

The story goes about a young girl sitting in church with her mother. As the preacher drones on she asks her. If we give him the money now will he let us go home? I promise my remarks will be brief today, but if the ushers start coming down the aisle, I'll know I've said enough.

I know you can preach about fire and brimstone. I'm not even sure what brimstone is, but it sure sound ominous. I prefer to see the gospel in a different light. I try to see the happiness that Jesus brought to the people whose lives he touched. In fact it seems to me wherever Jesus went a celebration was breaking out. There are many examples of these celebrations in the new testament.

Mary and Martha celebrated once just because he was there, and again when he raised their brother Lazarus from the dead. Jesus turned water into wine to help those celebrating a wedding in Cana. He celebrated with the 5000 he fed with just three fish and 5 loaves. And in our gospel lesson today there were two occasions for celebrations. Mark tells us of a woman who had been ill for many years. She was healed simply by touching Jesus's garment, and I can only imagine the celebration at Jarius house when Jesus told them that their 12 year old daughter was not dead but merely sleeping. Even on his last week on earth, knowing his fate, he gathered his disciples together to celebrate the feast of the Passover. He broke bread and served wine and taught us to do likewise in remembrance of him. These are just a few examples of the many times Jesus brought happiness to people of his day, and if we follow him he can bring happiness to us as well. At our outdoor worship service on Memorial Day weekend, Judy spoke about slowing down, and I think one way Jesus helps us to be happy is to slow down. Her sermon reminded me of a poem my Dad use to quote when he wanted to remind himself, or his kids to slow down. I thought I would share it with you today. It goes like this:

Slow me down Lord, I'm going to fast.

I can't see my brother when he's walking past.
I miss a lot of good things day by day,
I don't know a blessing when it comes my way.

Slow me down Lord, I want to see

More of the things that are good for me.
A little less of me and a lot more of you.

I want the heavenly atmosphere to trickle through.

Let me help a brother when the going gets rough,
When folks work together it ain't so tough.

Slow me down Lord so I can talk, with some of your angels,

Slow me down Lord, to a walk.

I can think of many times in my own life I need to slow down. I was recently headed back to work after lunch to meet an appointment where I work at Saturn. I sell cars for a living and I was thinking that in the illustrious history of this church, this may be the first time a used car salesman has been in this pulpit. Anyway I saw one of our mechanics parked by the side of the road with the hood of his car open. I know you many of you Saturn owners will find it hard to believe that a Saturn was actually broken down by the side of the road. It must have been operator error, I certainly couldn't have been the cars fault. See there is the used car salesman coming out in me, and enough of this shameless Saturn plug. But did I stop to see if I could help him? No I told myself I'm sure he has already called some one, and there is probably nothing I could do anyway. So I just went on by justifying that I need to get back so that I wouldn't miss my appointment.

Slow me down Lord I'm going to fast, I can't see my brother when he's walking past.

Since I work on the Westside of Cleveland I get to travel I 480 twice a day. This is one place I need to literally slow down. I think I'm traveling with the flow of traffic, oh at about 80, when some idiot wants to try to squeeze in ahead of me in a spot that is really only big enough for a skate board. Now I'm mad and find myself drafting on his bumper like I'm Jeff Gordon coming out of turn 4 at Daytona, and if he gets back out of line, you can bet he's not getting back in. That gaps just not going to be there any more. It's then that I need to be reminded to slow me down Lord, I am going to fast. I can't control how the other guy drives, I just better make sure I don't cause an accident myself.

I also like to play golf, and you would think a nice relaxing round of golf would be a good way to slow down. Sometimes the little white ball seems to have a mind of it's own, and can make a fun relaxing time into a major cause of frustration. I'm sure any of you golfers can relate. I can remember times when I've become so frustrated, that after a particularly bad shot, I've actually asked God to damn that golf ball. Have you ever asked God to do the same thing for you. You have a mower that won't start, you get a flat tire, you burn your hand as you pull a batch of brownies out of the oven, and what do we do, we call on God to send my golf ball or that mower to eternal condemnation. How silly, even if God would acknowledge our plea, I doubt that we would feel much better. Rather I should remind myself to slow down. A little more of you and a lot less of me is really what I need. I should n't let these little problems ruin my day.

Slowing down is just one way God can help us to be happier. God grants us many blessings, and the poem reminds us that we don't always see them. I would encourage you to take a minute each day to count your blessings, to not block your blessings, but rather praise God from whom all blessings flow. I think God is helping me figure out that the only reason to be alive is to enjoy it. One of my favorite psalms is Psalm 118 verse 24 which says, This is the day that the Lord has made let us rejoice and be glad in it.

Try to find away to be happy each day. Whistle while you work, skip across the room, put a big ol smile on your face, and see how many big ol smiles you get back. Or just sing a child's song of praise like this one. I got the joy, joy, joy, joy down in my heart.....Amen.

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