

June 10, 2018

“The Tie That Binds: Poured Out”

Ephesians 4:25-5:2

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“Put away from you all bitterness and wrath and anger and wrangling and slander, together with all malice, and be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, as God in Christ has forgiven you.”

Out – a word that speaks of voluntary movement and forced, pressured action.

There is the force, pressure and heartache of being:
squeezed out,
phased out,
ripped out,
and dragged out.

There is the out that can be a matter of choice, of being:
spilled out
and poured out.

In our passage for this morning we see both of those outs portrayed in wrath, anger, wrangling, slander, and malice, and that of being kind, tenderhearted and forgiving.

Now, before we become too self-loathing or self-congratulatory, we must be sure to check our actions by putting them up against the life of Christ, for in our reading we are reminded to do the outs in direct proportion to how Jesus did his spilling and pouring out in regard to kindness, tenderheartedness, and forgiveness.

Jesus was continually kind. And how did this kindness show itself? In many ways, but for the sake of time, we'll focus on three today.

Jesus was kind by touching those who needed his touch; often he touched those who lived devoid of touch.

Touch can often be overlooked in our fast paced, digital communication age. We can become out of touch, not due to lack of means of communication tools, but from lack of face-to-face close enough to touch encounters.

A French Psychologist, Sidney, Jourard, visited cafes and observed friends interacting for an hour. During this hour no one touched in England. In the United States, he counted two touches. In France, 110 touches; but in Puerto Rico, there were 180 touches!

What is the advantage of touch?

Psychology Today says that touch is able to communicate, "joy, love, gratitude and sympathy." What could come from purposeful hugs, high fives, or a gentle squeeze of the hand of a child or an elderly person? In one touch, we could give the gift of kindness that could positively change someone's outlook (how they see the world), and even their inlook (how they see themselves).

Jesus kindness showed itself through him spending time with those others rejected. It is interesting that Jesus did not give Zaccheus the tax collector a lecture on how he got himself into this situation where no one liked him, and thus why he was alone so much. Rather, he just took him, as he was, not requiring change or promises of something different in the future. Rather, in the acceptance, the rejected did not remain

isolated, but rather he wanted to connect himself to others in ways that were life giving to them, and in so doing, it became life giving for him. Zachheus (that lousy cheating, greedy tax collector) responded to Jesus kindness, by voluntarily giving half of his possessions to the poor and making amends by promising to give everyone four times what he took from them. It is amazing what happens under the blanket of kindness.

Jesus showed kindness by having compassion on the suffering.

In contrast to Jesus touching someone, he also noticed who touched him. One lone woman in a crowd of many, is noticed by Jesus. Again, Jesus does not reprimand or put her in her place, but rather puts her in a special place, that of being in relationship with one another, he calls her “daughter”. Kindness comes from noticing and acting upon the fact that we are all related. We are in God’s family, as we are all God’s children, and thus connected to one another. Our relationships to one another cannot be benign, because they are familial.

It is no wonder with this kind of resume, Jesus life was the life that changed the world, and his life lived out through us can do the same. Jesus lives and creates acts of kindness to the unsuspecting, those others consider undeserving, and the hurting - through you and me. Given that, we can make the world a community where kindness is the norm, and connection is the only means of relating.

Jesus was poured out and he calls us to do the same.

Now, let’s talk about tenderheartedness. Which means we have to give up some things in order to have tenderheartedness, or make sure certain things don’t take root in our hearts in the first place. And what are those things: bitterness, anger, wrath, wrangling, slander, and malice.

Let me just say, I don't believe most people can just let something go. Just put it behind them, without doing something.

And what our faith calls us to when we have those feelings of wanting to hurt another person because they have hurt us or someone we care about, we should not just stand there and take it, but move – move toward the other person.

Again, we need to pour ourselves out. Rather, our tendency can be, to move in the opposite direction by turning our back on them, or stabbing them in the back when they are not looking or don't see it coming. These actions of ours, do not serve as heart tenderizers, rather they cause our heart to further harden, and maybe to the point that we can no longer take anything in, but rather when it comes to the matters of the heart, everything bounces off our heart, because it has now become impenetrable.

Tenderheartedness comes from an act of refusal, the refusal to let these things take root in our heart, and it is also involves the act of weeding – weeding out those things that try and choke out love, joy, and peace.

Tenderheartedness comes from an act of being willing to get face-to-face with those who hurt us and see if we can work it out, clear up misunderstandings, see it from each other's perspective, and give each other the room to be clumsy in our interactions with one another. Tenderheartedness is much more interested in crossing a bridge, than burning it, and in hammering it out, rather than trying to nail each other.

Lastly, the Bible talks to us today about forgiveness. Now, we could spend a lot of time exploring the examples Jesus gave us

about forgiveness. But, I think our time would be better spent today, if I would have us look at what are the common elements in Jesus forgiveness, and thus should be in our forgiving as well.

First, Jesus tells us we will be forgiven in proportion to our forgiving. This is not damnation, rather just karma. If you are known to be someone who does forgive, good chance is you will not be offered forgiveness when you need it. None of us can live without forgiveness, for that is a burden too heavy to bear over a lifetime; because our need for forgiveness becomes cumulative.

Second, we all need to receive forgiveness, because we will all make mistakes. When we judge someone else, we presuppose we are not like them. Yet, when it comes to making mistakes we are all alike. We are not always at our best self. We are misguided at times, self-centered and self-seeking, have wrong motives, and act stupidly. We are not above the need for forgiveness, which should make us not above the need for granting forgiveness. Jesus said, forgive a lot ($7 \times 70 = 490$ times) because people mess up a lot, you and me included!

Scripture tells us that when we stay close to God, and live out life as God designed these will be the results: (the fruit of the Spirit) is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, gentleness, goodness, and self-control. I don't know about you, but that's the life I want. These are the things God has poured out for us, let us take them in, and pour them out – for others too.

It is fascinating and amazing to me, that when Jesus was nearing the end of his life on earth, he chose two things that cannot be stored up, to represent his life and work: bread and wine. One molds and rots if we save it, the other sours. Let us

not let the Jesus in us go to waste! Rather, like him, let us be poured out, not sealed, or stored up, but rather frequent, generous tenderhearted givers of kindnesses and forgiveness.