

THE FIRST 15

Thursday, July 11, 2024

Today is Thursday, July 11 and we are learning what the Bible says about restoration.

OPENING PRAYER

As I enter a time of prayer, I pause and become still. I calm my mind and quiet my heart. I breathe deeply and slowly, and center myself upon the presence of my Lord and Shepherd. In utter trust and confidence, I turn to the God who loves me who has the power to restore my soul. Amen.

SCRIPTURE

On a Sabbath Jesus was teaching in one of the synagogues, and a woman was there who had been crippled by a spirit for eighteen years. She was bent over and could not straighten up at all. When Jesus saw her, he called her forward and said to her, "Woman, you are set free from your infirmity." Then he put his hands on her, and immediately she straightened up and praised God. Indignant because Jesus had healed on the Sabbath, the synagogue leader said to the people, "There are six days for work. So come and be healed on those days, not on the Sabbath." The Lord answered him, "You hypocrites! Doesn't each of you on the Sabbath untie your ox or donkey from the stall and lead it out to give it water? Then should not this woman, a daughter of Abraham, whom Satan has kept bound for eighteen long years, be set free on the Sabbath day from what bound her?"
Luke 13:10-16

REFLECTION

During Jesus' earthly ministry, everywhere he traveled he encountered people who were bound by various physical infirmities and ailments. In today's passage from the Gospel of Luke there was a woman who had been bound for eighteen long years. Jesus used the opportunity to set her free despite the criticism he received for healing someone on the Sabbath day. Jesus compared her decades long ailment to an ox or a donkey that had been tied up in its stall and prevented from receiving a drink of water.

I reflect upon these two images and what they have in common. A woman is bound by a physical infirmity that left her crippled for eighteen long years. A helpless animal is left bound in the heat of the day unable to receive a drink of water. As I consider these images of imprisonment and bondage, I consider the places in my life where I feel bound. What circumstances or emotions keep me stuck in the muck? What people or situations have left me bound and thirsty? What has the enemy done to me that has crippled my life and prevented me from living fully? Perhaps I have been bound for a brief time. Or perhaps I have been bound for a long time, like the woman who was bound for eighteen years.

I notice that Jesus did not blame the crippled woman for her ailment. It was not her fault that she was unable to straighten her back, lift her head high and look into the eyes of her companions.

Similarly, Jesus did not blame the ox or donkey, whose uncompassionate owners left it tied just a few feet from refreshing, life-giving water. They are bound and helpless.

I might also feel bound and helpless in my circumstance. That is why I need a Savior. I need Jesus. Jesus came to “proclaim release to the captives” and to “let the oppressed go free” (Luke 4:18). Whatever is binding me, Jesus wants to set me free and he has the power to do so. Jesus wants to release me from the infirmities of my life and remove my bonds. Quiet. Listen. I hear him speaking to me, “Woman (Man), you are set free.”

Ask: Holy Spirit, please show me what binds me, cripples me, and keeps me stuck. Give me a vision of where I am trapped and how you want to unbind me and set me free.

Pause and Pray

CLOSING PRAYER

Holy Lord Jesus, reveal where I am bound by a hardened heart, unhealthy relationships, sinful behaviors, addictions, attitudes, anger, fear, sadness, depression, grief or sorrow. Enable me to recognize whatever it is that binds me and give me a vision for what true freedom looks like. Thank you for having compassion on people like me who are trapped in places and feel stuck. Thank you for noticing my circumstances and recognizing that I need your healing power to release me and set me free. If the enemy has bound me, I have faith that you have the power to free me forever. Amen.