

Wednesday Encouragement
June 3, 2020

Life seems just so absolutely messed up sometimes. Not just my life, but the entire world.

There's more turmoil, fighting, hatred and all out, absolutely ugly, un-Jesus like behavior out there than I even know how to emotionally process.

And that's not just the secular world.

Christians often seem to be right there in the middle of it, forgetting that Jesus taught us to love--that the two greatest commands He gave us were to love God with every ounce of our being and to love everyone else like we love ourselves. But we don't. I don't.

In spite of how evil, perverted, and confusing the world has become, we are still called to love. God never said we should become an exclusive club and only love our "own people" (whatever that may mean to you). He told us to love--no stipulations.

Somehow we've strayed from "loving the sinner but hating the sin" to hating the sin, the sinner and anything that might possibly be connected. We've gone from "Jesus loves the little children, all the children of the world" to taking sides, as if one color of human is less human than another.

We're scared of certain types of sinners and their sin, so we all but condemn them to hell rather than try to reach them and believe that God is powerful enough to change them.

We're scared of people who have a different religion than we do, so we're content to let them be homeless, starving refugees or, even worse, dead because they couldn't make it to freedom safely. We certainly couldn't accept them into our country or our homes, because they might have been taught to persecute Christians. Oh wait..remember Paul? God changed him from being the biggest persecutor of the church to being one of the men who is hugely responsible for the growth of the early church. The next Paul might just be seeking asylum in our country, waiting for you to show him or her what the love of Jesus looks like.

We're scared of investing our time into people we don't already know, because these people might require something of us. They might be needy. We might not like them. They might not be "our kind of people." So we're content to stay in our comfortable routines and ignore God's call to share His love with others.

We refuse to recognize that we might ourselves be living a relatively easy life while brothers and sisters around us are marginalized, mistreated or even murdered because of biases based on their skin color.

Let's remember this: we are ALL sinners and sinners come in all colors. Sin comes in a variety of forms, as well. I am thankful my sins are covered by the blood of Jesus, but that doesn't make me superior to people who aren't Christians. Just like being white doesn't make me superior to fellow humans of other colors. Just like my particular sin-persuasion doesn't make me a lesser sinner than someone else. It's this grace that God gives us that makes it an even bigger responsibility for us to love all people, in spite of whatever we don't think we like about them—and sometimes loving looks like admitting that you might not understand everything about what others experience. Loving might look like admitting ignorance and fighting for a better way. It might look like admitting you may have also been a part of the problem.

Not only are we all sinners, but we are ALL created by, loved by, and made in the image of God. These people that we're so scared of are people. These people we think are so different than us—they're people, too. Human beings. Part of our family. Who need to be loved. Who need to see that there is something more to this whole Jesus thing than becoming a superior person who gets to condemn sinners and ignore injustice. Jesus died for ALL people, not just "our" people.

Let's not write people off because of who we think they are. Only God can know who they can become when His love washes over them. Only God can know what we can become when His love washes over us.

They will never come to know the love of God through our hate, our apathy, our condemnation, or our avoidance.

They will know we are Christians by our love.

And that love--the true, sacrificial love that we're called to live out--is a love that turns heads and hearts toward Jesus. And Jesus brings peace.

-And now these three remain: faith, hope and love. But the greatest of these is love.
1 Corinthians 13:13

-I pray that God, the source of hope, will fill you completely with joy and peace because you trust in him. Then you will overflow with confident hope through the power of the Holy Spirit.
Romans 15:13