

News Article – For Week of Oct. 8

Throwing Rocks

There is a story of a young boy who was staying with his grandpa for the summer. While there, he helped his grandpa with the garden, hoeing the cotton fields, plowing and fence repair. One day his grandpa had him fill a backpack full of rocks and then put it on his back. He told him that it would be necessary to wear it all day. He couldn't take it off for any reason. At first it was not a big deal but after an hour or so it began to bother him. Eventually, everything he did became a burden, hard and frustrating. By the end of the day, grandpa saw him trying to reach back and take the rocks out in hopes of lightening the load. However, he could only get a few out and when he did manage to reach back and get a hold of a rock he would throw it as far as he could. Finally, his grandpa went up to him and asked him if he would like to keep the backpack on or let it go?

The boy replied, "What do you think? I don't know why I had to wear it all day anyway." He told him to release it and he did. The boy let out a huge sigh of relief. Then grandpa said to the young boy, "that is how many go through life. Carrying a load they were not meant to carry, nor did they have to carry."

When a person carries anger, resentment, bitterness, unforgiveness, worry, pain, sickness, fear, or selfishness it's like having a backpack full of rocks. Eventually, they will try to lighten the load by trying to take some rocks out of the backpack. They will try to throw them out like the boy did, however all too often they throw them at others. That is how we try to get rid of those kind of things by blaming and hurting others. Often the very ones that love us most.

In the book of Luke chapter 13 there is a woman who has an encounter with Jesus.

¹⁰ *On a Sabbath Jesus was teaching in one of the synagogues,*

¹¹ *and a woman was there who had been crippled by a spirit for eighteen years. She was bent over and could not straighten up at all.*

¹² *When Jesus saw her, he called her forward and said to her, "Woman, you are **set free** from your infirmity."*

¹³ *Then he put his hands on her, and immediately she straightened up and praised God.*

The Pharisees saw the woman as a sinner because of her infirmity. But Jesus saw her as one who needed forgiveness, healing and hope. The word for set free is the Greek word *apolyo* which can mean released, loosed, forgiven, made whole and send forth. The woman was in need of being healed but she got so much more from Jesus. She had a greater need to be forgiven and set free from the effects of sin. When he spoke "woman you are set free (*apolyo*) to her it meant much more than just healing. The same Greek word was used by Jesus when he taught his disciples that they must forgive to be forgiven.

The woman needed forgiveness before she needed healing. With forgiveness comes release, with forgiveness comes healing, and with forgiveness comes freedom to move on with your life and be who God meant for you to be. It was the woman's encounter with Jesus that made that

happen. We need the same encounter. Did you notice Jesus called her to himself. He is calling each of us to himself.

Maybe today you are bent over with a backpack full of rocks (pain, hurt, anger, sin, sickness, fear, worry). When we have a full backpack it is overwhelming and we will try to get rid of the rocks anyway we can. Often that is when we start throwing them at others: God, family, church members, coworkers, teachers, employers, the president, anyone and everyone. We pull those rocks out and throw them at others blaming them. We're all bend over by the weight of trying to get rid of them. Blaming others never works. It's not their fault. You see God gave us free will. That means we have the choice to receive his forgiveness and to give it. We are released when we receive it and give it.

Let go of the backpack! You don't have to carry it another day. There is a way to get free from it. Jesus wants it and will take it - he died for it. Let's not carry a load that we were never meant to carry.