



MINISTRIES

A Ministry of the Athens Universal Life Church
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<https://aulc.us>

TITLE: How to REALLY Honor God

SERMON IN A SENTENCE: In the story of Jesus and the synagogue leader, Jesus shows us how to REALLY honor God.

SCRIPTURE: Luke 13:10-17

Today's scripture lesson comes from the Gospel of Luke, chapter 13, verses 10 to 17.,,,

Starting at verse 10:,,,

As He was teaching in one of the synagogues on the Sabbath,

a woman was there who had been disabled by a spirit for over 18 years. She was bent over and could not straighten up at all.

When Jesus saw her, He called out to her, "Woman, you are free of your disability."

Then He laid His hands on her, and instantly she was restored and began to glorify God.

But the leader of the synagogue, indignant because Jesus had healed on the Sabbath, responded by telling the crowd, "There are six days when work should be done; therefore come on those days and be healed and not on the Sabbath day."

But the Lord answered him and said, "Hypocrites! Doesn't each one of you untie his ox or donkey from the feeding trough on the Sabbath and lead it to water?"

Satan has bound this woman, a daughter of Abraham, for 18 years—shouldn't she be untied from this bondage on the Sabbath day?"

When He had said these things, all His adversaries were humiliated, but the whole crowd was rejoicing over all the glorious things He was doing.,,,

-- May the Lord add His Blessing to the reading of His Word!,,,

-- Hello, I am Doctor Rob White with the A U L C Ministries with our message this week.

-- I am happy that you can take a few minutes out of your busy week to be with us today!

One of the things we learn as we grow older is how to look at a clock and recognize what time it is.

Why is it important to be able to tell time? Here are some ideas:

- So you know how much time you have to get ready for work.
- So you know when to eat dinner.
- So you know when it is bedtime.
- So you know when it is time to go to church.

There are many useful reasons why we need to know what time it is. You can probably list many more.

In the Bible Jesus teaches us about time. He was teaching in the synagogue on the Sabbath when he saw a woman who was bent over and unable to stand up straight. She had been crippled like this for eighteen years.

Jesus laid his hands on her and "immediately she stood up straight, and glorified God".

The leader of the synagogue disapproved of what Jesus had done because Jesus had cured the woman on the Sabbath which is supposed to be a day of rest.

Jesus disagreed with the leader of the synagogue and believed that the woman who had been crippled for "**eighteen long years**" should be set free. Do you know what the lesson of the story is?

Jesus teaches us that anytime is the right time to help someone in need. We don't have to look at our clocks or watches to decide if it is the right time to take food to the food bank, collect clothes for the homeless, say a kind word to a friend who seems sad, or visit an elderly person who might be lonely. Anytime is the right time to help.

You won't be surprised to learn that there are some rather odd laws on the books. I Googled the Internet for "odd laws" and came up with some very odd ones:

- Missouri requires 1,000 hours of training to braid hair.
- In Connecticut pickles must bounce to be sold legally.
- For many years, New Mexico prohibited idiots (IQ below 30) from voting. That raises a related question—could they run for office?

I don't know if those really are laws, but the Internet says that they are. The sad fact is that I can imagine that people do make dumb laws.

And then there is *Catch-22*, a book written by Joseph Heller some years ago. Heller was a bombardier in the Mediterranean during World War II, and the book is modeled, tongue-in-cheek, on his experiences in the Army Air Corps.

In that book, Captain Yossarian is a bombardier on a B-25 in the Med. He wants to be excused from combat flight duty, because it is so dangerous. The only way he can be excused is to be diagnosed as insane by the flight surgeon.

However, it is clear that no sane person would want to fly combat missions. By trying to get excused, Yossarian demonstrates that he is, in fact, sane and therefore fit to fly. Heller called this dilemma *Catch-22*—a situation where the rules just won't let you win.

Catch-22 became so popular because we have all felt like we have been there and done that. Life sometimes presents us with odd situations or odd laws that leave us nowhere to turn.,,,

In our Gospel lesson today, Jesus has run into one of those odd laws. He heals a woman on the Sabbath, and is immediately taken to task by the leader of the synagogue, who instructs the crowd:

"There are six days on which men ought to work.
Therefore come on those days and be healed,
and not on the Sabbath day".,,,

Our quick response is to wonder how anyone could be so stupid. This woman has been stooped over—unable to stand up straight—for eighteen years. For most of her adult life, she has been bent over—unable to look people in the eye. Her posture prevented her from breathing properly. It stopped her from getting exercise. It would almost certainly doom her to an early death.

But having encountered Jesus for just for a moment, this woman was suddenly freed from her infirmity. Suddenly she could stand straight—look Jesus in the eye—breathe properly—walk and run. Hallelujah!!! Everything that had been wrong for eighteen years was suddenly right. It was like being freed from prison.

And you can be sure that the village was overjoyed to see what had happened. They knew what it was like to endure hardship, and they were thrilled to see this woman freed from the prison of her infirmity.

But the synagogue leader—a religious man who presumably cared about people—had only this to say:

"There are six days on which men ought to work.
Therefore come on those days and be healed,
and not on the Sabbath day.".,,,

When Jesus cured this woman and she stood up straight for the first time in eighteen years, she was delighted—and she found exactly the right way to express her delight. Luke says that "she stood up and began praising God". How could anyone find fault with that? But the synagogue leader could say only:

"There are six days on which men ought to work.
Therefore come on those days and be healed,
and not on the Sabbath day.",,,

Talk about a stick-in-the-mud—a real Killjoy! If there were ever someone who failed to "get it," it was this synagogue leader. The woman was thrilled at her newfound freedom. The crowd shared her joy. But this synagogue leader could say only:

"There are six days on which men ought to work.
Therefore come on those days and be healed,
and not on the Sabbath day.",,,

But I'm going to confess something that you might find hard to understand—and that is that I have a certain amount of sympathy for the synagogue leader. I know that the synagogue leader is the "bad guy" in the story, and anyone who admits sympathy for him is likely to end up on your "bad guy" list too. I don't want to be on your "bad guy" list, but the synagogue leader deserves a hearing. If I don't help him, who will?,,,

The FIRST thing in the synagogue leader's favor is that the Fourth Commandment prohibits work on the Sabbath. It says:,,,

"Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy. ,,,

You shall labor six days, and do all your work,
but the seventh day is a Sabbath to Yahweh your God.
You shall not do any work in it,
you, nor your son, nor your daughter,
your male servant, nor your female servant, nor your livestock,
nor your stranger who is within your gates; ,,,

for in six days Yahweh made heaven and earth, the sea,
and all that is in them,
and rested the seventh day;
therefore Yahweh blessed the Sabbath day,
and made it holy".,,,

That's clear enough, isn't it! It's the longest of the Ten Commandments. God must have been really serious about not working on the Sabbath.,,,

SECOND, there wasn't any reason why Jesus couldn't heal this woman the next day. Sabbath regulations prohibited travel, so Jesus would still be in town the next day. The woman wasn't going anywhere. She had put up with her infirmity for eighteen years. There was no reason why she couldn't tough it out for one more day.,,,

THIRD, the synagogue leader was responsible for making sure that his townspeople observed the law. He had a job to do, and he was trying to do it.,,,

And FOURTH, to observe the law was to honor God. As nearly as the synagogue leader could tell, Jesus was deliberately violating the law—and quite unnecessarily—and was therefore guilty of dishonoring the Sabbath and dishonoring God. ,,

Maybe the synagogue leader was right and maybe he was wrong, but that's how he saw it. I admire his courage for challenging Jesus when he knew Jesus to be a formidable opponent.,,,

But then, even though a part of me admires the synagogue leader, the rest of me has to admit that he was wrong. Jesus made that abundantly clear. Jesus said:,,,

"You hypocrites!
Doesn't each of you free his ox or his donkey from the stall on the Sabbath,
and lead him away to water?" ,,,

In other words, if God's law allows you to take care of livestock, doesn't it also allow us to take care of people?,,,

- And isn't it OK to free this woman from Satan's bondage on the Sabbath? ,,
- Isn't it OK to defeat Satan on the Sabbath? ,,
- Isn't it OK to show a little Godly compassion on the Sabbath?,,,

Luke concludes the story by saying:,,,

As (Jesus) said these things, all his adversaries were disappointed,
and all the multitude rejoiced
for all the glorious things that were done by him.,,,

You can be sure that many of the members of that crowd had felt the lash of that synagogue leader's sharp tongue at some point in their lives. I'm sure that they all felt like cheering when Jesus put the synagogue leader in his place.,,,

So what does this story have to do with us? ,,

For one thing, it shows us that it isn't always easy to know what is right thing and what is wrong. There are lots of people who go around today acting as if they have all the answers. We like to think that these know-it-alls are "fundys" —far-right conservatives. However, these days far-left liberals have become as doctrinaire and uncharitable as any "fundy." People at both ends of the spectrum like to pronounce themselves right and everyone else wrong.,,,

The issues are different today. The hot-button issues today aren't whether it is legal to heal someone on the Sabbath, but how we should deal with abortion—and homosexuality—and illegal immigration—and global warming. Most of us have an opinion about each of those things—and that's fine. But it is not fine when we act like it is "My Way or the Highway"—when we care more about our opinions than about other people—when we no longer deal with other people in a charitable way.,,,

I used to be active in a big church that had all sorts of programs to serve all sorts of people. It was wonderful and exciting. But when I became the chairman of a committee with heavy responsibilities, the pressure was on. I found myself getting uptight. Sometimes I was short with other members of the

committee. Then someone would remind me of a little saying that the pastor had coined to help people like me keep our priorities straight. The little saying was this:,,

"People are more important
than programs.",,

Isn't that great! Six short words to remind us of our true purpose:,,

"People are more important
than programs.",,

When someone would quote that little saying to me, I would calm down until the next crisis. Then I needed someone to remind me again:,,

"People are more important
than programs.",,

That's what the synagogue leader needed—someone to tell him that he needed to lace his opinions with a bit of humanity—a bit of charity—a bit of grace. In another setting, Jesus put it this way. He said:,,

"The Sabbath was made for man,
not man for the Sabbath".,,,

When we hear this story of the synagogue leader and the woman, we probably identify with the woman and think of the synagogue leader as the enemy. But there is a more profitable way to hear the story. Instead of identifying with the woman, ask yourself this question:,,

"How am I like the synagogue leader?",,

,,And this question:,,

"How can I develop more love—
more charity—
more grace—
for people with whom I disagree?",,

,,When we do that, we will become more like Jesus—and less like the leader of the synagogue. ,,

-- That's our Lord's message for this Lord's Day and I hope you got a blessing out of it!,,

-- Go out this week and be a blessing and be blessed! -- For the more you are a blessing, the more you will be blessed!,,

-- Thank you all for watching and listening and we will see you all next week!

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