

Pentecost 11                      8/25/19  
Hebrews 12:4-24                16C

“MY SON, DO NOT REGARD LIGHTLY THE DISCIPLINE OF THE LORD, NOR BE WEARY WHEN REPROVED BY HIM. FOR THE LORD DISCIPLINES THE ONE HE LOVES, AND CHASTISES EVERY SON WHOM HE RECEIVES”.

Can you hear me now?

No, I mean: Can you hear me now?

That’s what the Lord your God is asking you in our lesson this morning. Our lesson reads, “For the Lord disciplines the one He loves”. When God disciplines you, He is really saying to you, “Dear Child, can you hear me now?” In Latin {bear with me}, “disciple,” “discipline,” and “decibel” all come from the same root word. “Disciple” is the one who hears, “discipline” is the act of hearing,” and “decibel” is the sound unit heard. As disciples, discipline is all about if we are listening to the Lord our God.

The theme of this Pentecost season is Living a Christian life. And, discipline at the Lord’s hand is indeed a part of the Christian life.

And, we don’t like it one bit. When we walk by the folly of our human reason, rather than by faith, we think we should still be in the Garden of Eden. The fact is: We have been cast out of the Garden. How does that old country song go? “I never promised you a rose garden.” That could well be God’s promise to us as we walk by faith through this valley of the shadow of death.

Allow me state the obvious: the saints of Concordia Lutheran Church are NOT without their difficulties! For all our joy of being joined together in the body of Christ and possessing all the riches of God’s grace in Christ, we are nevertheless burdened by heavy crosses. Just because you are a

Christian, does not mean that you are spared the thorns of this present age. For example, our prayer list every Sunday names many brothers and sisters in Christ afflicted by serious illness for the past months, even years. Look at the person seated to your left, to your right, to the person sitting in the pew behind you or the pew in front of you, and you will see a saint who mourns the death of a loved one. For some, their struggles are known to all, and we share with them in their struggles; for many others, their crosses of hurt, troubles, regret, or shame may be known to but a few, perhaps to God alone. Seen or unseen, public or private, our lives together most certainly cannot be called a rose garden.

The words of our lesson this morning bring your personal struggles – whatever they may be – to mind. And, honestly, these words **unsettle** us. I think the reason why is because when you hear the word “discipline” what do you think? When we think of “discipline”, we think of it in terms of punishment – punishment for sin.

But, Dear Saints of God, punishment is not discipline, and discipline is not punishment. Punishment is for sin; discipline is for love. When God says to you today, "the Lord disciplines the one he loves," He is NOT talking about punishing you for ANY REASON. No matter how hard and long Satan tries to convince you otherwise, the GOSPEL teaches us God does not punish you for your sin! The Good News of the Gospel teaches us that Jesus bore the full punishment for the sin of all the world, so that there is no punishment for you to bear. When John the Baptist saw Jesus, He said of the Son of God incarnate, “Behold, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world” (Jn 1:29)! Notice that John did not say, “Behold, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world, except those sins against the 6<sup>th</sup> Commandment,” or “Behold, the Lamb of God, who takes

away the sin of the world, except yours!" Your sin – each and every sin of thought, of word, of deed – was placed on Jesus and He carried that sin to the cross, where His sinless blood flowed out in death as punishment for your sin. "The blood of Jesus his Son cleanses us from all sin," the Bible says (1 Jn 1:7). God has no reason to punish you because Jesus bore your full punishment and you are now completely forgiven of every sin.

God does discipline you – His sons, His daughters, His children. Why does He do that? Because He loves you. He is the potter; we are the clay. As long as we have earthly breath, the sinful nature clings to us. To teach us the hopelessness of our idolatry; the futility of fearing, loving, and trusting in the things of this world, God disciplines us so that we learn to fear, love, and trust in Him above all this. God uses the crosses He allows in our lives to mold and shape us to the image of Christ.

Yet, when God disciplines us, what is our first reaction? In your fear and worry in facing illness or job uncertainty or frightening family situation, you easily find yourself struggling with the question, "Why me, why my child, my spouse, my parent?"

But, Dear Saints, do not allow yourself to be fooled by your own way of thinking or by the devil's temptations and snares! Because our minds are still so deeply rooted in sin, we tend to think foolish and unbelieving things about our suffering and our hardships. Because the devil is so intent on destroying your faith and causing you to despair, he is only too happy to whisper his lies into your ear. When your fallen way of thinking combines with the devil's temptations, it is easy for you to draw the wrong conclusions about your hardships.

Some people will think that their hardships have come because they did something wrong and that God is punishing them in some way. Satan

would have you believe your sin, and its punishment, is still on you. Never allow Satan to take your eyes off the cross. Remember: When Jesus died at Calvary, did the Son of God die for some, ... or ALL sin? The answer: ALL sin, which means you have full and complete forgiveness, for all your sins.

Some will look at their hardships and be tempted to think that God is not a merciful Father, but that He is instead cruel and loveless and demanding. The devil will gladly raise the question, "What kind of God allows people to suffer in this way?"

When you struggle with the questions, "Why me" or "Why my child, my spouse, my parent," do not allow yourself to be fooled by your flesh or by the devil. Listen to the Word of God. Cling and trust and hope in the promises God makes to you in His Word.

- The steadfast love of the LORD never ceases; His mercies never come to an end; they are new every morning; great is your faithfulness (Lam 3:22-23).
- "For I know the plans I have for you," declares the LORD, "plans for wholeness and not for evil, to give you a hope and a future (Jer 29:11)".
- We know that for those who love God all things work for good (Ro 8:28).
- Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or danger, or sword...No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through Him who loved us. For I am sure that neither death nor life, nor angels nor rulers, nor things present nor things to come, nor powers, nor height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord (Ro 8:35-39).

- “My grace is sufficient for you (2 Cor 12:9).”

Cherish that Word. Remember your baptism. Come to the table to eat and drink the faith-giving Body and Blood of Christ. And cherish God’s promise to you: ALL things must and shall work together for your good.

Martin Luther often used this illustration: What does a child do when their mother washes their hair? The cry and protest with shriek and moans, because they do not like it. So, why does the mother do it? She is not punishing the child. Mother knows best for the child and, because she loves the child, she will not be stopped by the child’s tears. So, Luther would say, because God loves us and knows what is best for us, God will not be stopped by our tears.

“Why should cross and trial grieve me? Christ is near with His cheer,” to lift up your drooping hands and strengthen your weak knees.  
[LSB 756:1]