

Sermon Transcript for September 26, 2021

Grace, mercy and peace be to you from our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. Amen.

So in our Gospel lesson, we have what seems to be two separate ideas going on or two separate stories being told. First, there is the actual events of Jesus healing a man who has dropsy. Now I'm not completely certain what dropsy is, nor are they able to describe it. It seems to be a, I don't know, a condition that affects the body so that you appear out of proportion. That something's going on with your water retention or your blood flow or something like that and it makes you appear odd and you have difficulty with your functions, is what we've been able to figure out.

Now, normally this Sabbath celebration, the breaking of the fast, gathering together on the Sabbath, this was meant to be a communal meal that is a celebratory event that all are welcome to. And so Jesus is found eating with the Pharisees. Not only does he eat with tax collectors and sinners who really want to hear the grace and mercy and forgiveness of sins. He also eats with the Pharisees who are trying to trap Him and trick Him and kill Him.

So Jesus sits with those that desire to be with Him and with those that seem to be His enemies. He's equally generous with all because He wants all people, no matter where they stand on the spectrum of politics or theology or anything, He wants them all to know Him and His salvation. So He willingly goes to the Pharisees to eat, even though they're watching Him carefully to see what He's going to do.

So they have this man who has got dropsy and they seem to be deriding him, not treating him with respect, and Jesus looks to them and says, "Is it lawful to heal on the Sabbath or not?" Now this is a pretty simple question. It's a yes or no question, but the Pharisees refuse to answer it because they know the answer is yes but they don't want to give Jesus any fodder to prove them wrong. So they just shut up and don't say anything.

So Jesus goes ahead and heals the guy and sends him on his way. And then He goes and doubles down on the Pharisees and says, "Look, which of you having a son or an ox that has fallen into a well on the Sabbath will not immediately pull him out?" Now that word immediately pull him out is a little bit... They would immediately go to try to pull the animal out of the well, but really getting an ox out of the well in those days was a day long process because, I mean, you had to dig a ramp to get up and you had to have the whole village come. An ox is a heavy beast of burden. One guy's not just going to just casually pull him out of the ditch nor are two or three. It takes a long time and a lot of people to pull this ox out of the well. And it is allowed in the Law. It is specifically stated, "If your ox falls in a well, you can get it out." And the reason you need to do that is one, the ox is your livelihood. And two, if you don't do it right away, the ox has a strong possibility of dying and there goes your livelihood. So yes, you desperately want to get that ox out as soon as you possibly can but in doing so, you work harder than you probably ever did the entire week beforehand or after. And that's allowed and you would not, according to the Old Testament Law, be breaking the Sabbath.

So if you can do that, doesn't it make sense also that you can heal and have compassion on and care for someone on the Sabbath? Elsewhere Jesus says that Sabbath was made for man, not man for the Sabbath. In other words, the Sabbath day is meant for us to be refreshed and restored. Not for it to be a legalistic burden upon ourselves that we feel judged or guilty every time we do something or think, wonder, "Have we broken the Sabbath?" It's meant to be a day of refreshment, a day of building up a nourishment in the Word of God, so that we might be rested and restored and prepared to deal with the chaos that is out there in that world for

the rest of the week that we are going to live in it. And it's like we get this little miniature section of paradise, where we get to dwell in peace and joy and soak up the Word of God so that we might be strengthened and nourished.

And then we have Jesus going on with this parable, as He's noticing how people are sitting. And it's kind of like, where do these two things fit together? But all of this is about nourishment so that you might be ready to face the world out there. And really, I think what Jesus is talking about here is that we really honestly need to think about how we treat one another and how we show respect to one another and how we think of ourselves.

Now the world today with the riots going on and the woke environment and the critical race theory and all these things. I know I don't often get political, but this is not political, this is relational. This is spiritual. The goal of all of these things seems to be to drive a wedge between people groups. Between blacks and whites. Between the rich and the poor. White privilege and not white privilege. And even coming down to the vaccine and the masks. Sometimes you can't even have a conversation if there are strong opinions on one side and the other, and it's as if you... If you say you're vaccinated, then some people are going to beat you up for that, "Didn't you know about this, that, and the other thing?" If you're unvaccinated, people are going to beat you up for being unvaccinated and it's driving a wedge so that we are afraid. Afraid to speak anything for fear that we're going to be judged by each other and that is not what we need to have happen in our church and as Christians. We are to act humbly with each other. We are to pray for one another. We're to consider everyone more righteous than ourselves, so that we might be able to build each other up. That we might have an attitude of humility amongst ourselves, knowing that possibly we might be wrong in our opinions. But always submitting ourselves to the Word of God and submitting ourselves to each other, that we might love each other. If we as a church and as a Christian community cannot be able to speak to one another or are afraid or create divisions within our own group here, we are going to be unable to bear witness to the love of God out in a society that desperately needs it.

We are called to be salt and light in this world and the only way we do that is by receiving the Word of God with humility, knowing that God's Word is the thing that gives us hope and comfort. Knowing that God's Word is what gives us our identity in Christ. And there is no distinction in the church of God, because all have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God. So we're all in the same boat. We are all sinners in need of the forgiveness of God, no matter what our particular sin might be or our particular proclivity might be. We all are in the need of the grace of God. And so there is no separation, whatever the religious or color of skin, your race, your economic status, your political status, none of that matters here. Your vaccination status, none of that matters here, because here, the Word of God is what we come for. The Word of God is what strengthens us and nourishes us and it gives us that unity. We are united in Christ. We may be divided in some of the other areas, but we are united in Christ and that is more important than any of the other things are going on out in the world. Because we are unified under one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all people. But we're called to speak in humility and we've all seen people out there who claim to be Christians who have these placards out there condemning one group or another or are yelling on the street corners, all in all making a bad name for Christians. Who are arrogant in the way that they speak. Who create conflict whenever they speak about the Word of God, who feel like they must force somebody to listen to what the Word of God has to say.

And that is not how we are to speak of Christ and it's not how we are called to bear witness to the love of God. We're called to speak in humility. We're called to pray. To interact with each other on a first person basis. One on one. It may feel good to make some statement on Facebook, just blurted out there, but it doesn't do any good, especially if it's done in harshness or in condemnation, because we don't know how it's interpreted. So we must speak and act and use all the media that we have very carefully and consciously. Is what we are saying, is what we are writing, is how we are acting, does this communicate the love of God? Does this communicate humility? Trusting that God will be the one who speaks the truth in people's lives.

You may think that somebody's absolutely wrong, and they may be absolutely wrong, but you can be right and say it wrong and accomplish absolutely nothing. And so being right is only half the battle. Speaking right is what needs to follow afterwards and to speak right requires much humility, requires a listening ear, being ready to hear reproach and being ready and willing to allow the Word of God to dwell in us because we need to be a faithful messenger, in other words. And the only way we can be faithful messengers is if we know what the message really is. And the only way we really know what the message is, is if we know very clearly and have been taught and continue to study the Word of God. If we cease in our personal devotions, if we stop praying on a regular basis, if we don't constantly desire to learn more about what God's Word is, we are not fulfilling God's desire for us. We have been called and we are called to walk in a manner worthy of that calling with humility and gentleness, with patience, bearing with one another in love.

Now that means bearing with one another here in love so that our differences and differences of opinions might be submitted to the Word of God and put under His grace. But it also means bearing with one another in love out there. Loving our enemy. Loving the person that seems to be speaking against Christianity. Loving the person who seems to desire for struggle and strife rather than peace and unity.

We are called by God to bear witness to His faithfulness in our lives. He was meek and gentle. He spoke the truth, He was very clear about that. He did not allow lies to be maintained. He did speak the truth, and He did challenge those who spoke falsehood but He did it in a spirit of gentleness with the goal of bringing them to repentance and bringing them back to the love of God.

We are called to do the same and to bear His love, His grace and His mercy to a world that really doesn't often want to hear what we have to say, but there are some. There are some that the Spirit has been working in, the Spirit has been digging in the soil of their lives and getting them ready to receive and hear the Word of God. Are you ready to plant that seed or to water that seed with gentleness, with humility, with joy? That is your calling.

I pray that you might consider it faithful, each and every day ask God, "How might I bear witness to Your grace and mercy in my life out of joy or the salvation that You have given to me? I know I don't deserve any praise or honor. It is only You that is working within me." And so let us act with humility and grace and trust God to do the work in and through us to and for the society at large.

May His grace and mercy and peace be and abide with you always, now and forevermore unto life everlasting. Amen.