

“I Am the Bent Over Woman” By Rev. Judy Bagley-Bonner

Luke 13: 10-17

I am going to go way out on a limb, and be really honest with you this morning. So if you brought your saws, maybe put them down now. Because here's the honest truth: i am the bent over woman. Maybe you are too, no matter what your gender. We bent over ones struggle to stand up straight every. single. day. There are reasons, good reasons, in my personal history that cause me to be reluctant to stand up straight. Those reasons have to do with an alcoholic father, and a frequently angry step father and any number of cruel nuns. But no matter, we all have truly good reasons. Through long processes of growth and healing, I have found my empowerment, and have, at many times, had the guts to stand up straight and claim my power and speak for the the Realm of God. At other times, I have been too tired to struggle, and have taken the easy way out. Today, I pray to preach the word of truth, which is to say that in some ways, we are all the bent over woman. We all have a hundred reasons why we do not stand up straight, why we do not speak our truth, why we do not live from our God given power to proclaim the realm of God and call one another to step up to it.

Here is the deal: as people of faith, we must stop being intimidated by our pain, by our sometimes dark histories, by our fatigue and apathy and lethargy. We must stand up straight, in honesty, eschewing fear of what others will think; eschewing the need to play it safe; eschewing the addiction to the status quo, and we must speak the truth... The bent over woman confronts us. She faces us as no one has faced us so directly before. She says, in no uncertain terms, “will you speak for me?” And she exhorts us: to be the strong, empowered souls that God created us to be. To live from our innate calling and be and do what God made us to be and do. We are to be the glorious beings that God

intended when we were knit together in our mother's womb. In many ways, it is that simple. Because the Kingdom of God counts simply on this: that we are each to be, and to offer to the wider Realm of God, our unique part.

Marianne Wilmonson said this: **“Our deepest fear is not that we are inadequate. Our deepest fear is that we are powerful beyond measure.** It is our light, not our darkness that most frightens us. We ask ourselves, Who am I to be brilliant, talented, and fabulous? Actually, who are you *not* to be? You are a child of God. Your playing small does not serve the world. There is nothing enlightened about shrinking so that other people will not feel insecure around you. We are all meant to shine, as children do. We were born to make manifest the glory of God that is within us. It is not just in some of us; it is in everyone and as we let our own light shine, we unconsciously give others permission to do the same. As we are liberated from our own fear, our presence automatically liberates others”

And there is no time like the present. Today. Here. Now. Jesus healed the bent over woman on the sabbath, which was against every Jewish law and code. The point is, as has been said “there is never a wrong time to do the right thing.” Jesus healed her, and we, as Jesus' body on earth now, need to be healing one another: loving one another unconditionally and reaching out a hand to invite one another to step up to the higher way. Lest we remain bent over for years. I learned this week that there is a word for that: *alschmertz*: weariness with the same old issues that we've always had; the same boring flaws and anxieties that we've been gnawing on for years. And isn't it time to put that gnawed bone down? Now I know it takes time, and great effort, and grace comes in its own time. But at some point we have to say, “here, in this moment at least, I am going to

stand up straight.”There is a caution, though: when we are honest and empowered in a healthy way, some of our old compatriots might not like it. Glenn Doyle Melton said this:

‘You will be too much for some people. Those aren't your people. Because Sweetie, maybe it's not you, maybe it's them. There are people for whom your too much will be exactly enough. Don't become less. Find those who want more.’”

This is really all I have to say this morning: That as much as we are able, with the Spirit's powere, Its time to stand up straight. And I say it to myself first, and then to you. And I can say it no better than the One Voice Children's Choir, in their song “Glorious” I will speak the lyrics first, because it is hard to catch them all on one hearing, and then we will hear there amazing voices sing it.

There are times when you might feel aimless,

you can't see the places where you belong.

But you will find that there is a purpose,

It's been there within you, all along.
And when you're near it, you can almost hear it.
It's like a symphony, just keep listening!
And pretty soon you will start to figure out your part.
Everyone plays a piece, and there are melodies,
in each one of us.
Oh, it's Glorious!
You will know how to let it ring out,
as you discover who you are.
Others around you, will start to wake up,
to the sounds that are in their hearts.
It's so amazing, what we're all creating!
It's like a symphony, just keep listening!
And pretty soon you will start to figure out your part.

Everyone plays a piece, and there are melodies,
in each one of us.
Oh, it's Glorious!
Glorious! Glorious! Glorious!
Oh, as you feel the notes build higher,
you will see!
It's like a symphony, just keep listening!
And pretty soon you will start to figure out your part.
Everyone plays a piece, and there are melodies,
in each one of us.
Oh, it's Glorious!