

Sermon – Love Rejoices With The Truth
Sunday June 7, 2020

We're in a series these days called Love Is. We've been looking at that famous chapter on love in 1 Corinthians 13. We're unpacking it verse by verse to learn how we can love more like Jesus. Our hope isn't that you would just *know* this passage better. Our hope is that you would actually *love* better. After all, following Jesus is all about loving like Jesus.

I've been really challenged through this series. During the pandemic, my wife Joanne is still going to work. (We appreciate our frontline workers for your dedication and your sacrifice.) Anyway, with Jo going out to work, that leaves me home alone with our two girls... all day long!

About a month ago, we actually started a new routine. We begin every morning together with a devotional so that we can learn to love better. Each morning,

- We sing a worship song off of YouTube.
- We do a Bible study on love.
- We recite and memorize 1 Corinthians 13.
- We talk about where we're growing and where we still need to grow.
- And we pray that God would grow us in our love and use us to bless others.

Now before you think I'm an amazing dad, you need to hear the full story. You need to know how we started doing these devotionals.

At the beginning of this pandemic, I was overwhelmed. I know many people have it much worse, but I was stressed by all the work and all the challenges of working from home.

There was a lot of yelling, sulking and crying. Some of it was even from the girls. During this time, *I was told* that I was impatient and irritable. I say "I was told" because I didn't see it myself. I thought I was doing a pretty good job of serving God and caring for my family.

But apparently I was wrong - because one day I just snapped. I was working late one evening. Joanne and the girls were putting together a video to send birthday wishes to a friend. They asked me to come down and shoot the video with them.

I was a little annoyed because I had so much work to do. But grudgingly I went. I figured we'd shoot the video quickly so I could get back to work. But before that could happen, there was more bickering and arguing. And that's when I snapped. I said, Can we just get this video done with?!

This must have come across stronger than I intended because after I said it, there was silence. Everyone just looked at me. They had spent time making the props, writing the script and setting up the camera. My only job was to show up and read my part. I felt horrible! I wasn't very loving.

The very next day was when I started doing morning devotionals with the girls. And we've been doing them every day ever since.

You see, I've been seeking to learn, *How can I love better* not because I'm so loving, but because I still have so far to go.

Because it's easy to love:

- When you're getting enough sleep,
- when you can do the things that recharge you,
- when you don't have to worry about work, finances or health
- when everyone's behaving and not driving you crazy

But it's a lot harder to love when:

- when your world has been turned upside down.
- When you're overwhelmed.
- When the cracks in your relationship are starting to surface?

How are you doing at loving others these days?

In this series so far,

- We've looked at what love is. Love is patient, love is kind.
- We've looked at what love is not. Love is not envious, it's not proud, it's not rude.

Today we're going to look at both what love is and also what it is not. ***Love does not delight in evil but rejoices with the truth.***

At first glance, the point seems obvious.

- Love does not delight in evil. So you shouldn't sin and you shouldn't be happy when you sin.
- Love rejoices with the truth. So you should love God's Word and study it everyday.

While this is true, it's *not* what Paul was thinking when he wrote this.

Remember, Paul is writing to the Corinthian church. The Christians there were arguing and fighting with each other. And one of the main reasons for this was their attitude of superiority.

- They looked down on Paul for not being eloquent enough.
- They looked down at young Christians for not being mature enough.
- They looked down other believers for not speaking in tongues.

And it's this attitude of superiority that Paul is addressing. He's saying, *this is what love looks like in your relationships.*

Love does not delight in evil. It doesn't look down on others. It's doesn't judge. It's not self-righteous.

Instead it rejoices with the truth. It remembers the truth of who Jesus is and what he's done for you.

We're going to look at a story today from the book of Luke. We're going to look at two characters that illustrate these two points and contrast them in three areas.

- Their response to Jesus
- Their attitude towards others

- And their view of themselves.

Our passage today comes from Luke 7:36-39.

36 When one of the Pharisees invited Jesus to have dinner with him, he went to the Pharisee's house and reclined at the table. 37 A woman in that town who lived a sinful life learned that Jesus was eating at the Pharisee's house, so she came there with an alabaster jar of perfume. 38 As she stood behind him at his feet weeping, she began to wet his feet with her tears. Then she wiped them with her hair, kissed them and poured perfume on them.

39 When the Pharisee who had invited him saw this, he said to himself, "If this man were a prophet, he would know who is touching him and what kind of woman she is—that she is a sinner."

The first contrast we're going to look at is their response to Jesus: Both were in the presence of Jesus but the Pharisee keeps Jesus at a distance while the woman comes to him with her whole being. **[Their Response to Jesus: Keep him at a distance vs Come to him with your whole being]**

Remember, it was the Pharisee who had invited Jesus to dinner. This means he believes Jesus to be at least his equal because in that culture, religious people would never associate with people of a lower status.

But in that culture, hospitality was also a huge value. A host was expected to go to great lengths to show honour to their guests. Now remember, back then the roads were filthy. There were lots of animals around too. This meant that when you walked around in your sandals, your feet would get caked with mud, garbage and even animal poo. And all the kids said, Eewwwwww!

So it was customary for the host to provide water for their guest to clean their feet. They would also greet their guest with a kiss at the door and then give them perfumed oil for anointing.

But does the Pharisee do any of these things? No. Not only was this extremely rude and disrespectful, it also shows that he doesn't understand who Jesus really is.

Notice what he says in verse 39,

If this man were a prophet, he would know who is touching him... (v. 39)

The grammatical structure of this sentence emphasizes that he clearly does *not* believe Jesus is a prophet.

The woman however, stands in stark contrast. This dinner would have taken place in an open courtyard. People would freely gather around to listen, which this woman does. But when she notices that Jesus doesn't get the honour he deserves, what does she do? She steps in.

- She washes his feet with her tears and wipes them with her hair.
- She kisses his feet.
- She anoints them with perfume.

She does everything the Pharisee should have done. In their response to Jesus, the Pharisee keeps Jesus at a distance while the woman comes to him with her whole being. The Pharisee treats Jesus with contempt while the woman freely pours out her love.

The second contrast is in their attitude towards others. The Pharisee is judgmental while the woman is humble. **[Their attitude towards others: Judgmental vs Humble]**

Isn't it easy to find fault with others these days? After all, we're stressed out. We're cooped up together all day. It's the perfect storm for conflict.

- Maybe you're noticing that someone is really overbearing and nitpicky.
- Maybe they have a short fuse or are emotionally withdrawn.
- Maybe they have attitude, leave a mess or throw tantrums.
- Maybe they're rude or overlook your contributions at work.

Now if you're watching this with other people and you're thinking, That totally describes them, don't look at them right now. Avoid eye contact.

I'm doing an online course right now to become a certified Enneagram coach. The Enneagram is a personality typing system that looks why we do what we do. I've been learning how each type has a different way of sinning and responds differently under stress.

- One type becomes resentful and moody.
- Another type becomes anxious and intense.
- While another becomes cynical and withdrawn.

The root sin for my personality type is Pride. Under stress, my type can focus on the faults of others while being blind to my own.

And this is exactly what the Pharisee does. He focuses on the sinfulness of the woman – referring to her as *a sinner*. While being blind to his own judgmentalism and self-righteousness.

But Paul says *love does not delight in evil*.

- It doesn't put others down so that you can feel better about yourself.
- It is not judgmental or harsh.
- It is not self-righteous and superior.

Jesus talked about this too. What's interesting is that he never rebukes prostitutes, tax collectors or "sinners" for their sins. He directs his rebukes only to the Pharisees for failing to keep the greatest commandment which is what? To love God and to love your neighbour.

- Because the Pharisees were more concerned with rule-keeping than kindness.
- More concerned with appearances than compassion.

But here's the thing. **You can't judge someone and love them at the same time.**

- You can't love them while you're finding fault with them.
- You can't love them while you're focused on their failures.
- You can't love them while you're holding their mistakes against them.

That's why Jesus said:

“Why do you look at the speck of sawdust in your brother's eye and pay no attention to the plank in your own eye? 4 How can you say to your brother, ‘Let me take the speck out of your eye,’ when all the time there is a plank in your own eye? 5 You hypocrite, first take the plank out of your own eye, and then you will see clearly to remove the speck from your brother's eye.

In their attitude towards others, the Pharisee is judgmental while the woman is humble.

The third contrast is in their view of themselves. The Pharisee is blind to his own depravity while the woman recognizes her sinfulness. **[Their view of themselves: Blind to your own depravity vs Admit your sinfulness]**

After this encounter, Jesus turns to the Pharisee.

Jesus answered him, “Simon, I have something to tell you.”

“Tell me, teacher,” he said.

41 “Two people owed money to a certain moneylender. One owed him five hundred denarii,[a] and the other fifty. 42 Neither of them had the money to pay him back, so he forgave the debts of both. Now which of them will love him more?”

43 Simon replied, “I suppose the one who had the bigger debt forgiven.”

“You have judged correctly,” Jesus said.

44 Then he turned toward the woman and said to Simon, “Do you see this woman? I came into your house. You did not give me any water for my feet, but she wet my feet with her tears and wiped them with her hair. 45 You did not give me a kiss, but this woman, from the time I entered, has not stopped kissing my feet. 46 You did not put oil on my head, but she has poured perfume on my feet. 47 Therefore, I tell you, her many sins have been forgiven—as her great love has shown. But whoever has been forgiven little loves little.”

Jesus makes this unusual connection between our forgiveness and our capacity to love. The Pharisee loves little because he's been forgiven little. He tried being a good person all his life. He went to church, he followed the rules. He just didn't sin very much.

Many of us are just like that. Sure, we've made mistakes but we haven't made a big mess of our lives like other people, like the woman. The story doesn't tell us her specific sin, but she was most likely a prostitute. So of course she loves more. She's forgiven more because she sinned more.

So it's simple. If you want to love more, go out and sin more, right? Just make a list. Write down all the things you've always wanted to do. All the sins you've always wanted to commit. Then this week, go out and do them.

Or... maybe we're missing the point. Maybe the point isn't that you've sinned less than someone else.

Because what does the passage say?

Neither of them had the money to pay back the debt... (v. 42)

You see, it doesn't matter whether you owe \$5 or \$5 million. Jesus brilliantly shows the Pharisee that both he and the woman are in the exact same position. Neither of them can pay their debt, so they both deserve to go to jail.

But while the Pharisee is focused on how much smaller his debt is compared to the woman, the woman simply acknowledges that she is a sinner.

Love rejoices with the truth. What is the truth? The truth is that when we stand in the presence of a Holy God as sinners. We owe a debt we could never repay. We deserve punishment, we deserve death.

But two thousand years ago, God sent his Son into this world. But he didn't come to collect the debt *from us*, he came to pay the debt *for us*. No amount of money could have covered it. So he paid it with his own life. He died on the cross. And so now our sins are forgiven. Our debt is cancelled.

The truth is, you and I are sinners. But that's not the whole truth. Because on the cross your sins and mine were forgiven.

Love rejoices with this truth.

- The truth of what Jesus has done for you.
- The truth that you owed a debt you could never repay.
- The truth that on the cross, your debt was cancelled and paid in full.

I love how Pastor Tim Keller puts it:

You are more wicked than you ever dared believe and yet in Christ, more loved than you ever dared hope.

So let's return now to the question we asked at the beginning of this message. How do you become more loving? How do you love others better? Here's how. You remember this truth.

You are more wicked than you ever dared believe and yet more loved than you ever dared hope.

- Let it sink into your heart.
- Let it change how you see yourself and others.
- Let it compel you to love.

It's hard for us to love people when they've hurt us and when they don't deserve it. Because it's just not fair!

But look at Jesus. Jesus loves people he shouldn't love. He doesn't love us only when we treat him well. He doesn't love us only when we have our act together. He doesn't love us only when we deserve it. The Bible says,

**God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us.
(Romans 5:8)**

Was that fair? Of course not! But by definition, grace isn't fair. It doesn't make sense. And that's the point!

If you want to love like Jesus, you can't limit the people you love.

- You can't love only those who treat you well.
- You can't love only those who have their act together.
- You can't love only those who deserve it.

Why? Because the ground is level at the foot of the cross. Jesus loved you even when you didn't treat him well, even when you didn't have your act together, even when you didn't deserve it. And he calls you to love others - your spouse, your children, your family members, your friends – even your enemies not according to what *they've* done *to* you but according to what *Jesus* has done *for* you.

If you're watching this with someone, tell them, ***Even though you don't deserve, Jesus told me to love you!***

So can we all agree this week to give a little grace? To show a little mercy? To forgive those who have wronged you and love them anyway?

God calls you to love others not according to what they've done to you but according to what Jesus has done for you. He gave up his rights for you. He gave up his life for you.

Love does not delight in evil but rejoices with the truth.

And the truth is You are more wicked than you ever dared believe and yet more loved than you ever dared hope.

Let this truth change you and let it compel you to love others just as in Christ God has loved you.