In the Gospel passage that we read earlier from Luke, a young teenage woman who was unable to stand up straight for the past 18 years came to ask Jesus for a healing. We don’t know the exact nature of her disability but just imagine that? 18 years of this young woman’s life at a time when she should be having all sorts of fun being a teenager!!! Perhaps even she would be a married woman by that age. That certainly not totally out of the question. But instead she came looking for Jesus….looking to be rescued and be healed. This young woman was probably ostracized by her community, perhaps even her own family, simply because she was different. This woman needed help but there was no one willing to stand up to be her advocate….that is until now when she met Jesus face-to-face.

Instead of focusing upon the healing of this woman, much of the attention was overshadowed by the fact that this incident of healing took place on a Sabbath day. This wasn’t the first time that Jesus and his disciples were being challenged for what they felt was the appropriate thing to do.

In another occasion, when Jesus was questioned for sending out his disciples to gather grains from the field on the Sabbath day, Jesus responded by saying, *"the sabbath was made for humankind, and not humankind for the sabbath; 28 so the Son of Man is lord even of the sabbath."[[1]](#footnote-1)* It became clear that **the Sabbath was meant to be a blessing and not a burden**. It shall be a time to dedicate, honor and recognize what God has done and more importantly what God is about to do. The spirit of honoring the Sabbath is intended to be a spiritual discipline rather than a mundane ritual or exercise. It’s not something that you “do” but rather something that you “live” in.

When Jesus was teaching in the synagogue, I’m sure he was aware of what day of the week it was. Then again, *the sabbath was made for humankind, and not humankind for the sabbath.* The woman came into the synagogue looking for help. When Jesus heard the commotion, he came over and called the woman out. She came for a physical healing but she got more than that. She also got a spiritual healing as well. Without asking about her background, Jesus knew that she has been suffering this way too long. Jesus simply laid out his hand and healed her immediately. She was set free from her physical bondage and as she departed, she began rejoicing, thanking, and praising God in telling others of what Jesus has done on her.

As always Jesus would turn an incident like this into a teaching moment for his disciples and the crowd. **What’s more important? Observing the legalist regulations that may no longer be relevant to its present time and place OR responding and extending God’s mercy to someone who’s in need of healing?**

Jesus liberated this woman of her bondage. He did what he had to do. Will worry about the consequences later on. This may seem radical for some but transforming and liberating for others. How many of us are willing to stand up and do what Jesus did, when situation presents itself? When we are the only one there who needed to do something or to say something about it? Can we afford to be complacent when we see injustice in the world that is taking place? Are we willing to swim against the current flow, defy the social norm, to stand up and to step out of our comfort zone in order to carry out justice by bring rescue and healing in this world?

This past week, many of us have seen footages of the devastating flood that’s happening down south in Louisiana and Mississippi. Over 30,000 people have been evacuated with 40,000 homes flooded and destroyed with over 30” of rain had fallen. Amazingly only a handful of people have unfortunately lost their lives if it were not for many unsung heroic rescue efforts that were being made by rescuers and volunteers.

One story that had gone viral across the internet was the rescue effort of this man – David Phung, who volunteered to search for victims who might be trapped inside their homes or vehicles. While they were on search and rescue mission, David and a couple of his friends, along with a TV crew, came across this woman who was trapped in her sinking vehicle with her dog. If it wasn’t for his spontaneous reaching and quick thinking, that woman and her dog would probably not be alive today. What struck me the most about this amazing miraculous story was that the demeanor that David handled himself with humility and humbleness after the rescue. They knew what their mission was and that God put them in the right place and at the right time. David put his own life on the line while trying to save and liberate those of others. He didn’t care what the challenges that they were up against. He did what he had to do in order to save that woman and her dog. Oh by the way, did I mention that all of this took place also on a Sunday – the traditional Sabbath Day!?!

David was just one of many heroes who have put their lives on the line in order to rescue and save others. Their faith and courage were quite extraordinary. They had to do what they had to do even if it might violate a few laws and protocols. When people like you and I take faith, have courage, and believe, God’s miracles happen beyond our human imagination and ordinary circumstances.

As we read in our opening Call to Worship earlier, the Psalmist reminded us that *God is our refuge and [our strength]. We will never be put to shame. God will deliver us and rescue us and God will incline His ears to us and He will save us. [because] God is our rock and our fortress.*[[2]](#footnote-2) God will call upon us to achieve extraordinary tasks that are beyond our human understanding. God will call upon us even when we are at the least expected or the least fit, yet we are the most qualified! God’s plan is not our plan!

As we read in the Old Testament passage earlier, we saw how God called out a young boy Jeremiah to be a liberator of God’s people. He was consecrated to be a prophet to the nation and its people, even before he was born. As Jeremiah described that God “knew” us before we were formed in our mother’s womb and has appointed us to our callings in this world.

The term “consecrated” means to be made “holy”. Now, holy does not mean that one is more special or more honorable or stands closer to God. “Holy” simply means that one is being “set apart” - set apart from the rest, to be different and chosen to be used by God. The central focus is on God and not on ourselves. By the virtue of our baptism, all of us are being “called” by God for a special purpose in order to participate in God’s mission here on earth. We don’t need to be a famous hero or to accomplish glorious rescues and save the lives of others. We don’t need to go around telling people what charitable acts of kindness that we have done. God knows and God sees what’s in our hearts and on our minds.

Just as we were reminded last week from the story of Eric Liddell of how he was given a special gift and was also being “called” by God for a special purpose. Thousands have been touched by his faith and testimony both on and off the field. Don’t forget, he was also a chemistry teacher in China after his athletic days were over. He used that gift to lead many Chinese to Christ as a missionary there, even though he only lived for 46 years. In the same way, all of us have also been consecrated by God and are being charged to do God’s will.

Often times we question our very own abilities that God has granted us. We downplay our ability to speak, about our age (of being too young or too old) or our lack of skills and talents, not having a job or earn enough income to carry out what God has challenged us to take on. The young Jeremiah used those as his excuses. He claimed that he was “only a boy” and didn’t know how to speak. Let someone else do all the work. We’ve heard that before from other notable biblical leaders have also used similar excuse as well...Moses, Isaiah and Ezekiel just to name a few.

Moses was called to lead the Israelites out of their slavery in Egypt against the mighty Pharoah, declared that he was *“slow in speech and tongue”.[[3]](#footnote-3)* Likewise, the prophet Isaiah deemed himself unworthy of being called by God. For “*I am a man of unclean lips and I live among a people of unclean lips.*”[[4]](#footnote-4) Why me, God? Why me? Choose somebody else. There are others who are more qualified than I am.

But out of all of the people out there, God has chosen YOU to be the right person, at the right time and for the right task….whatever that is. God knows what we are capable of doing and what we are not.

God does not call only those who are already equipped and qualified, but God will equip those who respond faithfully to their callings…. however unqualified they think they may be. **God is not so much interested in our abilities but rather our availabilities to do whatever God asks of us.** We are all missionary of God’s hope for the people. God will call upon us and challenge us to step out of our “comfort zone” and to carry out things that might seem extraordinary or even radical to some, but not so in accordance to God’s wisdom and will.

As in the case of Jeremiah, Isaiah, or Moses, **we shall never underestimate what God can do through us**. God reassured us that we shall go to speak to whomever God has sent before us, whether it’s the Pharoah of Egypt or our next door neighbors. God will put words in our mouths and will deliver us from all of our fears. God will put His hands upon us and touch our lips as agents of God’s grace and love in this world.

As the Psalmist reminded us that our “*God is our rock of refuge and a strong fortress. God will rescue us from the wicked, from the grasp of the unjust and the cruel of evil. For you, O Lord, are our hope and our trust.”[[5]](#footnote-5)* May God continue to shed grace and hope upon God’s people even in times of desperation and trials in life. May God continue to send us out into extraordinary places where God’s miracles are taking place and lives are being changed every day. May all thanks and praise be to God, our Rock, our Refuge and our Redeemer. Amen.

1. *Mark 2:27-28* [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. *Psalm 71:1-3* [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. *Exodus 4:10* [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. *Isaiah 6:5* [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
5. *Psalm 71:3-5* [↑](#footnote-ref-5)