

## **Weekly Study of Sunday's Message.**

**Sunday November 3, 2019. "The Most Excellent Way".**

### **I Intro.**

Welcome to the weekly devotional that gives you some specific things to work thru from the message this past Sunday. Whether you were able to attend the worship service or not, this devotional is free-standing and you can still use it to help you dig deeper into your own spiritual walk. Take as long as you need to dive into this material and feel free to share it.

### **II Sunday.**

Well we started it now. Yes, the theme title says; ***"The Most Excellent Way"***. And we really believe it is. But there is a deeper desire in what we hope is an impactful result of this four part series. The 2020 presidential election is a calendar year away, and we want to take this time to honestly and fearlessly examine our beliefs and values, to see where we might have allowed our particular political tribe, affiliation, compromise our beliefs, and work to realign ourselves with the teaching of Jesus. Paul used the term *"let me show you the most excellent way"* at the end of 1 Corinthians 12 before he went into the famous 1 Corinthians 13 chapter on the nature of love. So, in this series ***"The Most Excellent Way"*** we're focusing on the teachings of Jesus as the center of what we believe, practice, and how we focus our lives. And obviously this will affect how we treat others and our understanding of what it means to be, and belong to, a church.

So let's start with some opening questions and then we'll go to the scripture. You may not be able to answer these questions right now, but it's a good place to begin to do some serious inner reflection.

**Do my values and beliefs around my political leanings reflect the overall teachings of Jesus?**

**Where could I have compromised some of my important values and beliefs to fit into my political tribe?**

**What would it look like to actively practice and be a Christ-follower, not necessarily to just support the right, correct, tribe?**

### **III Scripture.**

There were two scriptures used Sunday. One is the centerpiece for this series. And the other was the specific one used for this first Sunday. Read both of them first, and then we'll spend most of our time on the second one.

**1 Corinthians 12:28-31.**

**Knowing this passage precedes the well known 'love chapter' of 1 Corinthians 13, how do you understand or frame the words; *"the most excellent way"*?**

**What is at the foundation of the *"most excellent way"* and what does it mean for us?**

The primary scripture is **Matthew 5:38-48**. This is also a very well known passage. But if we dig down deep in it we see some powerful words and truths that reveal to us what *"the most excellent way"* is.

**What jumped out to you about this passage?**

**Were there any specific words or ideas that spoke to you?**

Kal brought out a few specific points from this passage for us to consider.

**1. Jesus was tearing down how the world defines our choices.**

We tend to think the only way to live is in a binary understanding of either/or. It can only be one thing or another, and in this case it was as a victim or aggressor. Jesus was providing an understanding of a 'third way' that places Jesus at the center of our actions without having to be either/or.

**2. Jesus was inverting power.**

We see both in creation and the cross, God giving up the potential for ultimate power and control for the sake of relationship. God in creation could have made us perfectly obedient puppets but in giving us choice, he gave up some of his power. And at the cross we see a tool of the abuse of power, humiliation, and shame being used to upend the most powerful empire in the world and to be turned into a tool of grace and salvation. Because Jesus willingly chose this 'third way' he inverted the power structures of the world. This passage gives examples and challenges us to flip how the world views power and that love is the ultimate power inverter.

**3. We do this generously and graciously.**

Jesus used these two words to describe how we were to live towards others. Solely because this is how God lives towards us. Kal gave definitions of each of these words.

**Generously- liberally, lavishly.** The belief and practice you always have enough, more than you need. This fights scarcity mindset, which is at the center of power struggles. This pushes against the belief that there's not enough to go around, so we have to create hierarchies of who is deserving and who isn't. Generosity says we believe in an infinite God who makes infinite resources available to us.

**Graciously- with kindness and understanding that nothing is required in return.** This is living with no strings attached, or any expectations of payback. We live in a transactional world where power and influence is acquired, hoarded, and transferred through favors.

So some questions at the end of these three truths drawn out of this passage.

**How do you see the world forcing people into a binary choice of either this or that?**

**How do you see the church falling for the same false belief?**

**Who do you see holding power in our current culture, and how do you see it being abused?**

**What are specific ways you can flip, or invert those power structures?**

**What does generously mean to you, and how can you/we live that way?**

**What does graciously mean to you, and how can you/we live that way?**

**IV Challenge.**

I know that last run of questions was a lot. Just wrapping up the first in this series, "***The Most Excellent Way***", we are called to live in a way that goes against the world. And most of us define that as things we don't struggle with. We have to make our walk with Jesus OUR walk with Jesus.

**So, looking ahead for you, what are some things you could begin to work on?**