

Sermon Notes: The Power of Words

Week #3

Introduction

We continue our post-Easter sermon series exploring “The Power of Words.” This week, we remember the common conflict-avoidance of never talking about politics or religion by exploring both! As our denomination gathers at General Conference in Charlotte, NC, important matters are addressed by this international decision-making body. How we address one another even in these high-impact situations can say a lot about who we are.

Illustration Video

https://youtu.be/DWLoasvaFb8?si=t-ZxyxTdYFJ_cBtL

A clip from the 2020-2023 series *Ted Lasso* (S1E8), where Ted contrasts curiosity with judgment.

Video Discussion Questions

Because of some harsh language, this clip is limited and excludes some context. Rupert (the antagonist) is the former spouse of Rebecca (the blonde woman with the red scarf), and he regularly threatens to humiliate her in her status as owner of an English football team. When Rupert challenges Ted (the primary protagonist) to a game of darts, the two make a wager related to the management of the team and Rupert's influence.

1. Observe the non-verbal communication between the characters. What do you sense between them?
2. Ted seems to face an impossible task in order to win the match. How does he seem to respond? Have you ever faced a situation that seemed un-winnable? How did you respond?
3. What is Rupert's response when he hears the score Ted must achieve? Have you ever been in Rupert's position? How did you respond?
4. Ted says that he has felt underestimated throughout his life. As he talks about those who underestimated him, what observations does he make? Do you agree with Ted? Why or why not?
5. What do you think is the difference between curiosity and judgment? Do you think Ted's illustration makes sense and fits this circumstance? Do you think his illustration fits other circumstances? If so, how? If not, why not?

1 Corinthians 1:10-12; 12:31b; 13:4-8a (NRSVue)

¹⁰Now I appeal to you, brothers and sisters, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that all of you be in agreement and that there be no divisions among you but that you be knit together in the same mind and the same purpose. ¹¹For it has been made clear to me by Chloe's people that there are quarrels among you, my brothers and sisters. ¹²What I mean is that each of you says, "I belong to Paul," or "I belong to Apollos," or "I belong to Cephas," or "I belong to Christ."

^{31b}And I will show you a still more excellent way.

⁴Love is patient; love is kind; love is not envious or boastful or arrogant ⁵or rude. It does not insist on its own way; it is not irritable; it keeps no record of wrongs; ⁶it does not rejoice in wrongdoing but rejoices in the truth. ⁷It bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things.

^{8a}Love never ends.

Scripture Discussion Questions

1. Paul is honest about his purpose for writing the letter (v10). The ways in which the people are divided will become more apparent as the letter goes on. What might it look like to experience a church where there are “no divisions among you, but that you be united in the same mind and the same purpose?” What might that feel like?
2. Why do you think it is human nature to be drawn into certain allegiances, much as the Corinthians did? (Today, this can be seen in allegiances such as Republicans, Democrats, conservatives, liberals, southerners, northerners, Americans, etc.)
3. Does it seem realistic that we are of the “same mind and the same purpose?” With so many denominations, what does this look like today? What does it look like even within The United Methodist Church?
4. How many definitions of the word “love” can you imagine? Write them on a piece of paper or note them in your favorite note-taking app.
5. When do we usually hear 1 Corinthians 13 recited? If you said weddings, consider the context of this passage, that of a church fight about gifts. Is 1 Corinthians 13 fit for weddings? Why or why not?
6. Compare and contrast love as often romanticized in movies and novels versus how love is displayed by God and written about in 1 Corinthians 13. How has God demonstrated love?
7. What makes love a “better way?”

Weekly Action

The postponed 2020 General Conference continues through May 3, 2024. Consider visiting the General Conference website, reading up on the matters to be considered or summaries of activities, or even watching the livestream. Hold the Delegates and leaders in your prayers as they engage in this important sessions, and listen for God’s guidance on how The United Methodist Church can respond.

Prayer

God of redemption, we thank you that we are part of the wonderfully diverse body of Christ that transcends nationalities, ethnicities, and even time. Give us the eyes to see others within the body of Christ who are in need and how we as the body of Christ might extend your care and love to them and those who are not yet part of your family. Amen.