

Sunday, Nov. 4:

Message #2: "The Tie that Binds"

Scripture: Romans 14:1 - 15:6

Memory Verse: "We who are powerful need to be patient with the weakness of those who don't have power, and not please ourselves." -Romans 15:1

Blurb: One of the "stuck" conversations God's people have is around human sexuality, and particularly around homosexuality. There are faithful Christians on all sides of this conversation. How do we talk about this? How do we love and accept each other? How do we find a way forward together? This Sunday we'll hear how the United Methodist Church is forging a "way forward" that will define our church's approach to homosexuality.

Opening Song: *King of Glory* -Sanctify

Welcome: -Pastor David

Memory Verse: "We who are powerful need to be patient with the weakness of those who don't have power, and not please ourselves." -Romans 15:1

Worship Music Set: - Sanctify

Cannons

Even So Come

The Church's One Foundation

Worship Prayer - Andrew

Grow Moment: Stewardship - Teresa Gruber

Serve Moment: Youth Mission Trip Fundraiser - Cassi Betker

Offering: *The things that Bring Peace* -Sanctify

Love Moment: Prayers -David

Veteran's Day Observance - Prayers for Veterans, and cards to deployed

Loving your church family - Prayers for prayer list, cards to JoAnne Benoy

Skit: Stress in the Family

Message Bumper

PP#1: Difficult Conversations: How to LOVE someone when you don't agree.

The Tie that Binds

“We who are powerful need to be patient with the weakness of those who don't have power, and not please ourselves.” -Romans 15:1

Difficult Conversations: How to LOVE someone when you don't agree. The Tie that Binds. Romans 15:1, “We who are powerful need to be patient with the weakness of those who don't have power, and not please ourselves.”

Now, last week I told you that today I would be talking about the difficult conversations of human sexuality and homosexuality. We're not going to quite get there today, however. You see, I wrote the message, and it got extremely long. It ended up being double the length of a normal message. So, as my wife suggested, “Long enough for two sermons!” So, today I'll start the message, I'll call this Part 1. And next week we'll get to Part 2, which takes what we learn today and applies it to the conversation on homosexuality. So, you'll need to come back next week! So, hang in there!

PP#2: *Listing of a large number of different major Christian denominations, perhaps in a wordle?*

People of God, people of faith, people of religion, have always had disagreements. This is certainly true among Christians. The vast variety of Christian churches is itself evidence of our ability to think differently about many things, while still claiming a unity. Now, this is often a struggle for us, for our tendency is to say that our way—our beliefs—are right, and others are wrong, or at least not as right. Churches, and Christians, need continual reminders that although we think differently about many things, we are all still part of Christ's One Universal Church.

You've all heard the joke in some form: People are on a tour of heaven, and when they get near a group of people who were from a certain kind of church—insert name: Baptists, Catholics, Assemblies of God, Reformed, whatever—well, when they get near, the tour guide tells everyone to be quiet, because they think that they are the only ones who made it to heaven. When my father was young, his parents told him he had to marry someone from their same denomination. They were right, everyone else was wrong, and maybe not even going to heaven.

Jesus calls His Church to unity. So, how do we manage to have a sense of unity, when we think so differently? This is a huge struggle in our wider society—our country, for example. But today I want to focus on Christians. How do *we* interact with people, when they think so differently.

PP#3: *Image of an awkward moment around a Thanksgiving meal, or family gathering, or meal, etc.*

Some of the basic techniques work much of the time: limit your time around them, think them stupid in your mind but say polite things to their face, change the subject, or avoid certain subjects, or learn to hold your tongue. Or, we may even take it a nobler step more: like try to understand them, consider what they've gone through to make them think that way, or seek to learn more about the issue from someone who thinks differently, or try to be okay with different opinions...after all, variety is beautiful, and what they think may be true for them. We can focus on what we agree about, and we don't have to agree in order to get along.

Now, I think that we all need to practice some of these techniques much, much more, and if we would, things would go a lot better. But as Christians, we have a deeper obligation.

PP#4: Difficult Conversations when you disagree: The Tie that Binds

1. Love is the Tie that Binds

We learned it last Sunday. It is our calling to love one another. We are commanded, in God's highest commands, to love God and love one another. This love forms the foundation of all of our interactions with everyone, and certainly with those with whom we disagree.

This is not hard, but it is hard. It's not hard in that we usually can figure out what we ought to be doing. If we stop and ask, "What does it look like to love this misinformed, shallow-thinking, wrong person right now? What does it mean for me to love him or her?" we usually know what to do. So, it's usually not hard. But it is hard, in that we have to remember to ask that question of ourselves, and then follow through with behaving out of love.

PP#5: Difficult Conversations when you disagree: The Tie that Binds

1. Love is the Tie that Binds
2. It's more about you than them

So, notice the key change that love brings. It shifts the focus off of what's wrong with them, off the problem, the issue, and focuses you...on...you! How are you behaving? What are you saying? How are you loving them right now? In the midst of this argument or whatever you're disagreeing about, are they experiencing God's love in you? This love question, changes everything!

PP#6: Difficult Conversations when you disagree: The Tie that Binds

1. Love is the Tie that Binds
2. It's more about you than them
3. It's more about them than you

And it continues to flip everything around. For, although it is less about them, and their error, and more about you and how you love: it is also less about you, about how right you are and how you want them to think like you, and, more about them: about what they need from you, and how you can show them the next step closer to Jesus.

So, if you're a Trump lover, and someone says to you, "Trump's an idiot!," love changes how you respond. You say something like, "Well, I think Trump is doing some very good things." When they say, "Really? How could you be so stupid? You're an idiot, too!," you could say, "Well, I'm not an idiot, but I would love to hear what you think Trump is doing wrong, if I can ask you to keep an open mind and let me share my view, too." All the while, you're keeping your boiling blood under control, you seek to treat that person as love calls, and you try to focus the conversation onto something you can actually talk about in helpful ways. It's the art of respectful conversation.

PP#7: Difficult Conversations when you disagree: The Tie that Binds

1. Love is the Tie that Binds
2. It's more about you than them
3. It's more about them than you
4. Love looks like respect

And there's another key takeaway: love, in conversations where you disagree, looks a lot like respect. You keep yourself composed, and you show respect for the other person.

Now, church, it's hard to learn how to do this from our society. We are spiraling into disrespect in nearly every way. Well, there are pockets of it. Yesterday we celebrated Hellen and David Ash's 60th wedding anniversary. And if you want to know what love-respect looks like, watch

them. They are examples I'm trying follow! Their faith in Christ has shaped this in them, and it will in you, too. Spend time around those pockets of love-respect God has placed around you.

But, God has given us the most helpful and effective model for us, in Scripture. Here is where we learn how to love in a way that shows respect.

I'm going to ask you to turn to Romans 14. It's a long passage, so we may skim through parts of it. But here we see one of many places where we can learn love-respect.

Paul is writing to the Christians in Rome, and he's heard about how there are arguments and divisions among the Christians there about if they should follow Jewish laws or not, or if they should eat meat or not, as Christians. For them it was not about the meat, itself. You see, in that society, meat was expensive. Only the rich could afford meat directly from the market. However, it was very common to offer lots and lots of animal sacrifices to all the various gods. That meant butchering the animals, letting the blood drain, and burning certain parts of the animals. The cuts of meat, however, were salvaged. And there was often so much of it, that the priests from the temples would offer the meat for sale at discounted prices. If the poor were going to eat meat, this was the meat that they could afford. So, the issue was, could Christians buy and eat meat that had first been offered as a sacrifice to a pagan god. As you might imagine, some faithful Christians said "Absolutely not: the meat has been corrupted, and even the buying of it supports pagan temples." Other faithful Christians, however, said, "Those other gods aren't real, so it actually doesn't matter. Besides, we pray over our food, and God purifies it. Finally, it is wise to buy the cheaper meat, and poor people should have access to meat, too." Can you imagine those difficult conversations?

Well, Paul tackles the issue head on, but he doesn't say which side is right or wrong. Instead, he says the real issue is about loving others, and how to treat others with respect.

And...I just love this!...he starts off with having each person stick to his or her beliefs and hold that the other side is wrong. He starts by saying, "So, you know you're right and that they're wrong. You have the powerful position, they have a weaker one. Well, what should you do?"

PP#8: Romans 14:1 - 15:6 (CEB)

1 Welcome the person who is weak in faith—but not in order to argue about differences of opinion. 2 One person believes in eating everything, while the weak person eats only vegetables. 3 Those who eat must not look down on the ones who don't, and the ones who don't eat must not judge the ones who do, because God has accepted them. 4 Who are you to judge someone else's servants? They stand or fall before their own Lord (and they will stand, because the Lord has the power to make them stand).

Romans 14, verse 1. "Welcome the person who is weak in faith—but not in order to argue about differences of opinion. [What are you to do? Welcome them! But *truly* welcome them...not just invite them so you can show them how wrong they are!] 2 One person believes in eating everything [now, this is actually the official Christian position, for we believe that all food is clean and edible, even if it comes from an temple], while the weak person eats only vegetables [they avoid meat out of a misinformed fear of angering God]. 3 Those who eat must not look down on the ones who don't, and the ones who don't eat must not judge the ones who do, because God has accepted them."

God has accepted them, all of them, both sides! So, don't judge God's servants! If they do it to please God, that is good enough. Even those who believe wrongly do so because of their love for God.

PP#9: Romans 14:1 - 15:6 (CEB)

5 One person considers some days to be more sacred than others, while another person considers all days to be the same. Each person must have their own convictions. 6 Someone who thinks that a day is sacred, thinks that way for the Lord. Those who eat, eat for the Lord, because they thank God. And those who don't eat, don't eat for the Lord, and they thank the Lord too. ... 10 But why do you judge your brother or sister? Or why do you look down on your brother or sister? We all will stand in front of the judgment seat of God.

Verse 5, "One person considers some days to be more sacred than others (this is the Jewish calendar), while another person considers all days to be the same. Each person must have their own convictions. [It's okay to think differently! It's the motivation that is important, not the actual practice.] 6 Someone who thinks that a day is sacred, thinks that way for the Lord. Those who eat, eat for the Lord, because they thank God. And those who don't eat, don't eat for the Lord, and they thank the Lord too. ... 10 But why do you judge your brother or sister? Or why do you look down on your brother or sister? We all will stand in front of the judgment seat of God."

Don't judge! And here, we see what Paul means by that: Don't *look down on* your fellow Christian! Respect them! Lift them up. Let them have different opinions.

Let me pause here a minute, and go back to our Methodist DNA. John Wesley was the founder of the Methodist movement, and although he was uncompromising on salvation by grace alone through faith alone in Jesus, he taught the tolerance we see here in Romans, for all non-essential beliefs. Take a look at part of what he wrote.

PP#10: *Image for John Wesley, with this quote:*

"The distinguishing marks of a Methodist are not his opinions of any sort. His assenting to this or that scheme of Religion, his embracing any particular set of notions, his espousing the judgment of one man [or woman] or of another, are all quite wide of the point. Whosoever therefore imagines, that a Methodist is a man [or woman] of such or such an opinion, is grossly ignorant of the whole affair; he mistakes the truth totally. We believe indeed, that all Scripture is given by the inspiration of God....

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PP#11: *Image for John Wesley, with this quote:*

We believe the written word of God to be the only and sufficient rule, both of Christian faith and practice.... We believe Christ to be the eternal, supreme God.... But as to all opinions which do not strike at the root of Christianity, we think and let think. So that whatsoever they are, whether right or wrong, they are no distinguishing marks of a Methodist."

-John Wesley, in "The Character of a Methodist" (1739)

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not strike at the root of Christianity, we think and let think. So that whatsoever they are, whether right or wrong, they are no distinguishing marks of a Methodist.”

Now, of course, the difficulty is deciding what beliefs strike at the root of the Christian faith. But I can say, it is usually fewer things than we think. One helpful guide is the Apostle’s Creed. This was a listing, by the first generation Christians, of what was essential to believe as Christians. I would mention, just to point out how surprising it is what’s NOT included, that evil and Satan are not mentioned in the Apostle’s Creed. Makes you reconsider what actually strikes at the root of Christianity, doesn’t it? And, mind you, no statement on the role of Scripture!

PP#12: Romans 14:1 - 15:6 (CEB)

13 So stop judging each other. Instead, this is what you should decide: never put a stumbling block or obstacle in the way of your brother or sister. 14 I know and I’m convinced in the Lord Jesus that nothing is wrong to eat in itself. But if someone thinks something is wrong to eat, it becomes wrong for that person. 15 If your brother or sister is upset by your food, you are no longer walking in love. Don’t let your food destroy someone for whom Christ died. 16 And don’t let something you consider to be good be criticized as wrong. 17 God’s kingdom isn’t about eating food and drinking but about righteousness, peace, and joy in the Holy Spirit. 18 Whoever serves Christ this way pleases God and gets human approval.

Living the Methodist way means treating those who think differently with respect. Let’s go back to Romans 14. Verse 13 “So stop judging each other. Instead, this is what you should decide: never put a stumbling block or obstacle in the way of your brother or sister. [Consider what they need from you! Don’t make it difficult for them to follow Jesus.] 14 I know and I’m convinced in the Lord Jesus that nothing is wrong to eat in itself. But if someone thinks something is wrong to eat, it becomes wrong for that person. 15 If your brother or sister is upset by your food, you are no longer walking in love. [It’s not about the food, but loving!] Don’t let your food destroy someone for whom Christ died. 16 And don’t let something you consider to be good be criticized as wrong. [So, don’t spend too much time trying to convince them they’re wrong, and don’t spend too much time being told you’re wrong. Each side say calm and steady in your understanding.] 17 God’s kingdom isn’t about eating food and drinking but about righteousness, peace, and joy in the Holy Spirit.”

PP#13: Romans 14:1 - 15:6 (CEB)

19 So let’s strive for the things that bring peace and the things that build each other up. 20 Don’t destroy what God has done because of food. All food is acceptable, but it’s a bad thing if it trips someone else. 21 It’s a good thing not to eat meat or drink wine or to do anything that trips your brother or sister. 22 Keep the belief that you have to yourself—it’s between you and God. People are blessed who don’t convict themselves by the things they approve. 23 But those who have doubts are convicted if they go ahead and eat, because they aren’t acting on the basis of faith. Everything that isn’t based on faith is sin.

This is where we come to our message series theme verse. Romans 14:19, “So let’s strive for the things that bring peace and the things that build each other up. 20 Don’t destroy what God has done because of food. All food is acceptable, but it’s a bad thing if it trips someone else. 21 It’s a good thing not to eat meat or drink wine or to do anything that trips your brother or sister. 22 Keep the belief that you have to yourself—it’s between you and God.”

We shouldn't be so concerned about correcting others. We love them. Yes, that means we must hold fast to what is true, that we must teach the truth that gives life and we must even at times correct errors. But it is not our job to get them to get it all right. Let the Holy Spirit work on them. It's the Holy Spirit's job to convict and to correct. We just gracefully stand firm.

Here's my rule of thumb: If I really *want* to correct them, I know I shouldn't. But if I really don't want to correct them, but feel in inner compelling to do so, then I need to. I must never do it because I want to—that's me following my selfish desire and need to be right and need to have others believe like I do—but because my honest love for them compels me—I care so much about them, and so therefore I do it in a way that preserves our relationship, that respects them, and that shows them just how much God loves them. It's truthing in love, and loving in truth.

PP#14: Romans 14:1 - 15:6 (CEB)

15 We who are powerful need to be patient with the weakness of those who don't have power, and not please ourselves. 2 Each of us should please our neighbors for their good in order to build them up. 3 Christ didn't please Himself 5 May the God of endurance and encouragement give you the same attitude toward each other, similar to Christ Jesus' attitude. 6 That way you can glorify the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ together with one voice.

One more paragraph from Scripture. We continue into chapter 15. The first verse is our memory verse for today. "We who are powerful [who have the power when we believe we are wrong] need to be patient with the weakness of those who don't have power, and not please ourselves. [We must never correct because *we want to*. That's serving our own need to be right.] 2 Each of us should please our neighbors for their good in order to build them up. 3 Christ didn't please Himself, ... [we are to be like Jesus. Verse 5,] May the God of endurance and encouragement give you the same attitude toward each other, similar to Christ Jesus' attitude. 6 That way you can glorify the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ together with one voice."

PP#15: Love-Respect looks like:

- Welcome them; receive them warmly
- It's okay to think differently, if you both are trying to please God
- Don't look down on them; treat them with respect
- Be generous when you differ about nonessentials
- Consider what they need to see God's love from you
- Preserve the relationship first
- Don't correct when you want to (beware selfish need to be right)

Okay, so loving those with whom we disagree looks a lot like what we would call respect. And love-respect, we've seen in Romans, means welcoming warmly others who think differently. It's choosing to receive them in love. It's allowing room when you both are trying to love God. You can even consider them full-out wrong. But even then, it's not looking down on them for their different stance. Stretch to allow room for what is different, if it is not a core Christian belief. As you relate to them, don't think so much about how they are wrong and how to correct them, instead think about what they need from you so that they can see God's love in you. Even when you are right, if you correct them too harshly, you will damage your relationship. You will sacrifice your future influence on them for one point right now. And never correct when you want to. Beware your selfish need to be right. Only correct when the Holy Spirit compels you out of love.

PP#16: *Image of Christian, Muslim and Jewish leaders sitting around talking friendly together.*

I experienced this like of discussion a couple of years ago. A Jewish rabbi, a Muslim imam and I gathered with a few others to talk about the person of Jesus. Now, as you know, our views on Jesus are very different. Jews think Jesus was a rabbi, who was sent from God, but was wrongly crucified. Muslims consider Jesus a great prophet sent from God, who was crucified and even was raised from the dead. But Christians believe that Jesus is also fully God, and God's Son. He is th Savior of the world, and salvation only comes through Him.

Now, it was billed as a friendly conversation, so I suspected we would only talk about things we agreed on. Actually, I dreaded going because I suspected it might be about how we all worshiped the same God, and that, I didn't agree with. But that's what's trendy right now, that's how we find unity: we accept each other as correct. It's true to me.

So, I was quite surprised when after our initial pleasantries, the Jewish rabbi looked directly at the imam and said, "I just can't get over how you believe all that stuff. Do you know how ridiculous it is?" My eyes widened, but the rabbi's approach seemed friendly and playful. I looked over to the imam, who seemed relaxed and smiled as he responded, "Sure, I believe it. It's what God said. You just missed the good part."

I couldn't believe it. I held my breath waiting for a fistfight to break out!

The conversation plunged in from there...nothing was held back. Every topic was open game. And they shared from their hearts, passionately, and with conviction.

What I discovered was that the two of them were old friends, and they talked regularly in these conversations. They had invited me to expand their dialogue, and they expected me to share passionately, and with conviction, too. They talked, but were always respectful.

I found that so refreshing! They had found a way to love and care for each other, to accept each other for who they were, while still maintaining true to their own beliefs. They didn't want to water down what they believed in order to get along, but they each defended their beliefs.

I think they modeled what Paul was teaching Christians about how to have difficult conversations. There was respect. We asked each other questions hard, penetrating questions, and we listened deeply, trying to understand. At one point I asked the rabbi, "If you hold to Leviticus and that forgiveness from God comes through animal sacrifices, how do you receive forgiveness since the destruction of the Jewish temple?" I was challenged that didn't I really believed in three gods, not one. We were each able to share our faith, why we held on to it so passionately, and why we felt the others were wrong.

We were able to say to each other, "I think you're wrong," and we weren't offended. In fact, it made the conversation excellent. I was able to hear what they each believed, and why, and I was able to share the same.

In the end, there was much we didn't agree on. But it was okay. We had a great love-respect conversation. We did find things that we could agree on, and we each committed to work together to bring better dialogue and understanding. We didn't end in prayer, because, as we agreed, we didn't pray to the same God. I've not seen the rabbi again, but I consider the imam a friend.

Church, this kind of conversation is possible. And if we can do it as people of different faiths, how much more can we do this as Christians, who agree on Jesus! And, as Methodists, it is part of our DNA.

It is this kind of loving-respect that will help us next week as we talk about homosexuality. See? Look at the time...don't you agree this needs to be a two-part sermon?

PP#17: John Wesley

“Though we cannot think alike, may we not love alike? May we not be of one heart, though we are not of one opinion? Without all doubt, we may. Herein all the children of God may unite, notwithstanding these smaller differences.” -Sermon 39 “A Catholic Spirit”

For now, one more quote from John Wesley. “Though we cannot think alike, may we not love alike? May we not be of one heart, though we are not of one opinion? Without all doubt, we may. Herein all the children of God may unite, notwithstanding these smaller differences.”

Love-respect. This is what shapes how a Jesus-follower has a conversation with others when they disagree. Romans 15:1, “We who are powerful need to be patient with the weakness of those who don't have power, and not please ourselves.”

Amen.

Closing Song: *O Taste and See* - Sanctify

Memory Verse: “We who are powerful need to be patient with the weakness of those who don't have power, and not please ourselves.” -Romans 15:1

Announcements: -Pastor David

Benediction: -Pastor David

“May the God of endurance and encouragement give you the same attitude toward each other, similar to Christ Jesus' attitude. That way you can glorify the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ together with one voice.” -Romans 15:5-6