

Text: Psalm 55:22

Theme: The Art of Burden Casting

May 1, 2016

As many of you already know next weekend is opening weekend of fishing season, a weekend where many flock to the lakes to do what they love best, wait for that perfect catch. Although I'm not an avid fisherman, I do know that fishing is an art, that casting takes practice, and that there's a great deal of preparation that occurs before you catch your first fish. In today's text, casting is the topic, but we're not casting to catch, but to discard what's not best for us to carry.

I. Our God of great wisdom continually encourages us to cast our burdens on Him.

A. As He encourages, we realize that we are burdened people. 1. We carry physical burdens. I'm a bit curious this morning. Is there anyone here over the age of 30 that has no aches or pains of any kind? Just as I thought. We don't like them, welcome them, or invite them over for dinner and a movie, yet pain is part of life. We can blame it all on Adam and Eve, but blaming does no good. Pain is pain and pain is a very real and exhausting part of life, a part that we would gladly unload, sell, give away, or drop off at Good-Will, if only someone would take what we'd like to give away.

2. We also carry emotional burdens. Imagine for a moment that your mind had no emotional scars, no thoughts that created any sort of mental pain, emotional heartaches, nothing that had an emotional impact on your life. Wouldn't it be wonderful if we could be in that place, if we could press a button and arrive there at this very moment? Like physical burdens, we also carry mental and emotional burdens. The rest of the world may not notice them, yet their pain and the weariness they can create far exceeds any physical pain. If only we could unload all our emotional burdens into a dumpster forever, life would surely be dramatically different.

3. We also carry self-inflicted burdens. With all the pain we face, why would we create more pain? Because we are human and we do foolish things, painful things. At the top of the list is the self-inflicted burden of worrying. Is worry necessary? Worry is a major self-inflicted burden because we do one thing in particular that we should not do. We allow worry to get inside. Listen to this poem that puts worry into perspective. "All the water in the world However hard it tried, Could never, never sink a ship Unless it got inside. All the hardships of this world, Might wear you pretty thin, But they won't hurt you, one least bit Unless you let them in."

B. Realizing how burdened we are, how do we practice the art of burden casting?

1. We practice the art by owning our burdens. Popular belief says, "It's not my fault. It's their fault. If they hadn't said or done, my life wouldn't be this way today!" Popular that belief might be, but truthful it is not. Before we can cast our burdens on the Lord, we need to stand before Him and say, "I am responsible; I'm responsible for me. I will not blame or point my finger elsewhere. I am who I am because I am responsible for me!" As we take ownership of our burdens, we crack the door open, as it were, to allow God to slip His foot inside and begin the healing process.

2. We practice the art by believing God loves us. Sounds like an unnecessary statement considering the people sitting around us, doesn't it? But if it's so unnecessary, why do so many say in their hearts, "If God really loved me...?" In our

Gospel, what appears obvious is stated, "For the Father Himself loves you." You could easily take that statement and replace you with your name, "For the Father Himself loves John, or Mary, or Jim." Sounds different with your name in that blank, doesn't it? As we practice the art of casting, we need to know and believe those simple words we learned as a child, "Jesus loves me, this I know for the Bible tells me so."

3. We practice the art by believing God has the power to relieve our burdens. In our Gospel, we find these words, "Whatever you ask of the Father in My name, He will give it to you." Can you believe it! Do you believe it? The Creator of the universe who knows you by name has offered to relieve your burdens! It seems unbelievable, yet it's true when we believe that God has the power to relieve our burdens. Now, before someone offers to debate, God has the power, but that power is not always dispensed because God's wisdom exceeds our burdens. In the casting process, what we need to grasp at this moment is that, if God wants it done, He can do it.

4. We practice the art by believing He will sustain us. We heard the Psalmist's words, "Cast your burden on the Lord, and He will sustain you." A possibility? A maybe? Might happen if I do x,y, or z? No, it simply says that He will sustain you. However, sustain and remove are not the same thing. It has been said very aptly, "Sometimes God calms the storm and sometimes He calms the child." Sometimes God does relieve our burden by removing it and praise is our proper response. Yet, sometimes, He strengthens us and calms us because that's what's best at the moment. Either way, when we believe He will sustain, we prepare ourselves to cast.

5. We practice the art by believing God is the owner and bestower of peace. John wrote in our Gospel, "I have said these things to you, that in Me you may have peace." We are people searching for peace, people on a mission to find peace. Like John said already in his day, "In this world you will have tribulation," and our response is, "Amen. This world is not a peaceful place. It's a place of everything, but peace." Yet within this peaceless world, we find relief for our burdens by believing that God is the owner of peace, the possessor of peace, the One who distributes peace to His people.

6. Having made all the preparations mentioned above, much like the fishermen getting ready to go fishing, we cast, but do not reel. To our fishermen, it sounds all wrong. If you cast, you reel. Otherwise you don't cast. But when the lake is God's lake of love, we cast and do not reel. We cast our burdens like rocks into His lake and walk away empty-handed. It sounds so easy, but it's the toughest part of the art of casting. Yet, with sufficient practice, by observing others who cast and do not reel, we learn that casting is how we find relief from our burdens, that casting and not reeling provides a greater trophy than any fisherman will ever mount on his or her wall.

7. Today, and in the days ahead, many may make all the preparations so they are ready to stand along the shoreline or in their boat. Yet, as those activities occur, reflect on the art of casting, and then, practice once again the art of burden casting. Amen.