

In 1969, a ten-year-old boy named Jacob suddenly became stricken with a mysterious disorder of the autoimmune system. First his knees began to buckle and swell, and finally he couldn't walk anymore. Jacob was rushed to the hospital where the doctors tried to determine what was wrong with him. His parents had been divorced the year before, and as an only child it had hit Jacob pretty hard.

Both his parents were devastated by his illness. Although Jacob was in his mother's custody, his father asked if he could visit him regularly at the hospital and she agreed. The divorce had been bitter, but his mother was grateful for someone with whom to share the burden—both physical and emotional—that she allowed Jacob's father liberties she normally would never have permitted. In fact, they agreed that a united front was vital and that they needed to let go of their differences for the sake of their son's recovery.

At the beginning of Jacob's illness, his parents took turns at his bedside. But after a few weeks, Jacob's mother began tarrying a bit after his father's arrival, and stopped rushing out the door the minute he made his entrance. Their "shifts" began to overlap, and they began to spend time discussing their son's case. When Jacob's mother conferred with new doctors, she asked his father to be present during the consultations. And when his mother would burst into occasional tears, his father would drape a comforting arm around her.

After three months in the hospital, the doctors sent Jacob home. They told his parents they had not been able to determine the cause of his mysterious disorder, and that he would probably never walk again. Despite the grim prognosis, there was one ray of light in Jacob's bleak life. His parents had fallen in love with each other all over again and decided to remarry. Six months after their remarriage, their son was suddenly able to walk again. Jacob is now in his early sixties, and while the doctors were unable to explain his mysterious recovery, he

has always felt that God had a purpose through it all. For had he not become seriously ill, his parents would never have gotten together again and remarried. Jacob's illness was the spark that reignited their love. And their healing became the spark that led to his physical healing.

Sometimes all we can do when we face illnesses, or difficulties in life that are beyond our control, is to LET GO AND LET GOD! There are certain situations when only God, in Christ, can help bring about the forgiveness, compassion, and healing that we need. Take today's Gospel story for example. It was the Lord's compassion for the lost and the needy, that led him to go back to work after dinner was over, and the sun had gone down. In fact, throughout the story we observe Jesus letting Go and letting God, as he continues to cure and cast out demons late into the evening, as he lets go of needed sleep in order to find time in the morning to talk to his Heavenly father in prayer, and as he chooses to move on to neighboring towns to proclaim God's Word, rather than heading back to the crowd that awaited him in Capernaum.

Last week we heard about the authority that Jesus held as he cast a demon out of a man in a Synagogue, and we learned that the people were amazed by this miracle. The crowd that had gathered for worship that day was most definitely impressed with the power of His preaching, because His words took on action. Jesus rebuked a possessed man, ordering him to be silent, and they witnessed the demon obeying him. The mass of people was so impressed with this new Rabbi that they brought a whole city of people with them to Simon Peter's house later that evening.

As we witness the crowd's actions, we see that unlike Jesus, they had a difficult time letting Go and letting God. How do we know this? They were so focused on following the Letter of the Law, that they waited until the Sabbath had

ended before they went to Jesus for help. You see, if they had moved the sick earlier that day, they would have broken religious regulations which prohibited burden-bearing during a time when they were supposed to be resting and honoring God. Later those who continue to follow Jesus will hear him preach that the Sabbath was made for humankind, and not humankind for the Sabbath. The crowd's inability to let go of their understanding of the Law, kept them from realizing that the healing Jesus offered was to be seen as a blessing, as a way to provide them with rest and recovery. Those who were sick needed to be healed, and if had they learned to let Go and let God they would have gone to Simon Peter's house right away instead of suffering needlessly until nightfall!

We are aware that the fishermen who were now following Jesus, had previously learned a lesson about what it was like to let go and let God. Their teacher had called them to drop what they were doing in order to follow him, and they did just that, they let go of their nets and tagged along. In fact, in our story the Rabbi's new students provide us with a wonderful example for us to follow. Peter and Andrew not only brought their friends James and John home with them after the worship service at the Synagogu, but they also brought the Lord home with them as well. In a similar manner, don't leave the Jesus you encounter in our online zoom service here at church –take him home and share your blessings and your burdens with Him! Let our Lord teach you what it means to Let Go and Let God!

This is a lesson that I think most of us, if not all of us, have a hard time following. More often than not, it can be extremely difficult letting go of our burdens, our fears, and our anxieties, while giving them over to God. This is especially true when we believe that we have everything under control, when we think we can somehow fix the situation, or if we have ways of coping with our

difficult circumstances on our own. Even if those ways are unhealthy such as: relying on drugs or alcohol, turning to harmful relationships, depending on money, or placing our trust in other idols that keep us from our reliance on God.

Take a moment to think about the things in your own life that are weighing you down...what demons or illnesses do you need Jesus to cast out of you? Perhaps you are still recovering from the loss of someone close to you and are still searching for comfort and consolation in their absence. Maybe you are haunted by your past failures, or are struggling to overcome a childhood trauma? Perhaps you are lonely in your search for love and cannot understand why you haven't found it yet? Maybe you or a loved one is losing a battle against an illness or disease?

With all of the burdens that we carry, we may struggle with letting go and letting God, because as much as we may pray for ourselves and each other, as much as we touch and anoint a loved one, we often don't experience the healing and restoration that Peter's mother-in-law and the other sick people in the crowd receive in today's narrative. Much of the time we do experience some form of healing, but not in the ways we fully understand, and maybe not in ways we hope for or expect. At the same time, we cannot blame God when our sufferings are not immediately removed after prayer. Remember that even Jesus did not escape suffering or even death!

So how can we learn to let go? Getting back to the crowd for a moment, one may wonder, aside from their need for healing, what their motivations were for wanting to see Jesus again. Did they go back to him because they wanted to hear him preach God's Word, or did they just want to experience his healing and witness him performing more miracles? After all, they didn't have televisions, personal computers, Ipads, or much in the way of entertainment.

Later in our story the disciples appear to be a bit shocked when they learn that Jesus wanted to move on, rather than focusing on the success he found in Capernaum. Miracles were happening, people were being cured, the entire city was at their literal doorstep, and so far there had been no opposition to Jesus and his ministry. And yet Jesus recognized the shallowness of the people in the crowd. He saw their unbelief and their lack of appetite for the Word of God. Instead of permitting popular acclaim to change his priorities Jesus Let go and Let God, by demonstrating it was more important to preach the Gospel in other places than to stay where he was at. He did not come to keep the Gospel hidden in Capernaum, but he came in order to spread it throughout Galilee, Judea, and the world.

Like the individuals in the crowd that day, oftentimes we want to see Jesus, but we don't always want to hear what he has to say to us each day! After all he had some pretty radical ideas did he not? "Love your enemies and neighbors as you love yourself, forgive as I have forgiven, anyone who wants to be first among you must be your servant, go therefore and make disciples of all nations...!" We want Jesus to pour out blessings upon blessings upon us. and yet we may struggle to find time in our busy schedules to read his Word, or to spend time with him outside of worship.

And yet it is through our spending time with him in prayer, and in reading his Word on a regular basis that we can find comfort and healing. For it is often through prayer and scripture that the Holy Spirit can restore and revitalize our faith, and our relationship with God. We read in Mark's Gospel that even though Jesus had been busy late into the night healing people and casting out demons, he still took time in the early morning to pray to God!

Now if you have ever had a bad fever, then you most likely know how painful and uncomfortable it can be. You are probably also aware that after the

fever leaves you, it takes time for you to regain your strength. But not so in the case of Peter's mother-in-law! She was able to demonstrate her thankfulness to Jesus and she serves the Lord as soon as she is able to. Which begs the question, isn't offering up ourselves in service to the Lord one of the best ways to thank him for all he has done for us? Isn't that why God wants us to experience healing and wholeness in our lives, so we can be free to serve God and others?

Sometimes letting go and letting God is more than just giving our problems and burdens over to him. Keep in mind that like those diseased and demon possessed individuals in the crowd needed Jesus, we too may need Jesus to help us to let go of our harmful relationships, bad habits, negative perceptions, and all the things that have complete control over everything we do. If we allow God to free us from those things that blind us, or hold us back, our eyes will be opened to see where God is leading us. In fact, if we can learn to "let go and let God," we may even see for the first time what amazing things God has in store for us. Thanks be to God. Amen.