

10th Sunday past Trinity - 24th of August 2025

Luke 13, 10 – 17 and Jer 1, 1 – 4

Preacher: Rev. Antje Biller, Member of the Board of CCN Germany

Lord,

do give your spirit for righteous speaking and fruitful hearing. Amen.

Dear brothers and sisters in Christ,

among other things I'm a teacher for Religious Education, which is a regular subject at Bavarian schools. The 6th - grade - curriculum contains the occupation with the Jewish religion. As Jesus himself was a Jew, you need to know something about his faith to understand his preachings and actions.

So in class we talk about the Kashrut, the rules for storing, preparing and consuming food. We learn about Jewish holidays, especially Passover, that connects so closely to MaundyThursday until Easter Sunday. We sometimes create our own little Mesusot, little containers that hold verses from the Hebrew Bible and that you fix on the door frame. The kids find out how it feels to meet God's word everytime they enter their rooms. And of course we get into the Dos and Don'ts on Sabbathday.

As you all probably know, there shall be no workday activities on Sabbath. This day is meant for relaxing and recuperating. Take time for yourself, for your loved ones, for God. So there is no trading or transporting, no sewing or harvesting, no sowing or mending, no building or nurishing fire, and so on, and so forth.

I wouldn't want the pupils to think of the Sabbathday as a day of bans. So I usually ask them how they would like a law, that prohibits homework on one day of the week.

"Mrs. B., can we have a law that prohibits homework on every day of the week?"

Aah, my dear child, you already understood quite a bit about this weekly holiday...

Let's dive deeper.

To a devoted Jewish believer, the Sabbath has the most outstanding meaning, since God crowned his Creation with it and Creation would be incomplete and imperfect without rest, without ease, without peace. God rested before his Humans were called to do the same. So rest and ease and peace were inherent in the world right from the start. And ever since the original sin mankind is waiting and yearning for them to be restored and reestablished. As Christians, we usually call that Salvation.

With all that in mind, the harsh reaction of the leader of the synagogue we heard in the Gospel about, is absolutely comprehensible. Who lays hands on the Sabbath lays hands on all of God's good orders, all the perfect arrangements God made for his Humans to live well in His Creation. And thus hinders the salvation of all that is. The synagogue ruler must have been furious! Jesus, not very friendly, but still reminds him, that everyone of the assembled would do workday things in order to care for other living beings, such as loosen an animal and leading it to fresh water when it is thirsty. In fact, most of Jewish academics back then (and still today) taught, that all of the rules for Sabbath are suspended when life is at stake.

Jesus' opponent apparently does not see the woman's life endangered. He sees her fit enough to take his rant. After all, she'd been ill for 18 years now; she can wait another day and seek a healer's help tomorrow: "There are six days in which men ought to work: in them therefore come and be healed, and not on the Sabbath day."

Actually, I'd agree with the synagogue leader. Yes, the bent woman surely will make it to the end of the Sabbath. Her bad back won't cost her her life.

But then: what does he think she has been doing about her suffering the last eighteen years? Couldn't he figure she had been to each and every workday healer there is? And no one could help her, no one could heal her? She has good reason to come to the synagogue on that day: her belief, that only there, only through God she will find relief and healing. In a way she observes the Sabbath more thoroughly than the synagogue leader does. When this day is all about rest and ease and peace when else shall she seek healing? And where else should she go?

Smart woman: right time in the right place and Jesus himself proves her right.

Did you notice in the reading that the way he healed her somehow resembles Creation? It is only by his word that Jesus establishes her health. He is not using some physiotherapeutic tricks and moves.

And on his word the woman's back is made straight. That is how it's put in the Greek original. She is made. She doesn't straighten up herself.

That is what Sabbath is all about: listen to His word and let Him do His work on you. And of course this to us is what our Sunday is all about.

I'm pretty sure that most of us here didn't come to church just as a habit, or because they didn't find something more interesting to fill the time between morning toast and Sunday roast. Most of us probably came because they have found out, that before God you receive what the workday

world can't give. Being Lutheran I always have Luther's words in mind, that a service is "grace and help and teaching and comfort".

And maybe that reminds you of the words from Jeremiah, that we heard before, why he was set as prophet over the nations and kingdoms: to root out, and to pull down, and to destroy, and to throw down, to build and to plant.

Maybe we are here today full of anxieties and worries. The kids, the money, the health, all the conflict-ridden world. God is willing to root out our fear, offering his protection and company.

Maybe we are here today doubting our abilities, since we keep hearing "you can't do this, you're not fit to achieve that." God is willing to pull down these limitations in our minds, reminding us that we are part of His perfect and beautiful Creation.

He is willing to destroy unhealthy thoughts and habits just as misleading illusions. He is willing to build a strong relationship with us, to plant grace in our lives and ease and peace in our hearts.

When Jesus heals the bent woman he shows the assembled people in the synagogue a glimpse of the kingdom of God, of how it's going to be when the great Sabbath has arrived, when the world is completed.

Same for us: when we listen to His word today we can take that as a foretaste how it will be to speak to Him face to face. When we receive communion we can get an idea of how it is going to be to live with Him like in a family, sitting down on one table. When we are still and let him do his work on us, we can start to feel like a child that enjoys the care of a loving mother or father.

Was our life at stake this morning before we decided to come to church? Maybe. No: probably!

Even if we have been living for years with our threats...

So thank God we found our way to His house, to receive grace and help and teaching and comfort.

May the Lord grant that to us all. Amen.

And the peace of God, which passes all understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus. Amen.