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There was a woman who came to church to listen to Jesus preach. We don't know how old she was, but we do know she had been crippled for 18 years. For 18 years, she was bent over at the waist, staring at her own feet, staring into the gutter, unable to stand up straight. So she comes to the temple to hear what Jesus has to say.

She doesn't ask Jesus to heal her.

She doesn't make a fuss in order to draw attention to herself.

She doesn't do anything but come and listen.

And then suddenly Jesus calls her over to him and heals her...right there, in front of everybody...in front of the other people who had come to hear him preach...in front of the leaders of the synagogue who were always trying to catch Jesus doing something wrong...and what's even worse, is that Jesus heals her on the Sabbath, which technically counted as work, which technically you were not supposed to do because of the 3rd commandment, which we all know is to honor the Sabbath day and keep it holy, which very few people do today anyway.

So, technically Jesus is wrong for what he did. Technically, the leaders of the synagogue are right, because they have literally just caught Jesus in the act of breaking the 3rd commandment...he has worked on the Sabbath, he has broken a commandment, now they have him! Their fingers itch to grab Jesus and throw him in jail or, even better, kill him.

Except, they have forgotten one thing.

Or maybe they haven't forgotten...maybe they just haven't been listening....because only three chapters before, only two days earlier, a lawyer asked Jesus what the greatest commandment was, and Jesus answered, "Love the Lord your God with all your heart, mind and soul and love your neighbor as yourself. All of the other laws and the things the prophets say hang on this commandment." In his answer, Jesus didn't mention the Sabbath. Not once.

Because, for Jesus, healing this woman of her crippling disease was his way of honoring the Sabbath. For Jesus, healing this woman was his way of loving the neighbor. For Jesus, healing this woman was his way of illustrating that he loves his Father with all his heart and mind and soul. For Jesus, healing this woman in no way shape or form breaks the 3rd commandment. But the leaders of the synagogue see it differently. And they are outraged that he would so brazenly break one of God's commandments, right there, in God's own house.

So, the question is...where's the offense?

Did Jesus break the law or didn't he?

Technically, yes. Jesus broke the law. But he broke the old law. He offended the old school. He insulted the old traditions.

But Jesus keeps the new law. He upholds the new commandment that he has just given...to love God with everything you are and to love your neighbor as yourself. And Jesus says he has come not to destroy the old law, but to fulfill it, and he does this by embodying love for the neighbor. Like healing this crippled woman.

So why are the leaders so disgusted and offended by this?

Because they've never been crippled like that woman has.

They've never been so disfigured and twisted that they were forced to stare into the gutter for 18 years, not able to look up and see the trees or the stars or the clouds in the sky. They've never been ridiculed and ostracized and made fun of for being a freak. They've never had their world collapse like that woman did. They've never seen everything they've worked so hard to create go up in smoke. Healing on the Sabbath is offensive only to those who've never been broken. But for that woman, Jesus' offense is her salvation.

She finds her life suddenly restored. She finds her body healed and aligned, just like it was created to be. She finds acceptance again, and a reinstated place in society. She is no longer a freak; children no longer throw rocks at her; grownups no longer point at her and laugh. She no longer has to beg for food by the city gates. Her dignity is restored, she holds her head high again, she holds her chin up. She looks up and marvels at the trees and the sun and the moon and the stars and the clouds. She experiences resurrection before death. She encounters salvation...

...all because Jesus decided she was worth the risk.

Jesus decides it's worth it to offend people who lack compassion. Jesus decides it's worth it to offend people who defend ancient law and ignore his embodiment of his new law of mercy and love. *Jesus decides it's worth it to offend people who put a higher value on the day of the week than the value of a human life.*

Jesus comes to earth to rebuild the ruins of our lives. Jesus comes to earth to piece back together hope that has been shattered into a million pieces. Jesus comes to earth to calm the ones who are shaking and trembling. Jesus comes to earth to fulfill all those beautiful things that Isaiah is talking about...just like he did for that broken and crippled woman...

...he has come to make your bones strong...to make you flourish like a watered garden...to bring light to the dark, gloomy places in your lives...to repair things that have been torn apart. Jesus knows the world will find this offensive, and he knows it will cost him his life....but he knows it's worth it. He knows you're worth it.

The ones that Jesus offends are the ones who eventually give him the death penalty. Jesus only offends the ones he calls hypocrites...the ones who point the finger at him for healing that broken woman but fail to see the brokenness in their own lives. But the ones who are humble enough to admit their own crippling failures and brokenness can thank God that Jesus dares to offend the world in order to lift their eyes from staring into the gutter to gazing at the stars. Jesus is willing to offend anybody in order to bring you eternal health and salvation, anytime, on any day.