

The Strength of Forgiveness

Building Core Strength

By Steve Viars

sermonaudio.com

Preached on: Friday, June 22, 2012

Faith Church

5526 State Road 26 E

Lafayette, IN 47905

Website: www.faithlafayette.org/church

Online Sermons: www.sermonaudio.com/faithlafayette

Well, how many of us would say we really like physical exercise and we find it a very easy thing to do? Is that where you are coming from this morning? And I realize there may be a few odd folks who would say yes. But for the rest of us exercise is hard work. And the last thing we would ever want to do is make it any harder than it has to be, right? Unlike these people who thought it would be wise to add weight vests to their regimen. Here is a particular woman doing all her different things including chin-ups with a weight vest. That makes no sense whatsoever, but that is what she is doing. Or this guy right here. And what is worse than doing a bunch of push ups? Doing a bunch of push ups with the weight vest on. Why would you ever do that? Or people who wear weight vests while they are running. Does that look like a lot of fun right there? If his knees could talk, do you know what they would be saying? Take the weight vest off right now. There won't be any trouble. Take the weight vest off. Or there is this variation if you say, "I don't want to strap on a weight vest," well, then how about strapping on another person?

By the way, notice that the guy in the back is smiling and the guy in the front is grimacing. There is probably a lesson right there for sure.

Now apparently there is some sort of training value to adding weight to yourself while you are working out, but what would happen if a person actually came to the event like that, the game? Would the runner show up at a track meet wearing that vest? What would the coach say on game day if his running back still had an extra person strapped to himself.

The point is when it comes time for the game, an event that really counts, you don't want anything on you. You don't want anything in you that might drag you down. We all agree with that.

In fact, if you know your Bible you might be thinking about a particular passage of Scripture that says a very similar thing spiritually, doesn't it? It is Hebrews chapter 12 verse one.

"Therefore, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us also lay aside every weight, and sin which clings so closely, and let us run with endurance the race that

is set before us.”¹

We all agree when it comes to spiritual issues that the last thing we would ever want to do is to hold on to things that would weigh us down and to keep us from accomplishing what God desires. We wouldn't want that to happen as individuals. And we certainly wouldn't want that to happen to us as a church. But let me follow that up with this. Does that happen? Do you believe that many, if not all of us, have weights right now? We have sin that so closely clings to us that we are not running the spiritual race nearly as fast or nearly as far as God would desire. I don't think there would be many here who would dispute that point.

Well, what are some of those areas? And what are some of the things spiritually that could potentially weigh you down even today that could weigh us down? Even today, if you are going to make a list, what would be on it? How about this? What about the issue of the failure to forgive? Would that be a weight vest that many of us frequently strap on as we begin each day, continuing to hold grudges and embracing bitterness and frequently reviewing the ways others have failed or sinned against us?

Some people strap that weight vest on every day and don't run the race very quickly or very far. Could that happen to us as a church?

Here is a very specific example. Did you know last Sunday afternoon at our ground breaking there were some people who attended that actually had opposed us in some way? Did you know that? And some who had opposed us rather vigorously.

Well, what are we going to do about all of that? Are we going to go to West Lafayette with a chip on our shoulders and nursing those perceived wrongs and watching them grow mold and moss in the recesses of our hearts? And a church even corporately go through some portion of their history with needless weight vests strapped to their corporate backs? And think about this. Why do people wear those weight vests anyway? It is because of the joy and freedom that comes when you take them off. When the real game starts, when the real race begins, you can run like the wind. And maybe for some of us today, maybe for a lot of us it is a day when we can remove a vest and run with endurance the race that is set before us.

With that I mind, let me invite you to open your Bible this morning to Luke chapter 15. That is on page 60 at the back section of the Bible under the chair in front of you. So Luke chapter 15 on page 60 of the back section of the Bible under the chair in front of you.

This morning we are going to study the parable of the prodigal son. I realize that is a very well known story in the Bible, but it is also one that is not always applied in a way that is consistent with the text. One of the ways to prevent that from happening is to go back and review the context, the verses before or after. We want to start that this morning. And verses one and two set the stage for all of this.

¹ Hebrews 12:1.

Now all the tax collectors and the sinners were coming near Him to listen to Him. Both the Pharisees and the scribes began to grumble, saying, "This man receives sinners and eats with them."²

It sounds like they have got a weight vest on, you know? It sounds like it. Warren Wiersbe said this. He said, "It is significant that Jesus attracted sinners while the Pharisees repelled them. What does that say about some of our churches today? That lost sinners came to Jesus not because he catered to them or because he compromised his message, but because he cared for them. He understood their needs and tried to help them while the Pharisees criticized them and kept their distance. The Pharisees had a knowledge of the Old Testament law and a desire for personal purity—all of which was good, by the way—yet they had no love for lost souls."

Now it is in this context that Jesus actually gives three parables, all intended to help the Pharisees and the scribes see the error of their thinking and hopefully change. And though we are going to concentrate on the third one this morning, we are going to spend most of our time on the parable of the prodigal son and we are going to read these first two. They are rather short, just to see some contextual commonalities that are going to help us when we get to the parable of the prodigal son.

So look now at verse three.

So He told them this parable, saying, "What man among you, if he has a hundred sheep and has lost one of them, does not leave the ninety-nine in the open pasture and go after the one which is lost until he finds it? When he has found it, he lays it on his shoulders, rejoicing. And when he comes home, he calls together his friends and his neighbors, saying to them, 'Rejoice with me, for I have found my sheep which was lost!' I tell you that in the same way, there will be more joy in heaven over one sinner who repents than over ninety-nine righteous persons who need no repentance."³

So take that vest off is the point.

And then, the next story. Listen to the commonalities.

"Or what woman, if she has ten silver coins and loses one coin, does not light a lamp and sweep the house and search carefully until she finds it? When she has found it, she calls together her friends and neighbors, saying, 'Rejoice with me, for I have found the coin which I had lost!' In the same way, I tell you, there is joy in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner who repents."⁴

² Luke 15:1-2.

³ Luke 15:3-7.

⁴ Luke 15:8-10.

Now there is a lot we could say about those stories, but notice the commonalities. Something is lost. Something is found and there is great rejoicing. Another important principle is both the shepherd and the woman go to great lengths to find the object that was lost. Remember that. That is going to become crucial in our understanding of the parable of the prodigal son. But the shepherd left the 99 and he went after the one. And the woman lit a lamp and swept the house and searched carefully for it.

There is also great delight when the lost item was found, so much so that parties are thrown for and by the person's friends and the shepherd gets his friends and neighbors together. They have a party. The woman does exactly the same thing. There is this sense of unbridled delight when something that was lost was found.

Now why would Jesus tell stories like that? I think we all know, but keep that in mind now as we begin reading in verse 11.

And He said, "A man had two sons. The younger of them said to his father, 'Father, give me the share of the estate that falls to me.' So he divided his wealth between them. "And not many days later, the younger son gathered everything together and went on a journey into a distant country, and there he squandered his estate with loose living."⁵

Now picture this in your mind.

"Now when he had spent everything, a severe famine occurred..."⁶

Wow. Maybe there is another father involved in this.

"...a severe famine occurred in that country, and he began to be impoverished. So he went and hired himself out to one of the citizens of that country, and he sent him into his fields to feed swine. And he would have gladly filled his stomach with the pods that the swine were eating, and no one was giving anything to him. But when he came to his senses, he said, 'How many of my father's hired men have more than enough bread, but I am dying here with hunger! I will get up and go to my father, and will say to him, "Father, I have sinned against heaven, and in your sight; I am no longer worthy to be called your son; make me as one of your hired men."' So he got up and came to his father. But while he was still a long way off, his father saw him and felt compassion for him, and ran and embraced him and kissed him. And the son said to him, 'Father, I have sinned against heaven and in your sight; I am no longer worthy to be called your son.' But the father said to his slaves, 'Quickly bring out the best robe and put it on him, and put a ring on his hand and sandals on his feet; and bring the fattened calf, kill it, and let us eat and celebrate; for this

⁵ Luke 15:11-13.

⁶ Luke 15:14.

son of mine was dead and has come to life again; he was lost and has been found.’ And they began to celebrate.”⁷

It would be marvelous if the passage ended right there, but to bring us around full circle, to explain, really, why Jesus told this parable and to illustrate the weight vest that the guys in verse two were wearing and the ones that we better not be, verse 25.

"Now his older son was in the field, and when he came and approached the house, he heard music and dancing. And he summoned one of the servants and began inquiring what these things could be. And he said to him, ‘Your brother has come, and your father has killed the fattened calf because he has received him back safe and sound.’ But he became angry and was not willing to go in; and his father came out and began pleading with him. But he answered and said to his father, ‘Look! For so many years I have been serving you and I have never neglected a command of yours; and yet you have never given me a young goat, so that I might celebrate with my friends; but when this son of yours came, who has devoured your wealth with prostitutes, you killed the fattened calf for him.’ And he said to him, ‘Son, you have always been with me, and all that is mine is yours. But we had to celebrate and rejoice, for this brother of yours was dead and has begun to live, and was lost and has been found.’”⁸

Don’t you love the Word of God? We are talking this morning about the strength of forgiveness. With the time we have left let’s scour these verses and look at three principles to help us be forgiving people and to be a forgiving church. And you may have a weight vest you need to take off this morning, friend. We are going to try to let the Word of God help you do just that. Three principles to help us be forgiving people and to be a forgiving church.

First of all, understand the lengths to which God goes to rescue and restore people. Just like this sheep was lost and the coin was lost, this son was lost. Think about what the text says about the nature of the son’s sin. It says he demanded his inheritance in verse 12.

“Give me a share of my estate right now.”

And many students of Scripture think that it would have been incredibly insensitive because, in essence, what the son was saying was, “I wish you were dead now. Let’s get on with the party.”

In fact, boy, this is almost entirely off the subject, but I need to be sure that I have said it, because I know some of you are somewhat new to studying parables. The challenge with parables is generally they are given to emphasize one or two main points. And sometimes people take all the other points and try to make some sort of contemporary

⁷ Luke 15:14-24.

⁸ Luke 15:25-32.

application. That is called allegorizing and that would be very, very dangerous in this particular text.

If a person left here and said, “You know, because this particular father chose to give his younger son his share of the inheritance while he was still alive, apparently it would be ok for me to make that same demand of my living parents today.” Wrong. You all got that? Wrong, wrong, wrong. In fact—and you may not agree with me on this—but I don’t believe a parent biblically has any obligation to leave any material possessions for their children. In fact, I have the view that sometimes for some adult children that would be absolutely the worst thing you could possibly do for them.

Thomas Huxley said, “A man’s worst difficulties begin when he is able to do just as he likes.” And that is clearly proven in the life of the younger son in this particular parable. And I have seen some family members fight over what they thought belonged to them from their parents’ estate even after the parent had died in ways that are shameful and terribly destructive to the family. It is this attitude that suggests I am owed something by someone else.

Welcome to this news. You are not. Your parents owe you nothing. As an adult child your parents owe you nothing and if they decide to leave something for you, it is absolutely and entirely by their grace. And to demand it ahead of time would be absolutely wicked. Are we clear on that? Good. Sometimes I have trouble getting it out the way I want it to be said.

Now, back to the text. He went on and squandered it with loose living. It is amazing how forthright the bible is. Later in this passage the elder brother actually suggests that it was spent on prostitution and we don’t know, maybe, probably it was. But you can imagine this young man chafing to get out from under the authority in his life. He has decided that his father’s work is boring. His fathers rules are boring and his food is boring so he wants out where he can be his own boss and he can be his own man.

You can imagine him taking this wad of money and hitting the road and he would probably buy some new clothes and have some fancy meals. He has got friends everywhere. He can have anything he wants. But do you know what? It takes a whole lot longer to earn and save that money than it does to spend it. Do we all notice that over the years? The text says while he is squandering that money, he eventually becomes impoverished. The money is gone and his friends are gone and the Bible says he actually becomes enslaved. He is a Jewish young man in a foreign country and he suffers the indignity of having to work as a simple day slave for a Gentile. And as if that could not get any worse, he is sent out to feed the lousy pigs, the filthiest animal possible to a Jewish young man.

It is amazing how quickly he went from rags to riches. And it is just like Jesus taught.

“Truly, truly, I say to you, everyone who commits sin is the slave of sin.”⁹

⁹ John 8:34.

And verse 16 gives this haunting analysis.

“And he would have gladly filled his stomach with the pods that the swine were eating.”¹⁰

That is a bad day when it would be good if he got some slop. And that is what is happening.

“And he would have gladly filled his stomach with the pods that the swine were eating, and no one was giving anything to him.”¹¹

He was starving and he was alone.

Now switch perspectives on your camera. What was the father doing during this period of time? And one of the mistakes that is often made with this passage is to fail to remember the first two parables and to assume that salvation is all of man, because in this case this father would appear to be doing nothing. And I would like to suggest to you that is not true. I think what we saw this father do in this particular situation contained a tremendous amount of grace.

And by the way, you might say, “You know, pastor Viars, I think you have your apostrophe wrong there. Shouldn’t the apostrophe be between the r and the s?”

No, there is actually two fathers involved here. We will get that to that in a minute, but remember the context was the shepherd with his sheep and he woman with her coin, they went to great lengths to rescue. They went to great lengths to restore. And you might say, “Well, it doesn't appear that way with this early father. I mean, he just gave in. He let the son go. He approved his request.

This is hard, friends, but sometimes that is what grace does, especially when we are talking about an older child, we are talking about someone in their older teens. We are talking about someone in their 20s or beyond. Sometimes that is exactly what grace does. Because the sheep was lost by foolishness. That is how sheep are. And the coin was lost by carelessness. Sometimes that happens. But this son was lost by willfulness. And that cannot always be controlled.

Do you think there was any question in the father’s mind that this money would be squandered? Do you think there is any question in the father’s mind that his son was about to go through some very difficult times? Of course not. Sometimes grace let’s a person you love suffer the consequences of sin with the goal of repentance. It is not, well, I am just going to let him go passively so the day will come when he will have to come back so I can rub his nose in it. No, that is not what we are talking about. But I am saying that sometimes a father, a child or a parent has to allow their child to go away that

¹⁰ Luke 15:16.

¹¹ Ibid.

you know is going to hurt them in order to bring them to a point of repentance. That, by the way, is true for a local church.

One of our responsibilities and one of our hard ones is to practice church discipline. After a person has sinned and sinned and sinned and they will not repent and they have been confronted privately and with a small group at some point a local church has to do one of the most powerful things that a church ever does in a person's life and that is to say to them corporately, you are not behaving like a person who is a follower of Christ.

And what 1 Corinthians five says about that is at that moment, listen to this. At that moment you are delivering that person to Satan for the destruction of the flesh. That is why we are so careful whenever that happens around here, because of the power corporately of that act. What does that mean? Delivering a person.

And, by the way, if that haunts you off, you would be mad at the wrong guy. That is what God's Word says exactly about a situation like that, 1 Corinthians five and the story of the incestuous man. And you would deliver that person, if they will not repent to Satan for the destruction of the flesh. What does that mean? It means to put them in a position where now they are experiencing the full consequences of their sin so now they are in a position where their fleshly desires will be destroyed through experiencing the full consequences of their sin. So repentance will hopefully occur.

Now as I mentioned before, it is not just this earthly father who has allowed his son to go knowing full well that there is going to be sever consequences to pay. There is also the heavenly Father. See, he is the one who allowed the famine to occur at that very point. Do you think that was a surprise to him? He is the one who built the principles of cause and effect into his world. And he is the one who provided a job with, of all things, a pig farmer.

And I realize the skeptic might say, "Yeah, like God is going to go to all those lengths for the repentance of one person."

What is the answer to that? Absolutely. The God of the Bible is a rescuing God. And he is a saving God. He is a forgiving God.

Now if you are really trying to process this carefully in you mind you might say, "Now wait a minute, then. As a parent or as a person who is working with somebody else, how do I know when I ought to be like the shepherd or the woman or how do I know when I ought to be like the father? Because the shepherd and the woman aggressively sought and they aggressively chased whereas the father is passively allowing."

There is no question that their grace was evident in different ways. How do I know in a given situation which is the right course to pursue? That is a good question. And the answer, I think, is that requires the wisdom of Solomon, to apply God's Word carefully and accurately in a given situation. And that is why it is so important to have a personal relationship with God, because you have the Holy Spirit inside of you, guiding you as

you try to apply his Word. That is also why it is so wonderful to have the privilege of praying and asking for God's help to know when we ought to aggressively pursue and when we ought to hold back and when we rescue and when we should allow someone to suffer consequences.

But I believe this. I really believe that if your heart is right, if your motivation is sure, I believe God will bless us and help us and guide us in those situations. That is why Jesus said if anyone is willing to do his will, see, if you want to do right, if your heart is right, he will know of the teaching. He will know what to do in a given situation. See, for like the shepherd and like the woman and like the father in that we value rescuing and restoring people will know the best way to respond when we need to. But if we are like the scribes and the Pharisees and this older brother, we will get it wrong every time. And, of course, that leads to an obvious question, doesn't it? Think about this. What is the evidence in your life that you value restoring people to a relationship with God? You value the matter of rescuing and restoring.

And you might say, "Well, how do I know? How would I know?"

Well, think back over the last several weeks. Have you spent time crying out to God for people in your life who don't yet know the Lord? Those people who make you crazy and those people who disappoint you in every turn, those people who fail you. Those people who irritate you. Do you know what I am talking about? And how much time have you spent praying for their rescue, praying for their restoration? Did you wade through some of those bad habits because you long to see them come to Christ? Or have the last few weeks been all about looking down on others because of their sin or justifying bitterness because they hurt you or they disappointed you?

On the other hand, one of the things I love about our church is the number of men and women who serve at our church and reach out in our town because they have an eye on the ball. They are always on the lookout for the next person that God might be in the process of rescuing and they want to be part of that.

I was talking to my mom this week about one of the many ministries I could use to illustrate this point, but meals we take down to the mental health homeless shelter. And Craig and Sue Svenson organize that along with a lot of really good people who just quietly serve. And why do they do that? It is because they want to be like the shepherd. They want to be like this woman. They want to be like this father who values the rescue and restoration of others. They value people that much.

And that is a very big part of what we are trying to prepare for regarding fall readiness. You have heard me talk about that now several weeks being just ready for what God will do here at the end of August. And that is the time when everybody is back from their vacation. That is the time when people are getting their kids in school and in some cases, because they have been previously unchurched, more open to the thought of getting themselves in church. And we have to decide right now, who are we going to be like and how are we going to respond to people that God might bring into this church who don't

know the lingo, don't have the habits, et cetera, et cetera, et cetera. I hope we will learn much from this text. And if we have the weight vest of judgmentalism and self righteousness to get it off and to get it off fast.

Now let's keep going. Follow God's example after the person repents. And if you are here and you would say, "You know, I am the guy who needs to repent. I am the prodigal son," great. Listen up to this particular part of the story, because there is some very important truth here.

The nature of the son's repentance. He came to his senses. Verse 17 is crucial. That is why the father didn't chase after the son and try to shield him from all the consequences of his actions. Sometimes we have to be hungry, really hungry, not necessarily physically, but spiritually before we are ready to do business with God. Is that true?

Blessed are the poor in spirit, who get to that place, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven and blessed are those who mourn over their sin. You have to repent to get there. Blessed are the gentle. Blessed are those who hunger and thirst after righteousness for they shall be satisfied. And, by the way, that is why we talk so much about personal responsibility around here.

I realize if you had looked at this son at some point when he was out there with the pigs, there might not have appeared to be much difference the way they all smelled, the way they all looked, think about his tattered clothes, et cetera, et cetera. But there was a fundamental difference. He is made in the image of God.

And I understand that when human beings deny the image in which they are made, they can end up living in some pretty animalistic ways. But don't ever forget this. Where sin increased, grace abounds all the more. And one of the purposes of the cross that we have been so joyfully singing about this morning is that when a person repents and believes and sometimes they have to go through some very hard times, some animalistic type behavior, but when they get to the place of repenting and believing they can through the power of Christ be restored to the image in which they were made. And that is why Paul said:

"For those whom He foreknew, He also predestined to become conformed to the image of His Son."¹²

And it is possible for men and women, even if they have denied God for years, even if they have run from him, even if they have made a mess of their lives, it is possible for human beings to come to their senses. And I would just ask every person in this room. Has there been a definite time in your life when you came to your senses? Has there been a definite time in your life where you admitted your need and you said, "I am hungry. I am hungry. I want to go home"?

He also then changed his view of his father. All of the sudden the father's work and the

¹² Romans 8:29.

father's ways and the father's food didn't sound so bad. And this is what is really important. He planned his words and he did it thoroughly. That is how you can tell if a person is genuinely repentant. But that is at least one of the ways. This man planned what he was going to say to his father.

"I sinned against heaven. I understand God is part of this. I sinned in your sight. I sinned against you. I am no longer worthy to be called your son. And I would love to have a job and just be one of your hired men."

That is repentance. That is called turning it around, coming to your senses. And I ask you again. Have you done that. And if you would say, "Well, I don't know how God would respond. I have ignored him for so long or I have gotten into something so deeply. I don't know much about him," this parable can help you on that point, too, because think about the nature of the father's forgiveness. It was expectant.

While he was a long way off his father saw him. Why? Why was that? Because his father was looking for him and he was waiting and he was praying. But, again, all of that follows repentance. If you just bail a person out without them acknowledging their sin and their guilt they will be right back at it. And, yes, you have to have a forgiving spirit. You have to have a desire and willingness to forgive them. But God is no universalist. Forgiveness follows repentance.

This father was also compassionate. The verse says that he felt compassion for his son, not anger, not hatred, not a desire to have revenge. And he embraced him after he ran to his son. Think about that. He ran. And he embraced his son and he kissed him. And the tenses of the verbs that are used there would suggest that he did that over and over and over. This wasn't a quick peck. This was a very emotional moment over and over and over again. This father was quick to forgive.

It is interesting if you compare the planned speech that the son had prepared in verses 18 and 19, you will see the father didn't even let him complete the speech. And he knew his son's heart was repentant and that was enough and he was ready to restore, none of this you are going to be one of my hired servants. You are my son. Bring out the best robe and the sandals and the ring, signs of authority and sonship. And call for the party to begin. And it was a celebration. He called for the fatted calf to be killed and brought the servants together and rejoiced, because the lost son had returned.

And just like the shepherd rejoiced over the sheep and the woman rejoiced over the coin, this father was overjoyed by the return of his Son.

And if you are here this morning and you would say, "I am a lot like the prodigal son. I am not sure how God would respond to me if I repented," friends, it is all here right here in this text. The same father who responded like this would respond to you if you are in that situation this morning.

Now wouldn't it be great if the story ended right here? It is amazing how many times there are in the Bible where it ends on a negative note. But you understand ultimately that is why we started with the context. Ultimately the story is not about the prodigal son. It is not even about the earthly father. Instead, it is about the older brother, because that is who the scribes and the Pharisees were being like. And the lesson for all of us is to avoid the temptation to withhold grace and refuse to forgive. Who knows who God is going to bring to our church family in the next couple of weeks? Who knows who God is going to bring to our church family this fall? And there it is, fall readiness. Avoid the temptation to withhold grace and refuse to forgive.

And this older brother was angry. And he wouldn't even respond to his father's plea. Can you imagine this dear father on one of the happiest days of his life having this older son who would not listen to him. He was self righteous. That is what causes churches to wear this particular weight vest. He was self righteous.

"I have never neglected a command of yours."¹³

By the way, I doubt that, don't you? But while his father had focus on the joy and hope of forgiveness, this older brother had rehearsed his brother's sin. And the hurt day after day in his heart became more and more bitter and more and more hard and more and more self righteous. The truth of the matter is he was in the process of neglecting a command of his father at that very moment, because he wouldn't come to the party. He was selfish.

"For so many years I have been serving you... you have never given me a young goat."¹⁴

Like who wants a young goat?

"...you have never given me a young goat, so that I might celebrate with my friends."¹⁵

And James Boice said, "This is so important. We have within us the spirit of a hired servant who works for money rather than the spirit of a son who works because he loves his father."

He was hateful. It is fascinating that he wouldn't even refer to this prodigal as his brother. He said, "This son of yours."

Well, the lessons are pretty apparent, aren't they? Isn't it amazing how God's Word can work on our hearts if we will let it and be ready to rejoice when a person comes to Christ, regardless of his or her past.

One little boy said, "Lord, please make bad people good and good people nice."

¹³ Luke 15:29.

¹⁴ Ibid.

¹⁵ Ibid.

We might need a little of that this fall, huh? Don't confuse religious activity with closeness to God. This one hurts. It is possible for us elder brothers to leave the father without leaving the farm.

He said the older brother was good on the outside, but something was missing. He didn't share his father's joy. There were no festivals in his life, no music and dancing, only serious, tedious monotony and boring mildewed piety.

Be ready to quickly forgive others when they repent. And I wonder. I don't now why God wanted you to hear his message this morning or me, but I know this. If we tend to be exacting people, if we tend to be merciless people, if we tend to be self righteous people, God won't use us this fall. That is a sin that has so easily beset us. And, if necessary, I would encourage us to take that weight vest off.