

## *“Being Healed of Hatred”* {final outline}

*Psalm 9; Psalm 133; Luke 9:51-56*

June 7, 2020

- I. Introduction
  - a. Orange Crush story
    - i. Doesn't matter why I dislike orange teams, I just do.
    - ii. The present divide has taken on a similar degree of rancor.
      1. I don't question why I don't like someone or some class of people, I just do.
    - iii. Then, when some occasion arises which brings me an unpleasant reminder of this distaste, I react with furor.
    - iv. Bride into Scripture
- II. Scripture – Luke 9:51-57
  - a. “When the days drew near for him to be taken up, he set his face to go to Jerusalem. And he sent messengers ahead of him, who went and entered a village of the Samaritans, to make preparations for him. But the people did not receive him, because his face was set toward Jerusalem. And when his disciples James and John saw it, they said, “Lord, do you want us to tell fire to come down from heaven and consume them?” But he turned and rebuked them. And they went on to another village.”
- III. Travel Narrative in Luke
  - a. Jesus sets his face towards Jerusalem
    - i. This section of the Gospel of Luke comprises about 35% of its total length.
    - ii. In this part of Luke we get some of our most cherished parables.
      1. Parable of the Lost Sheep
      2. Parable of the Prodigal Son
      3. Parable of the Good Samaritan which teaches us that the one who shows mercy, even to people they dislike is doing the will of God.
        - a. That Jesus makes the hero of that parable a Samaritan is interesting, especially given the passage we've just read.
- IV. History of Jewish/Samaritan Animus
  - a. Northern Kingdom/Southern Kingdom
    - i. Begun after the death of Solomon when there was a disagreement over who should succeed him
  - b. Assyrian conquest of the Northern Kingdom
    - i. The country was repopulated with outsiders who intermarried with the Jews that remained.
      1. They continued to worship God – more observant of the Purity Laws
  - c. Babylonian Exile and Return under Cyrus the Great
    - i. Ezra 4 – They want to help build the wall, rejected by the Jews.
      1. Rejection leads to animosity.
  - d. Pilgrimages between Jewish Galilee and Jerusalem
    - i. Required travel through Samaria or the trip was much longer
  - e. Recent Developments
    - i. Slaughter of Jewish pilgrims within recent history
  - f. So we understand both why the Samaritans would reject this group of travelers and we also understand James and John calling down fire on these people.
    - i. And, let's not miss this, James and John were hotheads to begin with.
      1. Mark 3:17 – List of apostles, James and John are remembered as “Sons of Thunder”
        - a. Quick on the trigger, allowed their animosities to rise to the surface.

- g. We all have the capacity to be hotheads from time to time, to call down fire from heaven upon the people we dislike
  - i. “Kill ‘em all and let God sort them out.”
    - 1. Bumper sticker
    - 2. Cooking magazine

V. Not supposed to be that way

- a. Jesus was and is the Prince of Peace
  - i. This is language given to us in the prophecy of Isaiah
    - 1. **Isaiah 9:6** – “For to us a child is born, to us a son is given; and the government shall be upon his shoulder, and his name shall be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.”
  - ii. The Sermon on the Mount
    - 1. In the Beatitudes, Jesus commends Peace
      - a. **Matthew 5:9** – “Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called the children of God.”
      - b. **Matthew 5:38-42** – “You have heard that it was said, 'An eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth.' But I say to you, do not resist an evil person; but whoever slaps you on your right cheek, turn the other to him also. If anyone wants to sue you and take your shirt, let him have your coat also. Whoever forces you to go one mile, go with him two. Give to him who asks of you, and do not turn away from him who wants to borrow from you. You have heard that it was said, 'You shall love your neighbor and hate your enemy.' But I say to you, love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you.

- b. And here, Jesus rebukes James and John for the quickness of their anger.

VI. The Missing Words

- a. There isn't one “Original Bible”
- b. What we have are ancient fragments, papyri and scrolls which are compiled into the New Testament.
  - i. While the vast majority of these ancient writings are identical, there are variations.
  - ii. One occurs here, right after Jesus rebukes them and it spells out precisely why their idea is a bad one, contrary to His purpose
- c. The King James reading includes – “and said, “You do not know what manner of spirit you are of. For the Son of Man did not come to destroy men's lives but to save *them*.”
- d. When we're actively despising other people, we are failing to carry out our mission as Christ's body on Earth.

VII. The Church as Christ's Body on Earth

- a. Scripture makes this abundantly clear
  - i. **1 Corinthians 12:27** – “Now you are Christ's body, and individually members of it.”
  - ii. **Romans 12:4-5** – “For just as we have many members in one body and all the members do not have the same function, so we, who are many, are one body in Christ, and individually members one of another.”
  - iii. **1 Corinthians 12:12** – “For even as the body is one and yet has many members, and all the members of the body, though they are many, are one body, so also is Christ.
  - iv. **Ephesians 4:4** – There is one body and one Spirit, just as also you were called in one hope of your calling.”
- b. As Christ's body on Earth, we have one calling, to participate with Christ through the power of the Holy Spirit in saving other's lives.
  - i. Which WE CAN NOT DO IF WE'RE CALLING DOWN FIRE FROM HEAVEN ON OTHER PEOPLE

1. If you look at the rioters and want heaven's fire to pour down on them for their transgressions, think again.
2. If you hear someone say, "All lives matter," and it makes you want to kick them in the shin, THINK AGAIN.

ii. We are to be the Body of Christ who was and is the PRINCE OF PEACE

#### VIII. Why do we do that?

- a. Church as the Proleptic Kingdom of God
  - i. A bit of the end brought into the middle of things
  - ii. Merriam-Webster – "the representation or assumption of a future act or development as if presently existing or accomplished."
  - iii. We're supposed to show the world in some small what heaven looks like
    1. With our love
    2. With our care
    3. With our lack of animosity.

#### IX. How do we do that?

- a. The Wisdom of James
  - i. Old Testament Wisdom Literature
    1. Has more in common with Ecclesiastes and Proverbs than Romans or 1 Corinthians.
    2. A collection of wise thoughts and practices
  - ii. **James 1:19-20** – "Know this, my beloved brothers: let every person be quick to hear, slow to speak, slow to anger; for the anger of man does not produce the righteousness of God."
  - iii. **James 1:26** – "If anyone thinks he is religious and does not bridle his tongue but deceives his heart, this person's religion is worthless."
  - iii. Be QUIET, LISTEN and KEEP YOUR OPINIONS TO YOURSELF
    1. That's not just James, that's the wisdom of Old and New Testaments
      - a. **Proverbs 18:2** – "A fool takes no pleasure in understanding, but only in expressing his opinion."
      - b. **Proverbs 21:21** – "Whoever keeps his mouth and his tongue keeps himself out of trouble."
      - c. **Titus 3:2** – "To speak evil of no one, to avoid quarreling, to be gentle, and to show perfect courtesy toward all people."

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#### b. Social Consistency

- i. Less inclined to look for truth than defend our previous assertions.

#### X. Conclusion

- You know, I've heard it said that this world would be a better place if everyone, before speaking, asked themselves, "Is what I'm saying, TRUE, NECESSARY, KIND?" And then, only speaking if all three can be answered yes.
  - o I think this is a good idea, but insufficient for Christians.
  - o A Christian should ask instead, "Is what I'm about to say Kingdom building?" In that, we would encompass the entirety of the other three queries and ground our speech in our Holy Mission.

## Scripture

### Introduction

**Luke 9:51-57** – “When the days drew near for him to be taken up, he set his face to go to Jerusalem. And he sent messengers ahead of him, who went and entered a village of the Samaritans, to make preparations for him. But the people did not receive him, because his face was set toward Jerusalem. And when his disciples James and John saw it, they said, “Lord, do you want us to tell fire to come down from heaven and consume them?” But he turned and rebuked them. And they went on to another village.”

### Jesus as Prince of Peace

**Isaiah 9:6** – ““For to us a child is born, to us a son is given; and the government shall be upon his shoulder, and his name shall be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.”

**Matthew 5:38-42** – “You have heard that it was said, 'An eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth.' But I say to you, do not resist an evil person; but whoever slaps you on your right cheek, turn the other to him also. If anyone wants to sue you and take your shirt, let him have your coat also. Whoever forces you to go one mile, go with him two. Give to him who asks of you, and do not turn away from him who wants to borrow from you. You have heard that it was said, 'You shall love your neighbor and hate your enemy.' But I say to you, love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you.”

### Missing Words

“and said, “You do not know what manner of spirit you are of. For the Son of Man did not come to destroy men’s lives but to save them.”

### Church as Body of Christ

**1 Corinthians 12:27** – “Now you are Christ’s body, and individually members of it.”

**Romans 12:4-5** – “For just as we have many members in one body and all the members do not have the same function, so we, who are many, are one body in Christ, and individually members one of another.”

iii.

**1 Corinthians 12:12** – “For even as the body is one and yet has many members, and all the members of the body, though they are many, are one body, so also is Christ.

**Ephesians 4:4** – There is one body and one Spirit, just as also you were called in one hope of your calling;

### Church as Proleptic Involvement of the Kingdom of God

**Meriam-Webster** – “the representation or assumption of a future act or development as if presently existing or accomplished.”

### How We Live This Out

**James 1:19-20** – “Know this, my beloved brothers: let every person be quick to hear, slow to speak, slow to anger; for the anger of man does not produce the righteousness of God.”

**James 1:26** – “If anyone thinks he is religious and does not bridle his tongue but deceives his heart, this person's religion is worthless.”

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## “Being Healed of Hatred” {First Draft}

I’ve seen some pretty outrageous bumper-stickers in my day. I’m sure we all have but one I saw back last November made me do a double-take. On the back of this car was a neon yellow bumper-sticker with these words “Kill ‘em all and let God figure it out.”

Needless to say, I was offended, frightened, and outraged at all once. I even said a quick prayer for the person driving the car, that God would soften their hardened heart.

And after saying that prayer, I felt so much better than them. Like I was so much godlier, so much wiser than they’d ever be.

That’d change.

It wasn’t but a month later when I was settling into bed where I’ll generally read Cooking magazines. That night, I found something that got my dander up. It was an article on Jewish cuisine. Somehow the author found a way of voicing their opinion on the dietary restrictions in the Old Testament. According to the author, what they all boiled down to was that they were designed by humans to reinforce power structures. No talk of a loving or a Holy God interested in the holiness of God’s community. Just man-made rules enforced to insure propagation of power.

“Natalie,” I said immediately. “People who think like this are the worst people in the whole world.”

The next day I set about crafting the most searing letter ever written. Truth be told, I spent more time working on than I’d like to admit. I poured into it all my venom about the way Christianity is under attack. While writing it, my mood was dark. I was angry. If I had seen that bumper sticker that had so offended me earlier, I have to confess I would’ve whole-heartedly agreed with the sentiment.

Sometimes rejection brings out the worst in us, doesn’t it? I mean, that’s what ultimately lay behind my tirade. I imagine that the burning of rejection likely lurks within the person who’d put that bumper-sticker on their car.

Thinking back on our lives, I’ll bet we can all remember the names and faces of those who rejected us. Who can’t recall the first person who spurned us romantically? Do we still hold ill feelings towards a company that fired us or didn’t hire us to begin with? We might even remember the people who’ve rejected us while largely forgetting the more positive influences in our lives.

Rejection just does that to us sometimes. It blinds us to the larger picture. It almost invariably leads to us wanting to lash out.

One the most combustible types of rejection comes when people dismiss things that we’re passionate about. I might be okay with you talking trash about the Atlanta Braves but don’t utter a negative syllable about my beloved Tarheels.

*But I think our anger flares the most when people reject what we believe about God.*

When other people refute our core religious beliefs, we feel the bile burning in the back of our throats. Our insides twist together and we just yearn to vent our anger. That rage is the power behind quote-unquote Holy wars, those brutal conflicts when two sides reject what the other believes about God. Then, the only way to determine who’s right and who’s wrong is to kill one another. Last side standing wins because they’re supposedly the ones whom God protected.

In today’s Gospel reading, Jesus sets his face towards Jerusalem. These are no idle words from Luke’s author. From this point forward, Jesus is always heading toward the site of his ultimate rejection. In Jerusalem, Jesus will be rejected, not just by Romans and Pharisees, but by apostles and disciples too. *Everyone* rejects him. And they lash out at him, nailing him to a Cross.

Just as the journey to Jerusalem is set to begin, Jesus encounter rejection. A fitting foreshadowing of what’s to come.

But here it’s the Samaritans. Jesus and his band of followers have entered into Samaria seeking a place to lay their heads. Their hosts have said essentially “you don’t have to go home, but you can’t stay here.”

Their reaction wasn’t that surprising really. Samaritans were used to Jewish pilgrims after all. They’d seen scores of them come through their lands on the way to Jerusalem from all parts of the world for the Holy days. What must’ve made it terrible for them to play host was their awareness that the Jews they hosted considered Samaritans to be the worst of the worst.

You might well imagine how the Samaritans dealt with the obvious scorn of their visitors. Sometimes, like here with Jesus, they just sent the Jewish travelers away. *But that isn't all they did.* At least once during the era, Samaritans massacred Jewish pilgrims in their land. Rejection can lead *everyone* down some dark roads.

Now think about James and John. Over the past several days they'd seen Jesus take 5 loaves and two fish and feed 5000 people. They'd witnessed Jesus in glory on the mountaintop. They'd seen him cast off a evil spirit from a young man. You see, James and John...they knew who Jesus was....*at least they thought they did.*

And then, these dirty rotten Samaritans had the *audacity* to deny Jesus lodging. No room at the Inn, so to speak. And that kind of rejection just can't stand. It can't. Left to our own devices, rejection creates within us a combustible mix of anger and energy. It swirls around inside us until it spills out onto the most immediate target.

So, James and John do precisely that. They walk right up to Jesus and ask him "Lord, do you want us to command fire to come down from heaven and consume them?" It seems laughable to us, doesn't it? Ha, ha ha, we chuckle, here they are with the Prince of Peace and they're asking him, *straight-faced*, if Christ wants THEM to call down DEATH on the heads of these Samaritans. What rubes, right?

And yet we're the same people who cry out for blood whenever a terrorist kills an American. We're the same people who lash out in anger at those who reject belief in God or question our faith. When was the last time any of us had something nice to say about an atheist or a Muslim? Instead don't many of us imagine the fire and brimstone awaiting them for their heresies and their hostilities?

Rejection can lead us to such dark places.

But just when James and John have a full head of vim and vinegar, the blood boiling in their eyes, visions of flames floating in their imaginations, *Jesus rebukes them.*

Up until this point in the Gospel of Luke, Jesus had rebuked lots of things. Demons, fevers, unclean spirits, a faithless and perverse generation...all rebuked. This is the first time in the third Gospel Jesus rebukes his apostles *directly*. Intimately. And we shouldn't overlook that it comes here, just as James and John appear to be doing what any of us would likely do under the circumstances. The Samaritans have rejected God's Son, after all. Best to punish them. Be done with them for their slight of cosmic proportions. "Kill em all and let God figure them out."

And yet Jesus sternly rebukes them. No, he says. It isn't right. You're WRONG. Violence, be it verbal or physical *isn't the appropriate Christian response to rejection.*

And there are a couple of reason why that is. First of all, lashing out in anger over rejection warps us. Leads us further and further away from God. And sometimes we get to that point with only the best intentions.

In the short story, *The Barber*, by Flannery O'Connor, Rayber is a college professor in a pre-civil rights era Southern state. His barber is a notorious racist. Rayber gets his hair cut every single week. Each and every week, he listens to his barber drone on and on about a candidate for governor whose speeches indicate that he's every bit as racist as the barber is.

Rayber, on the other hand, is planning on voting for the other candidate. The barber goads Rayber, calling his candidate a lover of black people set to destroy good and decent society. Eventually, Rayber decides he's going to set that barber and his cronies straight. He spends an entire week writing a speech about his candidate. *But he's doing it not so much to change them as to scorn them.*

So, he comes at them *directly* with a full head of steam. Rayber sits down in the barber's chair and announces his intentions. The barber guffaws a bit but invites everyone in the shop to come and listen. Rayber delivers his speech, the one he's written to humiliate his opponents.

The barber and the crowd listen to the entire oration yet none of them are willing to change their minds.

But the next thing you know, Rayber slugs the barber, kicks him in the gut while he's down. It's wrong. It's uncalled for. *He escalated things.* Even though he's on the right side of the issue, his anger at being rejected made him choose the wrong way of dealing with the problem.

You know, I think the grace of this passage from the Gospel of Luke comes in quietly. It comes only when we realize that the people most worthy of destroying flames isn't the Samaritans. Not really. Rather it's James and John. They're the ones who really should know better. *And yet they're simply rebuked. Gracefully allowed to keep following Jesus to the next town.*

Jesus Christ rebukes us sometimes, doesn't he? When we're anxious to vent our anger sometimes we hear his chastisement ringing in our ears. We retreat to the next town alongside him just like James and John. It's there, following him, we find the anger from our rejection *being healed by the one we're following*. It isn't that God doesn't want us to fight injustice in the world. Rather God wants us to do it by witnessing to his peace.

But there's another reason why God comes into our lives in those moments of righteous indignation when all we want to do is call for fire to rain down from the heavens. Later on, tucked into the book of Acts is the mention of the Mission to Samaria. There, one of the Thunder Twins finds himself back in Samaria. Only this time, John's praying for them instead of calling for consuming flames. And then, in a way, *his wish* from that day years ago finally comes true. *John lays his hands upon some of the Samaritans and they receive the flame of the Holy Spirit of God into their hearts and lives.*

But just think for a minute.

What if Jesus had allowed James and John to vent their anger of the Samaritan's rejection in the way they'd enumerated? Imagine the people of Samaria's reception to John in particular but any follower of Jesus Christ who came their way following the flames. Do you think they'd be receptive? Do you think they'd allow them to even come within their borders?

In Jesus Christ, God was reconciling the world to God's self. And it came about precisely because Jesus processed rejection in a way that's foreign to us apart from God's presence. *Jesus Christ let it go. He loved us enough NOT to lash out to our spurning of him.* St. Paul writes in Romans "For if while we were enemies, we were reconciled to God through the death of his Son." God used our rejection of Jesus to bring about the ultimate good.

As Christ's disciples, we're directed to process rejection in different manner than the world around us. Because we follow Him, our lives are led away from lashing out. When we want to rain fire upon the heads of those who reject us or what we believe, we're rebuked by the Spirit and led in the other direction. We're to bear the rejections of others and stepping back from our anger and desire to lash out.

And there, in that new and strange territory, we remain in the presence of the Risen Lord. There, following him, we take in more of what he would teach us.

And who knows? Maybe sometime in the future, be it next week, next month or next year, we'll be the instruments God uses to reach out to the very same people who've rejected us. It'll be our prayers God uses to lift those people out of the darkness and into the light of Christ. It'll be our hands by which the fire of the Spirit will come into their hearts, consume their lives in joy and peace and change them for all eternity.

In the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit.