

Love Beyond: Love Beyond What's Comfortable

08.28.2022

Today, we're wrapping up our series

Love Beyond

God calls us again and again

To abandon the lines that we lay down

That contain

The love

That God wants to pour through us

To get us started this morning

Can you turn with me to 1 John 4

It's on page 834 in these Bibles

Take one of those if you don't have one

That's easy to read

So, for the last couple of years

We've had one of those robo-vacs

It's great – I'm a fan

But it's a liar

The advertising says that you start it

And you never think about it again

Well that's not true

Because it eats cell phone cords

So, you've got to get those out of the way

And it gets excited about the little fringy things

On throw rugs

And when your teenaged daughter

I mean someone

Leaves a chip on the floor

It doesn't know what to do with a chip

So, it does a great job

But you've gotta prep the room first

Now ours doesn't do this

But you can get them that'll schedule when to vacuum

They make them that empty out the trash into the base

On those commercials you see all the dirt getting sucked out

I don't think that's real

I'd pay extra if that was true

Like it's clear – and you can see it

And some of them come

With these little sensors

That tell it where to stop

Like I just want it to do this room

Now we do that

We just pile furniture in the way

But the fancier ones

Come with these little sensors

Kind of like the ones

That won't let your garage door shut

If you didn't pull up far enough

So, if you didn't know

You would see the vacuum clean, clean, clean

Up to this line

And no further

And it would seem arbitrary

It would seem artificial

Scripture says our lines

Feel that way to God

We love everyone

As long as they're in the same socio-economic bracket as we are

But then we stop

Or we love everyone

As long as they vote like we do

But then we stop

Or – this is a big one - we love everyone

As long as they haven't done too much in the past to me

Cause then we stop

Scripture wants us

To throw away the little sensors

And just love

Everyone

Even those beyond the line

Read 1 John 4:7

God is the source of love

You've never given out love

To another person

With love that wasn't first put there

By your Creator

Read 1 John 4:8

If you're not a loving person

In general

You've lost connection to God

Because *if* you're connected to God

You *will be* loving

Read 1 John 4:9-11

God's greatest demonstration

Of how He loves us

Came in the person of Jesus

We were hopelessly lost

With no ability to reconcile our relationship to God

And He came

Read 1 John 4:12

"No one has ever seen God"

At first blush

That seems out of place

He's comparing it

You've not seen God

But when you're loving each other

You'll see His shadow

You've not heard the audible voice of God

But when you're loving each other

You'll hear His tone

Re-read 1 John 4:12

If we love one another

God's love is made complete in us

By extension

Does that mean if we do not love one another

God's love is not yet made complete in us

Let me say it this way:

We weren't designed to be a destination

For God's love

We were designed to be a conduit

For God's love

And until it passes through us

It's not gone full circle

Let me say it this way:

Until you remove every sensor

Every line that stops love from going into that space
You're stunting God's love in your life

If that sounds unreasonable to you
I maybe saying it right

Because Jesus
Often stirred up the crowd
By saying
All these *unreasonable* things

Matthew 5
Is a great example:
Like He says it's *not only* wrong to kill someone
Which everyone agrees with
But He says it's wrong to hate them
Which lots of people do

Like He says it's *not only* wrong to have an affair
Which everyone pretty much agrees with
But He says it's wrong to look at a woman with lust in your eye
Which lots of people do

He says you can't just get a divorce for any ole reason

And you shouldn't swear by things
I mean He's just
Causing a real stir

And then He finally starts making some sense
In Matthew 5:38
Jesus finally speaks to the crowd
In a way they understand

Matthew 5:38 (NIV) - You have heard that it was said, 'Eye for eye, and tooth for tooth.'

The audience would be like
Now that's something that makes sense
Finally! Something we can all agree with
Eye for eye
Tooth for tooth
You get attacked and lose your eye
The attacker loses an eye in return
No more – no less
That makes sense

But Jesus didn't stop there
Jesus continues:

Matthew 5:38 - You have heard that it was said, 'Eye for eye, and tooth for tooth.'

Matthew 5:39a (NIV) - But I tell you, do not resist an evil person.

There He goes again

There He goes again

And then He gives us four

Very un-reasonable examples

Of how NOT to interact with an evil person

Matthew 5:39b-42 (NIV) - If anyone slaps you on the right cheek, turn to them the other cheek also. And if anyone wants to sue you and take your shirt, hand over your coat as well. If anyone forces you to go one mile, go with them two miles. Give to the one who asks you, and do not turn away from the one who wants to borrow from you.

Jesus says, you've heard that it was said

Love up to the line

But don't get crazy

"But I say to you"

Love *beyond* the line

Turn the other cheek

Go the extra mile

Let's break those down for a second:

Turn the other cheek

If anyone slaps you on the right cheek, turn to them the other cheek also.

Let's get a little specific

Jesus says if anyone slaps you on the right cheek

How many of you are right handed?

Most people are right-handed

You know, except for the weirdo's

And so, Jesus says, if a normal, right-handed person

Slaps you on the right cheek

What's happening here?

If a right-handed person hits you

It's typically going to be on the *left* cheek

So, if a right-handed person slaps you

On the *right* cheek

It's more an insult

Then a punch

"Turn the other cheek"

This is a quote of Jesus

That Christians and atheists still use

2,000 years later

When Jesus said this phrase for the first time

Tiberius was the Caesar of Rome

The most powerful leader
Of the most powerful nation
The world had ever known

Can anybody tell me one thing Tiberius ever said?

And yet, Christians and atheists alike
Are quite familiar with the phrase
Turn the other cheek
That's powerful

Jesus said, "Turn the other cheek"
If someone insults you
Do not run away
Do not turn away
Continue to approach them as a child of God

Jesus says if anyone wants to take your shirt

Give them your coat

If anyone forces you to go one mile

Go 2 miles
"Go the extra mile"

That's another popular quote from Jesus

You've had more time now

Can you think of a single quote from Tiberius?

Anyone?

Or Caligula became emperor

A few years after Jesus was crucified

Do you know any quotes from Caligula?

Anyone? Buehler?

And yet "go the extra mile"

Is just a part of modern speech

Because of Jesus

"Go the extra mile"

Under Roman rule

A military officer

Carrying his equipment and gear

Could ask you to stop what you're doing

And carry their stuff

For a mile

1,000 paces

And then he has to walk a mile back

So, if a family was doing something together

The dad would be gone for a bit

Carrying a heavy pack for a mile down the road

And then walking the mile back

And this wasn't just for adults

Any male – over 12 – could be commandeered

So, mothers could watch these trained killers

Roman soldiers

Come and command her son to go with him

For a mile

The Romans were hated for a lot of reasons

Lots of reasons

But among them was this rule

Where Roman soldiers

Would put the Jews in their place

Where Roman guards

Could make them feel like the servants they were

Kind of rub their nose in it

When I was a kid

I am the youngest of 3 boys

And my oldest brother

Is 5 years older than me

Doesn't make a lot of difference now

At 49 & 54

But 40 years ago

But at 9 & 14

That was significant

We'd wrestle

And he'd hold me down

And tell me to submit

It would make me so mad

I'd squirm and fight to get out

Cause I just wouldn't do it

That's how the Israelites felt

But they couldn't refuse a soldier

So, they'd go along

1,000 paces

Counting in their heads

998... 999... 1,000

And they'd throw the stuff off

While the guard looked for his next servant

But then Jesus comes along

And says I came to *be* a servant

I'm asking *you* to be a servant

If anyone forces you to go one mile, go with them two miles.

So, picture this

The Roman soldier asks a Christian

To carry his stuff

And he knows he's getting close to the mile

So, he starts looking around for another servant

998... 999... 1,000

Sir... if you'd like me to carry these another mile... I will

Can you imagine the dynamic shift inside the Roman soldier?

Can you imagine the dynamic shift inside of that Jewish believer?

That courageous believer just went from victim

To victor

From power-*less*

To power-*full*

Because there's great power

In choosing... a life of service

Jesus concludes by saying:

Give to the one who asks you, and do not turn away from the one who wants to borrow from you.

D.A. Carson states:

While these four vignettes have powerful shock value, they were not meant to be new legal prescriptions. For example, verse 42 does not commit Jesus' disciples to giving endless amounts of money to every one who seeks a soft touch.

Yet the illustrations must not be diluted by endless equivocations; the only limit to the believer's response in these situations is what love and Scripture impose.

Jesus

In these few verses

Effectively moved the line

Limiting our love

Instead of loving *to* the line

Now Jesus is asking us

To love *beyond* the line:

Turn the other cheek

Go the extra mile

Give to those who ask

But He wasn't done

Moving the line

In John 17

He's praying before He's arrested

And He says to God

John 17:4 - I have brought You glory on earth by finishing the work You gave Me to do.

"Finishing the work you gave me to do"

What's Jesus talking about?

At this point

He hasn't died on the cross

He hasn't been risen from the dead

But He had established a movement

A movement that would involve His death and resurrection

And a movement that would approach love

In a radically different way

Moments before He prayed this prayer

He gave His followers

This movement

A new command

John 13:34 - A new command I give you: Love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another.

And He said this countercultural love

This supernatural love

Will distinguish His movement

From every.other.one

John 13:35 – By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another.

I want you to notice

He says it's a new command

Because He's moved the line again

Not an eye for an eye

That's the old way

Not love your neighbor as yourself

Now I'm giving you a new command

Love each other

As I have loved you

And the disciples

These 11 men who would change the world

Must've heard these words in their mind

"Love each other as I have loved you"

They must've heard these words over and over again

As they watched Jesus on the cross the very next day

God's greatest demonstration

Of how He loves us

Came in the person of Jesus

We were hopelessly lost

With no ability to reconcile our relationship to God

And He came

This separates Christianity

From every other worldview

Lots of people get confused about this

So let me try to clear this up

Every world religion

Except Christianity

Says you do good things

To earn your salvation – you do good things

Hindu's say you work to pay for your bad karma

Muslims say you work to appease Allah

Mormons say it is by grace we are saved

After all we can do

They all say

You're saved

By doing good things

Secular thought also says

Good things are the way to live

Be kind

Follow the laws

Pay your taxes

Buy girl scout cookies

Be a good person

That's how you're "saved"

That's the way to live

Only Christianity says that our good works

Don't earn us anything

Think of it this way

God is a holy God

Completely flawless

So, He can't be associated

With anything sinful

Like you & I wouldn't be associated

With torturing puppies for fun

Or, we wouldn't be associated

With embezzling money from dementia patients

We're good people

We wouldn't be associated with something like that

Well God is a completely holy God

Much different than us

So, He also wouldn't be associated

With torturing puppies for fun

Or embezzling money from dementia patients

But God also wouldn't be associated

With lying or laziness or little impure thoughts

God is completely holy

So, when we say:

God, we've done some bad things

But we've also done a lot of good things

It would be like running a red light

And then telling the officer

If I don't run the next 10 red lights

Does that make up for it?

God is completely holy

So, our good deeds aren't extra

Our good deeds are standard living

For a holy God

And yet

I need you to see this

And yet, in spite of that *massive* gap

Between us and God

He *chooses* to love us

And I promise you

That we're beyond the line

A loving mother

Doesn't reject her baby

When he has a dirty diaper

I mean, that's over the line

A loving mother

Doesn't reject her baby

Even when he has a blowout

Like up the back

Throw away the onesie

Blowout

That's way over the line!

And in spite of the massive purity gap

Between us and God

He loves us

No one else believes this

Outside of Christianity

Because honestly

It's fairly unbelievable

All the world religions

Salvation that is earned

By doing good things

And salvation leads to independence

From God

Buddhists say you are saved

When you escape reincarnation

And can be at peace

Hindus say you are saved

When you essentially cease to exist

Like a drop in the ocean

Mormons believe you can be saved

And become your own god

And get your own planet to populate

They all say

That salvation

Makes you independent of God

That's how you know it's a lie

Because God doesn't want to be separated

From us

Christianity is different

Christianity says we worship a triune God

Father, Son, and Holy Spirit

And they existed

In perfect, harmonious, relationship

For all of eternity

So, He didn't create us

Because He needs us

He didn't create us

Because He was lonely

He created to share that love

With us

He walked in the Garden

With Adam and Eve

And they rebelled

And lost their place in paradise
But God never lost His dream for us

So, He sent Jesus

To face incalculable agony
Because He never gave up on His dream
Of living – in relationship – with you

God wants to pour love in your life

And then watch
With a proud-parent-glee
As you pour that love
In someone else

Because the secret to life
And that's when we see God

This is where secular thought
Lines up with other world religions

Secular thought says

If I'm a good person
I don't need God
"Religion is just a crutch"

But they've misunderstood who God is

They've misunderstood how *He* draws the line

The God who spread out the stars

Knows you

And loves you

And wants to be in a close, loving friendship with you

Forever

He sacrificed

So, you could thrive

And then He said

I don't just want my love

To find a destination in you

I want my love to be made complete

When you pour it into someone else

Jesus said "follow me"

"Take up your cross"

Sacrifice

Give of yourself

Die to yourself

Love beyond what's reasonable

Love beyond what's comfortable

Love beyond what fits in your preferences

Take up your cross

And follow me