

These days if an artist, or a celebrity, wants to make a dramatic impact at the end of their performance, they drop the mic! Perhaps you have seen this done after a lip sync battle featured on the Tonight Show. The always funny Melissa McCarthy did this very thing after a hilarious rendition of the song Colors of the Wind from the Disney movie Pocahontas. If you didn't see it, maybe you are aware that at the end of a great show stand-up comedians love to celebrate with a distinctive move! They drop the mic. Boom! In comedy lingo, this means they have "killed it," done a fantastic job, they've set the place on fire. Left the audience in stitches. Oddly enough, the opposite of killing is bombing. If you bomb, no one laughs. If you bomb, you don't drop the mic.

Dropping the mic has been around for almost 40 years or so. Eddie Murphy dropped the mic in 1983 at the end of a stand-up special. Dave Chappelle and Chris Rock then made it a part of their routines. Apparently, Adam Scott did something similar at the end of a speech on *Parks and Recreation*. The funny thing was that Adam Scott was not doing stand-up comedy. He was addressing a group of students gathered together for a model UN.

To close the Tony Awards, Neil Patrick Harris didn't just drop the mic -- he tossed it. Years ago, after singing at the MTV Video Music Awards, Beyoncé did a drop and at the same time revealed that she was pregnant. In every case, you drop the mic when you think you've nailed it, killed it -- done a fantastic job. The mic hits the floor, and you walk away victorious.

In today's gospel reading, you might say that Jesus nails it. He's teaching in one of the Galilean synagogues on the Sabbath day. He's not singing or doing stand-up comedy, but he's drawing a crowd anyway. Just then, during the middle of his routine, as he is preaching in the synagogue, a woman appears -- she has a spirit that has crippled her for 18 long years, leaving her bent over and unable to stand up straight. So, Jesus calls her over and says, "Woman, you are set free from

your ailment." He lays his hands on her, and immediately she stands up straight and begins to praise God!

Jesus is victorious over the crippling spirit, and to accentuate his triumph he drops the mic. Boom! But...not everyone in the crowd that day is impressed. The leader of the synagogue is indignant because Jesus has broken a religious law by healing on the day of rest. The leader says to the crowd, "There are six days on which work ought to be done; come on those days and be cured, and not on the Sabbath day." He scolds the crowd for seeking healings on the Sabbath, and criticizes Jesus for performing his work of healing.

Jesus responds by picking up the mic and saying, "You hypocrites! Does not each of you on the Sabbath untie his ox or his donkey from the manger, and lead it away to give it water?" The people respond by nodding their heads yes, admitting that they do this. "And ought not this woman," asks Jesus, "a daughter of Abraham whom Satan bound for 18 long years, be set free from this bondage on the Sabbath day?" Again, the people in the crowd nod in agreement, realizing that he's right. The opponents of Jesus are immediately put to shame, and the entire crowd rejoices at all the wonderful things that he is doing. Jesus has nailed it in that Galilean synagogue, he has set the place on fire, and he achieved a complete victory over his opponents. Once again, he drops the mic.

Ok, so that may not have actually been Jesus' self-assessment, but it certainly was the assessment of the crowd that day. Wow! He just dropped the mic. BOOM! He killed it! They were delighted. Sabbath day or not, there's nothing wrong with celebrating a healing and a victory over hypocrisy. When a crippled woman is healed, shame on anyone who gets hung up on religious regulations about Sabbath-keeping. Jesus knows that God's focus is on the needs of the woman, not on the letter of the law. In a similar way, we should not be timid about

doing God's work -- in particular, freeing the oppressed and speaking the truth to power. As Christians, we can follow Jesus boldly and drop the mic. Boom!

We can begin by liberating oppressed people, as Jesus did when he healed the woman afflicted by a crippling spirit. Although Luke doesn't tell us the exact nature of her affliction, we certainly know people today who are burdened by life and who cannot stand up straight: Abused women, unemployed men, substance abusers, teenagers caught up in sex trafficking, children who struggle to be successful at school.

For over 33 years, members of Calvary Presbyterian Church in Alexandria, Virginia, have put time and energy into a tutoring program called Eagle's Wings, which supports the students of the school next door to them, Mount Eagle Elementary. The students come from 40 countries and speak 28 languages, and many are needy, disadvantaged, or have struggles with the English language. The members of Calvary know that these children are burdened by their schoolwork. It is hard for students to stand up straight when they cannot understand their assignments and participate in class.

So, church members volunteer to tutor on Wednesday nights, and they have established relationships with the students at the school. One-on-one pairing between tutors and students seems to be the greatest benefit in the Eagle's Wings program. A member of the faculty observes that many of the children often lack the confidence to speak up in class. "They come to Calvary and get encouragement and much needed reinforcement," she says. "The next day, when the teacher asks a question in class, they may be ready to raise their hands." Her conclusion: "It's made a huge difference."

One-on-one tutoring is a critical intervention in the lives of needy and disadvantaged students. It is in line with the work that Jesus did to free the oppressed and bring good news to the poor. Christians who serve in this way are

helping children to, as the Prophet Isaiah declares, “stand up straight, mount up with wings like eagles, run and not be weary, walk and not faint.”

After serving in this way, tutors can proudly drop the mic. Boom!

Christians can also speak the truth to power, as Jesus did when he blasted people who objected to his work of healing on the Sabbath. A few years ago, a similar kind of truth-telling was done at an ELCA Church Wide Assembly in New Orleans. While every Lutheran may not have agreed with the decision, clergy members and lay leaders passed two resolutions calling on the US government to end all financial and military aid to Israel, until Israel complied with internationally recognized human rights standards and froze construction on occupied Palestinian land.

In our Affirmation of Baptism service found in the ELW, one of the five promises we make as Lutherans is to ‘work for justice and peace throughout the earth,’” said Jan Miller, ELCA member and a leader from the Rocky Mountain Synod. “By adopting these resolutions, the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America is taking an important step to ensure that we are not profiting from, or complicit in, injustice in the Holy Land and elsewhere.” Both clergy and voting members spoke the truth to power, stressing the importance of taking a stand against injustice and supporting the fight for freedom, justice, and equality in the Holy Land and around the world.

On the whole, our Christian tradition encourages us to be law-abiders and commandment-keepers. Jesus himself said that he came not to abolish the law, but to fulfill it. But the apostle Paul made it clear that "the whole law is summed up in a single commandment, 'You shall love your neighbor as you love yourself.'" And Jesus was clear that his mission was to bring good news to the poor, release to the captives, and freedom to the oppressed. In our Gospel story this morning Jesus

asks, "Ought not this woman be set free from this bondage on the Sabbath day?" The answer in the time of Jesus was "yes," and it is still "yes" today.

In a synagogue in Galilee, Jesus freed the oppressed and spoke the truth to power. His actions healed a crippled woman and put his opponents to shame. Today, Jesus challenges us to do the very same thing, with the boldness that he showed to the crowd that day, and to the leader of the synagogue. Maybe our mission is to tutor disadvantaged children, or to assist battered women, or to fight sex trafficking, or to work with substance abusers, or to take a stand with refugees seeking asylum, or to support pregnant teenagers, or to show care and unconditional love to members of the LGBTQIA community, or to participate in creation care.

Jesus constantly, and consistently, announced the coming kingdom in words and deeds that ran counter to the people's expectations for the kingdom of God. He came from Galilee, from where no prophet comes. He talked with a Samaritan -- and a woman, which no decent male Jew would do. He ate with tax collectors and sinners. He welcomed children into his presence. He was accused of being a glutton and a drunkard. He directly confronted the religious leaders and their understanding of Sabbath Law. Eventually he died as an accursed criminal on a cross.

Like Jesus, we can take bold stands as we seek to free the oppressed and speak the truth to power. The good news is that these actions lead to celebration, not condemnation; to rejoicing, instead of rejection. Luke tells us that the healed woman immediately began praising God and the entire crowd rejoiced at all the wonderful things that Jesus was doing. And whenever we seek to serve and help others as our Lord calls us to do, like Jesus we too can drop the mic and walk away victorious. And thanks be to God for that. Amen.