

Do We Always Listen
Luke 13:10-17 & Hebrews 12:5-7; 11-13
August 22, 2010

In Luke Alva read the parable of the crippled woman who was healed on the Sabbath. We know from the reading that it was wrong to work on the Sabbath. It is said that the religious leaders saw healing as part of a doctor's profession, and practicing one's profession on the Sabbath was prohibited. The synagogue leader could not see beyond the law to Jesus' compassion in healing this crippled woman. Jesus shamed him and the other leaders by pointing out their hypocrisy. They would untie their animals and care for them, but they refused to rejoice when a human being was freed from Satan's bondage. Jesus was teaching in a synagogue on the Sabbath. He looked up and saw a woman who was bent over. Her world was defined by the small piece of ground around her. She could not move freely, meet another person face to face, or look up to see the salvation – the healing – that was coming to her in the person of Jesus Christ. Jesus was teaching, he noticed the woman, and he spoke words of healing to her Woman, you are free from your sickness. And after he touched her, she immediately stood up straight and began praising God. Despite the protests of the synagogue leader, Jesus had broken the rules and put human welfare over religious obligation. He then went back to what he had been doing - teaching. See the Pharisees wanted everyone to pay attention to the rules. They said come back tomorrow when it is all right for healings to be performed. In other words wait a longer. The religious leader isn't mean – spirited; he was just trying to press his case for obedient faithfulness. Both the religious leader and Jesus want to observe the Sabbath but the problem is they don't agree on how to do it. Jesus says the time for salvation isn't tomorrow; it's right now, no matter what day it is. In fact maybe the Sabbath is the perfect time for healing. We are called

to love Jesus and to love the way Jesus loved, it's clear then that this story gives us a model of what it means to be the church – the Body of Christ – not just on Sunday but every day.

The passage in Hebrews we read about God's discipline and his love. Do we always listen? Are we sometimes pre-occupied that we do not always hear what was said? Last week Alva made reference to her children and when asked to do something they would say "in a minute". My children would always say, "okay I will". Then of course I would wait and wait. I felt that I was waiting forever especially if it was something they didn't like or want to do. Then as a parent the decision would be should I punish them if they didn't do what I wanted them to do or just let it go and do it myself. That was usually a hard decision for me to make and also if I did decide to punish them then I had to be able to carry out the punishment. I never knew who I was hurting more them or me when I did punish them.

In verse five we are asked how does the Lord discipline us? My study bible said that God disciplines us in many ways; sometimes it may be to punish us for our unfaithfulness. Some people believe that God uses sinful people as instruments of discipline. Some believe that our own inner struggles against sin, maybe a punishment. And then some believe that their own personal hardships are a punishment for there unfaithfulness. Occasionally some believe that discipline may come in the broader context of physical suffering. In the Old Testament we learned that the Israelites suffered for 40 years in the desert. When they became discourage they demonstrate their unfaithfulness by the worshipping of false idols. Then in the New Testament we learned Paul received a thorn in his flesh for being unfaithful (2 Cor. 12:7).

Then in verse eleven we read that discipline produce righteousness and peace? Divine discipline produces righteousness and peace in those who are trained by it. If we respond rightly to God when we live righteously, which is also known as correct living and we live in peace,

then whole-ness and harmony will be our result. When we under-going some kind of suffering which is not always pleasant at the time for us, we develop character qualities which lead us to Christian maturity, a stronger belief in God.

Who loves his child more - the parent who allows the child to do what will harm the child, or the parent who corrects, trains, and even punishes the child to help them to learn what is right? So it's never pleasant to be corrected and disciplined by God, but we know that God's discipline is a sign of his deep love for us. When God corrects you, use it as proof of his love, and ask him what he is trying to teach you.

We may respond to this discipline in several ways. (1) We can accept it with resignation or (2) we can accept it with self-pity, thinking we really don't deserve it, (3) We can be angry and resentful toward God, or (4) we can accept it gratefully as the appropriate response we owe a loving father. We all know people in each of those responses.

God is not only a disciplining parent but also a demanding coach who pushes us to our limits and requires our lives to be disciplined. Although we may not feel strong enough to push on to victory we will be able to accomplish it as long as we follow Christ and draw on his strength. Then we can use our growing strength to help those around us who are weak and struggling. Sometimes I get the opportunity to talk extensively to people who suffer from substance abuse of some kind. In the beginning they would say to me and the others who were also there that God hated them, so therefore they hated God. I would respond that God always loved them but that they just either never believed it or just didn't understand. I would say to them that all they had to do was ask for forgiveness and believe in the God of their understanding and that they would then see changes in their lives. This would be hard for some and easy for others, but once it happened then they did begin to see the positive changes in their lives. But no

matter what happens now to them in their lives they have at least experienced that they are loved now and always. They also know that whatever to them in their lives that it is not a punishment from God, but that it is just life and they must learn to deal with it. This is very rewarding to everyone who witnesses it.

We must not live with only our own survival in mind. Others will follow our example, and we have a responsibility to them if we are living for Christ, as we claim to be. Does your example make it easier for others to believe and follow Christ and to mature in him? Or would those who follow you end up confused and misled?

Let us always remember “to love, Jesus, and to love the way Jesus Loved.” Henri Nouwen. Amen