



LESSONS IN LIVING

Loving Through Difficult Times.

“Part 8: Love does not brood over injuries”

A St. Andrew's Sermon
Delivered by Dr. Jim Rigby
October 4, 2026

Scripture Reading: 1 Corinthians 13:4-7 (*The Inclusive Bible*)

Love is patient; love is kind. Love is not jealous, it does not put on airs, and it is not snobbish; it is never rude or self-seeking; it is not prone to anger, nor does it brood over injuries. Love doesn't rejoice in what is wrong, but rejoices in the truth. There is no limit to love's forbearance, to its trust, its hope, its power to endure.

Sermon

Good morning. Thank you for braving the hurricane that might have been. I'm so immature, and you know, this doesn't necessarily come out visibly in sermons, but whenever it's going to rain and it's just targeted on Sunday, something happens to me. So anyway, I appreciate y'all making the effort and being here. We are in what I hope will be a helpful series.

We're looking at the love passage in Paul, but we're looking at the words that he uses that come from philosophy of the time, the wisdom cultures of the time. And almost every word in the passage—I mean, every—almost every word has a rich history that's there. Paul was very influenced by the Stoics and Epicureans. You see that in the vocabulary. You see that in the Acts story where he goes and looks up the philosophers when he goes to Athens. And what I discovered in my searching was that the early Church was much more educated than what developed in Europe afterwards, much richer, much more informed by other religions of the world.

Unfortunately, we're sometimes seen as heretics, and I think you should be a heretic to oppressive forms of Christianity. I think that's a good thing. But it shouldn't be heretical to move Jesus back to the center of the message and say that you can't silence the teachings of the Sermon on the Mount by putting them in the context of a creed. There's not necessarily anything wrong with creeds, but what has happened is that people don't experience the teacher because they're trying to put him within this salvation scheme, using him as a sacrificial vessel instead of a teacher, a guide to our own hearts.

I think this wisdom tradition is really important right now because, like the times in which they were written, we're not in a whole lot of control right now. Things may turn out absolutely fine. We don't know enough to despair, but it's like we're in a tornado. And this little church has experienced that personally by loving the people that the orthodox people—who think they represent God and Jesus—the people they don't like. And so if we stand up for the people they hate, then of course we wind up being on the menu. And Jesus said that from the start. Love is not free. I mean, it's very costly sometimes.

So today we're going to look at a phrase. It's kind of ambiguous, so I'll look at what some possible meanings of it are, but please feel free to follow your own wisdom. We'll go to the text itself.

οὐ λογίζεται τὸ κακόν

ou logizetai to kaki
oo lo-GEE-ze-tai toh ka-KON
Doesn't brood over injuries

The top part is Greek, so that may not be real helpful, but if you look at the phrase right after that, the O-U means not. The second word is a word that's related to our word for logic. It's an accounting term. It's realizing that when things happen to you, you get to decide what ledger they go on. You get to decide what their meaning is, what their value is.

And then the last word is sometimes translated—you see our translation from our inclusive Bible is—love doesn't brood over injuries. The word just means bad, bad things or bad people, but it doesn't get caught brooding over the bad things that happen. It's sort of the phrase we're going to be looking at. I believe it's a distortion of Christianity to say the message is, you're a sinner, you can't save yourself, God decided to torture Jesus, and that then satisfies your debt. I don't see that in the Sermon on the Mount.

I think Paul was building a bridge for people from other cultures and other religions so that they could come on board. So in that sense, it's a very good thing to have these atonement theories to help people who think that they're made righteous by animal sacrifice to realize that they don't need that to enter into the community of love. At the same time, the New Deal that Jesus is coming up with, if you just look at his teachings—and, as I often say, I think he should have a vote on what Christianity means—is if you do not judge others, you will not be judged.

Now, I don't know if you like that or not. I'm not always crazy about it. But that's a different religion. And I think Jesus is like a doctor of the heart. Going into the heart, he's not saying that God is sitting there judging, and if you judge somebody else, then you'll be judged.

I think he's saying that the principles of judgment hurt us whether we know it or not. That I can think I love myself and hate you, but if I can't see your humanity, I probably can't see my own. I can think that I love you and hate myself. But again, Jesus is saying it's really a two-way street.

How we treat others is how we treat ourselves. How we treat ourselves is how we treat others. So it's more like this mathematical formula.

And even in the Genesis story, the story of the two trees in the garden, it gets lost when we make it a story about sin and fallenness. It's that you're invited to eat from the tree of life, and what human beings decide to do instead is to live in the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, which is your judgments about life. And what our passage, I think, is calling us to realize is that life is its own value system. You as a human being are your own value system, and when we judge ourselves by another standard, we don't see the value that's there, and it alienates us from ourselves, from other people, and from life.

We'll see if this makes sense to you.

In the first kind of shading that's there in the words, he's saying love does not live in its judgments of other people. Now, we have to have discernment. That's not saying that we don't need to judge actions and words. The lesson from Cornell this week, this horrible travesty, means that if you don't have discernment, if you don't work for justice, if you don't judge actions and words, people are going to get hurt.

At the same time, human beings are a mystery to us. And if we haven't lived the same story, we don't really know what has shut that person down enough to do that. And the thing that we need to realize as peacemakers is that just because I don't approve of somebody doesn't mean they disappear from the universe. In addition to an obligation to protect the oppressor from the oppressed, I have to realize that the oppressor has to be reintegrated into the beloved community. Every missing piece is dangerous. So the first line of duty is to protect the innocent, but the second is to not lose the humanity that's there of the person who's lost.

We are called to be healers in the world. There's so much pain in the world. If I live in my judgments of you instead of my experience of who you are, I cannot do that peacekeeping work. I think it was Anne Lamott that said that keeping a grudge is like taking rat poison and hoping the rat dies. How many times have you stayed awake at night because somebody had done something completely inappropriate, and you were paying the ticket for that? It was eating you alive, and they were fast asleep.

I ran across an interesting quote this week. It's not really a quote, it's more like a reflection:

There are so many people whose minds do not belong to them. There are so many people whose thoughts have been purchased by other people. There are so many people who have made people kings and queens of their thought. So many people who cannot sleep because of people. There are so many people whose lives are a small percentage of their own self and greater percentage of others. When the offenses of people occupy your mind, your mind becomes the offenses of the people instead of your own mind. To have your own mind and to be your own mind, free your mind.

So it's not simple. It's not an either/or thing, but it's remembering that your inner sanctum is incredibly important. And the Greek word for forgiveness just means to let go or cut something off. So in this case, it means just let go of the pain. It's the middle of the night. You're not going to punish that person across the airwaves. Let go of the judgments because you want to let go of that pain.

So the first idea is we don't—something bad happens when we live in our judgments of other people. And you see this in the MAGA movement. They're not talking to anybody. It's like they have these theories and conspiracy theories and these labels for people, and conversation's over when that happens. We need to not do that if there's going to be hope for healing somewhere down the road.

The second thing is we need to stop living in our judgments of ourselves. This is a little harder to see. We don't realize that we're all born in somebody else's story. Before you had a mind of your own, you'd already been told who you are. Being born again means finding the life within you, leaving the false self from the past, and entering into the present moment fully and completely. Jesus was not one who counted people's sins. Instead, he was trying to remind people that we are the light of the earth. We're the light of the world.

According to astronomy, human consciousness is coming out of the cosmos. So it makes sense to say you are the light of the world. Your consciousness by its nature illumines the world. And there's nothing that can happen to you to reduce your value. There's no scale that can measure your worth. And I think what Paul is trying to tell us and remind us—and he wasn't always good at it, I'm not always good at it—but to say your peace of mind is a part of what makes the love work.

You may lose your peace of mind to try to work for justice, but what Paul is saying is that love is a balance of all the virtues. It includes justice, but if you try to be just without love, it goes somewhere else. If you try to be temperate without love, if you try to be courageous without love, it takes you off and dismantles you from the inside out.

I don't think there's a God who sits there like a referee and says, okay, you go to heaven, you go to hell. But I think there are principles that make life feel like hell. There are principles that make it feel like heaven. And the great wisdom teachers are trying to help us base our lives on the virtues and not on the fate that happens to us.

So you are called to live completely, to be totally who you are. But that has its own value system. And if you judge yourself and live in your judgments about what you've done wrong or how you've fallen short or what you haven't been able to accomplish, it's missing the whole point, I think, of this passage. Lastly, to not trust your—love doesn't trust its judgments about life.

Now, like I say, I looked at the Weather Channel all week long and grumbled. Why does it have to rain on Sunday? Why? We've got so much stuff going on. Just cut us a break. You know how that goes. So I was a bad example of what I'm trying to teach.

But Paul is saying, when we start judging life itself, it hurts us in a way that's impossible to measure. Again, you have to enter into life and realize it has its own schedule, its own curriculum. And you have to say yes to that. If you want life to happen on your calendar, on your timescale, get to the place that you want to go, it's going to be very disappointing. Again, the two trees in the garden, the tree of life, relationship, love or the tree of thinking about that. I like this, I don't like that, this is good, this is bad.

There's a great vow that they take in the religion of Jainism which I think kind of captures the spirit that Jesus is trying to express in the Sermon on the Mount, when time and time again he says, don't judge, don't judge, don't judge. How you wind up with MAGA Christianity after that, I don't know. But this is the vow that they take. It's sometimes called the Forgiveness Sutra:

I grant forgiveness to all living beings. May all living beings grant me forgiveness. My friendship is with all living beings. My hatred is totally nonexistent. Let there be peace, harmony, and prosperity for all.

MAGA Christianity and a lot of Orthodox Christianity turns this on its head. And it becomes about retribution. We're the righteous ones. If we can just get in power over other people, that will bring in the love of God. Who knows how?

But if you look at the story, Jesus is the criminal. Jesus is the undocumented alien. And if you don't like that, you don't know the gospel. Not even the smallest fragment of it. Jesus is a criminal. He's being executed. That's what the cross means. Forget atonement theories for a moment. The cross was invented by Rome, not God, and it was invented to keep humanity down. The law and order people were the Romans and Pontius Pilate, not Jesus. The self-righteous religionists were not with Jesus. They were the ones that executed Jesus. The charismatic leader who built monuments to himself, that was Herod. That wasn't Jesus. And the good news is we don't have to fight with that stupidity and that cruelty. What we are called to do is manifest what is missing in that equation.

What a depressing thought to think you have to fight this juggernaut. That's happening in your fate, but it's not your character. Your calling is to manifest wisdom in the face of the stupidity, kindness in the face of the cruelty, and hope in what is essentially a movement of total despair and nihilism. They've lost hope. So we are called to be the ambassadors of a new day and a new path. That is a happy path. That's not a sad path.

Love does not keep account of the bad things that other people do, that we do, or where life falls short. The story goes back to Genesis. You were called to be fully alive, but you can't do that if you live in your judgments about life. Enter fully into life, into who you are and who other people are.

You have to fight for justice, but separate the people from the actions because ultimately we have to put the world back together again. No matter how wrong people are, they're not just going to disappear. If violence could get rid of hatred, the Civil War would have worked. Total

defeat of the South, and yet MAGA is the rebirth of all of it. Only love can cast out hate. Only light can cast out darkness.

So you're called to a very happy calling. Don't judge the world by its appearances. You are the light of the earth, the light of the world. By your nature, you are a calling to the higher life, to the virtues. But it has to start with realizing that our judgments are askew, that living and loving are the only safe path. And so the prayer that I think Paul is calling us to, the prayer that Jesus, I think, was calling us to is when he concludes the disciples' prayer with a reminder that the judgment we use on others is what will be used on us.

It's in our inner sanctum, in our holy of holies, to wish forgiveness on all beings. And I don't think anybody says it better than the Jains:

I grant forgiveness to all living beings. May all living beings grant me forgiveness. My friendship is with all living beings. My hatred is totally nonexistent. Let there be peace, harmony, and prosperity for all.

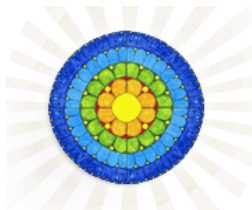
I invite you now to your own reflection on these words.

Benediction

Rev. Erica Knisely

Friends, hold on to your humanity by refusing to relinquish the humanity of others, even those who hurt or harm. Hold on to your humanity by refusing to measure yourself by your mistakes, Or the assessments of others. You were born from light. You were born to shine. May you be held in love, the love that brought us into this world, the love that walks alongside us, and the love that lives within us all of our days. Go in peace. Amen.

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