Sermon: **There are six days for work. So come and be healed on those days, not on the Sabbath”** (Luke 13.14)

Whom do you have the most sympathy for in this story? The woman, the synagogue official, Jesus?

[1] The Woman: Sympathy - crippled for 18 years = 6570 days, so bent all she could see was the ground.

What caused it we don’t know - Luke says ‘an evil spirit’. How many have a long term disability/illness?

[2] Synagogue Official: Moses and God, not him made the rules. Scribes told him how to apply them. He only tried to impose them. In any case after 6570 days – why not the day before? NB. For some Jews strict keeping of *God-given* laws was absolute – it was how you expressed being part of God’s people. If God’s law says don’t do X on the Sabbath, you did not do X, full stop. TEXT.

[3] Jesus: He was in a difficult position. Whether he healed her on the Sabbath or refused to, some would have complained. Sympathy for Jesus who was always on call, always on demand. Sympathy because of the attitude of the synagogue official. TEXT.

What do we learn from this story?

[1] There are many whose bodies, minds or spirits are broken. We see in Jesus a God who not only cares, but can and will do something about it. Not always a cure, but always a healing.

[2] It is easy to impose rules unthinkingly. What rules do we impose here? [Service starts at 10am; we sit to pray; we do not interrupt the preacher. Communion is on the first Sunday of the month; services last one hour (give or take)]. How would it be if one Sunday we began at 9.30? or the service lasted three hours?

Some rules seem trivial, others less so: the unwritten rules that those who gather the offering don’t walk off with it; that the church is not used as a brothel; the chairs are not free to take home!

There are house rules, school rules, work rules, road rules. Bewildering, especially if you do not share them.

How do we know what rules must be kept, and which can be broken?

[3] Jesus’ attitude does not abolish the Sabbath, but reinterprets the rules. What is at the heart of the rules about the Sabbath? Rest, focus on God, they are there to produce life and hope and joy.

Is not healing in God’s name a focus on God? Is it not a sign of life and hope and joy?

Above all, our story reminds us to be wary of using rules to avoid responsibility of our task of being God’s people showing God’s love to a broken world.