

How We View Others

Life in a Tent, Pt. 4

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I. PRAYER

- i. Would you transform our minds and our hearts to see people differently? All people. No matter what they've done. No matter who they are. No matter what they look like. Help us to see people like you see them.

II. INTRODUCTION

- i. Why is it that it is a pretty awkward conversation to discuss whom your voted for in the last presidential election?
 - Especially in the church. Why?
 - Reason: People will make all sorts of judgements about you, your beliefs, your political leanings, your morality, and all sorts of other things based on your answer to that question.
- ii. What is your opinion of healthcare reform, tax reform, criminal justice reform, immigration reform, you name it reform...
 - People will make assumptions about you based on your answer.
- iii. What is an appropriate way to protest injustice in this country and what is not an appropriate way to do that.
 - Again, your answer will put you in one of two camps in this country, right?
- iv. What if...what if...I have an opinion and someone out there doesn't agree with me?!?!
 - Are we allowed to be friends moving forward?



b. We live in a society today where the narrative seems to be controlled by social media, cable news, and the politics of outrage.

- i. Our level of dialogue with one another has largely been reduced to our computers and phones where we can throw out to the public square our opinions with no social consequences.
 - Instead of having to listen and respond to the opinions of the people right in front of me.
 1. I can attack them from the comfort of cyberspace...and then block you if I don't want to actually listen and have a conversation.
 - I can filter the content that I read and watch to certain channels, news outlets, bloggers, and other forms of media that agree with my sensibilities and block those who disagree with me.
 - I can be convinced that those who do not share my ideology, my opinions, and my thoughts are worthy of their character being assassinated without ever having a conversation with them.
 1. There are evangelicals who have convinced themselves that assassinating the character of others is something the Lord approves of!
- ii. **Our current culture of civic discourse is now so polarized and so toxic...**
 - That we really are not making any societal progress.



- We're not listening to one another, and we spend more time being angry and outraged than actually understanding one another and moving forward.
- I'm tired of it. I'm tired of all of our elections/campaigns giving into this culture.
 1. This week's VA Gubernatorial Election is no exception on both sides.
 2. It's sad and childish.
 3. It's childish that we can't have a political debate where the candidates don't give in to the notion that in order to win you have to assassinate the other guy's character.
 4. Because that garbage filters down to normal everyday conversations and debates among the people.

c. But here's the thing. As our society is trapped in this culture of judging one another and being outraged at one another...

- i. The church should stick out as oddly different.
 - The church should be the institution in our society that does not give in to this culture of outrage.
 - We should be these odd, crazy people that are able to love all people no matter where they stand on certain issues.
 - We should be a place that prefers face to face conversation over 140 characters because we don't label people without actually getting to know them and their story.



- ii. The church should be the place where people are not regarded nor treated from a worldly perspective.
 - Rather the church should be the institution that recognizes and puts into practice the belief that every person has dignity and value assigned to them by God.
 - And we don't treat what God calls valuable with disrespect.

III. LIFE IN A TENT

a. I bring this up because we have been in a series called Life in a Tent.

- i. This is a study of 2 Corinthians 5.
 - One chapter of one letter that the Apostle Paul wrote to a church in Corinth, Greece.
 - And in this part of the letter, Paul is explaining to us his worldview.
- ii. **And we've seen that as followers of Jesus, we should view our lives and our bodies as tents.**
 - We are here in this life temporarily and our body is like a tent.
 1. It's temporary. It's fragile.
 - But we know that this life is not all there is, that God will one day bring his children home to his kingdom where we will then get what Paul refers to as a building.
 1. Our bodies will be immortal. We will live for eternity. We won't experience any more pain and suffering.
 2. And so we are called to live this life knowing that we're in a tent.



- iii. **And this has huge implications on our worldview.**
 - Because if my worldview says that this life is all there is and I have to make the best of it.
 1. Then I will spend my life living for myself making sure that I don't miss out.
 2. And I will view other people in light of how they help me accomplish that goal.
 - But if my worldview says that this life is not all there is, the best is yet to come, but right now God has me here on assignment in this tent.
 1. Then I can spend my life living for Christ and not being concerned that I am missing out nor wasting my life.
 2. And I can view other people as God sees them.

b. And so this morning, as we read the next part of 2 Corinthians 5, we are going to be talking about how this worldview impacts the way we view other people.

- i. What does it mean when I say that the church should be this odd institution that sticks out in our society because we actually treat everyone as if they had equal dignity and worth.
 - What does that look like?

IV. 2 CORINTHIANS 5:16

a. This morning we're only going to be studying one verse.

- i. I want to focus today on v.16.



- Read 2 Corinthians 5:16
 1. Therefore – in light of this worldview that I have been writing about.
 2. In light of the fact that this life is not all there is.
 3. In light of the fact that Christ has died for all people.
 4. We – those who are followers of Jesus Christ and therefore a part of the church.
- ii. **So, Paul makes it clear that living with a Christian worldview impacts the way we view all people.**
 - No matter who they are. No matter what they've done. No matter what they look like.
 1. We view all people, everyone, differently than the rest of the world.
 - The text here says that we do not view people..."according to the flesh."
 1. I really like the Christian Standard Bible version of this verse – *"From now on, then, we do not know anyone from a worldly perspective. Even if we have known Christ from a worldly perspective, yet now we no longer know him in this way."*
 - See, Paul uses himself here as an example.
 1. He says that there was a time that he regarded Jesus from a worldly perspective.
 2. This was before Paul became a follower of Christ when he actually persecuted Christians in his quest to eradicate the faith from the planet.
 3. Paul says he regarded Christ according to the flesh.



4. He viewed Christ as just a normal human being who got for himself a large following, but he was executed by the Roman government.

5. Nothing special.

- But now, Paul says, he no longer knows Christ from a worldly perspective because the love of Christ swallowed up his heart and Paul sees all of life differently now.

b. So, the question this morning is simple: What is the difference between viewing people from a worldly perspective and viewing people how God views them?

i. Well to put it simply, we view others from a worldly perspective when we form an opinion or a judgment about a person according to...

1. Who they are.
2. What we see them doing.
3. What they look like.

- It's when we use the information that I see in the flesh and in this present moment to figure out what I think about the person.

ii. **Now, God has a much different perspective. How does God view people?**

- Well, first of all, God has created each person in his own image.
 1. Genesis 1:27 - *"So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them."*
 2. What this means is that every single person is created with immense and equal value.



3. That their value is inherent into their being because they were created by Almighty God...they are a prized possession.
 4. Psalm 139:19 - *"...you knitted me together in my mother's womb."*
 5. The Psalmist wants you to picture your grandma rocking in a chair knitting as an illustration of the care that God puts into creating each person.
 6. So, God views every person as incredibly valuable because they are made in his image...no matter who they are, no matter what they've done, no matter what they look like.
 7. That's how God views you. Someone whom he treasures and loves.
- Secondly, every single person is someone whom God sent His Son, Jesus, to die for.
 1. We studied that last week in 2 Corinthians 5:14 - *"For the love of Christ controls us because we have concluded this: that Jesus has died for all..."*
 2. Although not every person will trust in the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of their sins, you better believe that the death and resurrection of Jesus is sufficient to cover the sins of every single person.
 3. 2 Peter 3:9 tell us that God is... *"not wishing that any should perish, but that all should reach repentance."*
 4. You know what this means?
 5. It means that God loves each and every person on this planet to the point of sending Jesus to bleed out on a cross for them so they can be redeemed and restored.



6. No matter who they are, what they've done, or what they look like.
 7. Jesus died for you! He came and lived the life you could not live and died the death you deserve so you could be made right with God if you would trust in Him.
- Thirdly, God is aware that each and every person has a story.
 1. That each and every person has been born into a world that has been broken by sin.
 2. That, like we studied in 2 Corinthians 5:2-4, that each person lives in a tent and is longing and groaning for something better.
 3. That each person suffers in this world.
 4. That each person has a story, an upbringing, that has shaped who they are today and what they have done.
 5. It doesn't mean that their story does not include their own sin and rebellion against God.
 6. It just means that God has much more intimate knowledge of all of the factors that have shaped their lives.
 7. God knows your story. He knows your upbringing. He knows what you've gone through. And it doesn't change his opinion of you.
- iii. **So we view people from a worldly perspective when we see them just as who they are, what they've done and what they look like.**



- iv. But we view people from God's perspective when we see them as an image bearer of God with immense value, a person that Jesus died for, and someone with a long and complex story.

c. I love my children to the point that I would be willing to die for them.

- i. They have so much value to me that you can't quantify it.
- And I know my children. I know their stories. I know their personalities.
- ii. So, when I take them to a playground and the other kids on the playground disregard them, push them aside, maybe the older kids will push them away from the slide because they're being too slow...
- It hurts me a little.
 - How could these other kids not see how amazing, how fun, how awesome and valuable my children are!
 - How could they just push them aside as someone who is simply in their way?
- iii. And you know, when we as the church view people and treat people from a worldly perspective...I think it hurts God.
- Because these are people that he has created in his image and knit them together.
 - These are people that Christ died for.
 - These are people with stories.
 - And we sometimes brush them aside. See them as annoyances or insignificant.



- iv. How would God expect us to regard those whom he assigns such value?

V. STORIES

a. Who are the people that you cross paths with every single day?

- i. The people that maybe you don't cognitively notice but possibly form subconscious opinions about?
- Maybe the neighbor who doesn't care for his lawn that well?
 - The single mom at the waiting room in the doctor's office who isn't controlling her children.
 - The guy in the modified Honda Civic where the exhaust is way too loud.
 - The men hanging out outside the seven-eleven hoping for work?
 - The customer service representative who is having a hard time resolving the issue that you called about.
 - The person in front of you on the plane who reclines his chair back into you.
 - The barista at Starbucks who messed up your drink.
 - The people who are walking or driving slow in front of you so you can't go as fast as you want to go.
 - The people to your right and your left.
- ii. **These are people whom God knit together and made into his image.**
- These are people who are just as valuable to God as you.
 - These are people whom Christ died for.



- These are people who have lived a lot of life and have a long, complex story.

iii. **Is this how we view them?**

- See, when we live with the worldview that this life is all there is and I have to make the best of it.
 1. Then these people are judged by the standard of if they help me make the best of my life or not.
- But when our worldview says that this life is not all there is and God has me on assignment in this life in a tent...
 1. Then these people are not defined by my needs and desire. They are defined by how they relate to God.
 2. And check this out...as I live this life in a tent as a redeemed child of God...
 3. God has given me assignment to be a minister of reconciliation between that person that I have crossed paths with and God...
 4. That's what we'll discuss next week.
- The question for today, though, is do we have the humility to stop and see these people as God sees them.

b. I know women who deal with the shame of having an abortion.

- i. These are people who have been targets of many in the pro-life movement within the church.
 - For many, the church has not been a place of dealing with that shame.
- ii. This doesn't mean they don't have to take responsibility for their actions or that it wasn't sin before God.



- But these women are image bearers of God whom Christ died for.
- God never stopped loving them.
- iii. **And these women have stories....**
 - Stories of being forced into the abortion.
 - Being shamed into it.
 - Being given no other choice.
 - Again, it doesn't give an excuse.
- iv. **But as the church, we don't point fingers and judge.**
 - No, we're called to stick out in a society that is addicted to outrage.
 - We treat people as image bearers.
 - We pull up a chair to hear the story.
 - We minister the grace and the redemption that is available in and through Jesus.

c. As many of you know, we adopted my daughter Christy out of the foster care system.

- i. We maintain a relationship with her biological dad.
- ii. And I can struggle with my attitude towards him.
- iii. But if I lived with the worldview that this life is all there is...
 - Then sure, let's cut him out. Let's judge him.
- iv. **But this life is not all there is. And as a follower of Jesus I am to view and treat people as God sees them.**
 - And God created this man, assigned him value, Christ died for him, and he has a story.
 - He has a long hard story of being taken out of his birth home as well.



- And God has allowed him to cross paths with me.
- Someone who can minister to him the love and redemption of Christ.
- Guys, it's not about me...

d. What about these guys who were marching in these White Supremacist Rallies in Charlottesville and other cities.

- i. I'll be the first to say that what these guys were doing and the ideology they are advocating is evil and satanic.
 - It cannot be tolerated.
- ii. **But these guys are image bearers too.**
 - Christ died for them.
 - It doesn't excuse their actions and if they go to the grave without being changed by the grace of God through Christ, they will be judged for what they've done.
- iii. **But they do have stories.**
 - My guess is many of us would be shocked of how many of these guys grew up being indoctrinated by their parents and communities to sincerely believe in the superiority of their race.
 - And these guys need the grace of Jesus Christ to be ministered to them so they can see the evil of their ways, so they can repent and change.

e. If you are white, you are a part of the dominant, majority culture of this nation.



- i. **There is nothing wrong with that but it does mean we need to be cognizant of the experience of those who are a part of the sub-dominant, minority cultures in our nation.**
 - And the reality is that those who are minorities have a head start when it comes to viewing other people the way that God views them.
 1. They have more first-hand experience in being written off, judged based on the flesh, and not given the opportunity to tell their story.
- ii. **And as we navigate the racial tension that we find in our country today, one of the things that is desperately needed is Christians who are a part of the majority culture learning the stories and the history of those a part of minority cultures.**
 - Christians who, before they declare their opinion, spend time being educated and having their eyes opened to the experiences of their brothers and sisters who look different from them according to the flesh.
 - Christians who don't form their opinions base on their newsfeed and what's being spouted off on cable news but who sit at the table with people who are different from them and listen, ask questions, get into their shoes...
- iii. **Listen, one of my prayers and one of my goals for Grace Hill Church is that we would be a multi-cultural church.**
 - That our leadership would be multi-cultural and our pulpit would be multi-cultural.



- And I use the phrase multi-cultural instead of multi-ethnic intentionally because what I don't mean is that we would be a multi-ethnic church that is dominated by just one culture.
- That kind of multi-cultural, church would stick out in our society, right?
- But, here's the thing, this church will not achieve that kind of diversity in our leadership or in our Sunday morning attendance if the people of this church don't have that kind of diversity at their dinner tables.
- Let's go learn people's story.

VI. APPLICATION & CHALLENGE

a. In this cultural moment of so much outrage and polarization, it is only the church that has the ability to swim upstream and do things differently.

- And my prayer is that as we establish ourselves in this community, that we would stick out as this odd place where everyone is valued and heard.
 - Where everyone is someone that we believe we can minister the grace of Jesus Christ.

b. So, here is my challenge to you this week – it's simple.

- As you go about your day. As you go to work. As you run errands. As you're with your family...people watch.
 - Let's all get our noses out of our phones, look up, and notice people.



- ii. **And as you observe people, I want you to realize this about that person...**
- They are an image bearer of God. God knitted them together and they have value.
 1. God sees them as valuable.
 2. God sees them as equally valuable as you.
 - They are someone that Jesus bled on the cross for and He desires that that person shall not perish.
 1. They need to be rescued from their sin in the same way that you were rescued from your sin.
 2. As we think upon the grace that we have received, we begin to form gracious eyes towards others.
 - This person has a story. They had a mom and a dad. They had an upbringing. They've had happy moments and they've suffered. They've been loved and hated. They've been taught things. They laugh. They cry.
 1. How might your current opinion of that person change when you begin to hear their story?
 2. How many times do you wish you could tell your story to those who judge you?
- iii. **As you go about your week, my challenge to you is to view these people the way God sees them.**
- Grace Hill, let's be a church that oddly sticks out in this culture of outrage and polarization.
 - Let's love people the way that Jesus loves people.

VII. PRAY

