

When Someone Hurts Me: Pursue Reconciliation

Part 1 in the message series, "Beyond Hurt"

St. Paul's United Methodist Church of Elizabethtown

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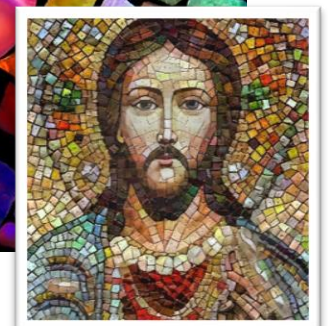
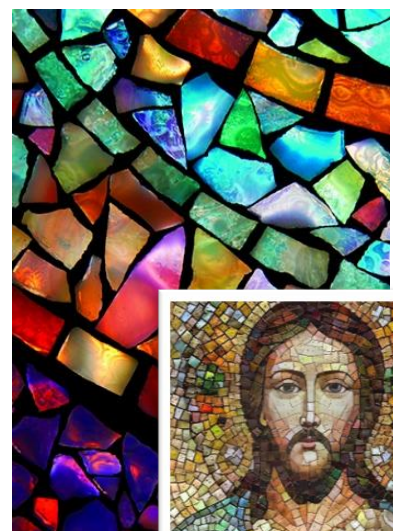
Pastor David Woolverton

We welcome you into the word of God and to this brand-new message series. It's a series that we're calling "Beyond Hurt." You know... we're living in a day, we're living in a season in our culture where it is so easy for us to offend, and it is so easy for us to be offended. That's the reality of what we're dealing with. We are easy to offend, and we are easy to be offended. Even minor things, little, little decisions that we make or major decisions that we make. It seems like it sets someone off. Maybe they interpreted it differently. Maybe something that we said or did or didn't say or didn't do caused a rift in the relationship and we didn't intend it, but that's the reality.

How do we build a bridge beyond that? How do we look beyond our pain? And in those moments when our hurt or when our grief or when our acts of offense are really deep... maybe they touch nerves that go way, way beyond the moment. How do we break through? How do we live in such a way that our responses to these times of offence actually bear witness to something bigger, to our relationship with Jesus Christ?

So, this series "Beyond Hurt" is really a study of **Matthew 18**. The Gospel of Matthew, Chapter 18, historically has been used by churches all over the world as a model for teaching us how to build bridges over our offenses. How do we navigate through the difficulties of relating with one another?

And so, we want to launch this series with a big picture. So, I have something to share with you. If you can look at your screens, do you know what that is (mosaic tiles)? Well, really what it is – it's a mosaic. I know it's hard to see that as a mosaic when all you see are the individual tiles. But when you pull back from that view, you see that (a mosaic image of Jesus). Those individual tiles, when they're put together, they form a picture. Right, and so the reality is when we talk about our context of our culture being easily offended and easy to offend, we really need to step back when we're looking at building bridges and we need to come to terms with how life is meant to be viewed, mosaic-ly. And in our context, this becomes an important truth: *When we're hurting, we tend to see only the single tile of our pain rather than the mosaic of our destiny in Christ.* Right, when we're hurting, we tend to only see the individual tile of the experience



that caused our pain rather than pulling back and seeing how that tile actually is partnering with other tiles to form a picture, a mosaic that God is creating out of the accumulation of our life experiences. When we focus just on those individual tiles, we will fail to see the redemptive picture that God is forming and how God never wastes to hurt, how God never wastes the brokenness that we experience together.

Turn with me to the letter to the Colossians in our New Testament. The letter to the **Colossians, Chapter three, starting at verse one**. Listen, as we share the word of God, this is what Paul says,

"Since then, you have been raised with Christ, set your hearts on things above where Christ is seated at the right hand of God, set your minds on things above, not on earthly things. For you died and your life is now hidden with Christ in God. When Christ, who is your life, appears, then you also will appear with him in glory."

Notice that Paul says, "since then." *"Since then... you have been raised with Christ."* Notice the past tense of that sentence: *"you have been raised."* He's writing to people who, obviously, have not died yet. So, what's that about? Well, he's writing to Christians, like you and me, in the church in Colossae. They haven't passed away, so Paul's actually writing with a larger "mosaic" in mind. Instead of looking at the individual tiles of their situation, he's looking at the bigger mosaic and he's asking those early believers to do the very same thing. Instead of looking at the tile of your offense, instead of looking at the tile of your pain, keep your eye on the larger mosaic, the larger picture of what God is doing with your life – especially as your life is a witness to His glory. When you do, we get a bigger picture of what God is trying to accomplish not just in your life, but also in the world.

God is actually preparing us, he's preparing us to be partners with him in a new community, a new community in Jesus Christ. And he's inviting us into that new community that Jesus himself inaugurated. That new community is what we know as the Church. And during our life in the new community here on Earth, we as followers of Jesus are to reflect the heart and values of our lord and savior Jesus. So, to participate in the new community, we need to model, we need to reflect the very heart of Jesus. Third, we also see in keeping our eye on the grander mosaic, that living in that new community requires a daily choice, a *daily* choice – to submit ourselves to the work of the Holy Spirit. So, every day we get up and we have to remember who we are and why we're here and where God is leading us. That's life in the mosaic. Living in the new community means keeping our eyes on the grander mosaic - rather than the individual tiles.

And also, and this is really critical, and what I want to focus in on today... The heart of Jesus was for us as believers in the new community to be *united*. To be *one*. Now, talk about difficult. The only way that we can do that is by keeping our eyes on the larger mosaic rather than the individual tiles of our offenses.

How do I know that Jesus had a desire for the church to be united, to be one? He said so. Look with me at John 17. In **John 17**, Jesus is praying – for His disciples and for all who would believe in Him because of their message. Starting in verse 9, Jesus in prayer says,

"I pray for them, I am not praying for the world, but for those you have given me," that's his disciples. That's all of us. That's every one of us. "For those who you have given me, for they are yours, all I have is yours and all you have is mine and glory comes to me through them. I will remain in the world no longer. But they are still in the world. And I am coming to you. Holy Father, protect them by the power of your name, the name you gave me so that they may be one as we are one."

So that they may be one as we are one. Jump down to verse 20. Jesus continues his prayer as He says,

"My prayer is not for them alone, I pray also for those who will believe in me through their message."

In other words, once the disciples begin their mission, that mission is to share the good news of the gospel of Jesus Christ. And we today, we who are sitting in this sanctuary, we who are watching online, we are examples of the many who have believed because of the teaching of those disciples. So, Jesus is actually praying for you and me. So, listen, he goes on...

"I'm praying for who will believe because of their message, that all of them may be one, Father, just as you are in me and I am in you, may they also be in us so that the world may believe that you sent me."

There we go again.

"So that all may believe that you sent me." Verse 22, "I have given them the glory that you gave me, that they may be one as we are one—I in them and you in me—so that they may be brought to complete unity. Then the world will know that you sent me and have loved them even as you have loved me."

Unity of the body of Christ, oneness in the body of Christ is really critical for Jesus. He values it. He's prayed for it, He's prayed for it in his disciples. He's prayed for it for every believer who would come into the church ever since, that's how important it is. This is a value that is critical. Why? For a very important reason: our witness in the world depends on our oneness. Our witness depends on our oneness.

So, I have a question, you and I both know that we live in a culture and in a day where that oneness, that unity is hard. It's hard to even imagine, let alone live. So the question that I have is how do we stay united amidst a bucket load of diverse opinions? I could probably poll this congregation in this room right now in terms of the anxieties that you have felt about the pandemic and get a wide variety of

responses. I could probably poll you on every theological challenge. I could probably poll you on every social or political challenge and get a diverse response. Right? Because as you've heard me say many times before, the reality that's taught in scripture is that wherever two or three are gathered in Jesus's name, there's bound to be a fight. That's the truth. It's our human condition intersecting with the discipleship invitation of the Lord Jesus Christ. Jesus calls us to do the impossible.

How can we possibly stay united amidst such diversity? First, I think we need to value what Jesus values. I think we need to value what Jesus values. Notice in **Colossians 3:1** Paul says to those believers,

"Set your hearts on things above, where Christ is."

Set your hearts on things above, what he's doing is he's inviting us to look mosaic-ly, not in the details of how we are separated from each other. He's asking us to look at the big picture and how we are united at the foot of the cross. That's what he's asking of us, to *"set your hearts on things above."* Begin to value the things that Jesus values. How do we know what Jesus valued? Look at his life. Read the gospels in particular. Track how he treats people that he encounters. Are we doing that?

Second, and very critically, we need to learn in our culture how to respond rather than react. In a culture where we're easy to offend and easy to be offended, it becomes really critical for us to delay our reaction. Because if we react, we are living defensively rather than from a place peace with the Lord. So, we must resist reacting. And we need to learn how to respond instead. Not only does Paul write to the Colossians that we are to set our hearts on things above, he says, one verse later,

"Set your minds on things above. Not on earthly things."

So, the challenge is when we live defensively, we are always focusing more on ourselves than we are on the bigger picture. And so, what he says to the Colossians, and he says to us, is you need to change the way you think. We need to think about the larger mission that God has for us – especially in times when people offend us. We need to focus on the mosaic. We need to remember who we are and why we're here, and by focusing on the bigger picture, the larger mosaic of what God is doing, it's less about us. By being reactive, we actually reinforce the chaos around us. And how does that give testimony to Jesus?

Now look at **Colossians 3:3**. It says,

"For you died." Wow, "for you died."

What's Paul talking about? He's not talking to zombies; this isn't a zombie attack here. What he's talking about is that when you say yes to Jesus, the old in you dies and God comes alive in you. Paul says that again in **II Corinthians, Chapter 5**, "In Christ, the old is gone. Behold, you are a new person in Christ." So, we now

need to be ambassadors of that hope and love and new life that He has equipped us in Christ to do. So, he says,

"You died and your life is now hidden in Christ Jesus."

So, our life, everything about us, is now embedded into the grander mosaic. We ourselves are but single tiles in the grander picture of what God is building through the church. Really critical.

And Paul says in **Colossians 3**,

"We therefore need to put on Christ to clothe ourselves with Christ."

What does that mean? What does that mean to "put on Christ"? Look at what he says starting in verse 12,

"Therefore, as God's chosen people," that's us, "as God's chosen people," that's the church, "wholly and dearly loved,"

so that should give us a foundation of security, we can enter into the chaos of the world, knowing that He's got us, He's got us. Would you say that out loud, even online? Would you say with me, He's got me? "He's got me." He's got this... say that: "He's got this." You need not fear. So, there's no need for us to live defensively, we can live peacefully. Because our eyes are on the grander mosaic of what God is doing. So, he says, "Clothe yourselves, therefore, with compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience, bear with each other and forgive one another if any of you has a grievance against someone." We're going to look at this again in two weeks when we go deeper into forgiveness, but notice that it says, "forgive one another if any of you has a grievance against someone." Who takes the responsibility? We do. It's incumbent on the believer to take the first step.

And Paul goes on,

"Forgive as the Lord forgave you."

Now, doesn't that just ratchet up the bar? Again, we'll come back to that in two weeks. Then we read in verse 14...

"And overall these virtues put on love, which binds them all together in perfect unity."

And so there we have yet another clue. How do we, as the body of Christ, find unity in the midst of this bucket load of diversity? Love. Love binds us all together. And if we're not loving each other, we end up tripping over the number one basic teaching of Jesus. He then says, "let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, since as members of one body, you were called to peace and be thankful. Let the message of Christ dwell among you richly as you teach and admonish one another with all

wisdom through psalms, hymns and songs from the Spirit, singing to God with gratitude in your hearts. And whatever you do, whether in word or deed, do it all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through Him.” Paul is saying to those Colossian believers that we are to value what Jesus valued.

For Paul, followers of Jesus ought to be identified by certain qualities – namely... Compassion. Kindness. Humility. Gentleness. Patience. Bearing with one another. Forgiving one another. Loving one another. Being peace makers. Being thankful. Doing life together in the name of Jesus. That's what we have to work on in our congregations right now. That's the challenge for us as followers of Jesus. We do not expect that the world, those who are not in Christ, we do not expect that they will be living this way. Hopefully they will, but we do not expect that. But what Paul expected and what we should expect of ourselves, is that that's how we should live. That's how we should live because our witness, our witness depends on our oneness. Our witness depends on our oneness. So it's time for us to not let our hurt cause us to focus solely on the individual tile, but rather to see the grander mosaic that God is creating to redeem even our hurt. Your hurt is only one tile in the mosaic that God will redeem.

Friends up here at our altar rail, I have a basket of individual mosaic tiles. During our final song, I invite you to come forward and take one. Put it in your pocket. Hold on to it and whenever somebody does something to you that offends you or whenever you do something and you realize afterwards that it was offensive, I invite you to take that tile out and hold it in your hand and remind yourself – “my hurt is only a single tile in a much bigger mosaic and I'm choosing to keep my eyes on the Jesus. The Jesus who designed the mosaic.”

For those of you who are watching online, if you want one of these tiles, just call the church office and we'll have one for you to pick up.

Would you join with me in prayer?

Gracious Lord, we give you thanks for the mosaic and for the realization that all of what we face is creating a larger portrait that testifies to you, Jesus. Lord, redeem my pain. And make it a testimony to your glory. I pray this in your precious name. Amen.