

A Sermon on how Jesus will set you Free

Luke 9: 28-43

If Jesus is our personal Messiah, what does it look like for Jesus to carry out an Exodus in our lives and the lives of our families? How does Jesus set us free personally from the bondage of sin and death?

Look at the story of this child and father to discover an answer: Jesus will remove the muck from your life, heal you, and restore you family to wholeness.

Jesus will remove the muck from your life: the metaphorical grime, the dirt, the mess. What's the first thing Jesus does for the child in the story? He rebukes the unclean spirit. We accumulate mess round our lives. We don't need to be ashamed of it. It's a part of being human and living in a world with a lot of mess in it.

But the best way to prepare for new life is to detox. We all know what a detox diet is. Stop eating certain unhealthy foods, drink a lot of water and flush your system. Now it's time for all of us to detox. I'm not just talking about food here. Although for some of us, we may need a detox on food. Detox from McDonald's and instead eat some carrots or something.

But you may need a mental detox or spiritual detox. Maybe you need to turn off the news for 10 minutes every day, for forty days. Just like in food detox, when you drink a lot of water to cleanse your system. Maybe you use that ten minutes not to hear another broadcast about the world, but to take that 10 minutes to pray for the world. It will detox you. Maybe you've got a TV show, or guilty pleasure, you can't stop watching but at the end of the show you just feel icky. You know it's not feeling you. Turn off that show for forty days and pull out your bible for 30 minutes. It will detox you.

God is inviting you and me to begin praying about the detox that God in Jesus Christ is inviting us to. No need to beat yourself up, but we need to recognize what is revealed in the text is that the first thing Jesus does is remove that which is unclean. First step in Jesus as your personal Messiah is to remove some of the muck from your life.

Once Jesus has removed the muck, the second thing your Messiah will do for you is heal you. Look at the text: Jesus heals the child. At our bible study, a woman had gone to visit one of our elementary schools here in the East End. She was assisting in the classroom, and one of the children said to her, "What you looking at?" She was so disturbed by this interaction that it drove her to come to the bible study at the church Wednesday morning, looking for answers.

And the answer she found is in our text this morning. Jesus says, "Bring the child to me." In our society right now, we see a child acting wrong and go straight to a penal response: "out of school suspension." One parent at Armstrong High School pointed out this week, that's not a good solution, suspending them for a week. That is exactly what they want, to get out of school. We got to find another way.

Too often, a child who is demonstrating signs of being troubled is met with crossed arms and a scowl. But Jesus said, "Bring the children unto me." This morning Jesus says, "Bring that troubled child to me" to Jesus's open, inviting arms.

Not saying we don't need discipline in our schools and households, but what we are invited into is addressing the behavior rather than addressing the child's self-worth. That's what Jesus does; he addresses the behavior that has hold of the child. Discipline the negative behavior but reinforce that the child is a child of God, for whom Jesus is holding out open arms.

Because that's what we all need, too, isn't it? We all have an inner child who has been through some stuff, who has seen some stuff. I don't care if you're a teenager or in your 80's, you still got that inner child. Some of us have been through some serious stuff as adults. Years of pain. Think that nobody sees it. Hide it. Well, Jesus sees it. Time this morning to offer your inner child, to offer the wounds you have been carrying so long, and allow Jesus to heal you this morning.

Jesus cleanses, Jesus heals, Jesus restores the family. In training us to be ministers, one of the things they focus on is called "family systems theory." The idea is that our families are bound together in ways we can't even see. When I say family, we mean our biological families but also our church family.

What does bound together in ways we can't see mean? Have you ever called someone and they say, "I was just thinking of you!"? Something ever happened to a family member or one of your children, you didn't talk with them, but you just feel something and know you need to pray for them? Bound together in ways we don't even see. But even though we are bound together, we can have rifts in our family, experience what we call broken relationships. Something happens, or a conversation all of a sudden: "I'm not talking to that person anymore." We're still held together because part of the same family, but there's a rift.

I can't imagine what this father in the Scripture had gone through. Boy just seized and thrown down, possessed by something beyond his control. I can't imagine the stress on that parent. But once Jesus cleanses, once Jesus heals, Jesus restores the family to wholeness.

Your family may have been through some serious stuff, maybe you're going through some serious stuff right now. But don't be surprised when you begin to detox, when you begin healing, that there will be restoration of relationships in your family. People will pop up out of the blue, an unexpected phone call, God will restore your family. Same is true for this congregation. Don't be surprised as we do our work together as led by the Messiah Jesus Christ, that people will be restored within our family of faith.

Look at the last line: "And all were astounded at the greatness of God." People talk about the greatness of God: God up there in the sky, God up there on the throne, God of unapproachable light. God of Glory, like the light that flashed across the mountaintop in the transfiguration. But that was not the point in time when everyone was astounded at the greatness of God. According to the text, it wasn't what happened on the mountaintop that showed God's greatness, it was what Jesus did for a child and his father in the valley that revealed God's greatness.

Look at the text to show you the greatness of God. Just like that boy and his father, God in Christ knows exactly what you and your family need. And Jesus is ready to be your personal Messiah. Jesus is ready to cleanse, heal and restore you and your family. Jesus says, "Bring the child here to me."

When Jesus beckons to you, go to your Messiah.

