

Title: Love does not Boil
Text: 1 Corinthians 13.4
Theme: Love does not burn with envy
Series: 1 Corinthians # 70
Prop Stmt.

In the past 25 years we have watched an increase in interest in the eastern religions. While Tom Cruise's meltdown on Oprah a while ago did not do a great deal to advance the image of the church of scientology (an oxymoron of immense proportions), Buddhism is a current rage from certain celebrities. However, the Buddhism that is presented by some of the Hollywood crowd is a bit different than the pure Buddhism that was intended by its founder.

All religions are an attempt to deal with 3 questions: 1) Where did we all come from 2) What went wrong and 3) How can we fix it. Those three questions permanently reside in every human being. The first question helps us answer our quest for identity. If I know where I came from, then I know who I am. If I know what went wrong, then I can understand why there is so much suffering in the world. And, if I know how we can fix it, then I can have hope. We could simplify these three questions and just say, Creation, Fall and Redemption. Every religion attempts to explain these three things (particularly the religion of Darwinism, which I will attempt to touch on a bit tonight). Some religions are more developed on some points than on others.

For example, Buddhism is not real coherent on the creation part. In Buddhism, life supposedly comes from a great absolute, spiritual essence that is completely impersonal. It is difficult to reconcile the fact that we see ourselves as persons if we were originally designed to be impersonal, but this came about because the founder of this religion basically worked backward. Siddhartha Gautama (later known as Buddha or "enlightened one") wanted to answer the question as to why there was so much suffering. (fall) So, he left his wife and new born child (causing more suffering) in order to go away develop a system by which he thought we could eventually be rid of suffering (redemption). In fact, the theological grid at the heart of Buddhism is the wheel of suffering. Everything bad that happens to you now is the result of something bad that you did, either in this life or in a previous life or lives. That is their explanation for why bad things happen to you now. While Buddhism attempts to answer why bad things happen now, it does not do a very good job with why bad things happened in the first place, other than to say, that pain and suffering comes about by our sense of individuality.

Pain and suffering comes as the result of desire. If I desire relationships, then I will suffer hurt, when I lose someone I love. Therefore, if I learn to detach myself from that desire, I will eliminate suffering. Losing a child, therefore is not the problem, but your affection for that child is. If you learn not have affection, then when something happens, it won't hurt. If I think of myself as an individual, then I will think of the people that are close to me as PERSONAL relationships, and if I think of myself as an individual, I will be tempted to think of the things that I own. Therefore, if I care personally about people and property, you can hurt me by violating my rights, attacking my children, or abusing

my wife, stealing my property, insulting my parents, make me jealous by having more than me, etc. And, I can in turn, do the same to you; if I am threatened by the fact that you have more than me. To quote that prominent theologian, Yoda, who said to the young Anakin Skywalker, “You have feelings for your mother. (He was afraid that something would happen to her) I sense fear in you. Fear leads to hate, and hate leads to suffering.”

But, if I do not look at myself as an individual, and you don't see yourself as an individual but rather if I see myself as being one with the universe, then I have no rights, and no possessions and suffering is only an illusion. Suffering does not really happen in that system. If I am able to completely disconnect myself from personal relationships and personal property, then I have no vulnerabilities because nothing has any hold on me. And if you would do the same, then, you would not be motivated to attack me if you think that I have something that you want, and then the world would be at peace. Therefore, meditation is the means by which I seek to become one with the Universal Spiritual Essence (Star Wars – force) and rid myself of all earthly attachments. Do you see it now? If the problem in the world has come about by us, living as if we are persons, then the solution has to be a repudiation of our personhood. Therefore, that means that in our original condition, we were never made to be persons, so the original power or source of our creation, could not be personal.

Buddhism is in reality a denial of our humanness. It is a fundamental rejection of our very personhood. But, it at least identifies a serious problem with our humanness and (let's give some credit) attempts to address the problem of pain and suffering. What are we supposed to do with all of this pain and sorrow that we are surrounded with? Buddhism is a hopelessly depressing religion. It is also hopelessly inconsistent. One of the ways you can answer the question of, “is it true?” is to ask the question, “does it work?” Think of it! If all of the Buddhists, really attained to the upper levels of Buddhism and became monks who had no earthly attachments, no spouses, and of course, no children, then, Buddhism would die in one generation. But, I like the fact that it is at least trying to answer an important question and that is a good question to ask and it needs to be asked and it deserves a clear answer. This world is full of suffering. Where did it come from? Can you answer that question in a way that your world will listen? They are asking it. If your life is marked by envy and jealousy, you can't give them a satisfactory answer.

Buddhism has identified that a great deal of pain and sorrow stems from jealousy. On the surface, that makes some sense. Two lanes are merging into 1 in a construction zone – what happens? Your “friend” starts to flirt with your boyfriend. Etc. You feel unappreciated by your wife, because she is giving so much attention to her work, or even to your children. So, you attempt to teach her a lesson by giving your affection to TV, or to work or to a new co-worker in order to help her know how it feels. That is always an immense help!! Jealousy is a serious problem. Eve was jealous of God's position. Joseph's brothers were jealous of his relationship with their father. Cain was jealous of Abel. It goes on and on. Buddhism has identified a problem alright, but the problem with Buddhism is that it does not go deep enough.

If you are investigating what it means to be a follower of Christ, then this message will be very insightful for you. We are not followers of Christ because “it works for us” and we think that it might work for you too. We are followers of Christ because He is God and He is the truth. He created us and our very identity and personhood is directly connected to Him. We were made for the express purpose of knowing him and making him known. As our designer, God not only knows how we best function, but he has called us to live that way. But the way He has called us to live is radically different at the heart level. Now, that is not always easily observable. I grant you that religions can be extremely confusing. On the surface, they all seem to basically teach the same thing, and the only difference is that they just have their own traditions, methods and rules. And if you don’t look under the surface it would be easy to conclude, that it really doesn’t matter what you believe, just as long as you believe it and it works for you. And frankly, since so many people who claim to be religious think that way and live that way, the religious culture too often props up that lie. But there is only one way that the answers to the questions of your heart are logically, consistently and satisfactorily provided. There is only one way for you to know who you really are, what went wrong and how life can be redeemed.

What the message of the Bible and the message of Christ reveal, is that you were made by a personal, all-knowing, all-powerful being. This One, God, made you for Himself. Your true identity is only found in knowing Him the way He calls you to know Him. When you discover that, and then, in turn, when you come home to God (repentance and faith), He calls you to live for Him. But, this life is not so much a rule-driven, top-down, mindless, mother-may-I existence. When you come home to God, God gives you a new heart that is like His heart. He calls us at the heart level to follow Him. That is what the Bible is about. That is what this chapter is about. We are called to love each other, the way God loves us. We are called by the way we love, to put the very love and person of God on display. We make Him known by displaying His heart. God is a God of love and desires to be known as the great and merciful God. He thrills to have His love set on display. You are to be a taste of that love to each other. But, we have to relearn what that love looks like. This type of love is patient and is kind. It is a love that does not envy.

1. **What does it mean to envy?**

The word that Paul uses here is the same word that we get zeal or zealot from. It can be used in a commendable way when speaking of striving for a goal and setting your heart on something or someone. Look at 12.31. The NIV translates this word in this verse as “eagerly desire.” In that verse, it is used in a positive way. Have zeal for the greater gifts. Go back to 3.3. There the same word is translated as jealousy and is used in a negative way. The status conscience members of this church in Corinth were threatened by each other. They were living by the rules of the world and were fighting over who was the most prominent and important among them. They were threatened by people who did not follow their own social rules and treated them as outcasts, which by their actions they were tragically denying the very gospel they claimed to believe.

Zeal can be good when the goal is the glory of God, and the means is consistent with that. Without that goal, zeal can deteriorate to envy. And the very thing that envy is after is now the tyrant that rules. What does it mean to envy? It means to boil with jealousy, to burn with a self-centered passion that seeks to capture or gain something or someone for one's own use or advancement. 1 Corinthians 13 was read first in a church because it was written to a family of believers, called the church of God in Corinth. But, these believers had so much envy. They were threatened by the success of others. They were dissatisfied with their positions and places. They were in competition for prominence and recognition, and the result was a mess. Burning jealousy is the sinful attitude that wants what others have, and if we can't have it, then they shouldn't have it either. You see it in a child who breaks the toy of a sibling, or when someone keys the paint job of a nice car. The two prostitutes that came to Solomon illustrate this as well. I could fill the rest of this sermon with examples of this boiling jealousy known as envy and how it has destroyed relationships, churches and dishonored Christ. But, I think we all know well enough what it is. What do we do about it?

2. **How can I love without envy?**

Buddhism tries and fails to answer this. There is a better way. It is better, because it is right and true. It is the way of the cross. Yes, there is suffering in this world, but that is not because we are persons, it is because we have attempted to live our God-given lives according to our own rules and reject the right of the Creator to rule over us. That rejection is called sin. Sin has affected everything. Something has to be done about sin. That something is something that we cannot fix on our own. We need a Savior to rescue us from our own sin. God, sent His own Son, Christ to this earth to become one like us, yet without sin in order to die so that the penalty for our sin would be paid. In doing that, Christ presented us with a template of what it means to be human. If you want to know what true love looks like, study Christ.

A. **Study Christ.**

When you study Christ you see one who lived in the ultimate sense for the benefit of others. He loved to see others grow, and flourish. He pursued the agenda of the Father, and laid aside his rights so that others would be benefited from his life. He did not blow his own trumpet or talk down about himself.

When we exaggerate our actions, or demean ourselves we betray a lack of security in God. Christ knew that He was loved by the Father. And brother and sister, I want you to know that you are deeply loved by Him as well. God, the Father loves you with a love that drove Him to kill His own Son so that the immense debt of your sin could be paid in full – at it was. Christ was loved by God. In John 13.1 we read that he knew that Christ knew that he had come from the Father, and that He was returning to the Father, and in that secure condition, he loved his disciples and was about to show them the full extent of His love. His confidence in His relationship to the Father was infinitely unshakeable and that enabled him to love those who would not perfectly love him in return. His love was focused on what was in their best interest. You are loved by Christ. This man of

sorrows, was only a man of sorrows because he took our sorrows. These were not His sorrows. But, he chose to take them because He alone could deal with them and he did, by dying in our place. (I will deal with this more extensively tonight). But as you study Christ, you learn what it means to love with such an incredible focus that desires to benefit the other person.

B. Love what God loves.

Love does not envy because it desires the best for the other person. Christ set aside his rights as the Son of God and died in our place because that was the only way that we could become sons of God. He loved what the Father loved – which is you. His love for the Father (and of course His love for you) drove him to the cross because He placed a higher value on the Father's joy in your redemption than he did on His own comfort.

Back in 1 Samuel, we have a rather stunning illustration of this. Jonathan, is the son of the king (Saul). But Jonathan knows that David is going to be king next, even though Jonathan, by lineage is next in line. Jonathan is committed to making David king and sets aside his rights as the son of a king in order to help make this happen.

If you love people like that, you will set your joy on seeing them flourish. Instead of using people to get what you want, you become the one who facilitates their advancement and development. Winning a championship as a player is thrilling. But winning a championship as a coach is even greater, because you are able to be part of bringing about that joy in others. But to consistently love like that, we have to stay near the cross.

C. Stay near the Cross.

“The cross is the blazing fire at which the flame of our love is kindled, but we have to get near enough for its sparks to fall on us.” John Stott

This is why the book of 1 Corinthians begins and ends with the gospel. Understanding what the cross is all about is not only the means by which we become believers, it is the means by which we live and love as believers. That is one of the purposes of observing communion as a community of believers. We confronted with the sacrifice of Christ that was the means for our justification and the means for our sanctification. As the men prepare to serve us, will you bow your heads and consider the Savior who died that you could live, but the life he called you to live is a life that loves like he loves.