

8/29/10

**THE CALL TO WORSHIP**                      **Luke 4:14-16**

Lay Minister: Luke tells us, *14 Jesus returned to Galilee in the power of the Spirit, and news about him spread through the whole countryside.*

**People:**        **15 He taught in their synagogues, and everyone praised him.**

Lay Minister: *16 He went to Nazareth, where he had been brought up, and on the Sabbath day he went into the synagogue,*

**People:**        **as was his custom.**

Lay Minister: Jesus followed customs and traditions that led helped Him to serve God with His life.

**People:**        **We gather today at the call of God to remember the Sabbath, to be fed, to grow, to encourage, and to praise the Lord of the universe.**

Lay Minister: We gather in the name of the true God,

**People:**        **In the name of God the Father, and in the name of God the Son, and in the name of God the Holy Spirit. Amen.**

**THE PRAYER OF THE DAY**    **Our loving heavenly Father, move us by your love and power so that we plan our lives in such a way that we keep you as the priority of our plans and our actions, through Jesus Christ, Your Son, our Lord, who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. Amen.**

**THE OLD TESTAMENT LESSON** Exodus 12:14-17

*(God instructs the Israelites to remember His powerful mercy in the celebration of the festival, Passover.)*

**14 "This is a day you are to commemorate; for the generations to come you shall celebrate it as a festival to the LORD-- a lasting ordinance.** 15 For seven days you are to eat bread made without yeast. On the first day remove the yeast from your houses, for whoever eats anything with yeast in it from the first day through the seventh must be cut off from Israel.

16 On the first day hold a sacred assembly, and another one on the seventh day. Do no work at all on these days, except to prepare food for everyone to eat-- that is all you may do.

17 "Celebrate the Feast of Unleavened Bread, because it was on this very day that I brought your divisions out of Egypt. Celebrate this day as a lasting ordinance for the generations to come.

**THE EPISTLE LESSON**        1 Corinthians 1:23-26

*(Paul 'passes on' what He has received about the Lord's Supper.)*

23 For I received from the Lord what I also passed on to you: The Lord Jesus, on the night he was betrayed, took bread, 24 and when he had given thanks, he broke it and said, "This is my body, which is for you; do this in remembrance of me."

25 In the same way, after supper he took the cup, saying, "This cup is the new covenant in my blood; do this, whenever you drink it, in remembrance of me." 26 For whenever you eat this bread and drink this cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until he comes.

## THE GOSPEL LESSON     Luke 4:14-21

*(Jesus follows his custom of observing the Sabbath.)*

14 Jesus returned to Galilee in the power of the Spirit, and news about him spread through the whole countryside. 15 He taught in their synagogues, and everyone praised him.

16 He went to Nazareth, where he had been brought up, and on the Sabbath day he went into the synagogue, as was his custom. And he stood up to read. 17 The scroll of the prophet Isaiah was handed to him. Unrolling it, he found the place where it is written:

18 "The Spirit of the Lord is on me, because he has anointed me to preach good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim freedom for the prisoners and recovery of sight for the blind, to release the oppressed, 19 to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor."

20 Then he rolled up the scroll, gave it back to the attendant and sat down. The eyes of everyone in the synagogue were fastened on him, 21 and he began by saying to them, "Today this scripture is fulfilled in your hearing."

## THE SERMON                    *“Christian Parenting – Rituals and Traditions”*

A number of years ago my wife told the kids she was thinking of making a change. That year, instead of a large tree that reached to the top of our vaulted ceiling, a 16 foot tree, she thought we were going to have a normal sized tree, 6 or 8 feet. Our kids protested loudly. “ But, we always have a tall tree. We can’t change.” You see, we had a tradition. It was part of the way we celebrated Christmas. The tradition included a family trip into the woods to cut the tree, and a family day to decorate the big tree on two levels. It is part of what made the Christmas season special in our home, and part of how we remembered the birth of the Savior.

You might wonder, “Pastor, what does this have to do with parenting?” Well, the Search Institute identified 4 practices that help teach Christian faith that lasts. We have looked at those traits based on Scripture to help build faith in the families and family of St. John. The practices include *Caring Words*, *Regular Devotions*, *Engaging in Service together*, and the topic for today’s look at Christian parenting practices is “*Rituals and Traditions*.” A practice that helps parents to teach faith that lasts is the practice of family traditions that teach the faith and make it important to family members.

However, I need to be honest traditions can be a problem too. To be sure, when traditions get in the way of God or his word they can be harmful. When traditions become more important than what they point to, they can lead people away from God and His teaching. An example of that happened in Jesus’ day. In Mark 7 Jesus was in a discussion with the Jewish leaders. Their teachings were not based on God’s word but traditions. **11 But you say that if a man says to his father or mother: 'Whatever help you might otherwise have received from me is Corban' (that is, a gift devoted to God), 12 then you no longer let him do**

**anything for his father or mother. 13 Thus you nullify the word of God by your tradition that you have handed down. And you do many things like that."** That also is part of the reason the Lutheran Church broke from the Catholic Church in the 1500's, traditions and man made teachings had become more important than what God taught in His Word. Some would say that Christmas traditions can get in the way of remembering the real gift of Christmas. There is a danger. But, the Search Institute has identified Family Traditions and Rituals as a practice that can make faith in God real and meaningful, especially when they point to the real meaning for celebrating. In fact, in Scripture God used traditions to help people remember Him and His love.

Look at Exodus 12. God himself sets up a tradition to remember His goodness in the Passover and Exodus. See verse 14. **Exodus 12: 14 "This is a day you are to commemorate; for the generations to come you shall celebrate it as a festival to the LORD-- a lasting ordinance.** The people were to celebrate the Passover as a way to remember God's great loving act. The tradition of a special meal and special worship helped build faith.

Look at our Epistle lesson. Paul passes on a regular practice which had been passed to him, by God. 1 Corinthians 11:23 says, **For I received from the Lord what I also passed on to you: The Lord Jesus, on the night he was betrayed, took bread, 24 and when he had given thanks, he broke it and said, "This is my body, which is for you; do this in remembrance of me."** The word meaning pass on also means a tradition. The Lord's Supper is more than a tradition, it is a sacrament where God comes and forgives His people. But, it is also a regular practice that points us to God's amazing love as we receive the merciful forgiveness of God. This regular practice or ritual helps build faith in the death and rising of Jesus. Does your family celebrate the Lord's Supper together?

Or look at Jesus in our Gospel lesson. In Luke 4:16 we are told of Jesus, **He went to Nazareth, where he had been brought up, and on the Sabbath day he went into the synagogue, as was his custom.** Jesus had a custom, a regular practice, a personal tradition. He kept the Sabbath. This custom was in response to God's commandment to remember His life giving love in creation. When families joyfully Worship together, they are strengthened.

Do you see what these customs and traditions did and why they helped build lasting faith? They celebrated and remembered God's goodness. The Sabbath remembers God's goodness in creation. The Passover remembers God's goodness in the Exodus. The Lord's Supper remembers and celebrates God's goodness in Jesus' dying and rising. There can be other traditions, regular prayers, family devotions, meals that remember God's goodness. Even the other practices we discussed, loving words, Regular family devotions, engaging in service together, these can become traditions that point us to God's love. But, when families use traditions to point to and remember God's love and blessings, these traditions can build lasting faith.

As a child I remember another tradition. Every year before Christmas we would go Christmas shopping and after shopping my grandfather would buy everyone lunch at a nice restaurant, The Fort. That may not seem like much, but it was something we did together. We looked forward to that day 2 weeks before Christmas. It celebrated the gift of family, and the love we had. My grand father always made sure to remind us of the reason for Christmas too. So this event built family love and family faith in Jesus. When we remember and celebrate God's love with regular traditions and rituals, we teach faith that lasts. But, after all, that follows the practice of God with the Passover, the Sabbath, and the Lord's Supper.