**Transcript**

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Missing Peace 2
12/1/24

Curious
• How many of you know someone right now that’s a little bit difficult to love?
o Raise hands
♣ Don’t point – just raise

It’s interesting because I think 2024 has seemed to make more of them!
• Have you noticed?
• Like the crazies are multiplying in 2024
• Normally, you come to this time of year, and you get a little crazy in your family

Can be complicated, but it seems like this year there is crazy with extra whipped cream on top of the already crazy in your life
• Politics
• War
• Division in our country
o I’ve even heard that there were people uninviting their family to Thanksgiving/Christmas celebrations because of their politics
• I believe it’s going to be a while before we get over this election
o Emotionally
o Relationally

It seems we’ve created the perfect scenario for tension
• An election that is so close
o Almost exactly in half
• Add a couple of wars around the world
• So, I’ll repeat my question – how many of you have somebody who’s difficult to love right now?
o It’s incredibly complicated out there
o I’ve heard it said that this is the age of perpetual offense

Have you noticed?
• People are quick to become angry
o Quick to judge
o Quick to call foul
o Incredibly quick to be offended
♣ “You hurt me. You did me wrong. How can you vote this way? I’m going to cancel you!”
• What I’ve noticed is that if you’re on a continual search to be offended, you will always find what you’re looking for
o If you’re always looking to be hurt
♣ Offended
♣ Wronged
♣ Angry
• You will always find what you’re looking for

The challenge is there is absolutely no win at all in living offended
• I’ve never met a person who said, “My life is so much more productive because I’m pissed off everywhere I go”
o Never heard that
• I’ve never heard anyone say, “The quality of my life is so much better because I’m angry and find fault everywhere I go”
• We have to understand that people right now are hurting
o On edge
o They’re going to hurt you
♣ Going to offend you
• We need to recognize that being offended is inevitable
o But living offended is a choice
o And as Jesus followers, we will choose wisely

Our message series is called “Missing Peace”
• Today’s message title, “Help, These People are Driving Me Crazy!”
Prayer

Are you ready for a tough scripture today?
• Yes?
o You asked for is to let’s go!
• Romans 12:14-18 – easy to ready, incredibly difficult to live
o Paul says, “If you’ve got anyone who’s a little bit difficult to love right now – he says – Bless those who persecute you; bless and do not curse.”
o He teaches us, as Jesus followers, that we are to “rejoice with those who rejoice and mourn with those who mourn”
♣ He tells us to live in harmony with one another
♣ He says, “Do not be proud, but be willing to associate with people of low position”
♣ He tells us, “Do not be conceited. Do not repay anyone evil for evil. Be careful to do what is right in the eyes of everyone.”
o Verse 18 is our key verse, we’ll come back to it later
♣ Paul tells us, “If it is possible, as far as it depends on you, live at peace with everyone”

But let’s start at the beginning when Paul says, “Bless those who persecute you”
• We might say it this way: “Bless those who are mean to you. Bless those who are short with you. Bless those who disagree with you”

What does it mean to bless?
• The word – bless – comes from the Greek – ‘eulogeo’
o It’s a little like eulogy
♣ E-U means good
♣ Logo – logos means word
o What this word means – it means a good word
♣ Very literally – to speak well of or to wish the best blessings for someone

Think about this
• Speak well of and wish the best blessings for someone who’s rude to you
• Speak well of and wish the best blessings for someone who betrays you
o “Bless those who persecute you”
♣ Don’t know about you, but it’s really easy for me to wish the best for you if I like you
• It’s the rest of the people that makes it difficult for me
• It’s easy to bless someone who’s a blessing
o To be nice to someone who’s nice
o To be generous with someone who is generous
• It’s really hard, though, when someone offends you
o Is harsh to you
o Belittles you
o Leaves you out
o Hurts your feelings
o Betrays you

I’m sure this isn’t you – it’s only me
• But when someone I don’t trust, respect, or like gets something bad in their life
o There’s a very sick part of me that kind of likes it
♣ I hate to say it
o You can sit and act like you don’t know what I’m talking about
♣ Polish your halo
• Act like you’re better than everybody else

Have you ever been driving down the road – the speed limit
• And a sports car (usually red) zips by you doing 90
o Then, 5 miles later, you passed them because they were stopped by a cop
♣ There’s a secret part of me that wants to roll down the window and preach, “You reap what you sew, you idiot”
• Because they got what’s coming to them

But Paul gives a very specific, direct command
• And in Greek, his command is what’s called a present imperative
o That means to do what you’re told, to do and keep on doing
♣ Not a one-time action
• Very literally when Paul said, “Bless those who persecute you”
o You could translate it, “Be a continual blessing to those who are a continual problem”
• I don’t know about you, but I could maybe be a blessing to someone who’s a problem for a good 8 seconds
o Maybe for a minute
♣ But after a while, if they continue to be a problem to me of offensive at me, I’m going to snap
• And I’ll want to retaliate
o The flesh in me wants to retaliate
o There’s the human part of me – just like anyone else – I don’t want to bless someone who’s mean to me
♣ Or my family
o But here’s Paul giving us this imperative
♣ Inspired by the Holy Spirit
• That we, as followers of Christ, are to be a continual blessing to those who are a continual problem

How do we do that?
• It’s an impossibility if I rely on my nature
• The only way we can do what Paul tells us is to understand the context or Romans 12
o Let’s go back to the first verse of the chapter for context
♣ This sets up the how we love people that are so difficult to love
• Paul starts this way – “In view of God’s mercy” (Mercy)

How merciful has God been to you?
• How much has He forgiven you from that you don’t deserve?
• How much has He blessed you beyond what you’ve earned?
o In view of that – in view of His goodness for you, his mercy for you
♣ Paul tells us to “offer our bodies as a living sacrifice”
• Interesting phrase, we’ll come back to it

In view of who God is and what He’s done – offer your lives “as a living sacrifice – holy and pleasing to God
• “This is your true and proper worship”
o I love this
• If you want to worship God, it’s not about songs we sing
o It’s the life we live
♣ Loving people as we’ve been loved is a spiritual act of worship

How do we do this?
• Paul says we’re a living sacrifice
o That seems like a contradiction, right?
♣ Think about it – living sacrifice
♣ Usually when we think of sacrifices, we think of dead sacrifices
• I’ve been reading Leviticus this month and, believe me, there is a lot there about dead sacrifices
o But, what’s a living sacrifice?
♣ Anytime an animal was sacrificed, if the animal could know they’re taking volunteers
• How many little lambs do you think would say, “I volunteer, that doesn’t sound too baaaad”
o None of them would do that

When you think living sacrifice, though, think of the Lamb of God who, when He was alive said, “I’m willing to die”
• A living sacrifice
• He said, “No one takes my life, I lay it down”

How do we love others?
• We lay down our own natural responses
o Selfish desires
• Die to ourselves so that Jesus can love others through us

In Galatians 2:20 – Paul said, I am crucified with Christ, but nevertheless I live”
• “But it’s no longer I who lives but it’s Christ who lives in me”
o How do we love people?
♣ It’s not me – I don’t have that in me ever, ever in my own self
• I want to hit back, fight back, retaliate
♣ So, it’s not me, I’ve died to me
• But it’s Christ inside of me
♣ That’s how we do it
♣ In view of what God has done, I let Christ love through me
o Paul goes on to say in verse 16
♣ “Live in harmony with one another”
o Then he says, “Do not be proud” (Do not be proud)
♣ And he says, “Do not be conceited” (Do not be conceited)

Do not be proud and do not be conceited
• So, I’ll say to you – “do not be proud and do not be conceited”
o Again, “do not be proud and do not be conceited”
♣ I’ll say it again
• I’m saying it to you, not the person you think I’m saying it to
o “Preach it to them pastor”
• No, I’m saying it to you
• You – listen – do not be proud or conceited
o Yes – we all like to prove our ‘rightness’, how much we know, how proud we are
♣ But remember, Jesus didn’t tell us to be right
• Jesus told us to be loving
o To be loving
♣ He didn’t say the world was going to know us by how right we are
• He said they’d know us by how loving we are

I don’t know if we’re still talking politics, but I want to talk politics for a minute
• To get something off my chest
o It’s bizarre to me how many of my conservative friends, will say something like “I can’t believe anybody who’s liberal could ever love Jesus”
♣ “No way they could”
o On the other hand, I have liberal friends who say, “Republicans are just a bunch of hatemongers”
♣ “There’s no way they could really love Jesus”
o If you live in either of those extremes, I want to invite you to get out of your pathetically small world for a minute
♣ Seriously, if you can’t for a minute visualize someone else who was born in another part of the world, around a totally different pattern of thinking, with different parents, maybe a different skin color, different friends, opportunities and different threats
• And you can’t imagine for a moment how someone could love Jesus from a different perspective at a different point in their walk than you can?
o Come on
♣ When people talk, don’t listen to respond, don’t listen to correct, listen to understand and listen to love
• We start with grace and lead toward truth
• If we can’t understand another perspective, our impact is always going to be limited

We’re followers of Christ
• We have to be bigger than that
• We are going to face conflict, misunderstandings, differences of perspective – because we don’t understand
o And because our brains are wired to protect or defend – what we tend to do is we tend to tell a story
♣ A story that explains whatever part we don’t understand
o If someone is unkind with us or short with us or has a different opinion about something, we make up a story about them to fill in the gaps
♣ We do this all the time
• Example
o I’m short with you, or late, or do something wrong
♣ I judge myself by my intentions
o But I tend to judge you by your actions
• In other words, if I’m short with you I’ll say, “Hey, you know my intentions, that wasn’t what I meant. I was running late and you should understand”
o But if you are short with me, I judge you by your actions
♣ “You’re a jerk, a loser. You need Jesus to save your pathetic soul”

So, what we tend to do is to tell ourselves a story about something we don’t understand
• And what the devil wants us to do is whenever we tell a story about someone else, he wants the premise to be accusations because he is the great accuser
• So, if someone does something to hurt me or offend me, he wants me to say, “Well, I can’t trust her.”
o Or “he’s only out for himself”
o Or “people are always going to lie to you, they’re always going to let you down”
o Or “Conservative this, or liberal that”
♣ Accusations
• The devil wants our stories to be rooted in accusation, but God wants our stories to be rooted in love
o Because what do accusations do?
♣ They erode marriages
♣ They split friendships
♣ Divide churches
o That’s why Paul said, “Let it all be in love” (Eph 4:2)
♣ He said, “Be patient with each other, making allowances for each other’s faults – because of your love
• Because of your love

They’re not going to know us by how correct we are
• The world is going to know us by the way we love – or don’t
• Remember, you’re going to be offended – it’s inevitable
o Living offended is a choice
It’s inevitable that we’ll be offended, but living offended is a choice
• I tell myself over and over – this truth – that your life is too short and your calling too great to be offended by something small
o Life is short – a mist
♣ It’s here a little while
o Your calling is one by God Himself to show His love
♣ Your life is short and your calling too great to be offended by something small

Imagine if Jesus was easily offended
• Think about it
o How it would prevent him from his mission
o Imagine if Jesus was offended
♣ “Matthew, I noticed you weren’t paying attention to my sermon. I said blessed are the meek for they will inherit…”
• You didn’t even write that down
♣ “I healed 10 lepers, only 1 came back”
• “Nobody cares for me, nobody appreciates me. I can’t go on”
♣ Or, Thomas, you didn’t even brag on my miracle. I raised the dead, I didn’t just open blind eyes
• “Thomas, always doubting. I just can’t count on Thomas

Being offended is inevitable
• Living offended is a choice

Proverbs 19 is powerful
• “A person’s wisdom yields patience and it’s to ones glory to overlook an offense”

Wouldn’t it be amazing that because of God’s love for us, we got better at overlooking offenses?
• What does it mean to overlook an offense?
o It’s not pretending it didn’t happen
• Overlooking an offense is a conscious decision to let it go
o It’s kind of like real-time forgiveness
♣ Forgiveness in the moment

The word ‘overlook’ in Hebrew – ‘avor’
• It means to pass over
o To get up above
• Life is too short, your calling too great to be offended by something small
o You get over it
♣ “I’m over it. I’m on top of it”
♣ “My mission is more important than this, my calling is greater, I’m over this”
♣ “You can play down there, but I’m not coming down there with you – we’ve got more important things to do
• Say it – “I’m over it”

Someone is rude to you?
• I’m over it
o Your mother-in-law corrects your kids again?
♣ That’s a tough one but I’m over it
o Someone says something passive-aggressive?
♣ I’m over it
o Your spouse makes fun of the way you chew or walk or your in-between pile?
♣ I’m over it
♣ She’s over it
• We’ve got more important things to do

You can apply this to the jerk at the mall
• Most importantly, apply it to the people you love the most
o Apply it to people at home
♣ Kathy and I have a great marriage, and we have constructive conversations (I call it intense fellowship)
♣ We are so different in so many ways and disagree on so many things
• Parenting
• Money
• Decisions about leading the church
♣ We get into arguments that are bathed in love
• Because love doesn’t seek to win the argument, love seeks to protect the relationship
o (I’m late getting there sometimes)

Church – in your effort to be right, some of you have forgotten to be loving

Kathy is the best at getting over it, too
• I can be short, grumpy, sarcastic, harsh
o And she keeps on going
♣ “I’m over it, I’m choosing to overlook that”
♣ “Our marriage, our calling is too important to get hung up on that”

Here is a key verse in all of this – how you love those people that are difficult to love
• Romans 12:18 – If it’s possible, as far as it depends on you, live at peace with everyone
o I love that he says ‘as far as it depends on you’ – that’s all that’s within my power
♣ My responses
♣ My thoughts
• I can live at peace with everyone

And that means the person that you’re not talking to right now
• As far as it goes with you, you’re going to do what’s right
o That person was really rude, the person who wronged you and took advantage of you
♣ “As far as it depends on you”, you’re going to do what’s right

Because life is too short and your calling is too great to be offended by something small
• You don’t want to let things get too late, holding something against a loved one only to have it be too late and you carry that with you
o A chance to choose being loving over being right
• We still have a chance
o Still have a chance in a fractured marriage
o A chance in a relationship with your children, your mom/dad that you haven’t talked to in years
o You have a chance to forgive someone who wronged you and maybe see a miraculous restoration story that only God can write

Many of you have that chance
• So, today’s assignment is hard – it’s tough
o It’s tough and you can’t do it on your own
♣ You need help from the One who is peace and brings relational peace
o At first you’re going to say, “But they’re not being nice, didn’t apologize, being kind, whatever”
♣ Saying, “it takes 2 to reconcile”
• It does, but it takes 1 to apologize
o Takes 2 to reconcile but one to be loving
♣ And so as far as it depends on you, as far as it depends on me, we are going to live at peace with everyone

I promise you people are going to let you down
• I’ll let you down
o I may have ticked you off today
• Being offended is inevitable, but living that way is a choice

And remember
• Jesus, the One who is our peace
o He didn’t tell us to always be right, he told us to always be loving
♣ So as far as it depends on us, on me, on you – what we are going to do as follower of Jesus?
♣ We are going to do our best – by the power of the Holy Spirit who is in us – to live a peace with everyone

It’s my prayer today that for someone
• That could be just what you need this holiday season for healing in a relationship that’s broken

Prayer
• Father, asking that you would do what only you can do
• Do a work in us today

As you’re praying, as a follower of Jesus and you want to do whatever you can
• Wherever you are
• Whoever you interact with to live a peace in every situation
o Whether it’s the rude person in public
o The hurtful person in your home
• If your prayer is “God help me to live at peace” – would you lift your hand
o I hope it’s everybody today

As hands are up – or you can put them down and relax
• I want to pray for you and I want to pray very specifically for those who have a broken relationship and really need help form God for healing

Father, give us all a love that comes from heaven
• A love we can’t generate from our own sinful, selfish way
o Help me die to myself as a living sacrifice
o Yet it’s not me living, it’s Christ – his love, your love through us
• I pray especially for those who have seriously wounded relationships
o Broken trust
o Broken friendships
o Broken relationships – with parents/children/broken marriages
• We thank you that you’re a God of restoration
o A God of healing, of forgiveness
• We pray today for miracles – if nothing else miracles in our hearts
o Let’s just start there
♣ Help us forgive, rise above, help us to let go, to consciously, in the moment, choose forgiveness
• God, in the way you’ve loved is, would you help us love others
o Forfeiting our right to be right and picking up a desire to be loving
♣ Help us live at peace

As we keep praying
• We will recognize the most important potential relationship of all
o The one with God
• You’re not at peace
o Ther’s no peace in your heart about your relationship with God
• The good news is I believe that you are here today and it’s not an accident
o It’s by God’s grace – who loves you and loved you so much that He did something for you that you couldn’t do for yourself
♣ He sent His son
• Why?
o Because He loves you
♣ God so loved you that He became like you
♣ He sent Jesus, born of a virgin, perfect in every way, the Lamb of God, the Living Sacrifice
• The one who said, “I lay down my life, no one takes it”
♣ And he gave his life on the cross for the forgiveness of your sins so that you who believe in him
• No matter what you’ve done
♣ When you call on his name
♣ The name above every name
• He hears your prayers
o Forgives your sins
o Heals your heart
o Mends your brokenness

Heads bowed
• If you’re saying, “I need his grace, I want peace with Him”
o You can take that step today – away from your old life and toward Him, as you are
♣ Calling on the name above every name
o He hears your prayer, forgives your sin, and you become new
♣ The old is gone, the new is here

If that’s you today
• Saying, “Yes, I want Him. I want peace with God. I surrender my life. I give my life today.”
o If that’s your prayer – raise hand
♣ Saying, “Yes”

Salvation prayer