

Sermon Sparkler for the 11th Sunday After Pentecost

Luke points to Jesus' teachings on both Sabbath and the dignity of women.

Two notes about Jesus' argument. First, Jesus comparing a woman to a beast of burden is on its face insulting. What he is doing is arguing from the lesser to the greater... but it still sounds pretty bad, so be aware of this dynamic when you preach. Second, it is clear Jesus is arguing with followers of Rabbi Hillel, because if he was arguing with followers of Rabbi Shammai, the head of the other main school of thought, they would have argued that the ox, in point of fact, ought to die in order to preserve the Sabbath.

But that's not the tradition with which Jesus is debating. Instead, he argues Sabbath is made for liberation; a good way to remember and celebrate freedom from slavery in Egypt is to free people from what binds them now! On balance is Sabbath more about rest, or liberation? In today's reading Jesus says liberation!

- ✎ What holds your folk captive? What aspect of Sabbath could bring them liberation? How can Jesus make that a reality in their life today?
- ✎ When it comes to the two sides of Sabbath—rest and liberation—which one convicts you this week? Which one energizes you? What happens if you add in Luther's gloss on Sabbath, that it is for hearing of the Word?
- ✎ What rules about time (6 days you can liberate, the 7th not so much) do we keep that might be leaving people crippled and waiting? In what ways do we say "stop!" "Not yet!" "It's too soon!" when Jesus is already ready to bring folk out of their suffering?