

Pure Love

Sermon August 30, 2020

Romans 12:9-21

I am dreaming about a world, where people will not hurt each other, but everybody will love with an unconditional love.

Can you imagine how amazing it would be to picture a family, a relationship, where everybody would make their best effort to love purely and to avoid even the smallest incident or hurt? Relationships and marriages would last forever, and life on earth would be heavenly.

Were you asking yourself: why is there so much hurt, pain and conflict in this world? Why do people hurt each other? Why do some people like to cause tremendous physical or psychological pain to each other? Why are some people happy and satisfied when they hurt others? Why is it that a person, who is hurt, wants to hurt back, causing more pain?

When our Lord Jesus Christ compares His followers' lives to the lambs, He highlights that those who were experiencing God's love, and the way He deals with people, are changed by the Holy Spirit; they have the supernatural ability to love with an unconditional love.

Lambs are very special creatures. They cannot hurt, cannot fight, and cannot go against their attackers. They cannot run away, they cannot bite or kick, they won't turn against their predators. When they are hurt or experience fear, they run to their shepherd for safety.

In this world, there are many humans who are using Jesus' definition: wolves covered with the skin of lambs. Also, there are less and less people with a lamb's nature. One wolf is strong enough to destroy 100 lambs.

In Romans 12, we read that, by the grace of God, Jesus Christ brought love, kindness and patience into this world. He came to change this world, so God's people could be changed, to be Christ-like, receiving a new nature, Christ's nature.

I am sure that we all do our very best to show unconditional love and support towards everybody. But we all know people, or have people around us, with whom it is quite a challenge to work or live together day by day, because of their behaviour. These people are challenging our faith and our love, sometimes day by day, and often we are experiencing difficulties as we try to behave as God's children. Often, we have a hard time not only to love them and to deal with them, but even to tolerate them. Often, we suffer because they are mean to us and because it seems so easy for them to hurt us with words or with their decisions.

We, also, have to realize that, just because we are Christ's followers, does not mean that we are perfect. Often, even we Christians make mistakes, and we deserve to be penalized or even excluded.

The worse situation is, when two Christians start their relationship, but due to their challenges and unresolved problems, one person will turn into a wolf, hiding in a lamb's skin. In this situation the danger is, that the other person, will accumulate his or her hurt, and will turn into a

fighter, to defend and protect themselves. And, for this, even into a Christian's life, a tremendous amount of hurt, pain, suffering and madness can be accumulated.

Dear beloved, we have to acknowledge that, behind this kind of behavior, our biggest enemy is hiding, who wants to destroy relationships and lives.

Two thousand years ago, for the apostle Paul, it was important to teach about human behaviours. Today, in the 21st century, it is still very important to realize the importance of love, and to realize how hate and anger can destroy our relationships and, personally, us. God is teaching us, here and now, that we, who are His children, HAVE to learn to LOVE each other with Christ's unconditional love.

“How can we learn to love everybody?” is the challenging question.

“Do not repay anyone evil with evil. Be careful to do what is right in the eyes of everyone.”
Romans 12:17

Probably, nobody can picture where the lamb eats the wolf. If our Lord Jesus Christ and His attitude lives in us, we can not only be protected by Him, our shepherd, but also we can win above evil with love. With Him, we can experience not only Protection but Victory.

How can we love even those who hurts us?

Well, exactly the way God loves them. It is strange to see these three words together: anger, revenge and love. How do these words fit together? God loves all the people since we all are His children. God loves and loves and loves continually, even those who rebel against Him. God's revenge and anger are always the last reactions. If somebody will not change his or her mind to respond with love on God's grace, then God's very last decision is exclusion. We see many times how patient God is. But, also, we see how God stands up to protect His children against their predators. God is hurt when His children are hurt. The Bible says that those who hurt God's children, hurt God's eyeball. God's patience is long and wide but not endless.

Please note that, although God would come after His enemies, He does NOT allow US, you and me, to hurt people back. We must not forget that the rights of anger and revenge, belong to God alone. A Christian cannot be self-sufficient. Here, the Scripture speaks of that kind of judgment when we read that restless, angry, harsh and evil people could fall into the punishing hands of the living God. Only God has the right to judge evil. The time might can come when God will no longer tolerate hurt, and God will tell the evil that so far and no more.

Think of Pharaoh, who hurt God's people in the time of Moses. Think of Goliath, who had insulted God's people for forty days until David came and defeated him in God's name. But I can give you another example, which is closer to us. Until 1989, in Romania, a dictator and his wife held the whole country in disaster. Bibles were not tolerated, and were turned into toilet papers. In Christmas 1989, God's patience and mercy came to an end. God said: enough.

We know that God is merciful, loving and patient, and He loves even His enemies. In Matthew 5, Jesus said that *“He causes his sun to rise on the evil and the good, and sends rain on the righteous and the unrighteous.”* (Matthew 5:45) God's love cares for everyone.

Let me highlight again: God will not hurt us unless His patience and mercy comes to an end. God sent Jesus Christ to all of us, to teach us, to listen to Him, to change our hearts and minds. Christ died for us. Our responsibility is to turn to God and to live by His loving grace. Humans have to earn not to push God's patience to the very end. God is able to forgive the greatest evil, but humans have to accept God's grace and have to turn away from doing evil.

Again, God does not allow us to hurt those who are hurting us. Revenge is not ours. That belongs ONLY to God. In Hebrews 10:30, we read: *"For we know him who said, "It is mine to avenge; I will repay," and again, "The Lord will judge his people."*

"Love must be sincere. Hate what is evil; cling to what is good. Be devoted to one another in love. Honour one another above yourselves ... Be joyful in hope, patient in affliction, faithful in prayer." (Romans 12:9-10, 12)

Please look around you. Is there anybody who suffers because of your temper, mood or misbehaviour? If there is, please come to our good shepherd for help. God's love is so great that after any difficult, corrupt life, He can forgive us because Jesus Christ, the good shepherd, died for it. Because of Jesus' cross, God can overcome evil. He can make us new. I witnessed many times people, who were called evil, who by their family members were called the most unbearable, unloving people, who caused tremendous harm and tears. But after they came to God for grace and they repented, God forgave them and renewed their own lives and their relationships.

There is another very important message in this very rich teaching of Paul in verse 18: *"If it is possible, as far as it depends on you, live at peace with everyone."*

Jesus said: *"Love your enemies!"* (Matthew 5:44) The question is not if the enemy wants to live in peace with us, but how we deal with them, and how WE maintain the peace with them. They might be yelling, but we cannot yell back. We have to be strong enough to keep quiet and NOT yell back. Often, the truth is attacked and we want to defend the truth or convince the other person that WE ARE RIGHT. What should we do then? We have to try to give up our rights to the truth. We have to continue to take care of what is good, kind, and honourable in the eyes of all men. We have to let God convince the person about what the truth really is. This should be our attitude: showing love and respect even with the most difficult people, even in those moments when we are hurt.

What should I do when another person would harass me and would constantly hurt me with words and actions? For how long should I forgive? Even seven times? Jesus said nope. Not seven times but 77 times. But how? We are not angels. We are not perfect! Yes, this is the problem, that we are not perfect either.

In these situations we still should follow what God's words say: *"Do not take revenge, my dear friends, but leave room for God's wrath, for it is written: "It is mine to avenge; I will repay," says the Lord. On the contrary: "If your enemy is hungry, feed him; if he is thirsty, give him something to drink. In doing this, you will heap burning coals on his head." Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good"*. (Romans 12:19-21)

I am asking you kindly, do not ask God for revenge, but pray for them as Jesus said: *“love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you, that you may be children of your Father in heaven.”* (Matthew 5:44-45) Love your enemies and serve them, provide them what they need. This is real LOVE, and in this way they might change their behaviour with us.

And if we might realize that neither your patience nor your love can penetrate the evil’s heart, as a last satisfaction we could say what King David said when he was persecuted by Saul: May the Lord judge between you and me.

In time of sorrow we should come closer to the cross, and we should keep our eyes on our Lord Jesus Christ, who suffered as an innocent lamb of God. He did not ask for revenge, but prayed for those who crucified him. And let’s hope that one day the grace of our Lord will touch them and will change them in a very special ways.

There was a husband dealing with all kinds of mess. His wife loved him unconditionally, and prayed for him and for his salvation. The husband often said to her: Do not love me so much because I cannot take it. One day, this husband, in a special situation, was touched by the Spirit of the Lord and became a newborn Christian. Then he said to his wife: if you did not love me so much, I would not be able to see God’s immeasurable love.

Let’s picture a world, when everybody is happy and live together with real joy and happiness. Let’s love each other, and may the Lord continue to work in us and through us. Amen