

Open for Business

Jeremiah 1:4-10; Hebrews 12:18-29; Luke 13:10-17; Psalm 71:1-7 8-26-07

The other day a colleague of mine called, and, in the course of our conversation, we shared the direction our sermons were taking for this Sunday. She is a bit younger than I, so, when I told her, that, upon reading the scripture from the gospel of Luke, I was thinking about blue laws, she asked, “What’s a ‘blue law?’”

Do you remember a time when many states had “blue laws?” Some still do. As I child I remember that no stores or places of business were open on Sunday. There was no place to go but church and that was where we were expected to be. These were also known as “Sunday closing laws.” In many places car dealerships and package stores are still closed on Sunday.

These laws go back a long way. In doing a little reading about them I learned that they were “legislation regulating public and private conduct, especially laws relating to Sabbath observance. The term was originally applied to the 17th century laws of the theocratic New Haven colony (guess where that was located)”; they were called blue laws after the blue paper on which they were printed.” (*Columbia Encyclopedia*, 6th edition, 2001-05) This last fact is debated, it is also thought that they were called “blue laws” because they were rigid moral codes developed by and enforced by rigid moral folks known as “blue-noses.”

Some of these laws in the colony of Connecticut were:

- The judges shall determine controversies without a jury.
- No one shall be a freeman, or give a vote, unless he is converted, and a member in full communion of one of the Churches allowed in the Dominion.
- Each freeman shall swear by the blessed God to bear true allegiance to this Dominion, and that Jesus Christ is the only King.
- No food or lodging shall be afforded to a Quaker, Adamite, or other Heretic.
- No Priest shall abide in this Dominion; he shall be banished and suffer death on his return. Priests may be seized by anyone without a warrant.
- No one shall run on the Sabbath day, or walk in his garden or elsewhere, except reverently to and from meeting.
- No one shall travel, cook, make beds, sweep house, cut hair, or shave on the Sabbath day.
- No woman shall kiss her child on the Sabbath or feasting day.
- No one shall read Common-Prayer, keep Christmas or saints-days, make minced pies, dance, play cards, or play on any instrument of music, except the drum, trumpet and the Jews-harp.
- Adulterers shall be punished by death.
- A wife shall be deemed good evidence against her husband.
- Married persons must live together or be imprisoned. (Wikipedia)

There are countless other laws that were in other states at other times.

Considering our scripture reading from the gospel of Luke for this morning, we must realize that there were forms of “blue laws” in existence before and during the time of Jesus. And, he broke one.

In mercy and love he reached out and healed someone who had struggled with a life of pain. In compassion he cured someone on the Sabbath, the day of rest. As we know, one of the Ten Commandments says that we are to “Remember the Sabbath and keep it holy.”

Jesus knew this. He knew the Hebrew Bible well, he was a Jew. He was a teacher. And, yet, he knew that every now and then there came a time when he had to be “open for business” even if his actions violated a man-made rule.

All through his brief public life, he opposed rules that were too rigid and that never took the human condition into consideration. He was that new wine always sloshing around in those old rigid wineskins seeking a way to grow and extend the Kingdom of God on earth. To do this, senseless rules restricting the will and way of God were broken, revised and/or set aside.

What better day and in what better place should a healing occur? It was the Sabbath, the day when devout people enter their respective houses of God to try and sense the presence of their Creator. What better place to be when that healing connection happens? The church is meant to be a place of healing, a place where we stretch toward greater wholeness and an oneness with God. The church is the place where we bring our varieties of brokenness hoping to hear a word, a hymn, a prayer that will help us back into a sense of being more complete humans. It should be a place where the love and care of God are expressed to us regardless of the time or day.

If we have a sense of God’s love for us within the walls of our places of worship, we are enabled to take it with us into the world and to share it with all we encounter no matter who they are or where they are on life’s journey.

And that is what the message is all about that is contained within the pages of our Bible, from the days of the prophets, to the days of the letters written by Paul and others, to the pages of our treasured gospels. We are reminded over and over again that we all have a role in the process of making the world a better place for all, everyone. We are reminded that God’s love and caring and healing are available to all, in all places and at all times. Man-made restrictions on God and God’s power cannot contain the spread of the “good news” as we know it; the “good news” that we all are loved, cherished and worthy of God’s love as revealed to us through Jesus Christ.

-- Amen