**7th Sunday after Pentecost – Year C – Faith Lutheran, Radcliff, KY**

**Based on Galatians 6:1-10 written by Pastor Paul Horn**

**Carry the load**

**I. Of other’s burdens with gentleness**

**II. Of your own with self-reflection**

*Brothers, if someone is caught in a sin, you who are spiritual* *should restore* *him gently. But watch yourself, or you also may be tempted. 2 Carry each other's burdens, and in this way you will fulfill the law of Christ.* *3 If anyone thinks he is something* *when he is nothing, he deceives himself.* *4 Each one should test his own actions. Then he can take pride in himself,* *without comparing himself to somebody else,* *5 for each one should carry his own load.* *6 Anyone who receives instruction in the word must share all good things with his instructor.* *7 Do not be deceived:* *God cannot be mocked. A man reaps what he sows.* *8 The one who sows to please his sinful nature,* *from that nature* *will reap destruction;* *the one who sows to please the Spirit, from the Spirit will reap eternal life.* *9 Let us not become weary in doing good,* *for at the proper time we will reap a harvest if we do not give up.* *10 Therefore, as we have opportunity, let us do good* *to all people, especially to those who belong to the family* *of believers.*

Some men in Dallas, Texas had the conviction that on Memorial Day, Americans ought to remember our Soldiers who have fallen, and not just think of cookouts and shopping sales. So they founded “Carry the Load” project. For 20hours and 11minutes, people are encouraged to carry more than they can, further than they thought they could. For founder Stephen Holly, that meant a 25pound ruck sack for 65miles. Firemen trudged along with heavy water hoses slung across their shoulders. Some carried backpacks, others carried pictures or tshirts that had the names of the fallen on them. And as founder Stephen Holly passed by a participant he would ask, “Who are you carrying?”

Who are you carrying? Are you carrying the load for someone else right now? Are you carrying your own load? What load is this that we’re talking about? Paul in his letter to the Galatians will teach us to “Carry the Load” firstly, the load of other’s burdens with gentleness, and secondly, our own burdens with self-reflection.

I. Of other’s burdens with gentleness (vs1a,2,14-15)

Paul begins the sixth chapter, **“Brothers, if someone is caught in a sin, you who are spiritual should restore him gently.”** “Caught in a sin” does not have the meaning - they were secretly looking at pornography on their computer and were caught. This is more in the sense of they were surprised that they were sinning. This sin they were “caught in” is something they slowly fell into, almost unaware.

One of the areas of Christian living that I often slide into and I’m sure you do, too, is how we approach a brother or sister in Christ who has irritated us or sinned against us. Christ commands us in Matthew 18 that when a fellow Christian sins against us, we, in Christian love, approach that individual and talk to them about it. Instead, in the weakness of our sinful flesh, we often don’t. Instead of talking to them about it, we gossip to others about them, or we sit and stew about it, and allow anger to build up in ourselves, even convince ourselves that we’re justified in our animosity toward them.

In reality, by not talking to them about it, we’re really loading a burden on our soul, not allowing love and forgiveness to build up, but resentment to pile up. That’s a heavy burden to bear. It will overwhelm you and crush you spiritually and emotionally.

What Paul is saying here, is that when you, as a brother or sister in Christ see and hear this in another brother or sister, Paul says, **“Carry each other’s burdens.”** These burdens are their weaknesses of the sinful flesh. “Carrying the load” means this, “**You who are spiritual should restore him gently.”** This restoration begins with instruction in the Word of God. That means, first, to approach the individual who is sinning, help them see the error of their hostility and anger. And then when they repent, to tell them Jesus’ promise that he has forgiven them.

But our sinful nature gets the best of us, too, and oftentimes we do one of two things: 1) we don’t do anything at all… too often what do we instead is we listen to their gossip, we might agree with them, too often we don’t tell them to stop, and say, “You really need to talk to them about this.” Instead, by our inaction, we’re fueling the fire. We’re helping them pile up the burden of sin and guilt. And we’re just as guilty for not doing anything at all. James 4:17 “**Anyone who knows the good he ought to do and does not do it, sins.”**

Second thing we do when we approach the brother or sister who is sinning, is that sometimes we don’t examine our own hearts first.

II. Of your own with self-reflection (vs1b,3-5,14-15)

**“But watch yourself, or you also may be tempted. If anyone thinks he is something when he is nothing, he deceives himself. Each one should test his own actions. Then he can take pride in himself, without comparing himself to somebody else, for each one should carry his own load.”**

Why are we pointing out the sin of a brother or sister in Christ? Is it in love to carry their burden? Or is it sinful pride that thinks, “Well, at least I’m not that weak as to fall into that sin!” But is it not true that each of you has certain sins that you are susceptible to as well? And is it possible that in weakness of faith you too could someday fall into that same sin? Wouldn’t you also want a brother or sister in Christ to help you carry your load, that is, to point out your sin, lead you to repent and to lift that burden through forgiveness? Or are we of the opinion that we are something special in God’s church, that we don’t need others to lead us to repent.

I have my own load to carry, my own sins of weakness to watch out for, as well as carrying the load of others. That’s a lot of baggage to be carrying around! How can I help others see their sin, and point them to their Savior and to do it in a loving, gentle way? How do I constantly reflect on the burdens of my own weaknesses? This doesn’t feel like a 20hour 11minute ruck march, but a lifelong hike with a thousand pound ruck...

When the Roman soldiers prodded Jesus along the streets of Jerusalem to Golgotha, the hill of execution outside the city walls, they pulled a man from the crowd, a man by the name of Simon from the country of Cyrene. They forced him to carry Jesus’ cross. We can only imagine how weak Jesus’ body must have been, no water or food since the night before, beaten and bruised, whipped, a great loss of blood. (Mark 15:21; Luke 23:26) Although Simon of Cyrene will be forever immortalized on the pages of Scripture as the man who carried our Savior’s cross, Jesus alone had to carry the burden of our sins, of our weaknesses and failures. He alone had to carry our load.

The prophet Isaiah wrote, **“Surely he took up our infirmities and carried our sorrows. The punishment that brought us peace was upon him… the LORD has laid on him the iniquity of us all. For he bore the sin of many.”** (Isaiah 53:4-6,12) The weight of our sins of inaction, sins of unloving actions, sins of failing to reflect on our own burdens - Jesus had to carry that enormous weight of sin. The consequences associated with those sins - the punishment of death, the wrath of a holy God, the pain of hell, the accusations of Satan – what a burden! Not just on his body, but in his soul and heart, in his mind, the innocent Son of God, condemned to die for our sins, weighted down with our guilt. To die because of that burden of sin.

Why did he do it? He carried our sins because he loves us so much. He willingly allowed the enormous weight of our sins to break him unto death. He did this so that he could lift the burden of sin from your soul, that he might lift the weight of guilt from your conscience, so that you know you are forgiven, and have peace with God, so that you know you have received his mercy, you have received his love, love that reassures you today, “I am patient with you. I am gentle with you. I love you. You are forgiven.”

He has carried your burden of sin, so that you will carry each other’s burdens with gentleness. Before we can carry each other’s burdens, I think that it starts with self-reflection … let’s go back to the second part…

II. Of your own with self-reflection (vs1b,3-5,14-15)

**“But watch yourself, or you also may be tempted. Each one should test his own actions. Then he can take pride in himself, without comparing himself to somebody else, for each one should carry his own load.”**

That’s a sobering exercise, isn’t it? self-reflection… How do I do that? Open your hymnals to pg. 156, at the top it should say, “Personal Preparation for Holy Communion.” The question there asks, “What does God tell me about myself in his holy Word?” The answer: “He says that I am a sinner and deserve only his punishment.” Question: “What should I do if I am not aware of my sins or troubled by them?” Answer: “I should examine myself according to the Ten Commandments and ask how well I have carried out my responsibilities as a husband or wife or single person, as a parent or child, an employer or employee, a teacher or a student. Have I loved God with all my heart, gladly heard his Word and patiently endured affliction? Have I been disobedient, proud or unforgiving? Have I been selfish, lazy, envious, or quarrelsome? Have I lied or deceived, taken something not mine, or given anyone a bad name? Have I abused my body or permitted indecent thoughts to linger in my mind? Have I failed to do what is right and good?”

I must carry my own burdens, that is, recognize that I myself have my own weaknesses to bring before Christ, and to repent of them, and after having my broken spirit mended through his promises of love and forgiveness, that I then go and carry the burdens of others.

I. Of other’s burdens with gentleness (vs1a,2,14-15)

**“Brothers, if someone is caught in a sin, you who are spiritual should restore him gently. Carry each other’s burdens, and in this way you will fulfill the law of Christ.”**

“Fulfilling the law of Christ…” Remember back to the night before Jesus was forced through the city streets? He was with his disciples in the upper room, celebrating the Passover for the final time. He got down on his feet, acting as the household slave, and washed their feet, and then told them, **“A new command I give you: love each other as I have loved you.”** When Paul says, **“In this way you will fulfill the law of Christ**,” that’s what he was talking about. The law of Christ is to love each other as Jesus loves us. Christ has loved me, and has been patient and gentle with me, in spite of the many times I have fallen into sin. I will love my brothers and sisters the same way.

When a brother or sister is caught in a sin… when they do not realize they are sinning, when they are tempted to gossip, when they are tempted not to talk to someone about their offense, when they are tempted to compare themselves with others**, “you who are spiritual should restore him gently.”**

Take them out for coffee, and talk to them, as a brother or sister. Allow the Bible, God’s Word, to point out their sin, and ask them, “Do you see here what this passage says? Is that what you’re doing right now?” And when in tears they repent, then allow the Bible, God’s Word, to lift them up again. Show them God’s promise in Jesus, point them to Christ who carried their sins all way the cross. Point them to the font where Jesus washed away their sins. Point them to the Supper, where Jesus refreshes them again.

**“Restore him gently…”** *restore* in the Greek language has the meaning of setting a broken bone. How do you set a broken bone? Carefully, gently, patiently… What a wonderful picture! Here you have brothers and sisters in Christ whose spirits have been crushed under the weight of their sin and guilt. Mend those bones - bind those broken spirits - with the promises of Jesus’ love and forgiveness.

Brothers and sisters, you came here today to have your broken spirits mended, to hear how much Jesus loves you, how he carried the burden of sin for you. Now, go, and carry the load. Amen.