

“I will bend over backwards to help you.” Have you ever heard someone say that to you? What a strange expression that is! “Leaning over backwards.” We usually think of leaning forward to help someone. Only a good gymnast can actually lean over backwards. Off course this a popular way of saying, “I will do everything possible to help you. Let that be our attitude with the people that live around us. Let us be ready to: “Lean Over Backwards To Share Jesus!”

Jesus was an example to us all on what it means to Lean Over Backwards For Someone. Take a look at our lesson for today for proof. After worshipping with his disciples in the synagogue in Capernaum, Jesus went to the home of Simon Peter and his brother Andrew. Sadness came to them because it says, “Simon’s mother-in-law was in bed with a fever, and they told Jesus about her.” The Greek word used her for fever has the word fire in it. She was burning up with fever. She did not have her Covid vaccination. There were no antibiotics to knock down the infection in those days. See the concerned looks on faces of the two brothers Peter and Andrew as they know that their mom is going to die. She does not have much longer to live.

It says that Jesus went to her. He had compassion on her and was deeply moved by the sadness that came to Peter and Andrew. That’s our Jesus. He still has compassion on people today who get a bad report from their doctor, people who live each day with their bodies racked in pain, people who have just lost their jobs and those who cannot make their house payments. “What a friend we have in Jesus. All our sins and grief’s to bear. What a privilege to carry everything to God in prayer. “No body knows the trouble I’ve seen. Nobody knows but Jesus.” Listen again to these words we read from the book of Job. “Does not man have hard service on earth? Are not his days like those of a hired man? Like a slave longing for the evening shadows, or a hired man waiting eagerly for his wages, so I have been allotted months of futility, and nights of misery have been assigned to me. When I lie down I think, ‘How long before I get up?’” (Job 7)

Jesus went to her and then “he took her hand and helped her up. The fever left her and she began to wait on them.” Did you catch that? The miracle took effect so quickly that she jumps of bed, goes into the kitchen and starts serving all the guests that have come to their house with Jesus. There is always the element of the spectacular in the miracles of Jesus. 5000 people are fed with five barley loaves and two small fish, and how many baskets were left over? (12) A man who never walked is healed and what does he do with his bed? (He walks and goes home) A man who never heard a word in his life because he was deaf, and never spoke a word plainly is healed by Jesus and what happens? He immediately begins to understand words he never heard before and even speaks them plainly. We get to pray to this same Jesus who sits at the right hand of God.

It didn’t take long for the word to get out in the tiny town of Capernaum. That evening as the sun is setting (remember the Sabbath was over at sunset) the people starting bringing their friends and family members with various diseases to Jesus. If there was a little boy with a club foot, Jesus was able to heal it and make it straight so he could run with the best of them. I still remember when my daughter and son-in-law were told that my first Grandson Everett would have club feet. They were devastated. Fortunately shortly after birth this baby was put into casts on his feet, and in about a year his feet were straightened out. But it took a year. With Jesus, it was instantaneous. See the dad over there carrying his little blind boy. And over there is the man who broke his leg and it never did heal right. And there is the woman who is deaf. She never

heard a sound in her life. And over there is a man who holds his demon-possessed brother, humped over, spitting, cussing and foaming at the mouth. They all go home healed by Jesus.

Consider for a moment how special that evening was for Jesus. As we said at the beginning of our sermon Jesus is Lord and God, but he is also fully human. Can't you see the tears of joy in the eyes of Jesus as he helps these people, and as he sees them overwhelmed with gratitude? He saw the smiles on their faces when he healed them, the tears in their eyes, and the generous outpouring of thanks from the lips. Think of all the admiration and thanks that came to the Commander Sully who safely landed the airplane on the Hudson River, even called the miracle of the Hudson. How easy it would have been for Jesus to let all these glorious moments fill his life and let it crowd out the all important work of preaching and teaching people the good news of how they are saved from eternal death and punishment through him.

How did Jesus handle this temptation to give up preaching the gospel and devote his ministry to acts of mercy and kindness? We are told, "Very early in the morning, while it was still dark, Jesus got up, left the house and went off to a solitary place, where he prayed. Although he is God from all eternity, he is also fully human. He sets aside his power as God to even be tempted in all parts as we are. The temptation was real. Devote yourself to healing people. Forget about going from village to village and have people reject what you tell them about the kingdom of God. Forget about going to the cross. Healing people is so much more exciting. I can almost hear him praying: "Please, Father, please Father, help me meet the challenges of this new day that is coming. Don't let me get trapped into spending all my time taking care of their problems of this life. Help me Father, please help me teach them how lost they are in their sin and how I have come to rescue them. The time is so short and these people need me as their Shepherd to rescue them and bring them back to you."

When it comes to helping people we pray the way Jesus did. We are so thankful the Lord allows us to live on this earth to help people, and show them kindness and love, and pray for them in their needs. How thankful we are to pray for people such as Keith Mackey who just lost his wife Renda, and Sharon Schenk who recently lost her husband Charles. But then we also pray as Jesus did that our heavenly Father would always keep in front of us the important work of reaching out to the people who are lost without Jesus, and to those who are wandering away from him. We pray for what Jesus prayed that night in Capernaum as he asked his heavenly Father to help him reach more people more often with the good news that he is their Savior.

What an example Jesus sets for us as we strive to keep our life in the right balance. He saw people as sheep without a shepherd, destined for eternal death and punishment unless he rescued them. As Job said, "Life is but a breath." It is so short. When we read the Revelation we hear about a terrible place for the person who wants nothing to do with Jesus as his Savior. "He will be tormented with burning sulfur in the presence of the holy angels and of the Lamb." The Shepherd yearned to get into the villages around the Sea of Galilee and bring the people who were lost home to him. Later he would define his ministry with these words, The Son of Man is come to seek and save that which was lost."

It is exciting to live your life for Jesus and take advantage of all the opportunity to show kindness and love. Galatians 6 says, "Therefore as we have opportunity, let us do good to all people, especially to those who belong to the family of believers." There is a higher calling we have for our lives on this earth. 2 Corinthians 4 says, "We bear about in our bodies the dying of

the Lord Jesus Christ.” We find ourselves longing and yearning to have people see the dying of the Lord Jesus and his resurrection as the hope of their salvation. We are faced with the tough job of letting people know the truth of what is going to happen if they die without Jesus.

A Lebanese man named Quasim Hatoum was riding a bus in Damascus with his wife and three old son. He spotted a Saudi man boarding the bus and preparing to detonate the bombs that were attached to his body. Without even thinking he handed his son to his wife, rushed towards the terrorist and threw his body on him as the bomb exploded. Six people died and nineteen were wounded. His son and his wife survived. How many times will this mother tell the story to her son about his father who gave his life to save them? We are determined to tell the story over and over again of Jesus, God’s Son who gave his life on the cross and rose again from the dead to save not just us but the whole world.

People need Jesus to be saved and spared from the wrath to come. This afternoon two great quarterbacks will battle it out for the Super Bowl. Who will come out on top the winner? Will it be Patrick Mahomes of the Kansas City Chiefs or Tom Brady of our hometown Tampa Bay Buccaneers? Both of these men need to find something far more valuable than a Super Bowl ring. They need Jesus blood to wash them clean of their sin, and they need Jesus’ righteousness to cover them with a righteousness they can never find in themselves. If this doesn’t happen they will play forever in the Suffer Bowl. The Lord our God leaves us on this earth to take the good news of Jesus rescuing us when we were lost and share it with others who are lost.” And so we pray with Jesus that he might use our lives to bring the good news about him to world full of people who are still lost and without hope. Let’s bend over backwards to get that message out! Amen.