

Luke 13:10-17

August 22, 2010

Live With It ?

There was a newly married young man who wanted to learn some of his mother's recipes, so he could share his favorites with his beloved. And so while visiting home John learns to make Pot Roast just like mom. A couple of months later John was making pot roast for his wife Sarah and she questioned his approach. "Why are you cutting the ends off the Pot Roast?" she asks. Look my mother makes the greatest pot roast ever and this is how she taught me to make it. "You like it don't you?" "Yes," Sarah answers "but I still don't understand why you cut the ends off."

Few months later at Thanksgiving the pot roast issue comes up in conversation. Sarah asks John's mother why the ends of the pot roast are cut off. "Well that's easy honey. That's the way my mother taught me to make the pot roast and my mother is a very good cook."

Christmas rolls around and three generations are gathered for the holiday and John takes the opportunity to ask his grandmother about her pot roast recipe. Grandma, "Mom taught me how to cook

your pot roast.” They go over the routine, vegetables cut same size, a little bit of wine, everything uniformly salted, spices, temperature.” “Grandma you are such a good cook, I understand everything about the pot roast recipe but why do you cut the ends of the Pot Roast off?”

“What are you talking about? I don’t cut the ends of the Pot Roast off.” John’s mother jumps in and says, “Oh yes you do. That’s how you taught me to cook pot roast. And that’s how I have been doing it for forty years. The Grand mother stares at her daughter in amazement and says, “Well all I can tell you is that you have been wasting a lot of good meat for a long time.” You see when you were young, we were not well off and my only roasting dish was kind of small. I used to cut the ends off to make sure the roast fit in the pan. I bought a new roasting dish a long time ago.”

As the parable of the Pot Roast illustrates, sometimes we learn to live with our situation. Sometimes we are so accustomed to the way we do things and the way we think about a certain subject, we don’t even question our own assumptions and our own point of view. And face it sometimes our practices and positions are handed down to us from parent to child and parent to child again. We might not

even be aware that we are out of sync or on the edge. We just learn to live with it. Some of us who have grown up in seriously dysfunctional families for instance, aren't even aware we are weird or different until live with different people maybe away at school or choose a mate. We just learn to live with the world the way we were taught to experience it.

The unnamed daughter of Abraham had gotten used to looking at people out of the corner of her eye, by looking up and sideways. She had been crippled for eighteen years. In fact, after eighteen years, she could hardly remember any other way of seeing the world. On one particular Sabbath day, there was a special excitement at the synagogue, where she regularly went to worship. A Galilean preacher and prophet, Jesus of Nazareth, had arrived in town and would be teaching there. She and the others in town had heard reports about Jesus—how he talked about God's reign arriving soon and how he healed sick people.¹ She had been bent over so long; it didn't occur to her that she might be healed. She just went to worship as she always had. She was a person of faith living out her

¹ Jeanine K Browne, WorkingPreacher.org lectionary for Aug 22, 2010

faith. She certainly didn't ask Jesus for any help. But Jesus bent over backwards to help her.

A lot of the time when we read about healings in the Gospels, we read about people who call out or reach to Jesus for help. We read about friends who go out of their way to get help for people who are sick. There is even one story about a bunch of friends who cut a hole in someone's ceiling to lower their friend down for help. The unnamed daughter of Abraham does not call out, reach out or ask for the help of friends. Jesus sees her. Jesus seeks her out and Jesus reaches out with his hands and he heals her. "Woman, you are set free from your ailment."

It is striking that she does not ask for healing or help. You see over the years she has become accustomed, if not resigned to her long and serious illness, which is attributed by first century thinking to Satan. For eighteen years this woman must stretch and strain to see the birds fly in the blue sky. She can see the floor just fine. For eighteen years she has to twist her body to look people in the eye. She can see feet just fine. For eighteen years her world has been one of turning from side to side to see what those who stand upright

can see with just a glance.² She cuts the ends off her pot roast too, because this is the life to which she is accustomed. She does not expect to be healed. She cannot see that possibility. Yet he touches her on the Sabbath in Synagogue and she is freed.

Part of being healed by Jesus is looking at the world from a different angle. Part of being healed by Jesus is accepting fresh perspective. Part of being touched by Jesus is the granting of deeper vision. Part of Spiritual Formation is suddenly standing up and taking stock of the world from a different angle.

The thing is not everyone likes deeper vision and fresh perspective. Many of us would prefer to cut the ends off the pot roast because that's the way we have always done it, even if it wastes meat. Even when Jesus touches us we cling to old behaviors because they are familiar. Even when Jesus heals us we resist release from stale conclusions because we are comfortable in our cocoon. Jesus sought out this woman. He bent over backwards to heal this daughter of Abraham and the leader of the synagogue was bent out of shape over the woman's ability to stand straight and

² Emilie M. Towns in *Feasting on the Word Year C, Volume 3* Westminster John Knox Louisville KY 2010, pp382-4

praise God. The issue for him was policy. He was indignant because Jesus had cured on the Sabbath and he made his voice known.

Jesus respected the Torah from which such rules were derived. He did not feel that healing a person on the Sabbath was in any way a violation of God's wish for us to remember the Sabbath and keep it holy and pointed out some first century hypocrisy. He thought the leader of the synagogue was being ridiculous. Technically to water animals was work because it meant you had to untie and retie knots; but everyone did it because you had to water and feed your animals. Twisting things around, I'll bet that if Jesus came today and saw the way we massacre the Sabbath, he might side with the Synagogue leader and share a testy word with us. He might even call it twenty first century hypocrisy. It all depends on your perspective.

I find it quite interesting that Jesus gives this unnamed woman a name. He calls her a daughter of Abraham. Although she is crippled, although according to first century thinking; she was sick because she was being punished, he touched her. Although according to first century thinking she was getting what she deserved from Satan. Although many thought handicapped people were evil;

she was very involved with her synagogue and Jesus called her a daughter of Abraham. There is joy and release in his touching of her for he indicates that he did not in any way think she was ritually unclean.

Given the headlines and the fuss about the proposed mosque near ground zero in New York City, I find it quite interesting that Jesus calls this woman Daughter of Abraham. In today's world if someone calls you a daughter of Abraham you could be a Jew, you could be a Christian and you also could be a Moslem. Bruce Feiler in his book Abraham does a very insightful job of showing the way that Abraham is at the center of the three great monotheistic faiths in the world. The way we treat each other betrays our common denominators and religious ancestry. It seems that a common perspective among Jews, Christians and Moslems is that the people in the other two religions have most things wrong and can't be trusted. There is some poignant history that leads to mistrust, but I think a lot of the time we are bent over crippled cooks cutting the ends off the pot roast. We just go along with the ignorance of others. I think that I'm pretty safe in saying that most Christians know very little about Judaism and they don't know squat about Islam. I think

your average Islamic person in the Middle East has gross mischaracterizations of Christianity as well. Instead of behaving like children in a school yard brawl, it would behoove us all to extend a little trust and learn more about each other. We cannot allow ourselves to be manipulated by terrorists or politicians who twist ignorance into electoral or media advantage. Your average Islamic person was horrified at the events of 9/11 and they roundly and strongly condemned the attacks. They saw the attacks for what they were, a twisting false contortion of Islam.

I found it interesting this week when I read articles that pointed out that this Mosque would not be visible from Ground Zero and neither would you be able to see Ground Zero from the Mosque. I found it interesting that this New Islamic Center would be only a short distance away from the current location of this group's Mosque. New York is not Like Anne Arundel or Howard Counties - Its dense. People are always on top of people. I found it interesting to discover that this group of Moslems are Sufi's, generally a more peaceful sect in Islam.

I think the Islamic terrorists who are a thorn in all our sides are quite pleased by the mess they have made. They have succeeded.

Their purpose was to strike terror and fear into the hearts of American Christians and this fear has led to commotion and even hate. And hate can lead to violence and it is on fear and violence that terrorists breed like maggots on rotting flesh. Yes when they check out the American media they are very satisfied. They have succeeded. They have made us look like a circus of hypocrites. We are like the leader of the synagogue. We are so crippled and so bent on fighting over pot roast rules and we have forgotten God Gospel and Love. I am hoping that as a congregation we will learn something from our participation in a Habitat For Humanity Coalition that includes a Mosque

We need a new recipe. We need to allow ourselves and our perspectives to be touched and healed by the grace and love of Christ Jesus. We need to remember the Sabbath and keep it holy and we need to allow and encourage the other two great faiths to do the same.

There are places in our lives where our perspectives are completely bent out of shape. We are so used to our way of thinking that even after Jesus touches us, even after Jesus heals us; we have trouble seeing and feeling things differently. This story of a daughter

of Abraham and Sarah has made me wonder what other blind nesses
I bring to life. My prayer is that we allow ourselves to be healed .