

Have you ever found yourself in a fix without knowing what to do?

I want to show you some slides. A bear was walking across Rainbow Bridge when two cars also crossing the bridge scared the bear into jumping over the edge of the bridge. Somehow the bear caught the ledge and was able to pull itself to safety. Authorities decided that nothing could be done to help Saturday night.

Do you want to see what they found when they returned on Sunday? The bear was sound asleep on the ledge. When the bear got into a fix, he got comfortable and went to sleep.

After securing a net under the bridge the bear was tranquilized, fell into the net, (Change Slides) lowered, (Change Slide) then woke up and walked out of the net.

Isn't that great? The moral of the story just might be, when you find yourself in a fix and you don't know what to do, take a nap. The reality is though, that when we find ourselves in a fix, a nap might help. But for most of us, most of the time, a nap doesn't end the challenge we are facing.

When we are facing challenges, when we are facing overwhelming circumstances, what do you do? Where do you go? Where do you turn?

Matthew is pretty clear that when we find ourselves in a jam, sometimes it is hard to make it through. **When we are in a fix, sometimes we have to deal with what others are thinking of us or saying about us.**

I remember a number of years ago I was visiting with a member of our church who was struggling with an issue. At the time,

I was going through a divorce and it was the talk of many in the church.

I listen as this lady described her challenge. Then she said, "But what bothers me the most is that I have friends and family members who are talking about me." I said, "Yes, it is hard when people are talking about you. I know. Just be glad you are not me. When something goes wrong in my life, I get to have 1,100 - 1,200 people know about it and talk about me."

She laughed and said, "Wow, I guess that is a perspective. How do you deal with that?"

I told her what I think Jesus is trying to teach us in this passage. I said, "Well, I wake up each day. I try to do the best job I can. I seek to live faithfully before God and at the end of the day, the people who really know me and care about me, they will know who I am."

Jesus in this passage starts off by reminding us that when life is a challenge, that we really become known by our actions. What do your actions say about you? What do your actions say about your faith in God?

The second thing this passage reminds me of, is that when we are in a fix, we don't have to face it alone. God is with us. Jesus goes on to say, *"Come to me all of you who are tired and have heavy loads, and I will give you rest. Accept my teachings and learn from me, because I am gentle and humble in spirit, and you will find rest for your lives."*

You might be sitting here and wondering does this teaching really ring true? Can we give God our struggles and our burdens? If so, does it really make a difference?

Well, my answer to that is yes, it does make a difference. I know, because I have just lived through the most difficult year I could have ever imagined for anyone.

Last July 14th, my daughter Whitney was murdered by my son, Isaac. We have been caught up in legal issues ever since. I had been hoping that we could have everything settled by now. But that hasn't happened and it looks like we are headed for a trial.

I had really wished to avoid a trial, for many reasons. One is that all the details of this case will be public. I would wish them not to be public for the sake of the memory of my beautiful daughter and her integrity. My fear is that what people will remember are the details of this case when they think of my daughter, and not what a wonderful, beautiful, fun person that she was and was becoming.

I had hoped we could avoid a trial for the sake of my son, Isaac and his incarceration. It will affect him and how he is treated by others.

I had hoped to avoid a trial, because of the uncertainty this brings to my life and because of how long it will last. Not only will I be affected by the trial, but also the years of appeals that will happen as a result of it.

But, ultimately I get reminded over and over that most of this is out of my hands. No amount of worrying on my part will resolve this. In the end, I am still left with the pain of the death of my daughter, and the incarceration of my son and the feelings of anger and frustration as all of our family work through this process.

What I know is that being able to turn to God and say, "I can't do this without you. Will you walk with me?" And feeling God walk with me and hold my hand, seeing God in the faces of all of you who

have surrounded me and my family with your love, prayers and support, it is helping me live each day.

And so, I turn to God in prayer. I turn to God in times of quiet and in times of public worship, and I thank God for walking with me and for giving me my family to walk with me. I thank God for you, who walk with me.

Yes, there are days I would rather take a nap. But I know that the only way through this is to trust God, to turn to God and to take one step at a time.

Are you willing to turn to God, to lean on God and take one step at a time when life gets tough?

May God help us live lives that are faithful.

Amen