

HT 2016 August 21  
Luke 13:10-17 and Isaiah

The first year I was in seminary I was asked to be at a funeral for the mother in law of my second cousin....ok...you don't have to remember that part....and of course in Ohio one does not need to be clergy to do a funeral...so good friends, funeral directors, anyone can do a funeral

I agreed and spent hours praying, preparing, and composing

Things were moving along pretty well when the family asked the morning of the funeral to play a cd at the beginning...I did not know the song but I liked the title and so I said sure.

The song was by a young man rather new to the music scene by the name of Josh Grobin and the song was "You raise me up" do any of you know that song? The chorus goes

You raise me up so I can stand on mountains

Your raise me up to walk on stormy seas

I am strong when I am on your shoulders

You raise me up to more than I can be

As I listened the Holy Spirit spoke to me and convicted me that I needed to change the focus of this dear one's funeral....and so I did....that was many years ago and I hadn't thought about it for ages

I love the slong...I love the message...but that was years ago

And yet, after reading today's and the commentaries and praying about what to say...that memory and that song came back to me in a powerful way

Here we have a two part story.... Part one, the story of a woman who had been crippled, bent over, seeing the world from a very different perspective....she went to the temple that day we aren't sure why...perhaps she went to worship maybe she knew Jesus would be there and knew of his miraculous healings...the reason doesn't matter; she was there.

Now remember that in the time of Jesus, people with physical challenges or disease were seen to be unclean....the problems were often believed to be a judgement and so this woman had most likely been outcast and ostracized for 18 years

But Jesus did not see her that way Jesus did not judge Jesus saw her as a daughter of Abraham; a beloved child of God so Jesus healed her and she straightened up ...he raised her up from her bent over most likely painful position physically but also brought her to a joyous thankful heart

We are told that she immediately began praising God....who can blame her? Wouldn't you? And I suspect some of here words of praise came from psalm bless the lord o my soul and all that is within me bless his holy name

We will get back to this healing in a moment but here's where part two comes in . A man in the temple was not a happy camper Jesus was breaking a rule of moses the third commandment to be precise he was healing on the Sabbath when the commandment clearly said to remember the Sabbath and keep it holy

The man was right! It was the law...but Jesus as Jesus always does went to the heart of the matter Jesus knew that the law was to help with the bigger picture that while laws and rules are important, God's most important law is to love so Jesus gave the example of everyone who was breaking that commandment by caring for their livestock...

Hopefully his explanation helped those listening to understand that the loving thing to do was to heal

Observing the Sabbath was intended to be a good thing..a gift from God in Genesis we are told that after making all of creation God rested...and the third commandment was a huge gift to those who had been a slave in Egypt a day of rest a day to renew

Of course in 2016 that has changed drastically...most of our lives continue at a break neck pace no matter what day of the week it is so this law did have an important purpose but Jesus was saying that mercy, or we might say love, creates, transforms and restores therefore the absolute law is love and mercy or love in this case would over ride the law.

C.S. Lewis was a Christian writer in the 1940s who began his adult life as an atheist and whose works are still studied today...in his book Mere Christianity Lewis says that love is not a state of feeling but of the will...that love is not always a noun...but often needs to be a verb that we can choose to love

Isn't that profound/ we can choose to love no matter how rotten someone has been to us..no matter whether we like a person or not...love can be..should be a choice and in God's absolute law should always be a choice.

But it gets better...Lewis also goes on to explain that the more we practice love or loving gestures the more we will actually come to love the person in question

Listen to this quote "The worldly man treats certain people kindly because he likes them; the Christian, trying to treat everyone kindly, finds himself liking more and more people as he goes on - including people he could not even imagine himself liking at the beginning " (1)

Sadly, this apparently also works in the opposite way the more cruel you are, the more you hate; the more cruel and hateful you will become

"Good and evil both increase at compound interest. That is why the little decisions we make every day are of such infinite importance" (2)

I have seen this played out a time or two in my career. I have not done any marriage counseling here at Holy Trinity so I feel safe sharing that in other congregation where couples were in struggle...I shared this advice... to act as if you love the other not to wait for the feeling but to act in loving and forgiving ways and in many, many cases the feeling will follow the action

This isn't just true in marriage but in all our relationship in all our dealings with others

If we few others with suspicion and distrust for whatever reason, and act accordingly we will find more and more reasons to be hate filled

But if we embrace God's absolute law of love and act in loving ways...we will love more and more and the more we love the more we will receive love

So don't wait for the other person to make the first move be loving reach out to heal or forgive act as if you already have the feeling and let's see what happens

I think that's what Josh Grobin's song is all about....certainly it is about how Jesus lifts us up makes us better and stronger helps us face whatever life throws at us

But perhaps more importantly it calls us to be that for others when we are at our best when we choose to love when we act as if love has already happened we will be lifting others just as surely as Jesus raised the crippled woman

I've asked Kristy to give us a bit of that song so that we can listen and contemplate the huge impact this can have on our lives and the lives of those around us...

Jesus raises all of us up Jesus stands with us and then Jesus calls us to go and do likewise

Kristy sings

Let us pray

1 and 2 C.S. Lewis, Mere Christianity 1943