

McCabe United Methodist Church
Got Baggage?
Matthew 11:27-30 * Hebrews 12:1-3: August 17 & 18, 2013
Pastor Rick Fossum

Have you ever watched the Australian movie called *Phar Lap*? In Australia, it's supposed to be a movie classic. *Phar Lap* was the name of a race horse that dominated racing in Australia for several years in the late 1920s and early 1930s. He was a big horse. Strong and fast.

The sad part of the story is that race officials didn't think it was good for racing to have *Phar Lap* win all the time. So they resorted to putting weights on *Phar Lap* as a way of slowing him down. In other words, they weighed him down so that the other horses might have a chance of winning. As the weights became heavier, poor *Phar Lap* found it harder and harder to race.

As I read this story, I thought about you and me and the weights and burdens and baggage we carry around with us. For many of us, this baggage is weighing us down and preventing us from living the life God wants us to live.

Have you ever heard someone say, **"He's a good person. Talented, but he comes with baggage."** This is what I'm talking about. I heard a football coach on TV talking about one of his star players. He said something like, **"He's a great player. He's probably the best athlete on our team, but we traded him because we just couldn't handle his baggage anymore."**

Baggage. Some of you have learned how to handle your baggage and life goes on. For others of you, your baggage is causing you problems. I know because I have baggage of my own.

Do you see these rocks? These rocks are like the baggage we carry around. These rocks all have names. They represent something.

Some of our baggage is caused by other people.

This rock is for all the names people have called you. "Fatty. Ugly. Dummy." Some of these names are ancient history, but you remember them like they happened yesterday. Some of the names you've been called are more recent. **"Loser. Worthless. Lazy. Incompetent."** You know you shouldn't let these names bother you, but they do and it becomes part of our baggage.

This rock is for the losses, mostly unexpected, that we've had. The divorces, the

job losses, our health, and death. It's when someone you love died and you feel cheated because you never had the chance to say "**goodbye**" or to say "**you're sorry**" or say "**I love you.**" You continue to grieve and mourn and you can't seem to move on.

This rock is for the grudges we carry. It's the sister or daughter we stopped talking to or the mother or husband or wife who let us down or the church that rejected us. We know we're not supposed to hate anyone, but we can't get past this hate.

My bag is getting a little heavy. It's funny what a little bit of baggage feels like.

Some of our baggage comes from us.

This rock is our fear of failure. We don't like leaving our comfort zone because we might fail. We failed in the past and we didn't like it, right? Besides, why should we risk trying something new? It's easier and safer to keep doing the same thing over and over again. It goes into our baggage.

This rock is our lack of confidence. We don't remember who told us, but someone once said we weren't very smart. We believed them. Or, maybe our lack of confidence and self-esteem came when we were told that we'll never amount to much in life. We believed them to. Or, maybe our lack of confidence came when someone once said to us, "**Why can't you be like your sister or your brother or the smart kid in your class?**" And we believed them to.

This rock is for the prejudices we carry around. We don't know why, but we don't like this race of people. We blame a certain religion for all the problems in today's world. And we hate this president or senator because . . . because . . . they're a Democrat or a Republican. And we hate all Republicans or is it Democrats . . . and we forget why!

This big rock is for the guilt we carry. Yes, we goofed up. Yes, we hurt someone we love. Yes, we cheated. Yes, we lied. We're sorry. But, the guilt doesn't leave, does it? It stays in our baggage.

And then, there's this rock. This one is for our anger and resentment. We're angry because someone hurt us or let us down. We resent certain people because they have it better than us or they're more lucky or more fortunate or more something. Even though we know we're only hurting ourselves, we continue to hold onto our anger and resentment and we carry around this rock to prove it.

This rock is for those dark secrets we carry around thinking that no else knows about them. It's our hidden addictions, our lust, our greed, our envy, our jealousy and

our lies. We try to hide our secrets, but most people know.

This bag is getting heavier. I can still carry it, but I can tell I'm hurting myself by carrying all this extra baggage.

These other rocks come from our religious beliefs or our relationship with God or our lack of a relationship with God.

Do you see this rock? *Somewhere, sometime, someone told us that we're just too sinful to be forgiven.* And we believed it. God could never, ever forgive us for what we did. And so in our own eyes, we remain unforgivable.

This rock is related to the last one. *Since we're too sinful to be forgiven we must also be unlovable.* How can God love someone like me? I'm a sinner. I've done bad things. I don't even love myself. How can God?

My bag is pretty heavy. I'm carrying a lot of baggage. I know how *Phar Lap* must have felt. The worst part is this: the longer we carry around this baggage the more we start thinking that this is normal. This is the way life is meant to feel. After a while, we don't even notice the baggage. But, it's there. We can't see how harmful it is to us or to the people around us.

Do you have any of this baggage? **"Rick,"** you might say, **"I don't remember picking up this baggage or these rocks. Where did they come from?"**

They come from different places. Some of our baggage comes from the poor choices we've made or didn't make. Some of our baggage comes from other people. Some of our baggage has been with us for years and some we just picked up.

The Good News is this: It doesn't have to be like this.

Jesus said, **"Come to me, all you that are weary and are carrying heavy burdens, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me; for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light."**

If you want to get better. If you want to get rid of the rocks you're carrying. If you want some real help. Listen to this:

First, it starts with you. You need to decide that you want to feel better. Are you sick and tired of being angry or jealous or insecure. You decide when you've had enough.

Second, you need to open your bag and look inside. Only you know the baggage that you're carrying. You look inside and you identify those rocks that are keeping you from being the person God calls you to be.

Can you see some of your baggage? The anger? The insecurity? The hidden secrets? The grudges?

Finally, you bring every rock . . . every last piece of baggage to Jesus and you ask him to help you get rid of it. **“Jesus,”** you pray, **“you know me and you know the baggage I’m carrying. You know it’s hurting me and the people around me and you know that I can’t get rid of it on my own. I need your help.”**

It’s not going to be easy. We’ve been carrying around these rocks for a long, long time and getting rid of them won’t happen overnight, but gradually you will start feeling your load getting lighter and lighter.

“Let us run with perseverance the race that is set before us.” This is from the book of Hebrews. The writer is reminding us that we’re running a race. We’re running a race called life. And life can be hard enough without the extra baggage we’re carrying. It’s time to lose it.

“Come to me,” Jesus says to all of us **“and I’ll help you.”**