with women, children, and slaves being relegated to an anti-room separated from the main chamber by grillwork. Women were not allowed in the main chamber. Men only.
  - ✓ Men were not supposed to speak to women in public.

With this cultural background, let's now read Luke 13:10-17, as printed on p. 3.

- a. In your Oasis, conduct a little experiment. Invite those who can to stand, bend over, and stay that way for 60 seconds. How did that feel? What do you imagine it would be like to live that way for 18 years? What might have been the worst thing about the woman's illness?
- b. Have you ever experienced a serious illness or disability? What was/is the worst thing about your illness or disability? How did/does that affect your life?
- c. Imagine living at a time when illness was thought to be caused by personal evil. How might that have affected how people responded to those who were sick? How might it have affected those who were ill?
- d. When the woman heard Jesus was coming to the synagogue in her village, what thoughts and feelings may have raced through her mind?
- e. The text indicates that the woman arrived late, after Jesus had already begun to teach. Why might she have arrived late? Might her lateness have been deliberate? What feelings did she likely experience as she entered?

- f. Picture the woman quietly slipping into the back of the synagogue as Jesus noticed her through the grillwork even though he was in the midst of a sermon. What does that tell us about Jesus?
3. Verse 12 says that when he saw her, Jesus interrupted his sermon and “called her over.” In so doing, he was breaking the rule against speaking to women in public and flouting the rule that prohibited women from entering the main chamber of the synagogue. Jesus was inviting the woman into a forbidden space where only men were supposed to go. Then when she was healed, he let her “praise God” – so that she, a woman, was being given permission to make proclamation right there in the male chamber.
  - a. For the women in your Oasis, how does this story make you feel about Jesus? About yourself? And about the history of how men have treated women?
  - b. For the men in your Oasis, how does this story make you feel about Jesus? About yourself? And about the history of how men have treated women?
  - c. What do you think we’re supposed to learn from this story about how we, as followers of Jesus, should respond to matters of gender inequality?
  - d. Why do you think churches (and most other faith traditions) have historically been so discriminatory toward women? How do you think our church – LifeJourney – is doing in this regard? How can we do better?
  - e. For women in your Oasis Group, when in your life have you felt Jesus “calling you over,” i.e., calling you to dare to boldly do what others said you, as a woman, could not or should not? Tell us about what you did and how it went.
  - f. The lesson in this Gospel story is not only for women; it’s for all of us. Regardless of your gender, in your life right now where is Jesus calling you to “cross over,” i.e., to do something bold that you or others thought you couldn’t or shouldn’t? Are you going to “cross over?”
4. In our Gospel story, Jesus also boldly challenged the rule prohibiting work on the Sabbath. At the time, healing was universally regarded as work. Jesus chose to act in accordance with spiritual values (i.e., compassion, mercy, etc.) when in conflict with religious rules. From this, Jeff drew a conclusion: Whenever there’s a conflict between spiritual values and religious rules, we should always go with values even if that means breaking a rule.
  - a. Do you agree with that? Why or why not?
  - b. Galatians 5:18 says, “If you are led by the Spirit, you are not subject to the law.” What do you think that means? And why is it so important?
  - c. Why do think so many churches stubbornly tend to prioritize rules over values?

- d. When in your life have you broken a rule because you felt God wanted you to?  
How did that feel? What happened?

### **Luke 13:10-17**

Now Jesus was teaching in one of the synagogues on the sabbath. <sup>11</sup>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. <sup>12</sup>When Jesus saw her, he called her over and said, 'Woman, you are set free from your ailment.' <sup>13</sup>When he laid his hands on her, immediately she stood up straight and began praising God.

<sup>14</sup>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.'

<sup>15</sup>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? <sup>16</sup>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?'

<sup>17</sup>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.