

August 21, 2016
Sermon for The Thirteenth Sunday after Pentecost
St Peter Lutheran Church
Bowie, TX
Larry Knobloch, Pastor
Hebrews 12:4-24 (25-29)

J.J.- Jesu Juva—Help me, Jesus

Hebrews 12:4–24 (ESV)

⁴ In your struggle against sin you have not yet resisted to the point of shedding your blood. ⁵ And have you forgotten the exhortation that addresses you as sons? “My son, do not regard lightly the discipline of the Lord, nor be weary when reproved by him. ⁶ For the Lord disciplines the one he loves, and chastises every son whom he receives.” ⁷ It is for discipline that you have to endure. God is treating you as sons. For what son is there whom his father does not discipline? ⁸ If you are left without discipline, in which all have participated, then you are illegitimate children and not sons. ⁹ Besides this, we have had earthly fathers who disciplined us and we respected them. Shall we not much more be subject to the Father of spirits and live? ¹⁰ For they disciplined us for a short time as it seemed best to them, but he disciplines us for our good, that we may share his holiness. ¹¹ For the moment all discipline seems painful rather than pleasant, but later it yields the peaceful fruit of righteousness to those who have been trained by it. ¹² Therefore lift your drooping hands and strengthen your weak knees, ¹³ and make straight paths for your feet, so that what is lame may not be put out of joint but rather be healed. ¹⁴ Strive for peace with everyone, and for the holiness without which no one will see the Lord. ¹⁵ See to it that no one fails to obtain the grace of God; that no “root of bitterness” springs up and causes trouble, and by it many become defiled; ¹⁶ that no one is sexually immoral or unholy like Esau, who sold his birthright for a single meal. ¹⁷ For you know that afterward, when he desired to inherit the blessing, he was rejected, for he found no chance to repent, though he sought it with tears. ¹⁸ For you have not come to what may be touched, a blazing fire and darkness and gloom and a tempest ¹⁹ and the sound of a trumpet and a voice whose words made the hearers beg that no further messages be spoken to them. ²⁰ For they could not endure the order that was given, “If even a beast touches the mountain, it shall be stoned.” ²¹ Indeed, so terrifying was the sight that Moses said, “I tremble with fear.” ²² But you have come to Mount Zion and to the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to innumerable angels in festal gathering, ²³ and to the assembly of the firstborn who are enrolled in heaven, and to God, the judge of all, and to the spirits of the righteous made perfect, ²⁴ and to Jesus, the mediator of a new covenant, and to the sprinkled blood that speaks a better word than the blood of Abel.

Grace, mercy and peace be to you from God our Father and from our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ!

Amen.

A young boy named Johnny is with his mother at the grocery store. As they're in the checkout line, Johnny sees another young boy take some chocolate from the shelf, put it in his pocket, and quietly walk away. Johnny is hungry, and the chocolate sure looks good, so he eases over to the shelf and slips one into his pocket too.

It seemed so easy. No one got hurt, he got some chocolate. god deal!

After Johnny's mom finishes paying, they walk out of the grocery store and to the car. It's there that his mother notices the chocolate. After some direct questioning, his mom gets the truth, and she is not happy. Mom's always seem to know when we are lying and hey get to the truth pretty quickly.

It's one of the worst days of Johnny's young life. His mother scolds him, makes him apologize to the manager, and it's no candy for a month. It's not really the fussing or the lack of candy; it's more of the disappointment he sees on his mother's face.

You may have been here at some point in your life. How do you see yourselves in this story? It depends on your perspective.

From Johnny's perspective, things look pretty tough. He early didn't think he did anything wrong. But then when Mom first finds out, whew, she was pretty mad. Johnny gulps and thinks to himself, Mom is going to kill me. He tries to lie, but he soon realizes that Mom sees through the lie. Johnny believes in that moment that Mom is so disappointed in him that she no longer loves him but rather hates him. He guesses that he has upset her so much that she has every right to hate him.

In his defense, Johnny told her about the other boy, if he old do it, hey couldn't he? But she's not mad at him. It must be that she loves him more, even tough he isn't even her son.

How about Mom's perspective?

Mom is overcome with disappointment. She is and angry, but only because she loves Johnny so much. She surely doesn't want to kill him, but protect him from everything in this life, even his wrong decisions. However, she knows that if her son is going to live long and well, he needs to be disciplined. Disappointment

As for the other boy, she's already forgotten, since her focus is on her son, whom she loves. Even though she might care about the other boy's welfare, she cares about her own even more.

Now let's look at our perspective.

When we suffer or are dealing with the consequences of our sin, our first thought is that God hates us. We give in to our addiction or maybe an old habit again. We hurt our neighbor, again. We lose our temper with our child...or even our parent...again. The list could be endless when we sin, again, and again; even though we ask for forgiveness and promise to never do it again, we fail.

We believe that God has just been watching, like an overprotective parent waiting for us to do something bad so that—"Bam!"—He can catch us in the act. You are in trouble now and boy are you going to get it!

We see our suffering and pain, and we think God is cruel because He's putting us through all this affliction. God just wants to punish us and to watch us suffer and die for what we have done wrong.

But now let's try to look at God's perspective.

Even though we're disobedient children (more disobedient than we even imagine we are), God loves us more than we can comprehend. Everything He does is guided by His great love for us.

When God disciplines us, it's because He's making us holy, just as we are already holy in Christ. He is preparing us for eternal life, just as we already have eternal life in our Baptism.

God does not want us to die, but to live. To learn, to make better decisions; to be his sanctified child.

So, then, how do we know which perspective is true for us?

We'd like to see things from God's perspective of love, but how do we really know He loves us? We know He loves us because He made us His children (vv 5–6).

But how...how are we God's children? God made it so through the blood of Christ, who cries for forgiveness and reconciliation from the cross! For grace, not for vengeance (vv 18–24).

God's discipline is not a sign of His disfavor or hatred, but a sign of His favor.

As the writer to the Hebrews reminds the Church: They suffer not because God hates them, but because He loves them (v 7). In fact, if they got away with everything and were not disciplined at all, it would mean they weren't God's true children (v 8).

Which means, during times of trial, when our perspective, like Johnny's, sees God as the enemy, let us see ourselves as He does—as His children.

And if discipline is seen as coming from a loving Father to His dear sons, it must be good for us. It is! It is preparation for our heavenly Jerusalem, our eternal home! (vv 22–24).

See things from God's perspective! We live in the suffering of a sinful world for a very short time. God's discipline is His way of guiding us, lest we ourselves fall and lose our blessed forever.

And what a blessed eternity it will be—feasting with the angels, perfect holiness, with Jesus!

So we endure under trial with hope, not despair, with the result that this present suffering will produce a harvest of peaceful, eternal fruit (v 11). God is shaping us by the Holy Spirit through Word and Sacrament that we might be more like Him, each passing day.

God wants us to bear fruit, and so He purifies us from all unrighteousness.

This is God forming us, not rejecting us, in earthly trials.

From God's perspective, you are His son, His children . . . and that's what matters.

Little Johnny's mom had a good perspective. But if she, a sinful mother, disciplined her son lovingly according to her best judgment, imagine how wisely and lovingly our heavenly Father is disciplining us!

The temporary pain, suffering, we face now does not compare to the glory He will reveal to you!

Therefore, strengthen your hands and knees and forge ahead, because you are walking to glory (v 12). You are sons, God says, His children through Christ, and that's the only perspective that matters.

Amen.

The peace of God, which passes all understanding, keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus.

Amen.

Sermon Outline

You are God's son . . . and that's what matters

(Hebrews 12:4-24)

- I. How do we see this story? It depends on your perspective.
- II. How do we know which perspective is true for us?
- III. If discipline is coming from a loving Father to His dear children, it is good for us.