

“Does The Church Hate Me?”

Part 3: Are we Making God Available?

(preached 7/7/24)

Please turn to *Romans 12*.

Today’s sermon could be a standalone, but truth is its part 3 of the series we’ve been on.

FIRST 2 SERMONS SUMMARIZED:

- Biblical definition of “hate” is not hot rage or a desire for revenge/karma—while those things are certainly expressions of hate, they aren’t the source.
- Hate is to cut someone off from God and everything He and does, like forgive and transform us.
- Thus, if God hated someone, He would deny them of Himself.
- If a Christian hates someone, they deny another of God the HS within them.
- God practices what He preaches—He commanded Christians to respond to persecution with good, prayer, and blessing.
- Jesus, Who was God the Son, lived this life and still does! He’s not a hypocrite.
- If God hated you, He wouldn’t command His followers to respond with goodness, prayer, and blessing.
- Instead, He would tell them to fight back, take revenge, and adopt an “eye for an eye” mentality.
- If God wanted to condemn humanity to Hell, He would have sent Jesus here 2000 years ago in fire raining down from the sky.
- It’s God’s will that none should perish in Hell, but that all should come to repentance and the Saving Grace of His Son, Jesus Christ.
- The Lord makes Himself available to ALL: the saint, the sinner, the law-abiding citizen, the criminal, straight people, LGBTQ people, the rich, the poor...everyone.
- Even during the 7 year Tribulation, He pulls out all the stops to give people the chance to repent and receive Jesus as their Savior.

TODAY we, the Church, need to do a sober self-assessment and ask if we are **MAKING GOD WITHIN US AVAILABLE TO OTHERS OR NOT.**

If we’ve written anyone off, **are wishing “karma” upon someone**, or deciding entire groups are beyond Saving then perhaps we’re being more “hateful” than we thought.

[Rom 12:9-13 ESV] 9 Let love be genuine. Abhor what is evil; hold fast to what is good. 10 Love one another with brotherly affection. Outdo one another in showing honor. 11 Do not

be slothful in zeal, be fervent in spirit, serve the Lord. 12 Rejoice in hope, be patient in tribulation, be constant in prayer. 13 Contribute to the needs of the saints and seek to show hospitality.

VERSE 9: *let's stop faking "love."* What is love? **Making God within us available.** Allowing Him to flow through us like rivers of living water and getting others wet.

"Abhor what is evil." Evil is anything God calls sin and not just murder, child abuse, or Hitler. Cussing is evil, gluttony is evil, lust & porn is evil, and pickles are the ultimate in all that's dark and unholy. You aren't being unloving or hateful by hating sin in all its forms. That being said, let's all make sure we aren't justifying the ones we're weak to while despising the ones we can resist. Please notice that one can still love—that is to make God in us available—and still hate sin. God does and so can we.

"Hold fast to what is good." Good is anything God calls good and doesn't have to be great, community wide acts of charity, feeding the homeless, or going on a missions trip to a 3rd world country. Good is honoring your parents when they don't deserve it, giving to give, and taking the time to be a compassionate listening ear to someone who needs to share.

"Love & outdo each other." This is referring to in-church relationships...for real. Whenever you read "your brother" in the Bible, it's a brother in faith, in Christ. Not just anyone. The message has been diluted to including everyone which seems pious and righteous when, in fact, Jesus said the rest of the world would be inspired to become a disciple when they see the disciples love for ONE ANOTHER.

"Serve the Lord with zeal." All the above are serving the Lord!

"Be patient in trouble." What sort of trouble? More than just suffering through a medical condition or marital problems, the context here is PERSECUTION.

What is persecution for the sake of Jesus and the Christian faith?

What would happen if I walked into a **meeting of Vegans with a burger** in one hand, a piece of bacon dangling from my mouth, and a t-shirt saying "beef is king!"? Something within them would be triggered and they might respond with outrage to the point of violently throwing me out! The same might apply if a vegan walked into a meeting of people doing the carnivore diet.

THE WORLD HATES JESUS. THE DEVIL HATES JESUS. The world and the devil are darkness, which is the absence of light. When the Light of Christ shines in this dark world, the dark is triggered, is enraged, and gets verbally and sometimes physically violent in response.

The first non-cynical expectation we must have is that unbelievers will react accordingly should we choose to be bold about our faith.

Speaking of boldness, **WHY ARE SOME EVANGELICALS WILLING TO BOLDLY WEAR A MAGA HAT IN PUBLIC, BUT THEN WON'T SHARE THE GOSPEL** or quote the Bible out loud? Will say foolish things like “*my faith is private*”? Or give into the world bizarre narrative that sharing any aspect of your faith violates someone else’s rights in any way and we must keep it to ourselves? For fear of “shoving it down someone’s throat”?

The devil most certainly isn’t keeping his stuff to himself, but shares them openly in the media, big business, the entertainment industry, and the educational system. Yet we the church must keep our mouths shut about the faith?

Are we more willing to share conservative thought and a political platform than we are the Gospel? Are we bolder for a political candidate than we are for Jesus?

We’re called to be PATIENT—suffer long—through persecution when we share Christ with others. The moment we start to truly make the HS within us available to others is when the world and the devil will be triggered and respond accordingly.

Part of maturity is not cynically posting “no good deed goes unpunished” and continue to be flabbergasted when this happens. Christian maturity is to know that when the HS within us shines more brightly, the darkness fights back in the form of persecution and we’re to suffer long through it. *Not fight fire with fire or wish “karma” on others.*

Would you like a test to see where your heart is at?

Is there part of you hoping Joe Biden will get locked up and that Hunter will finally get what’s coming to him? Or Trump? That your version of “justice” will finally be done and the deserving person will finally be on the receiving end of “karma”?

THAT’S CALLED HATE.

If Joe Biden were here right now I would shake his hand and call him “Mr. President.” Same with Trump.

- If JB fell down I would rush over to help him up. Same with Trump.
- If JB gave me 60 seconds I would share the saving grace of Jesus Christ with him. Trump too.
- (I actually asked a former congressman to get me an audience with him when he was still President to do exactly that...didn't happen, but I tried!)
- When the day comes and I finally walk through the pearly gates of the NJ and JB or Trump greeted me there, I would jump for joy and be exuberant that I played a part in it by sharing the Gospel with them, shaking their hand, and helping them after they fell.

[Rom 12:14-16 ESV] 14 Bless those who persecute you; bless and do not curse them. 15 Rejoice with those who rejoice, weep with those who weep. 16 Live in harmony with one another. Do not be haughty, but associate with the lowly. Never be wise in your own sight.

HAVE YOU EVER HEARD OR GIVEN A EULOGY? They're normally done at funerals, but they can be done anytime. A eulogy is when one person says nice things about/toward someone else, alive or dead, from some sort of platform. Whether a pulpit at a funeral hall, or social media, or just among others. Imagine being at a funeral and someone stands up and instead of eulogy, angrily points out the sins of the deceased and concludes that they hope he's rotting in Hell. Would you be stunned?

Do you know the Greek word for “bless” that Paul uses is “eulogy”? Imagine if Christians said good things toward someone persecuting them? As I've taught previously, a curse is more than just saying the f-word. A curse is directional—when we speak evil, negativity, and especially “karma” toward someone. When we *desire* that instead of getting Saved, that they get just wrath.

Wishing karma on someone is hate because it's the opposite of the Gospel.

Karma is the enemy of the Gospel.

The Gospel promises that God will forgive, be merciful, extend grace, and restore someone.

Speaking “karma” onto to someone is like going before God and asking Him to visit wrath, judgment, and condemnation on a person.

WISHING KARMA ON ANOTHER IS LIKE BEING AN EVIL INTERCESSOR. It’s asking God to hate them, to cut them off, and condemn them.

[Eze 22:30-31 NKJV] 30 **"So I sought for a man among them who would make a wall, and stand in the gap before Me on behalf of the land, that I should not destroy it;** but I found no one. 31 "Therefore I have poured out My indignation on them; I have consumed them with the fire of My wrath; and I have recompensed their deeds on their own heads," says the Lord GOD.

God is looking for a faith-based person to pray and ask God for MERCY on behalf of sinners. Just as Moses asked God for mercy after the people violated the commandments, and Jesus asked for mercy for you and I. The Lord LOVES people who come and plead with Him for mercy on behalf of others...said people are called intercessors.

THE DEVIL HAS LONG BEEN COMPARED IN THE BIBLE TO A PROSECUTING LAWYER who accuses people and asks God to mete out wrath.

God’s people are called upon to be divine defense lawyers who plead with God for patience and mercy on behalf of others.

Keep in mind that intercessors are “standing in the gap” for sinners who are, as of yet, unrepentant. In the example above in Ezekiel, the Lord has spent much of chapter 22 pointing out all the sins of His people Israel which are many. His Law demands that He mete out fiery wrathful justice to balance the scales and He’s about to.

But what does God want? Does He DESIRE to condemn? Does He derive pleasure from it? *No...it breaks His heart.* Which is why He scans the entire nation looking for someone who will approach Him and beg for mercy on behalf of the people.

[Mat 9:10-13 NKJV] 10 Now it happened, as Jesus sat at the table in the house, [that] behold, many **tax collectors and sinners** came and sat down with Him and His disciples. 11 And when the Pharisees saw [it], they said to His disciples, "Why does your Teacher eat with tax collectors and sinners?" 12 When Jesus heard [that], He said to them,

"Those who are well have no need of a physician, but those who are sick. 13 "But go and learn what [this] means: **'I desire mercy and not sacrifice.'** For I did not come to call the righteous, but sinners, to repentance."

Jesus is quoting Himself from Hosea: ***God desires to have mercy upon unbelievers***. He looks for people to be like His Son Jesus and make the Holy Spirit available to all and give them a chance to turn from any wicked way.

When we were born again, we were made in the likeness of Jesus. **God our Father is calling upon us to be intercessors for unbelievers**, pleading with Him to be patient and NOT visit His just wrath upon them. He wants us to pray for the same people to repent and be Saved and if we can, to be the ones sharing the good news with them.

It's unlikely you and I will ever get close enough to JB or DT to share Jesus, but how are we acting toward them?

- When was the last time any of us interceded for JB or DT and asked God for mercy?
- Or are we hoping for "karma" to get the one we don't like so that we can rejoice in their condemnation?

[Rom 12:17-21 NKJV] 17 Repay no one evil for evil. Have regard for good things in the sight of all men. 18 If it is possible, as much as depends on you, live peaceably with all men. 19 Beloved, **do not avenge yourselves [speaking karma included]**, but [rather] give place to wrath; for it is written, "Vengeance [is] Mine, I will repay," says the Lord. 20 Therefore **"If your enemy is hungry, feed him; If he is thirsty, give him a drink;** For in so doing you will heap coals of fire on his head." 21 **Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good.**

JUDGMENT DAY IS COMING. On the day, it will be too late to repent and be Saved. The clock is ticking and today needs to be the day of Salvation for any listening who've not yet believed the Gospel. On the day, God WILL balance the scales and call everyone into their final reckoning. Anyone who has refused the saving grace of Jesus on that day will be condemned, as Jesus Himself once stated in *John 3*. THAT is the vengeance Paul is referring to in *Romans 12:19*.

We "give place to wrath" by allowing God to be the One Who does the wrath thing. His wrath is just and holy, whereas ours is not.

UP UNTIL JD, WE ARE TO MAKE GOD THE HS WITHIN US AVAILABLE TO ALL.

We're to be intercessors for enemies and oppressors, rather than cursers of the same.

COALS OF FIRE. The reference to heaping coals of fire is fascinating and was an Egyptian ritual. In ancient Egypt when a person wanted to atone for their own sins, they strapped a basket to their heads and put hot coals on them. The coals represented the person feeling the pain of their own sin. Obviously, that would hurt! Thus if you saw a person with a smoking basket on their heads, you knew they'd done wrong and were trying to atone. You had the right to add coals to their basket to prolong their pain.

When you and I, as Christians, ***do GOOD to our enemies and oppressors we're adding to the coals in their basket.*** Godly acts of good toward someone persecuting us actually makes them feel the pain of their own sin which is what so many people want in the first place.

I've had too many people say they won't come to church because they're afraid they're going to be judged. Whether that will actually happen or not is irrelevant to their decision to attend because they think the Church hates them.

Tell you what: outside of the church let's make the Holy Spirit available.

PRAYER/Communion

CALL TO ACTION

Choose an unbeliever, preferably one whose done you wrong and/or has been hostile to anything Jesus. Think of that person and name them in your heart right now.

- Repent of any curses or “karma” you’ve spoken or wished upon them.
- Plead with God on their behalf for the Lord to be merciful and patient with them.
- Ask God to spare them His wrath and to Save them instead.
- Pick someone—anyone including the person you just prayed for—and share the good news of Jesus with them.
- Don’t overthink it! Don’t disqualify yourself! Just do it.
- Next time persecution comes, don’t be surprised...you knew it would.