

12-3-2016, COTR Texarkana

Title: Loving the Unlovable

Purpose: Provoke people to love unlovable people like Jesus did.

Spiritual Truth: Jesus loved the unlovable; so, will I.

Text: Mark 12:28-31

Topic: Love, Hatred, Election, Neighbor, Sinner

Series: The Power of Love

Series Purpose: Provoke people to demonstrate the love of God in hate filled world.

Loving the Unlovable

I. Introduction

- A. Video: pt-1 <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Ffnfh78wd4A> stop 2:46. My message today is about loving “unlovable people”. It’s not just down and outers who can be unlovable but up and outers and everybody in between.
- B. Review series, “The Power of Love”
 1. Listen to live stream @ChurchOnTheRock.org or the COTR iPhone/ Android app
 2. Mark 12:28–31 (ESV) one of the scribes...asked him (*Jesus*), “Which commandment is the most important of all?” 29 Jesus answered...30 And you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind and with all your strength.’ 31 The second is this: ‘**You shall love your neighbor as yourself.**’ There is no other commandment greater than these.”
 3. Love has an inherent power to change people. My love for God changes me; my love for people changes them and me. In my last message, we talked about demonstrating the power of love through acts of kindness to combat the hatred in post-election America.
- C. Today’s message is, “Loving the Unlovable”. We’ll see how Jesus loved people who are hard to love. (1) Jesus loved people nobody else liked. (2) Jesus loved people who were out of control and (3) Jesus loved people caught in the trap of sin.
- D. Purpose: Provoke people to love unlovable people like Jesus did.
- E. Spiritual Truth: Jesus loved the unlovable; so, will I.

II. Jesus loved people nobody else liked. (*Zacchaeus*)

- A. Luke 19:1–10 (NLT) Jesus entered Jericho and...2 There was a man there named Zacchaeus. **He was the chief tax collector in the region, and he had become very rich.** 3 He tried to get a look at Jesus, but he was too short to see over the crowd. 4 So he ...climbed a sycamore-fig tree...5 When Jesus came by, he looked up at Zacchaeus and ...said. “Quick, come down! I must be a guest in your home today.” ...7 But the people were displeased. “**He has gone to be the guest of a notorious sinner,**” (MSG) “What business does he have getting cozy with this crook?” ...8 Meanwhile, Zacchaeus stood before the Lord and said, “I will give half my wealth to the poor, Lord, and if I have cheated people on their taxes, I will give them back four times as much!” 9 Jesus responded, “Salvation has come to this home today...10 **For the Son of Man came to seek and save those who are lost.**”

1. Background: Most people didn't like Zacchaeus because he was an IRS agent and took as much money as he could. He'd give the Roman government their share and keep some for himself. People hated him for this.
 2. Outwardly Zacchaeus had it all together. He had money and power. But inwardly there was a deep spiritual need nobody else saw. He needed God and when he began to follow Jesus a corrupt, strong-arming thief became a humble man who loved God more than money. He changed because Jesus loved someone no one else liked.
 3. We don't like people for a lot of reasons. They're hard to love because they're arrogant, unethical, liars, steal, manipulative, mean like Scrooge, selfish, etc. Their actions and personality push people away. Zacchaeus was hard to love but Jesus loved him anyway.
- B. Zacchaeus was influential and had everything money can buy but he still wasn't happy. Something was missing. He needed God in his life. Jesus saw this and loved him despite his problems. Jesus knew his deepest need was spiritual and when this was met everything else would change.
1. Jesus has a lesson for us. We may not like people like Zacchaeus but if we love them like Jesus did they may meet the Savior who has the power to change them on the inside. It's hard to love people we don't like...love them anyway.

III. Jesus loved people who were out of control/ couldn't cope with life/ crazy (the Gadarene maniac/ demoniac)

- A. Mark 5:1–19 (ESV) They came to...the country of the Gerasenes. 2 And when Jesus had stepped out of the boat, immediately there met him...a man with an unclean (*NLT evil*) spirit. 3 He lived among the tombs (*NLT cemetery.*) And no one could bind him anymore, not even with a chain, 4... 5 Night and day among the tombs and on the mountains he was always crying out and cutting himself with stones. 6 And **when he saw Jesus from afar, he ran and fell down before him.** 7 And crying out with a loud voice, he said, "What have you to do with me, Jesus, Son of the Most High God? I adjure you by God, do not torment me." 8 For he was saying to him, "Come out of the man, you unclean spirit!" 9 And Jesus asked him, "What is your name?" He replied, "My name is Legion, for we are many."... 13...And the unclean spirits came out and entered the pigs...about two thousand, rushed down the steep bank into the sea and drowned in the sea...15 And they came to Jesus and saw the demon-possessed man, the one who had had the legion, sitting there, **clothed and in his right mind**...
1. Background: In these verses, we see the personality of a man and the demon(s) who possessed him. A Roman legion had 6,000 soldiers; he had many demons who oppressed him. They tormented him under the leadership of one demon. This man was hurting and deeply troubled. No one could control him. He went about night and day shrieking wildly and cutting himself with sharp stones. Somehow demons were influencing his behavior but he reached out to Jesus for help. Demons made him crazy, not sickness or insanity.

- B. Our society is filled with people out of control, e.g. sex addicts driven to perverseness, drug addicts who steal mom's jewelry, alcoholics who drink the rent money, gamblers who lose the house payment. Hospitals are built for people who can't control themselves
 - 1. It's like they can't help themselves. Not all out of control people are controlled by demons but some are.
- C. Jesus loved this man and helped him get free. There's some lessons for us when dealing with out of control people:
 - 1. Society must help those who can't help themselves. This poor man lived in a cave.
 - 2. Don't give up on people who are out of control. Like this man, most people want help. We may not know what to do but simply being available says I love you.
 - 3. Spiritual problems demand spiritual solutions. Jesus recognized the power of evil and responded with a greater power. We have this same power in us through the Holy Spirit. Mark 16:17 (ESV) And these signs will accompany those who believe: **in my name they will cast out demons...**
 - 4. E.g. my battle with anxiety: I needed medical help, counseling and spiritual help.

IV. Jesus loved people caught in the trap of sin. (a woman caught in adultery) (There are questions about the authenticity of these verses but the story is consistent with how Jesus treated people.)

- A. Jn. 8:3-11 (NIV) The...Pharisees brought in a woman caught in adultery...4 and said to Jesus, "Teacher, this woman was caught in the act of adultery. 5 In the Law Moses commanded us to stone such women. Now what do you say?" 6 They were using this question as a trap...to have a basis for accusing him. But Jesus bent down and started to write on the ground with his finger. 7 When they kept on questioning him, he...said to them, **"Let any one of you who is without sin be the first to throw a stone at her."** 8 Again...wrote on the ground. 9...those who heard began to go away one at a time...until only Jesus was left, with the woman... 10 Jesus straightened up and asked her, "Woman, where are they? Has no one condemned you?" 11 "No one, sir," she said. **"Then neither do I condemn you,"** Jesus declared. **"Go now and leave your life of sin."**
 - 1. This is a story about how we treat people whose sin we find repulsive. E.g. someone who molests a child, a drug dealer who sells to kids, a thief who preys on the elderly
 - a Jesus shows us how to confront the sin and love a person who's hard to love.
 - 2. Background: (1) Stoning was the OT punishment for sexual immorality, Dt. 22:22–24, Lv. 20:10. (2) the authorities weren't interested in justice but used the question as a trap, to accuse him. If Jesus ignored the law of Moses, his credibility would be undermined and he could be dismissed as a lawless person. If he upheld the law of Moses, His reputation for forgiveness and restoration would be undermined. He could also could have gotten in trouble with the Roman governor because only Roman officials could impose the death sentence.
- B. Jesus gives us some lessons about loving people caught in sin.
 - 1. Agree with what God says is sinful/ wrong and call people to "leave their life of sin"/ repent. The proper response to God's mercy for our sins is purity in the future.
 - 2. Love the person despite what they've done wrong. It's easy to look down on people who sin but Jesus addressed her in a respectful way.

3. Be careful of having a self-righteous, judgmental heart. Don't forget we were once caught up in the same sinful lifestyle and God forgave us. Mark 2:17 (ESV)... Jesus...said to them, "Those who are well have no need of a physician, but those who are sick. **I came not to call the righteous, but sinners.**"
4. Reach out and restore the fallen. James 5:19–20 (MSG) My dear friends, if you know people who have wandered off from God's truth, don't write them off. **Go after them. Get them back** 20 and you will have rescued precious lives from destruction and (ESV) cover a multitude of sins.

V. Conclusion: The power of love can change someone's life by opening a door to God.

- A. It's not easy to love people. Sometimes it's hard but Jesus loved the unlovable. When I'm acting unlovable, I want someone to still love me. Mt. 7:12 (NCV) "**Do to others what you want them to do to you...** (1) If nobody else liked me I hope you would love me (2) If I was out of control I hope you'd love me and get me some help. (3) If I was caught in the trap of sin I hope you'd love me instead of condemn me. If we want people to treat us this way we need to love the unlovable people God brings across our path.
- B. Video pt-2 <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Ffnfh78wd4A> start 2:21

VI. Response

- A. Prayer
- B. Souls
- C. *** *Logos Bible Software and library, The Pillar NT Commentary: John, Bible Knowledge Commentary were used to prepare this message.*