

10 And He was teaching in one of the synagogues on the Sabbath. 11 And behold, there was a woman who for eighteen years had had a sickness caused by a spirit; and she was bent double, and could not straighten up at all. 12 And when Jesus saw her, He called her over and said to her, "Woman, you are freed from your sickness." 13 And He laid His hands upon her; and immediately she was made erect again, and began glorifying God. 14 And the synagogue official, indignant because Jesus had healed on the Sabbath, began saying to the multitude in response, "There are six days in which work should be done; therefore come during them and get healed, and not on the Sabbath day." 15 But the Lord answered him and said, "You hypocrites, does not each of you on the Sabbath untie his ox or his donkey from the stall, and lead him away to water him? 16 "And this woman, a daughter of Abraham as she is, whom Satan has bound for eighteen long years, should she not have been released from this bond on the Sabbath day?" 17 And as He said this, all His opponents were being humiliated; and the entire multitude was rejoicing over all the glorious things being done by Him.

This is a simple story to understand and yet it is profound in its truth. Conflict is the subject of the story. This is a story about conflict. People at odds with other people.

Conflict followed Jesus literally everywhere He went. Somebody is upset with what Jesus did. Somebody else is happy with what Jesus did. Conflict. See it there in verse 17. The word *Opponents*. Jesus had people who hated Him. They were against Him. And then later in that same verse a multitude who is rejoicing, at least if not over Him, over all the glorious things He was doing.

Pam and myself are conflict avoiders. We simply do our best to fly under the radar. Both of us. Guilty. We hate confrontations and we dislike conflict perhaps to the point that we avoid some confrontations that we probably should have had.

My dear wife has told me very recently that she prefers the happy texts like Pollyanna and is uncomfortable with the texts about sorrow and punishment

and judgement. It's the same problem. Conflict. It's a downer and we avoid being negative. We both long for the day when there is no conflict at all.

Last week before vacation Bible school began I knocked on a couple of local doors in my neighborhood to invite neighbor children to come to vbs. And one neighbor shared with me that the reason their child would not be attending was because religion had brought most of the harm experienced by this world. Religion is the cause of conflict and harm.

Hoping to preserve the friendship for future purposes I, as is my modus operandi, avoided any conflict that would have come if I had taken our conversation any further.

I don't think as well on my feet as I wish I did, and the good answers always come too late, but as usual, I thought to myself, that person is correct. Religion *is* the cause of enormous harm in this world. And in the name of religion men have been murdering other men since Cain and Abel.

And that is exactly what we have in our passage this morning. This conflict is religious based. The opponents of Jesus, who will in a few weeks murder Him, are wildly religious. Religion will be the cause of the Son of God being hung on a roman cross, and this conflict we will look at in this passage this morning is just one of many precursor events that lead to that final solution.

Only, we all know, it wasn't final. Jesus rose from the grave on the 3rd day. He was fully dead. Buried in a tomb. Sealed with a roman guard. And on the morning of the third day, He arose from the dead. The conflict of this book then, was not resolved in Jesus death, it was declared victorious by Jesus life.

This book we hold is the story of a single conflict. Turn if you will to Genesis chapter 3. The first book in the Bible. The beginnings of all things, and this is the first prophecy in the Bible. God is speaking directly to Satan here, the serpent, and He says;

And I will put enmity Between you and the woman, And between your seed

and her seed; He shall bruise you on the head, And you shall bruise him on the heel." Gen. 3:15

Enmity. Groups who oppose each other. Two groups who will be enemies of each other. The prophecy is about Christ. He is the seed of the woman. And all people who join with Christ are included in that seed. This verse describes a war between God, and those who belong to Him, through the woman's seed, those who are IN Christ, and those who belong to Satan.

That battle has been declared victorious in the resurrection of Jesus. But, we are caught in a holding pattern so to speak. Jesus has won the victory over death, but it has pleased God, with His Son at His right hand, to forestall the final victory for these 2000 years while God gathers in a bride made up of those who believe in His Son. A bride for His Son. The church.

Thus we find ourselves in a strange position in our world this morning. The victory of the ages has been declared. Jesus has won the battle over sin and death. But we're in this strange holding pattern waiting for His return when He will cast Satan into a prison and set up a government on earth like no government ever before. A paradise not unlike the original garden.

But that isn't now. Right now we have a world in conflict. And it's the same old conflict that Jesus experienced when He walked in this world. The names have all changed, but the cause and effects are all equivalents to the conflict Jesus had right here in this passage.

So let's look at it. Luke is going to set the scene. And I with some disapproval will make the necessary comparisons from Jesus scenario to ours. Same conflict. Same opponents, different names. But first a little background, as usual. Paul says to Timothy;

*what persecutions I endured, and out of them all the Lord delivered me! 12 **And indeed, all who desire to live godly in Christ Jesus will be persecuted.** 13 But evil men and impostors will proceed from bad to worse, deceiving and being deceived. 14 You, however, continue in the things you have learned and*

become convinced of, knowing from whom you have learned them;

2Tim 3:11b - 14a

Paul states very simply a truth we don't want to hear in our day. *all who desire to live godly in Christ Jesus will be persecuted.* Conflict is not only normal, it's inescapable according to Paul. Jesus said the same thing. *In the world **you will have tribulation**. But take courage; I have overcome the world!*" . Jn. 16:33

We are in a unique spot in this world, in history. Our nation was set up as an experiment in liberty, personal and autonomous liberty for all, but within guidelines that were clearly biblical.

That happened in a time and place where reformed protestant theology was the basis and guidelines. Liberty within a general framework of the morality of the 10 commandments and liberty that respected property ownership and the value of life as defined as made in God's image.

And I don't have to tell you, the result of that experiment, based on this book, was a thriving never before seen on earth. Not perfect, we all know that, we're still sinners with all the problems sinners have, but comparatively, this nation became the envy of the whole world.

We built the experiment on the protestant christian understood values of this book and almost unbridled thriving was the result. Keep that in mind as we look at this passage this morning and define the opposing parties and the conflict that was impossible to avoid.

10 And He was teaching in one of the synagogues on the Sabbath.

Synagogues were a result of the 70 year captivity in Babylon. Before the Babylonian captivity there was only the temple. But when the jews were captured and carried off to Babylon, it was necessary to design something very similar to what we have today.

Local congregations of Jews that would meet together on the Sabbath day for a time of worship and instruction. Typically each synagogue would have a ruler, an elder who was in charge of who would be speaking and also of the collection of scrolls of the books they held.

But as good as that sounds, almost 500 years had passed since the final prophets brought direct words from God. After Babylon, when the Jews returned there was a time of revival and joy as they rebuilt their city and then their temple. But then; almost 500 years of silence. No prophet until John the Baptist.

And during that long silence their religion degraded into something unrecognizable from what God intended. We with our 20-20 hindsight look into history and read God's word in the old testament and we discover something that they were blindsided to.

The 10 commandments and indeed the Shema in Deuteronomy 6 is completely un-achievable.

4 "Hear, O Israel! The LORD is our God, the LORD is one! 5 "You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your might. Deut. 6:4,5

The Levitical law and the Shema I just read to you are unachievable. The intent was not to fool yourself into thinking you could become acceptable to God, the intent was to show you a mirror that reflects your imperfection. A mirror picture of sinfulness. Hopeless sinfulness. And realizing that; a cry out to God to save, and animal sacrifices that looked forward to the acceptable sacrifice God would provide to remove sin.

That was where they began. Nehemiah read the book to the people and the result was weeping. That's the correct response! But 500 years have elapsed with no prophet, and the religion of Israel had degraded into a works righteousness process, and central to that process was the Sabbath.

After 500 years the religion of the jews had devolved into; *rules make God happy* and people who keep rules are pleasing to God. The more rules you keep, the happier God is. And they thought they were righteous because of keeping rules rules rules. And the rules weren't even in their book. They made up rules and more rules as they went along. Man made rules for a man achieved righteousness.

So we have a conflict and we need to get to the root cause. My neighbors stated that most of the harm inflicted on the world is done so in the name of religion. They didn't want their little child in a situation where religious instruction would be inflicted because religion is the source of harm, not the solution from harm.

And I in my retiring way decided that day was not the day to have a knock down drag out fight, so, whether right or wrong, and because like my wife, I abhor conflict, I backed down, saddened that a nice child would not get to run and scream and have fun with other nice kids.

What my neighbors don't know is that I agree with them. They're absolutely correct. Religion is the source of more harm inflicted on the world than perhaps any other source.

Religion is the source of the conflict in this passage before us this morning. So then, we need to understand the root cause of the two opposing sides in this conflict.

It turns out that the ruler of this world, Satan, loves religion. Adores religion. Satan is no slouch. He isn't stupid. In fact you probably don't want to know how smart he is.

The devil uses religion to get most people into hell. The religion of human achievement. Working your way to God. Making yourself good enough to please God. In thousands of forms and different names and types, the religion of Satan is always the same system.

You can please God if you just do stuff. Don't worry about it. God grades on the curve and look around you. You'll be just fine. Have you killed anyone? No. You're fine. Those other guys, the real evil ones, they'll be going to the bad place, but nice people go to heaven.

Karl Marx was actually more intelligent about this phenomenon than most. Here's his quote. *Religious suffering is, at one and the same time, the expression of real suffering and a protest against real suffering. Religion is the sigh of the oppressed creature, the heart of a heartless world, and the soul of soulless conditions. It is the opium of the people.*

He's actually right. Satanic systems of religion are an opium that make people think they'll be OK in the next life. Good enough. Marx recognized the opiate value of that phenomenon and then went on to design the religion of secularism. Leave the religion opium and come take of my new opium. Secularism. Godless achievement.

Satan's laughing all the way to the bank. Marx defines the problem and creates a new religion. For Satan. Satan could care less which religion you cling to that's gonna make it all right.

Real christianity opposes religion. It is a relationship with a person who takes your sin and pays your debt and then who gives you His righteousness. It isn't the religion of human achievement, it IS the religion of divine accomplishment. We own what Jesus accomplished. He gives His perfection to me. He takes my imperfection, my sin, to the cross. For me.

So those are the two opposing parties in the conflict that unfolds in our passage this morning. And as Solomon wisely said under the inspiration of God, *there's nothing new under the sun.*

The conflict in our world today is the same old identical conflict. New names, different beliefs, same conflicting parties. Satan is still at it today. Same as ever. Satan's current religion that is increasing exponentially in our land in our time is marxist secularism. Human achievement through marxist ideas.

The religion of no God, no religion. Same conflict, different names.

10 And He was teaching in one of the synagogues on the Sabbath. 11 And behold, there was a woman who for eighteen years had had a sickness caused by a spirit; and she was bent double, and could not straighten up at all.

Here is a physical condition, caused by the oppressor, an evil spirit, one of the angels who were cast out of heaven in the rebellion Satan caused there, cast down to earth, and working to inflict havoc on mankind for the benefit of Satan. This is a war. Demons are real. And they inflict harm on people.

And while we're defining sides and sources in this conflict the world woke up in, again, this morning; Let's be clear. Satan is the source of all oppression. We want to talk about oppression these days. Satan is the source of ALL of it. He gets people fighting about oppression and it's all from him. Freedom comes from God, which we will see this morning in this miracle.

This same lady could walk into our church and we have no way of perceiving what Jesus could see and knew. This poor lady is bent over double and has been for 18 years because of an evil spirit. Why did that happen? We have no idea.

Luke calls it a sickness. That's all we get to know. But Jesus response is also helpful. He doesn't chastise the woman for being in that condition. He doesn't tell her, well, of course it's your own fault because you did such and such, or whatever might have brought the condition on.

He just see's a poor sheep that's getting eaten alive by the enemy and does what shepherds do.

12 And when Jesus saw her, He called her over and said to her, "Woman, you are freed from your sickness."

And that's approximately what Jesus does for every son and daughter of the kingdom of God. All of us. We were lost sheep, floundering helplessly under

the bondage of sin and Satan and for whatever reason, God doesn't explain why or how His sovereign choice works, He said to every one of us who now belongs to Him; *you are freed from your sickness.*”

But I want you to pay particular attention to the sickness and the cause, and the cure, and what I want to draw your attention to is root causes. Why was she sick? What was causing her debilitating condition and why? And how did the cure happen? What was the cause of her being restored to health?

13 And He laid His hands upon her; and immediately she was made erect again, and began glorifying God.

Why was she sick? Satanic oppression. That is the only conclusion we can draw as to source. Our lesson last week has immediate application to this case. Why did the tower crush the 18 men at Siloam? Was it because they were more wicked? No. Jesus tells us no. That isn't the reason. He doesn't tell us there is a reason except the sovereign plan of a good God, but He does tell us it didn't happen because they were more deserving, more wicked than all the rest.

This woman is in the grip of a demon. Was that because she was more wicked than all the other women? No. But she would have been an outcast in her society because that was the common religious belief of their false religion. This woman is suffering because God is punishing her because she is secretly more wicked than other women. Jesus just taught us, that isn't the case at all.

It's more like this. She's a helpless sheep and a wolf has selected her and grabbed her by the neck and is dragging her off to a secluded place behind some foliage where she will be eaten. But the shepherd showed up. That's more accurate.

What caused the cure and why did Jesus choose to cure her. Again, we aren't told. Except that Jesus is a shepherd and one of His sheep, a daughter of Abraham as we shall see, is getting drug off to be eaten, and He steps in and reverses that situation.

Will she be in heaven? We don't know that either. Many of the people that Jesus healed physically were simply restored to physical health and finished living their time and vanished. Physical healing doesn't necessarily equate to spiritual healing. But we hope it did.

She didn't have faith, she didn't do anything to cause the healing. She was just there, and God by His sovereign choice chose to heal her and deliver her from the spirit causing the sickness. That's all we get to know.

But it turns out the woman and her final disposition isn't the main point of the story. The story is about anger and conflict that results from a false religious system that is actually in the grips of Satan responding to the Son of God who is doing battle in the long war against Satan and his hold on this world.

14 And the synagogue official, indignant because Jesus had healed on the Sabbath,

Here is conflict. Anger. This man is indignant. Why? Not because Jesus actually sinned against God's sabbath law. He did not. But because Jesus has given complete dis-regard to their made up man made religion of traditions and rules that have nothing to do with anything except;

They are duped into thinking they are righteous by keeping a bunch of ridiculous rules that are not from God and give no pleasure to God. It's the same false religion of human achievement that Satan has in different disguises everywhere there are men on earth. Phony, worthless and at it's core, satanic religion.

God just made an incursion into Satan's territory and this synagogue official who is blindly duped into fighting against God for Satan is angry at Jesus for doing an act that caused people to glorify God. Jesus freed the woman from a serious debilitating oppression and this guy is angry about that.

And that causal analysis is what Satan is doing all over the earth with religion

at it's core. Satan uses religion to cause conflict. Often it's two false religions having conflict with each other, killing each other and God doesn't even have a dog in the fight.

Satan uses false religions to cause conflict and harm and he doesn't care who's killing who. He likes it best when the religion doing the most damage is somehow connected to true religion in it's claims. That way he can smear God. But Satan causes chaos. That's what he does. And he uses religious people who claim to belong to God to do his evil damage.

What he would love best is to fool you or me into fighting in his war, on his side. It all gets convoluted very quick. What could be more confusing than a synagogue official, one who represents the descendents of Abraham who are indeed the chosen people of God, this guy is an official in that group, and he's duped into a false religion and he's fighting against God. Satan at his best.

But please note this. In whatever form it takes, and whatever the names and ideas are, in any age, the people who are the remnant who actually DO belong to God, who have separated themselves from this world, and who order themselves according to the authority of this book, correctly, they will be in conflict with whatever system Satan is working with at the moment.

Fast forward to 2020 and I give you secularism, rife with marxist ideals, in direct conflict with anyone who holds onto the words of this book. Same old war. Same old conflict. God's people will always have to do battle with people who are in the grip of Satan under some false religion. And make no mistake, secularism is the new religion. There's nothing new under the sun.

So, back to the ancient version of the same conflict, in our passage;

14 And the synagogue official, indignant because Jesus had healed on the Sabbath, began saying to the multitude in response, "There are six days in which work should be done; therefore come during them and get healed, and not on the Sabbath day."

This is almost a comical situation. Jesus has just done a powerful miracle! He has just accomplished something that no one else on earth can do. No one. He has sent the spirit causing the illness fleeing and delivered this woman to perfect health.

You're bent over for 18 years?? Your body is going to compensate for that the best way it possibly can. You don't just straighten back up erect after 18 years. She's going to need 6 months of physical therapy and she's never going to be how she was before.

Wrong. Jesus healed her and she stood erect and just as whole and normal as anyone else there that day, and the people glorified God because it was a miracle. No one else ever, before or after Jesus can do what he just did. No one!

The synagogue official doesn't have the courage to get in Jesus face. He's angry, indignant that his false religion has just taken a serious hit, but he doesn't have the guts apparently to go face to face with Jesus. So he turns his anger at the people who are in the synagogue!

It's almost comical. If you people want to get healed, come on a week day! It's like, did you hear what you just said. You skipped right over the part that only God can do and tell them to not do it on the Sabbath? That's absurd.

It's like, if you people simply must indulge in watching God perform miracles can you kindly not do it on the Sabbath day. Somehow God doing miracles is dis-pleasing to God. Well it can't be God doing it because God would never break the rules of our religion we invented. It's convoluted and ridiculous. But the poor synagogue official is just as tangled up as the woman. He's turned right into wrong in the name of a man made religion. He is Satan's dupe.

He actually believes the one doing things no one else can do or has ever done before is the one connected to Satan. Jesus cannot be from God because Jesus breaks the man-made sabbath rules so we know however He's doing the tricks

it isn't a connection with God, so that means His power source is Satan.

Satan in conjunction with duped men in man made religions turns everything inside out and upside down. Evil is good. Good is evil. It's the same today. The christians are the evil haters who are withholding the good and righteous liberties that all men are free to have. Christians and their book are the oppressors. Christians evil. Societal breakdown beginning at the family unit and everywhere beyond, good.

Jesus; evil. Absurd rules keepers that dishonor God; good. If you expect a different result you need to re-read this book. There is truly nothing new under the sun. We can expect Satan to work his same war in his same way, albeit with new names and ideas.

Note that even though the official didn't direct his disgust in a direct confrontation with Jesus himself, Jesus bysteps that and gets directly into a confrontational reply directed at His opposition.

15 But the Lord answered him and said, "You hypocrites, does not each of you on the Sabbath untie his ox or his donkey from the stall, and lead him away to water him?"

Inconsistency in their own rules keeping. For some reason the rules aren't the same when it comes to inconveniencing the pocket books of the ones who make up the rules.

So Jesus can't take care of His lambs and lead them to good pastures and a drink of fresh water on the sabbath, but you can untie your ox or your donkey and take them for a drink?

The logic is inconsistent. It's one rule for the guy making the rules and it's another rule for everybody else, including the Son of God who has just set demons to flight and restored a daughter of Abraham to good health.

God never said you couldn't lead your donkey to water for a drink on the

Sabbath day. That isn't work. It's necessary care for your animals. And God never said you couldn't perform healings on the Sabbath. It just turns out most of us can't perform healings, miraculous ones that recreate fresh bone structures and fleshy muscles and tissues where they had become damaged and dormant over 18 years, with creative powers, to health.

We can't do that on a Sabbath or any other day. What was the work accomplished that the official is upset about. Jesus touched her. He laid his hands upon her bent and broken body, and the same creative power that spoke the universes into existence from nothing, created everything that was damaged and dead and broken in that woman's body, new, out of nothing, as well as setting the spirit who caused the oppression to flight, all with simple words and a touch.

It was a two part process; *“Woman, you are freed from your sickness.” 13
And He laid His hands upon her*

He spoke and the demons holding her body captive were removed. He touched and the creative powers of God Almighty restored every damaged and broken muscle and tissue and bone in her so that she was just like everyone else in the room.

What part of that is work. There is nothing in the scriptures that define keeping the Sabbath holy that says anything what-so-ever about anything Jesus just did. Not really necessary since He's the only person who could ever have done it!

So He points out the man's inconsistency. You do what's necessary and convenient for you on the sabbath. But you dis-allow God to glorify Himself on the sabbath. That is an absurd inconsistency. Hypocrite!

16 “And this woman, a daughter of Abraham as she is, whom Satan has bound for eighteen long years, should she not have been released from this bond on the Sabbath day?”

Your animals are bound by you and it's OK for you to let them loose for a necessary drink on the sabbath day. And that's OK. You haven't broken any sabbath law that God ever said by doing that.

The argument is the typical jewish one from the lesser to the greater. You free your animals from the oppression of their stalls for a necessary drink of water. How much more then this poor woman who is a daughter of Abraham, who is being bound by Satan, and has been for 18 years, why is it OK for you to do what's convenient for you and your animals you own, but not OK for me to unbind this daughter that I own . . . on the sabbath? Inconsistent hypocrisy.

Indeed, if you stop being blinded by Satan for one minute and think about what happened just now it is a frighteningly absurd hypocrisy. You are being duped into a war fighting against God.

17 And as He said this, all His opponents were being humiliated; and the entire multitude was rejoicing over all the glorious things being done by Him

Beloved, I have to bring this home to where we are in 2020. To not do that would be to fail at the job God has graciously entrusted me to do. I'm supposed to feed the sheep and in some sense, as much as is possible, protect the sheep. If I fail to apply this passage and this conflict to our current situation, I'm failing to do what God has said in His book.

This same identical conflict is alive and well in 2020. And it is gaining speed at breakneck rates that none of us saw coming even just 10 years ago.

The current false religion that is in direct confrontational conflict with the people of God is modern secularism.

And in my lifetime I have watched from the sidelines from a position of being in relative good standing with the "multitude" to becoming the enemy of the "multitude". All in my 50 year span as a christian.

In 1970, christians were the good guys. Christians, even evangelical Bible

pounders as my tribe was called, were user friendly. No one was angry with me for being a christian. Lots of people thought I was dumb and sort of a knuckle dragger, but it was totally *live and let live*.

You go do your christian thing and it doesn't bother me at all. Good for you. Good for me. The conflict was in the background, it was always possible, but it was not on the surface. Christians were accepted and generally respected as valuable neighbors and friendly folk to have a dis-agreement with.

Even in 1970 that was the legacy of a nation that was formed and founded to actually be user-friendly to christians. We built the place that way with that in mind, and God poured out unrivaled blessing on this nation because of that.

Fast forward to 2020. Christians are the people who are causing the oppression. It's because of christians that every class of oppressed people are harmed and oppressed. It's because of our book that every form of slavery and oppression and evil has come upon the oppressed classes.

White anglo saxon protestants are the source of our pain. Every pain possible can be traced to those roots. It's our fault. We are the evil oppressors. Every kind of harm imaginable and real can be traced to that oppression that had roots in this ancient book. We are the new enemy.

All you have to do is walk to your neighbors house and invite their children to come have fun with other children to find out you are going to be held at arms length.

In future days, we will not be surprised at escalating conflict. Indeed, the surprise was the bubble that most of us were born in where the usual conflict described in this book was temporarily eased. America was the anomaly, not the norm. Things are returning to a biblical normal where the world singles out God's possession as their enemies.

What we constantly have to remember is that in this conflict, if we tarry and watch it unfold, those who consider us as enemies upon which to inflict harm,

are not in fact enemies of us. While they are angry, like this synagogue leader, indignant and striking against us, we need to continually remember we may be considered enemies to them, but they are not enemies to us. Those folks inflicting disgrace and pain are the mission field.

What else would you expect in this world. Evangelicals are stunned because the world is starting to act like the world. Don't be. Hold fast to the clear words and teachings of this book no matter what the world does and says. If the conflict comes to you, stand firm.

And remember always; Satan is the oppressor. Every kind and color of oppression in this world is because of him. And Jesus is the one who says; *“Woman, you are freed from your sickness.”* True freedom from the oppression of this world . . . only comes from Jesus, the victorious One.