

Deuteronomy 30:15-20

Psalms 119:1-8

1 Corinthians 3:1-9

Matthew 5:21-37

Sermon February 12th, 2023

Jesus Gives Us Permission to Let Go!

Relationships are messy. Sometimes we can say or do something that really hurts someone we love. Or vice versa. We all have been angry with someone before. And for the most part, we repent, forgive, and move on from the conflict. But, sometimes, we hang on to the anger. Sometimes, we don't know how to let go. This is especially true if our stubborn pride kicks in, and we find ourselves rationalizing our words and actions instead of choosing to repent. Or when the person who hurts us doesn't repent.

In our gospel, Jesus sees what happens to us when anger is left to fester. We build up walls to protect ourselves from getting hurt again. We build up walls to keep people out. For example, we become sarcastic. Saying nasty remarks to drive people away. We only engage in superficial conversation. We have a lot of trouble opening our hearts up to love others. We can even become abusive, and/or violent.

Anger in itself is a healthy emotion that alerts us to some injustice we or others we love are experiencing. Anger can move us to confront this injustice. But when anger starts to fester. When we hold onto the anger, then our anger can become bitterness. Our anger can make it hard for us to experience the love of Jesus. Our anger can make it hard for us to follow Jesus. To love as Jesus loves. To use non-violent means in trying to confront the injustices we face.

Instead, we find ourselves in Peter's shoes. With sword in hand. Staring at the piece of ear we just cut off.

Well, in response to our struggles with anger, Jesus gives us permission to let go. Jesus invites us to repent, to forgive, to let go, and move on. So, that we can keep living out our calling to follow Jesus. Loving one another as Jesus loves us. Jesus gives us permission to let go of the anger that burns inside of us.

Now, in situations where repentance is absent, Jesus doesn't expect us to reconcile with a person who will keep hurting us. But Jesus does invite us to forgive, to let go of our anger, wish them well, and move on. Because, if we continue to hang on to our anger towards them, we will struggle to love others as Jesus loves us. Jesus gives us permission to let go of our anger.

Likewise, when we exploit someone, because we are attracted to them, we can speak and act in hurtful ways towards them. Creating an environment that is unsafe and limiting for the people we are exploiting.

Jesus gives us permission to let go of those thoughts and emotions that urge us to exploit someone, and challenges us to love and respect the people we meet. To treat everyone in the same way we would like to be treated. With dignity.

Jesus goes on to talk about divorce to call out a deeper problem at play here. Women are living in a system where they are totally vulnerable to their husbands. If someone chooses to leave their wife, because of something other than adultery they are choosing to push their wife out onto the street. The women will become impoverished, because they can't remarry. Under the current system this would be considered adultery. They can't get a job that earns money. They are left without any means to survive.

Therefore, Jesus is challenging the very system that allows men to exploit women. That allows men to treat women as property. Or in other words, Jesus is giving us permission to let go of those systems we have in place that allow us to treat women, and other minorities as lesser than us.

Likewise, we can care too much what other people think about our appearance, our behaviour, our beliefs. We can say whatever or do whatever we can to convince people of something we are not. Just to fit in.

Jesus gives us permission to let go of the anxiety, the fear, of not fitting in, and be honest. Let our yes be yes, and our no be no. Or in other words, lets be ourselves.

Unfortunately, in all walks of life, we carry with us a lot of baggage. Sometimes this baggage weighs us down. Becomes a barrier between us and the people we love.

Jesus sees that his disciples are tired, worn down from all this baggage. Struggling to be all Jesus calls them to be.

Jesus gives the disciples/us permission to let go of all those things that make it harder for us to follow Jesus. All those things that make it harder for us to love one another as Jesus loves us.

Jesus gives us permission to put down the baggage we are carrying. To be free to be all God created us to be. To love one another as Jesus loves us.

Let us pray, gracious God, when our baggage, our anger, our lust, our systems, our anxiety weigh us down. Help us put our baggage down. Help us let go. Free us to love one another as you love us. **Amen.**