

***Don't Get Hung Up*****Luke 13:10-17; 14:1-6****August 24, 25, 2019****Beargrass Christian Church****I. INTRODUCTION.**

- A. Ellen and I are back after a week of resting, reading, and relaxing.
  1. Although we were hundreds of miles south of Louisville, it was about ten degrees cooler where we were.
  2. I confess that I'm not sorry to have missed the recent heat wave.
  3. But it was good to "recharge our batteries" and get back.
- B. I am also grateful for the ministry that continues to happen here.
  1. We have so many faithful, dedicated, talented people in the church family who generously share their gifts.
  2. Rev. Julie Richardson shared an excellent, eloquent message—check out our website if you haven't heard it.
  3. Our children's and youth ministries got off to a super start with Promotion Sunday and the "Space for Grace" kickoff last weekend and the "field trips" this weekend.
  4. We welcomed the first member of the newest refugee family.
  5. The list goes on and on and on and on...thank you!
  6. And thank God for the opportunities.
- C. Today we will continue the series called "Living It Up," which is focusing on what a Spirit-filled, Spirit-led life looks like.
  1. We are reflecting on several passages from the Gospel of Luke.
  2. We have thought about "Freshening Up" and "Giving It Up."
  3. Today's message is titled "Don't Get Hung Up."
  4. Let's think about these inspiring stories in Luke 13 and 14.

**II. JESUS IS HYPERCRITICAL OF THE HYPOCRITICAL!**

- A. Jesus has a run-in with a religious leader who is passionate about following all of the rules and regulations of the law.
  1. He explains to the folks in the crowd—who have just witnessed a miraculous healing—that Jesus is breaking the law.
  2. He says: "You can't cure people on the Sabbath—pick another day!"
- B. Now, before we join the crowd and start hiss'n' and diss'n' this man, I want to shout out an "Amen!" for this guy.
  1. He offers a sound argument about keeping the Sabbath holy.
  2. Many folks in our 24/7/7 culture could learn from this man.
  3. Some of you remember a time when coaches never scheduled any athletic activities on Sunday—or Wednesday nights.
  4. Some of you recall when the stores weren't open on Sunday.
  5. And some of you know that we often worship an unholy host of other gods before we worship our Creator God on the weekends.
- C. So, you tell 'em, you "rules and regulations" keeper!
  1. And remind us about the positive purpose of the Sabbath.
  2. It was to be a joyous day of rest, worship, eating and drinking!
  3. It was meant to be a celebration of God's rest and creation!
  4. It was a time to remember the liberation of God's people—not a burden.

- D. In fact, the day was established with social justice in mind.
  1. It was a day of much-needed rest for servants and slaves.
  2. The poor and hungry were invited to join in the festivities.
  3. To honor the Sabbath was a way to honor and glorify God.
- E. But there are laws and there are laws—some are more important.
  1. Jesus' interpretation is actually closer to tradition—surprise!
  2. The law allowed for healing in life-threatening situations.
  3. Jesus affirms the life-enhancing aspect of the Sabbath—for him there is no do-nothing, just-sit-there, middle ground.
  4. The other guy is correct—he is sharing a form of the truth.
  5. But Jesus' compassion for this woman who has suffered 18 long years is more correct, more caring, more just, more loving.
  6. Sometimes people get sick; and sometimes religion gets sick.
- F. These are beautiful stories—stories of love and grace.
  1. Jesus lays his hands on her, an act of blessing and healing.
  2. She stands up straight; we see the literal and symbolic meaning.
  3. In a society where women are marginalized, he not only restores her health but allows her to stand tall, with dignity and pride.
  4. Pride and dignity are also restored to the man in the other story.
  5. And Jesus "puts the religious authorities to shame."
  6. He says: "You take better care of your animals and pets than people!"
  7. Any my favorite line in the passage is Luke 14:6.
  8. It says: "And they—the leaders—could not respond to this."
  9. It is a "mic dropping" moment for Jesus—BOOM!

### III. THE STORIES REMAIN REMARKABLY RELEVANT.

- A. We still get hung up and need straightening up.
- B. Jesus is still hypercritical of the hypocritical.
  1. Studies show that non-Christians view us as un-Christian.
  2. Young people—85%—see Christianity as hypocritical.
  3. Christian lifestyles seem to be no different than the "norm."
  4. Some look at the issues facing our country and world today and wonder, "Where are the Christians? Why aren't they rising up?"
  5. What we say does not always equal what we believe and do.
  6. There are often noticeable gaps between faith and praxis.
  7. Someone defined hypocrisy as "prejudice with a halo."
- C. A church historian offers these words of wisdom.
  1. "Tradition is the living faith of those who have died."
  2. "Traditionalism is the dead faith of those who are living."
- D. So...we must choose authenticity, genuineness, integrity, transparency.
  1. They are "buzzwords" in some churches today, but for a reason.
  2. People are tired of Sunday, only-for-an-hour Christianity.
  3. If Christianity isn't true and holistically transformative, then there are plenty of other things to do with one's time.
- E. Rob Bell speaks and writes a lot about all of this.
  1. He says: "I often meet people who don't want anything to do with church or God because of 'all those religious hypocrites.'"
  2. "Often they have great pain that they blame on 'the church.'"

3. "But institutions are made up of people—people hurt people."
  4. "When I meet someone who has been burned by an institution or church, my first question is, 'What was the person's name?'"
- F. Madeleine L'Engle poses some other very important questions.
1. "What makes Christians feel that hate can express Jesus' love?"
  2. "Why are those who criticize my writing the same people who loudly proclaim themselves to be followers of Christ?"
  3. "And why do others find that my books lead them to Christ?"
  4. She says: "I think of myself as a fundamentalist—someone who still cares about fundamental things—like truth and friends and imagination and love and story and honor and compassion."
  5. "One can be a fundamentalist without being a literalist—and one can be a literalist without being a fundamentalist."
- G. But sometimes when we combine the two, we can run into trouble.
1. Sometimes we try to force our understandings of what we believe are the fundamental truths upon everybody else.
  2. This happens theologically, sociologically, and politically.
  3. We become the very people we are protesting against.
  4. It's like the person who became tired of seeing bumper stickers.
  5. So he put one on his car that said: "Ban Bumper Stickers!"
- H. Again, we have to lean into Jesus' life and teachings and ministry.
1. There will be times to follow the letter of the law.
  2. But we have laws in our land that hurt and don't help.
  3. New ones are being written—some good...some not so.
  4. Jesus' test is whether they are bringing life, hope and healing.
  5. There are times when love has to transcend the law.
  6. There are moments when mission and ministry top the minutia.
  7. And focusing on the bigger picture can bring us together.
  8. When we come together for mission we come as Democrats and Republicans and Independents, we come as liberals and conservatives, rich and poor, men and women, young and old—we drop the labels and work together.
- I. Think about some of the things going on around here.
1. "Fed with Faith" volunteers work really hard on Sunday.
  2. Are they breaking the "sabbath" laws?
  3. Sure—but thank God—because folks who are hungry don't get a day off from hunger.
- J. We give thanks for those involved in refugee ministry.
1. A woman shared her perspective about her passion.
  2. She said: "In the gospels we have a Savior who was born a refugee child who sought safety for the first years of his life."
  3. She wants to provide that same comfort to others in need.
  4. She pointed out that "no one enters our country as a refugee, with refugee status, without having been thoroughly vetted."
  5. Laws certainly have a place in our religious and national lives.
  6. But the whole law is summed up in a single commandment: "You shall love your neighbor as yourself."
  7. "Jesus was clear that his mission was to bring good news to the poor, release to the captives, and freedom to the oppressed."

- K. We give thanks for those involved in outreach—whether that is around the block, around the country, or around the world.
1. People generously trade vacation time for volunteer time.
  2. It is inspiring to see people place service above self.
- L. I read about some folks who did amazing mission work overseas.
1. In one village the people carried water laboriously by pails.
  2. So, a system was designed to pump the water where it was needed—which freed up a lot of time and energy and enabled the village to flourish.
  3. They also noticed that every woman over 60 had a bent back.
  4. They learned that during the monsoon season the sweeping of debris was mostly done by older people with short brooms—wood was in short supply.
  5. So the mission team found long, stalked reeds and palm fronds and began to make longer brooms—and urged the people to plant more reeds.
  6. Years later, the team received a letter from the village leader.
  7. The letter read: “In our village the backs of our people are now straight and firm—no longer are their bodies painful and bent.”
  8. “We constructed a small shrine for you that says: ‘In grateful memory of those who unbent the backs of our people.’”
- M. Today, Jesus challenges us to do the same, with the boldness that he showed to the crowd and to the lovers of the law.
1. We are not to get hung up on unhelpful rules and regulations.
  2. We are called to get fired up about helping when it is needed.
  3. And when we do, as in today’s story, rejection will give way to rejoicing!
  4. Accusation and allegations will become adulation and adoration!
  5. Condemnation will open the door to celebration!
  6. Thanks be to God!
  7. Thanks be to God for opportunities to help...
  8. And thanks be to God who continues to unbend the backs of God’s people!