

Only in the last few years has story of the bent woman appeared in our lectionaries; I don't think I have ever known it to be taught in Sunday school. Here is the "Lectionary 21" Gospel for this Sunday, Luke 13:10-17.

Now Jesus was teaching in one of the synagogues on the sabbath. And just then there appeared a woman with a spirit that had crippled her for eighteen years. She was bent over and was quite unable to stand up straight.

When Jesus saw her, he called her over and said, "Woman, you are set free from your ailment." When he laid his hands on her, immediately she stood up straight and began praising God.

But the leader of the synagogue, indignant because Jesus had cured on the sabbath, kept saying to the crowd, "There are six days on which work ought to be done; come on those days and be cured, and not on the sabbath day."

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 manger, and lead it away to give it water? And ought not this woman, a daughter of Abraham whom Satan bound for eighteen long years, be set free from this bondage on the sabbath day?"

When he said this, all his opponents were put to shame; and the entire crowd was rejoicing at all the wonderful things that he was doing.

### ***Questions for Discussion***

Notice that the anonymous hunchbacked woman does not approach Jesus or ask for help. She is simply present in the congregation. Yet Jesus notices her and straightens her out. Is there a lesson here for us as we look around our communities and our churches? Are we able to spot those who need help but are unable or unwilling to ask for our aid?

Leaders of religious establishments — present-day clergy as well as ancient archisynagogoi — often find it difficult to "bend the rules." Here the leader argues that the work of healing could wait until after the Sabbath. Do you think he had a case?

"Daughter of Abraham" is an unusual title, which appears only here in the New Testament. It is a highly complementary term for this (formerly) nearly useless bent woman. If the Lord wanted to surprise you, what would you want him to call you?