

Natalie Ford  
August 22, 2010

***Hope for Healing***  
***Luke 13:10-17***

I have some ***beautiful crape myrtles*** in my new front yard—hot pink. I've always wanted crepe myrtles in my yard. I remember a yard I had in Tulsa once, a nice yard, and we tried to have crepe myrtles.

We tried everything.

All the ***recommendations***---

The Right Soil. The Right Amount of Water.

Heavy pruning in the winter. But no beautiful flowers.

Crape myrtles are not one of those trees that look great without flowers.

Finally we were informed that myrtles need sunlight, so it didn't really matter what we did; they were not going to bloom in our shady yard.

Some trees need sun.

My new crape myrtles? They face the eastern sun—and they love it.

***Life can be a lot like myrtles.*** Sometimes, we are just not blooming.

And we try the recommendations of friends and family.

You need a hobby. You need a different job.

You need a different doctor, a different medicine, a different routine.

You need a man, a woman. You need a change.

But maybe what we really need is some ***Sun***.

In fact, if we ask the Professional Gardener upstairs, we may find that

We need more time with **THE Son (aka Jesus)** to bring beauty and life.

I think of the woman crippled for 18 years as someone who really needed some ***Sun/Son***. She was living in the shadows, bent over, her infirmity literally blocking any light in her life.

Think about *her situation* for a minute.  
 I want you to do something for me---look down,  
 Literally, I want you to bend down in your seat, lean over your lap  
 and look at your feet. **Now** imagine living like this 24/7.

What *do you see?*

You see the ground, you see your feet,  
 if you strain really hard you can see a little bit side to side  
 but if you are truly bent over you really just see the ground below you,  
 not any light above you or around you.

Even what you *hear is slightly distorted* because you are so bent over,  
 You cannot see people's faces when they speak,  
 you cannot read their lips or their expressions or body language.  
 You cannot truly express yourself.  
 So you choose to live as if you are invisible.  
 Don't say too much, don't do too much, don't go out in public too much.

This lady took a chance when she came to the synagogue where Jesus was  
 teaching that day.  
 She came out in public, knowing the ridicule and stares that it would bring.

She *didn't however, talk to Jesus*, or ask for healing.  
 No—he did that for her—he was the one who noticed her, who called her over  
 and said to her, "Woman, you are set free from your ailment."

He called her, and he said to her, "**You are set free.**"  
 Now imagine this for a minute.  
 Lean back over your feet, if you will for just a minute.  
 Now—this is Jesus we're talking about, so he's not just going to yell out, "hey  
 you, you're set free---"  
 he's going to look her in the eyes when he's talking to her!

So he gets down *on his knees quite possibly*, making quite a spectacle at this  
 point, and he looks up into her face---  
 can you see him looking into your face?  
 And he says, "You are set free."

Then he ***touches her***.

Where? We don't know.

Maybe he touches her horribly stooped ***shoulders*** or her aching head, or her weary forehead.

He touches her and she stands up straight for the first time in 18 years and then the two stand there looking each other eye to eye...

and she starts praising God! "Thank you, thank you, praise God, praise God! Alleluia! Praise be to God!"

She can finally LOOK UP and praise God!

***Set free.*** She is set free.

We don't know from what—the Greek says she is bent over, *kyphotic*, all the way bent over, bent in on herself, which leads us to believe that not only is she bent over, but she believes it—she has become the 'stooped over lady'—without hope of a better life.

And Jesus says that it is ***Satan that has bound her***.

Of course it is.

It's not God's will to curse people with pain and suffering.

That is the product of a fallen world, the Enemy, the forces that work against God, not the Spirit of God.

And today she is set free from what has bound her.

All the while the synagogue ***leader is fuming***.

This is after all, the Sabbath day—a day of no work, only rest.

All work, all labor, indeed everything requiring effort is prohibited on this day, except for worship.

So Jesus reminds him that the Sabbath has another purpose.

It is not just about prohibition, so that we might rest.

It is about doing things that bring ***renewal, refreshment, and life***.

Don't you lead your animals to water on the Sabbath? (which of course is ***doing*** something?)

Jesus says—the Sabbath is not just about prohibition.

It is also ***for something***---for doing good, for helping, for healing,

The Sabbath was made for the good of people, not vice versa.

And what better renewal, refreshment, indeed, what better rest, than for this woman to be set free from her infirmity on the Sabbath?

*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?"*  
*v. 17 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.*

Notice something else interesting:

Her healing is ***not dependent*** upon her request, nor her level of faith, nor her prayers....it is entirely a gift of grace, a gift of God.

All too often we Protestant work ethic type folks make it about how much we pray, how well we act, how much faith we have....that will bring healing....

But look at all the people Jesus heals, who don't even ask for it!!!

Who don't even know how much they need it!

Jesus ***sees the woman***, sees her need, and sets her free!

All she has done is come to be where Jesus is.

She made herself ***available***, open, ready.

How often are ***we this person***, bent over, bent in on ourselves?

Believing the lies that make us crippled in body? Or spirit? Or mind?

We may be weighed down and bent over by loneliness, grief, worry, anxiety, or doubt....

We may be ***unable to see the light*** above us and around us,

We see only the dust and dirt beneath our feet...

***What is keeping you bent over?***

Unable to see the light?

And are you ready to be set free?

When we make ***ourselves available*** to his Spirit and his presence

He invites us, He calls us,

And He sets us FREE.

He lays his hand upon us,

And soon we can stand up and look him right in the eye,

and look up in the sky, to praise God with all we've got inside of us!

And what about the others? What's keeping our friends bent over?  
 What's hurting the **people in our community**?  
 Is it finances, prejudice, addiction, shame?  
 How many times do we pretend not to see them?  
 Bent over, weighed down with life,  
 Suffering in a myriad of ways....not feeling good enough to ask for help?

I love the way one pastor put it....**Healing is unleashed in the world when we dare to look into one another's eyes and be remade in the image of Christ.**

*Rev. Bradley Schmelling, Day 1, 2004.*

How will **we be Jesus** to them?  
 How will we help to unleash God's healing in this world?  
 And dare to look into one another's eyes?

It's **not easy!**

Frankly, it's easier to be like the synagogue leader....  
 How many times do we care so much about the rules, or the protocol,  
 Or the fact that giving money to a homeless person might end up in the liquor  
 store cash register...so we don't help?  
 We don't offer help and healing

But just as the woman simply **made herself available** to Jesus....  
 And he did the inviting and the healing  
 We make ourselves available to Jesus,  
 And He'll do the healing—the healing of us, and those we reach out to...  
 We love, and He'll do the healing.

Friends, hear the **Good News** of the Gospel,  
 Whatever causes you to look down,  
 Whatever keeps you stooped over, tired, worn out, crippled,  
 Our Lord Jesus wants to **set you FREE** from what binds you.  
 He wants to help you stand up and see His light.  
 He wants to help you look up and praise the God who can  
 make you a new creation in Christ.

Can you hear him calling you? Inviting you to be set free?  
 May we hear the call, and come to Him, Amen