

In Jesus' name. **Amen.**

Today our congregation has the wonderful opportunity to welcome Ms. Emma Schneck as a member and to install her as the 4th grade teacher at Parkland Lutheran School.

So "Welcome" Emma. The Lord bless and keep you as you receive His mercy alongside us and extend that mercy to the lambs entrusted to your care.

On this occasion, I would like to pass along something, not only for Ms. Schneck but all our teachers, our parents, our grandparents, and... well anyone who lives and deals with other people.

It is a quote from former Pres. Nils Hong of Pacific Lutheran University.

He will be quoting Pastor Bjug Harstad, the first president of that institution and our first pastor.

He wrote: "Well do I remember one of the first faculty meetings I attended, where [Pr. B. Harstad] made plain the fundamental difference between evangelistic and legalistic discipline.

'Let us,' he said, 'teach these young people to study, work, and play, and to obey the rules for God's sake, and not for fear of punishment.'

Simple enough, you will say; yet to me it was a revelation that, with all its implications, changed my whole concept of education.

More than thirty years old at the time, a graduate of two Christian schools,

I here for the first time got a glimpse of the real meaning of evangelical discipline."

~N.J. Hong speaking at the funeral of Mrs. Guro Harstad regarding Pr. Harstad

In the classroom, at home, on the playground, we often think of discipline mainly as punishment.

And as we will hear again in our text for meditation, there certainly is that element,

but we will also learn that it is God's alien, or foreign, work.

where His natural work AND DESIRE is to show grace and mercy.

Regularly and often receiving His forgiveness and mercy so that God's Word may affect our lives is the evangelical discipline that Harstad and Hong both spoke of.

It is helping ourselves and those around us to maintain a clean conscience for love's sake,

love of God and His gracious word and works, and love for our neighbor,

rather than simply fear of punishment.

In our text, we are going to hear more about the punitive side, because of the hardness of our hearts.

But listen also for the motivation for which Jesus speaks these warnings,

it is not because He is looking forward to punishing them,

but desiring that they will escape them on account of His death and resurrection.

Our text for meditation... as follows in Jesus' name:

[Jesus said,] "But to what shall I compare this generation? It is like children sitting in the marketplaces and calling to their playmates,

"'We played the flute for you, and you did not dance;

we sang a dirge, and you did not mourn.'

For John came neither eating nor drinking, and they say, 'He has a demon.' The Son of Man came eating and drinking, and they say, 'Look at Him! A glutton and a drunkard, a friend of tax collectors and sinners!' Yet wisdom is justified by her deeds."

Then he began to denounce the cities where most of His mighty works had been done, because they did not repent. "Woe to you, Chorazin! Woe to you, Bethsaida! For if the mighty works done in

you had been done in Tyre and Sidon, they would have repented long ago in sackcloth and ashes. But I tell you, it will be more bearable on the day of judgment for Tyre and Sidon than for you. And you, Capernaum, will you be exalted to heaven? You will be brought down to Hades. For if the mighty works done in you had been done in Sodom, it would have remained until this day. But I tell you that it will be more tolerable on the day of judgment for the land of Sodom than for you.”(ESV)

*This is Your Word, heavenly Father; **sanctify us in the truth, Your Word is Truth.** Amen.* (John 17:17)

Chapter 11 in St. Matthew’s Gospel is a turning point.

In His outline, up until this point, he had reported about Jesus’ great popularity, how the masses were swarming to Him, fascinated by the miracles and hungry for His preaching, **as one who had authority and not as their scribes.** Matthew 7:29

His miracles professed, not only a power over nature, but also a kindness and mercy as He reversed the corruptions of sin... He even raised Jairus’ daughter from the dead. Matthew 9:18ff
They had been primed for Him, prepared for His coming by St. John the Baptist’s faithful work.

But now in chapter 11, we hear that not all had received or continued to receive Jesus happily.

In fact, though many, especially in Capernaum, Chorazin and Bethsaida, had been blessed to receive much of His time and energy, they had either rejected Him outright, or become apathetic to Him. His newness had worn off. The “Jesus fad” was waning.

I am sure that this is an experience that we have all had in our own lives with various things.

We see or hear something that we like and so we follow it, almost obsessively for a while.

And as time goes on, we start to nitpick at it a little more, and get bored with it, or realize that it wasn’t what we initially thought it was going to be, or it changes over time and what we initially appreciated wasn’t continuing, or it leads us to another thing that we turn our attention to.

But Jesus would warn us against considering Him and His salvation to be a passing fad.

Those living in His generation had been given a special gift.

Their time on earth was “**the fullness of time, when God sent forth His Son...**” Galatians 4:4

They could see what **many prophets and kings desired to see, but did not see it, and to hear, but did not hear it.** Luke 10:24

To them God had given not only the long-expected Christ, but also His forerunner to prepare them. They had it all, but they had their own thoughts about what God should do for them.

Jesus compared them to the children in the market place.

John was great... for a time. He was new. He was totally different. Like Elijah of old.

His sermons struck a chord or a nerve with people.

But as Jesus said, His generation expected John to sing and **dance to their flute playing.**

While they made merry, living as they pleased, they mocked his ascetic and self-depriving life-style.

They trivialized his message and mocked him as **having a demon**, because he did not live like them. And yet, when Jesus, the Son of Man came and ate and drank as they did, they ridiculed Him for doing so.

They **played the dirge** for Him, expecting Him to stop His feasting **with tax collectors and sinners**, And when He would not stop, they accused God’s Messenger of being a **glutton and drunkard.**

These things they did so that they could justify why they would not listen to God's messengers.

By labeling John as **one having a demon**, and Jesus as a **drunkard and glutton**,
they did not have to give serious consideration of what they said.

And they could easily tempt others to be dismissive of them as well.

...

Bethsaida, Chorazin, and Capernaum had been the recipients of God's most precious treasure.

In these cities, Jesus had performed His natural work of showing mercy and preaching forgiveness.

He had called them, invited them, healed them, and saved them.

But we hear Jesus now perform His alien work, declaring woes, or condemnations,
upon these cities that had rejected, or now were apathetic to Him.

This was not the message He desired to give them, nor leave them with.

And the whole point of His delivering this message was to call them back to Himself,
so that they might avoid the punishment, the condemnation,

so that He might heal and restore them, yet again, and give them forgiveness, life, and salvation.

...

Perhaps our ears should have been tingling as we heard Jesus pronounce His woes on these cities
because we too have been the recipients of His forgiveness, life, and salvation.

How often have you heard the great things God has done for you?

How often has Jesus' crucifixion been declared to you for your forgiveness,
and His life been imparted to you as your righteousness before God?

How often have unexplainable help and healing and protection or provision been given to you?

And yet, how often do you find yourself challenged in your busy life to afford the time or the energy
or even the desire to meditate, even concentrate, on His gracious Word to you.

Or to come before His altar to receive His Supper?

It is easy to become apathetic to something that you can hear and receive so often and regularly.

It can seem to be so common, so ordinary, that we lose sight of the goodness and excitement of it.

But Jesus does not want you to suffer the same fate as Jerusalem, and Tyre, and Capernaum, Sodom.

He speaks these words to you today so that you may hear and be renewed in your joy.

He performs His alien work of preaching the Law and condemning your lethargy and disinterest,
speaking woes upon your absence from His Holy Communion,

so that He may arouse your conscience, and awaken you to your guilt and shame,

so that you may see your great need and once again look to your Savior

and desire to hear and receive His gracious forgiveness once again.

He does this so that He may perform His natural work of showing mercy and forgiving you.

He once again points you to His crucifixion on your behalf so that you may be freed
from your guilt and shame,

and that you may remember and cherish your Baptism,

when He washed away your sins in His blood and clothed you in His perfection.

He once again points you to His resurrected body which He gives to you in His Supper
to reinvigorate your spiritual life

and to strengthen you against the temptations yet before you.

He desires to keep you and those entrusted to your care in His evangelical discipline,

constantly receiving His goodness so that you make keep a clean and certain conscience,
living in the joy of His salvation.

In Jesus' name. **Amen.**

Soli Deo Gloria