

Coastal Community Church Vision

Hope beyond our brokenness

Trust in our Risen Savior

Restoration for our city, nation, and world

Today... I choose to be changed by Jesus, I choose to seek Jesus first, and I choose to join Jesus in His resurrection work.

Ear Tug. Ask Permission

Today we will be talking about anger. I'm kidding. Today's passage in Ephesians is Paul continuing this theme that he's been describing in a multitude of ways over and over again, perfectly summed up in the last verses of chapter 4. Let's read together the big theme: Ephesians 4:32 Be kind and compassionate to one another, forgiving each other, just as in Christ God forgave you. So today, everything that we read will have this verse as the anchor point. God treats us with kindness, compassion, and forgiveness...all words describing God's love...how God pays so that we benefit. Jesus does exactly what our Heavenly Father wants...He pays so we benefit. He pays on the cross so we benefit with forgiveness. Jesus, the Judge of the Universe, holds our pain and suffers with us so that we can benefit from His kindness and His compassion. Jesus loves us this way...all the time. When we are doing great, when we mess up, when we are faithful and praising him, when we

are selfish and irritated with God that we can't be more selfish. Jesus is still, always, thoroughly, forever....kind, compassionate, and forgiving to me, to you...that's just how Jesus loves.

So can I speak to the part of your heart that believes that for other people and not for yourself? Can I speak to the part of your heart that still is looking for that safety, significance, comfort, certainty...apart from Jesus? Can I speak to the part of your heart that is so tired of messing up and you just don't know the way home? **Pray!** Ready? Read with me:

Ephesians 5:1 Follow God's example, therefore, as dearly loved children
2 and walk in the way of love, just as Christ loved us and gave himself up
for us as a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God.

So...if God is kind and compassionate and forgiving towards you... then what? Walk in the way of love...just as Jesus has loved you...do the same for others. Be kind and compassionate and forgiving. Paul isn't saying you have to live with abuse. Paul isn't saying you have to put up with awful behavior forever. Paul is saying: be kind. Instead of carrying anger around all the time...operate with kindness and compassion. Smile. Choose joy. See others as people who are just as broken as you are. There's no room for our self-righteousness and anger in the Kingdom of God. When I needed hip surgery, my surgically repaired shoulder said to my hip: "Hey hip!! Why can't you just try harder!!! Why

are you so weak!! You're such a mess up!!!" And then orbital bone and nose bones, which have three titanium plates screwed to hold it all together said to my surgically repaired shoulder, "Hey shoulder! Be kind! When you blew apart throwing a one pound piece of wood 2 feet...no one crushed you with judgement. Sure you'll have to work harder because you'll carry the crutches. But hip worked harder when you were out of commission for 4 months. Be kind! Be compassionate! Forgive!" By the way, when I told my doctor this I got a three day vacation and meds. But I'm fine.

Do you see what Paul is saying? Don't intend to be kind and compassion. Walk in it. Do it. Don't intend to forgive. Actually forgive... speak it out loud, all the time, as many times as you need in order to let the wound go. Stop moving so fast to be productive. Take a moment, take a breath, slow down...walk...walk...walk...in love. Give yourself. Don't steal. Build. Encourage. Be generous. Build. This is the way of love.

Now...here's the challenging part. Paul also saying be kind, compassionate, and forgiving to yourself. When you're not the weight you want to be, be kind and compassionate to yourself. When you mess up, forgive yourself. If you use the tool of anger and condemnation and criticism on yourself, you'll use the exact same tools on others.

Yeah, Andy, but it's hard to be kind, compassionate, and forgiving to myself and to those who have hurt me. Yes, my friends, yes it is. So what do we do when we don't have what we need? I've spent years performing, pretending, trying on my own power to give what I do not have. I can last about 4 minutes. What's the other option? We get to receive everything we need from Jesus. How? We literally pray... Jesus, I need kindness and compassion and forgiveness for myself, for this person. I don't have it in me. Please give me all that I need right now. And then...and then...and then...walk in the way of love. Choose to be kind and compassionate as an act of faith and Jesus will give you what you need. You don't wait for it to show up first...you walk in faith and trust Jesus will give you kindness and compassion as you choose it.

Now onto the verses that are everyone's favorite!

Ephesians 5:3 But among you there must not be even a hint of sexual immorality, or of any kind of impurity, or of greed, because these are improper for God's holy people.

So many pastors never include the verses before this one when they talk about this next section in Ephesians. They just spout this as a way to condemn those of us who have made bad choices to find comfort, security, safety, belonging, or significance apart from Jesus. But Paul ain't writing to non Christians. He's writing to the church. Which means

people in the church are struggling here. Why? Because if you're not receiving kindness, compassion, forgiveness and love from Jesus...you'll seek it somewhere else.

Listen, honey, listen. Listen. Listen. If you not receiving comfort, security, safety, belonging, and significance from Jesus, you will seek it somewhere else. Weak people aren't the ones who struggle with this... all people struggle with this. It's a rule. If you don't believe God will be your security and provider, there's no other alternative but to be greedy and get more and more so that you feel safe and secure. Do you remember that phrase, 'Bad out, good in'? What Paul is saying...if you don't put the good Jesus has for in your heart...you will put the bad in... every time. Paul gives another example:

Ephesians 5:4 Nor should there be obscenity, foolish talk or coarse joking, which are out of place, but rather thanksgiving.

Everyone has jokes. Jokes are fine. Don't tear people down with your jokes. Don't drag yourself down into the mire of disgusting things with your talk and your jokes. Tony Campolo, the speaker and author and pastor once said, "If you mix manure and ice cream, the manure isn't really all that affected. But it sure does ruin the ice cream." Paul is saying something pretty easy to understand. If you're speaking kindness and compassion into someone's life and then you mix that with manure...the

only thing spoiled is your kindness and compassion. Now here's my favorite verse of this whole passage primarily because it's so massively misunderstood. Again...Paul continues with the same thought thread that he started at the end of chapter four:

Ephesians 5:5 For of this you can be sure: No immoral, impure or greedy person—such a person is an idolater—has any inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and of God.

This verse has nothing to do with our salvation. This verse has nothing to do with whether or not God loves us. God loves you. Remember...Jesus is always always kind, compassionate, and forgiving toward you. So what does the Paul say? If you are attempting to find the benefits of God's love...joy, hope, significance, peace, security, comfort....in things that are immoral, impure, with greed....that is literally the definition of idolatry. Idolatry is asking a thing or a person to do God's job for you. What will be the result? You won't get what you're attempting to get. There won't be the inheritance you're looking for. The benefits of God's love won't be there. And we all know this through our experience.

Buy a car and you feel amazing...and then two weeks later that feeling is gone. How many of you, right now, still carry the same feeling you had on Christmas morning? Nah, man, it's gone. We all know what

it's like to pursue that money, that house, that dream...but when your relationships die or your soul is crushed or your body is destroyed because of your pursuit...that thing you wanted soooo bad now is ash in your mouth. There's no inheritance there.

What is Paul saying? We need Jesus. Put Jesus first. Make God your treasure and all these things will then be added unto you. Hold onto, delight in, rejoice in, and trust the love and forgiveness and hope of Jesus. And then give what you're receiving to God away. Because there is an inheritance that produces generational wealth in the kingdom of God. Your kindness and compassion produces something beautiful... intimacy, connection, safety. Now your family is united. Now your friends are transformed. Now they have kindness and compassion for themselves and others. It's generational wealth that grows. Your forgiveness heals your soul and the when you show your kids how to be forgiven and how to forgive...their failures won't move them towards despair and further rebellion because they think they can't be forgiven. Instead, having been forgiven by you and shown how to forgive themselves through your example, your kids will be confident to ask forgiveness from Jesus, receive it, and be healed.

Paul continues...Read with me:

Ephesians 5:6 Let no one deceive you with empty words, for because of such things God's wrath comes on those who are disobedient.

7 Therefore do not be partners with them.

Let no one deceive you by saying 'Hey...ditch Jesus...He won't give you life. Get this thing. Buy this. Look this way. Smoke or drink this. Get angry. Hold onto your bitterness. You're the real victim...you deserve this. Get them to love you. Date these many people....then you'll be happy.' Those are empty words, deceitful words. And what happens when we believe these deceitful words? And make no mistake...the 'let no one deceive you' also includes yourself. Those thoughts are running through your brain right now. What happens you believe those lies? God's wrath comes. Remember what God's wrath is? God's wrath is literally this: God allows you to have exactly what you want.

And then what? Oh then I'm miserable. This is why Paul says to not partner with them. I was talking with a friend this week about how we have a hard time letting people love us. If I partner with that lie, that I won't let anyone love me, God will let me do so. And what will be the result? I will be happy to meet your needs but I won't let you love me. And we will feel more and more unloved until our hearts harden and then break. And then what? Where is God then? God's wrath isn't Him abandoning me. God's wrath is God being with me as I get exactly what

you want...all the misery, all the temporary joys, all the illusion of safety or security. And then, when my heart is broken...God is there with His kindness, compassion, and forgiveness. Every time. He will never leave Me. I belong to Him.

Last verses; and here's the practical tool Paul wants to teach us to put all this into practice:

Ephesians 5:8 For you were once darkness, but now you are light in the Lord. Live as children of light 9 (for the fruit of the light consists in all goodness, righteousness and truth) 10 and find out what pleases the Lord. 11 Have nothing to do with the fruitless deeds of darkness, but rather expose them.

We were all once in darkness. That's why we can have compassion on others. We all know what it's like to be lost and then found. We're now living in the light. So what do we do? Avoid darkness. Don't choose it. Expose the darkness. It's soooooo much better for you to confess what's in the darkness and bring it to light rather than someone else shining the light on it. After all, nothing ever remains hidden. During the 2019 wild fires in Los Angeles a CNN photographer received his assignment to photograph the fires in the hills above Calabasas. He headed to the small Van Nuys airport and spotted his plane, hopped into and said firmly, "Let's go." So the plane took off and the CNN man said,

"Take me closer to the valley." The pilot questioned, "Why?" "Why? To see the wild fires of course", the reporter responded. After a while the pilot again asked, "So why are we going there?" Irritated, the photographer snapped sarcastically, "So I can take pictures of the fires." Again, after a while, the pilot asked, "Why do you want to take pictures?" This time the photographer exploded, "What do you mean why? I'm a CNN photographer and I take pictures!!!" The pilot took a long pause, leaned over and looked at the CNN man and said, "So what you're telling me is that you're not my instructor?" After all, nothing ever remains hidden. It's sooooo much better for you to confess what's happening in your life rather than to be up in that plane...with no instructor...flying over fires...not knowing how to get back home or land that plane.

Here's another practical take away. When any thought passes through your mind, take it captive. Slow down. Grab the thought. Examine it. And ask yourself, "Is this from Jesus? Is this His kindness, compassion, and forgiveness towards me? Is this helping me? And if not, where did this come from?" Paul writes: **2 Corinthians 10:5 We demolish arguments and every pretension that sets itself up against the knowledge of God, and we take captive every thought to make it obedient to Christ.** This is the language of warfare. This is language of interrogation. **Brothers and sisters, you are not your thoughts. You can't**

be your thoughts...because You are observing them as they exist in your head. Grab that thought...wrestle it...take it captive...interrogate it.

Demand to know...are you from my Jesus? Are you here to help me find my hope and life in Jesus? If it's not helpful, reject it in Jesus' name. So this week as I was literally teaching this exact moment at staff meeting the staff was joking and I got irritated with them. And then I lashed out in a private little text so I could appear kind even though I was being a prideful jerk. I didn't take the thought captive of 'I'm trying to teach and they're goofing off and they don't respect me and I'm mad'. That wasn't from Jesus. That was my pride. So as I was teaching about taking my thoughts captive I didn't take my thoughts captive. And I caused a lot of hurt. My friends got mad at me for a bit but then they were kind, compassionate, and forgiving toward me. Sometimes we will succeed and sometimes we will fail. The Kingdom of God is this family where you get to bring up all the darkness in your life into the light and you, Jesus, and your friends and family can be kind, compassionate, and forgiving to every wound and failure. You can toss out thoughts that aren't helpful and hold onto every good thing. And the result will be nothing less than your resurrection. Jesus loves you. He is always always always kind, compassionate, and forgiving toward you because You are His beloved.

Pray

Benediction

Table Talk