

Grace be to you and peace from God our Father and our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

Amen.

Take a few seconds and think about how we schedule our medical care. We have routine visits to make sure that we are healthy and when we are sick, we call to schedule an appointment. Many doctors' offices are open Monday through Friday from 9-5, some on Saturdays. And of course, we have the emergency room available to us any time, day or night. If we are sick or have an emergency we have services available to us. However, if we are sick and we can't get an appointment at the doctor, do we get frustrated? I know that I do. My expectations are to be able to get an appointment, get the medication that I need so I can start feeling better. And, I also can tell you that I'll wait until Monday morning if I'm sick all weekend before I go to the emergency room. My expectations are to see my doctor during regular office hours.

In the gospel lesson for this morning, the people gathered have certain expectations. The leaders of the synagogue and the crowds expectations are turned up-side-down when Jesus heals a woman on the Sabbath. In the text for today we have two groups of people. The leader's of the temple and the people that praised God after Jesus healed the woman.

The first group is the temple leaders who ridicule Jesus for healing on the Sabbath. Their expectations of the Sabbath were challenged. Jesus speaks to the leaders of the temple, calling them hypocrites. He throws the law at them because they were upset because he

healed on the Sabbath. Jesus asked them if in fact that it's okay for an ox or a donkey to be untied and given water on the Sabbath, then surely this woman who could not stand up straight, a descendant of Abraham, should be able to be unbound from Satan. Jesus does a play on words. If an animal can be unbound from the manger for a drink on the Sabbath, then the woman can be unbound from Satan after eighteen years of discomfort.

The second group is the people praising God and rejoicing for all of the great things that Jesus had done. This crowd probably came to the temple out of custom, but they may have come because they heard that there were going to be healings that day. Either way, they gathered or they praised God for the miracles that Jesus performed.

Both of these groups can teach us things about our own expectations. On Sunday mornings, we probably expect to come to worship. During worship we'll confess our sins, receive God's forgiveness, listen to scripture readings, participate in communion, and other ritual actions. We will expect to have conversation with certain people after the service. There are certain things we would expect to happen during our worship experience. What if during that worship experience we were interrupted? We would probably be upset...what we thought would happen isn't.

Jesus healed a woman when the leaders of the synagogue expected other ritual actions to occur. Their expectations were challenged. What would we do if someone who needed help came into the church on a Sunday morning asking for assistance in some way – it may be financial help, or it may be a ride somewhere, or it might be someone to talk to.

How would we react to this person? Would we be like the synagogue leaders and ridicule this person for interrupting our worship experience? Would we ask them to leave? Would we ask them to join us for worship and fellowship? Would we help them? What would we do?

I would hope that we would invite that person to join us in worship, in fellowship. I would hope that we could together put our own expectations on hold and listen to what God is asking us to do.

Many people know that Sunday morning is a good time to go to a church when they need help because it's full of Christians - people who love God and are willing to help those in need. We are those people. We have expectations and from time to time they may be challenged.

Now to the crowd...the crowd can teach us to rejoice in the unexpected. Praise God for the interruptions in our lives, even if at first they are more like a thorn in our side than a blessing. The crowd gathered at the temple heard that there might be healings at the synagogue that day, but no one knew for sure. They gathered at the temple for worship, ready for the usual rituals and Jesus healed the woman who could not stand up straight for 18 years. In doing so, the crowds didn't have their normal experience, but they embraced the things that Jesus was doing and saw God's work.

When our expectations are challenged who will we be like? Will we be like the leaders in the synagogue and ridicule those that are challenging our expectations? Or will we be like the crowds who saw God's work and praised him?

The peace of God which surpasses all human understanding be in your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus the Lord. Amen.