

"WHERE FAITH MEETS LOVE"

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Welcome to Untethered series. A series like this can be unnerving.

- For our family, this series has been like nothing I have experienced before... My wife and I have been so excited for each week and yet also a little bit nervous because being tethered are often tied to either tradition or family or even just assumptions we have lived in. But what I love about this series is it pushes us to depend on the other half of what defines Kessid... Scripture and SPIRIT.
- As a family, we made the decision to step into where God is leading, I think the easy thing is to do is dig in and not open our hearts and minds but when we step into where God is leading we experience so much more of what He has for us.
- To me, that is where we are so privileged to be a part of a church and to have a pastor who is willing to go where God is leading and not just stay stagnant and become irrelevant.
- To me, the most amazing part of God's word is when we see how God has led people through every generation. From the very beginning to Noah and Moses and Abraham, and David and through the prophets and to Jesus and all the way through the NT epistles and the promise He has to lead us today.

(Vs) 2 Peter 1:3 NLT "By his divine power, God has given us everything we need for living a godly life. We have received all of this by coming to know him, the one who called us to himself by means of his marvelous glory and excellence."

- So, when we get to these unnerving moments or untethered instances from how we view the bible or prayer or the church or how we live out our faith, we know we are not alone and that we have all we need to follow what God has for us all.
- The first week of this series my mother-in-law who attends with us was so excited about the possibilities of this series in her life and she asked me afterward, how far do I go with this Kelly? She said, what are the boundaries for how far I let God take this in my life?
- I think that is awesome! And I told Danny her concern and he said, that's perfect, you should teach on that when you teach for this series SO, here we are... Let's dive in and before we do let's stop and pray and ask God to show us His leading and direction.

Boundaries, how far should we go? Where faith meets love...

- Today, I want to start with the quote of the day and then work through that according to what Jesus experienced and commanded.

“The only clear line I draw these days is this: when my religion tries to come between me and my neighbor, I will choose my neighbor...Jesus never commanded me to love my religion.” —Barbara Brown Taylor

- Wow, that is a provocative quote this morning... but I want to challenge us to absorb the power of this quote and we will look at scriptures this morning that hopefully will help us to UNTETHER from some preconceptions we might have that separates us from really learning to LOVE all people the way Jesus commanded us.
- The great commandment is to love God with all your heart and to love our neighbors as ourselves.
- Those two things may be the hardest part of this life; Learning to love ourselves...and learning to love our neighbors the way we should love ourselves...
- To me, that is the beautiful outflow of learning to love ourselves, the healthier you are in proper self-love the more consumed we are with loving everyone else. And I think the opposite is true too, when you have a lack of self-love or an unhealthy self-love, we have a lack of consuming love for others.
- The further I have gotten into my emotional recovery and healing, the more I have loved ME and experiencing emotions that go with that. I am so affected now by what people are going through. That never used to be the case. Now I watch the news and I am so sad.
- And I think that our culture today is being shaken in so many ways. Politically, religiously, racially, socio-economically...

The divide seems to never have been any worse. It seems almost impossible to spend time with someone who we don't 100% agree with on every item.

- The problem is, there isn't anyone we are going to agree with 100% and the challenge is, how do we maintain or even grow relationships with people who think or act differently than I do?
- I don't want to oversimplify this but I do think if we look to Jesus this morning we all can learn better on becoming untethered, how far should we go, or consider going in order to build relationships and share our faith with people outside our lives and our circles, or our boxes. Where does our faith meet love?
- I am really excited to be able to work through this together and to hopefully allow us all to untether from what could be keeping us all from reaching and connecting to people who would have nothing to do with our faith.

In the gospels (Matthew, Mark, Luke, John) we have four different accounts of the life and ministry of Jesus. Since we call ourselves Christians or Christ-followers, I think it is important we master what He taught and how He lived.

- This morning I want to look in the book of Matthew and more specifically the calling of Matthew to follow Jesus. The books of Mark and Luke also give an account of Matthew's calling but I think Matthew has an even better recollection of his own calling that day and we will see a clear tie to KESSID CHURCH in this reading...

(Vs) Matthew 9:9-13 The Message (MSG) "Now, before we read this, I want to set the table for you. Jesus had called several of his core disciples (the ones that were simple fishermen) and he was doing many amazing miracles and healing people from sickness and leprosy and just before this the paralyzed man that his friends lowered through the ceiling."

- And, if you recall the story when his friend's faith was so strong, they cut a hole in the roof and lowered their friend down to Jesus. Jesus' response was to tell the man, your sins are forgiven, and the religious people were so MAD that he thought he could just forgive this man's sins and Jesus asked the, what is more difficult, to forgive his sins or to heal his body?
- Understand this was a small community, maybe the size of Clark County and there were not many people and so they knew who Jesus was, and they heard of what amazing miracles were happening.
- So, when Jesus walks up to Levi (Matthew) and says come follow me, it wasn't some guy that Matthew had never heard of...

(Vs) Matt. 9:9 "Passing along, Jesus saw a man at his work collecting taxes. His name was Matthew. Jesus said, "Come along with me." Matthew stood up and followed him."

The miracle wasn't that Matthew followed Jesus; the miracle was that Jesus called Matthew. But God looks at the heart...

- Don't lose that, don't get to the place in your faith that you begin to think how lucky God is to have us... the miracle always is, God in His amazing power and knowledge and wisdom, WANTS US! He loves us! He chooses us!!
- Now, Matthew it says was a tax collector and he got up and left everything he had, on the spot, to follow Jesus.
- Now, for most of us, we have a difficult time identifying with the significance of Jesus calling a tax collector...
- One writer said this, *"There is no one hated by a nation quite as much as an enemy collaborator. The tax collectors in Israel at the time of Christ were the leeches that sucked the financial blood out of the hard-working laborers of Israeli society and transferred it into the coffers of the occupying Roman Empire, taking as much as they could for themselves. The tax collector made a sizable living. But part of his pay was the derision, disgust, and isolation of his community. In rigid defiance, he plodded through the condemning faces, the whispers, the threats, and rage, multiplying his wealth and the emptiness of his soul."*

- So, for Jesus to have first recruited, plain, simple fishermen as His first recruits, now, he takes it to another level and he chooses, the worst of the worst, the most despised of society, the ones who everyone would have agreed were the lowest of the low.

And if that is not enough, Jesus now goes out on a limb much further than just asking this tax collector to follow Him, Jesus goes with Matthew and all of his disrespectful friends to a party...

(Vs) Matt 9:10-11 "Later when Jesus was eating supper at Matthew's house with his close followers, a lot of disreputable characters came and joined them. When the Pharisees saw him keeping this kind of company, they had a fit and lit into Jesus' followers. "What kind of example is this from your Teacher, acting cozy with crooks and riffraff?"

- I am reading this out of the message paraphrase for a reason, I don't want us to get lost in the words that were used by the religious people (the Pharisees) they kept referring to them as "sinners" and I think that in our society creates an US verse THEM mentality and for most church people today, the sinners are THEM and there is a HUGE gap in our ability to relate to ANYONE who is different than we are.
- We create our own safe place and that is US and everyone who acts or thinks different than we are is THEM -sinners... Well, Jesus BLOWS that paradigm UP!!
- And He does it by inserting himself into the lives of the very people who needed Him most... Jesus didn't just say, come follow me, he took it to the next level and entered into the lives of the people where they lived...
- Earlier, when Jesus called Peter, James, and John... they were fishermen, and Jesus climbed onto their boats and entered into their lives, where they lived...
- Now, Jesus calls this tax collector and he enters into his life and friends and he isn't there to condemn them or to tell them why He is different or why they are wrong... He is there to enter into relationship and to love them where they are.
- Well, that sets off the religious people (US crowd).
- Because they say you are with THEM, and THEY are sinners...And do you know what Jesus didn't say...?

He didn't say, HATE THE SIN, LOVE THE SINNER...

Nope, nowhere, shocker, it's not in the Bible!!

- If he said anything, he said, LOVE THE SINNER, LOVE THE SINNER!
- The apostle Paul said in Galatians, *"For the whole law is fulfilled in one word: "You shall love your neighbor as yourself."*
- Let's read exactly what Jesus said; *(Vs) Matt. 9:12-13 "Jesus, overhearing, shot back, "Who needs a doctor: the healthy or the sick?"*
- Go figure out what this Scripture means: 'I'm after mercy, not religion.' I'm here to invite outsiders, not coddle insiders." (S-no bullet point) (leave verses up until next verse)
- Wow, and you thought the quote from Barbara Brown Taylor was controversial...

Talking about untethered... In this scripture, Jesus blows up what it means to be untethered for the religious crowd of His time.

- One author said; The church has many ancient and contemporary metaphors - one is a hospital for sinners, another is a spiritual pub with grace on tap.
- Something very intriguing to me that Danny suggested in the very first week of this series was, that what if God isn't allowing us to move into our new building until we all learn some things that He wants us to learn before we go into a community that we have ONE chance to minister to when we get there.
- What if, God wants us to learn how to LOVE ALL PEOPLE better...
- What if God wants us to untether from our US and THEM mentality and to see people where they are, and to love ALL people where they are. Not an US and THEM mentality but a place where people come in and are loved where they are... PERIOD.

Now, here is where I think we created the US verses THEM paradigm that Jesus is trying to change...

- BOX 1 – We came to Jesus, or He came to us. Whether it was a moment like Matthew, come follow me... or whether it was a long process, you entered into a relationship with God, you found a church with people who are similar and we JUMP IN!
- That's our box... and everyone else (THEM) is outside our box.
- Some of THEM are in other church BOXES and other of THEM are not, they are just doing and living either the way WE used to or maybe even worse... and the longer we live in this box of ORDER the bigger the divide of US and THEM.
- Jesus came along in our scripture this morning and HE stepped out of the box of order into the box of DISORDER and this box is not as comfortable, we are not the same, we are not compatible and we do not see things the same, it is crowded and a challenge.
- But until we learn to get out of our box of ORDER and to experience the box of DISORDER God can never REORDER our lives together for His greater purpose...

Let's look back at where Jesus left us...

- Go figure out what this Scripture means: 'I'm after mercy, not religion.' I'm here to invite outsiders, not coddle insiders."

So, let's take Him up on his offer... Let's figure out what this scripture means...

(Vs) Hosea 6:6 (New International Version) "For I desire [mercy], not sacrifice, and acknowledgment of God rather than burnt offerings."

- First of all, the general meaning is that God isn't interested in our religious practices more than He is in us living out our faith in love.

- But what I think is especially beautiful about this particular scripture this morning is when I did what the verse says, figure out what it means, I found out the word mercy in Hebrew means chesed, or where we get the name for our church - Kessid.
- It is a rich word for the covenant love of God that is impossible to translate directly into English.
- Chesed most properly means “devoted love,” with connotations of loyalty, strength, kindness, and compassion.”
- Hosea emphasizes the forgiveness and undeserved compassion of God so strongly. These are necessary because God is devoted to one who is unfaithful to him, and so in order for God to carry out his covenant love, he must be self-sacrificially merciful.
- In telling the Pharisees this, Jesus reminds them that God’s compassion extends to those who are farthest away from him. And in fact, mercy in the way God’s people treat one another outweighs sacrifice, even ritual sacrifices commanded by the covenant, in the eyes of God.
- If they share God’s heart, then, the Pharisees should not simply want to reject and cut off those who are apostate: they should desire to see them brought into the fold — healed.
- So, it is only after you and I get out of the box of order and engage in the chesed life of showing LOVE, MERCY, COMPASSION and engage with people outside our safe space (whoever they might be) DISORDER that we can then step into together, the box of REORDER

Where we can UNTETHER together and grow together to be the Kessid community that God is leading us to be?

- Question 1: In light of Jesus challenge to “figure out what this means”
- Question 2: What boundaries keep you from living Kessid mercy?
- Question 3: How can your love grow to include outsiders and not just insiders?

A Parable of a Lighthouse

On a dangerous seacoast, where shipwrecks often occur, there was once a crude little life-saving station. The building was just a hut, and there was only one boat, but the few devoted members kept a constant watch over the sea, and with no thought for themselves, they went out day or night tirelessly searching for the lost.

Many lives were saved by this wonderful little lifesaving station so that it became famous. Some of those who were saved, and various others in the surrounding areas, wanted to become associated with the station and they gave of their time and money and effort for the support of its work. New boats were bought, and new crews were trained. The little life-saving station grew.

Now some of these new members of the life-saving station were unhappy that the building was so crude and so poorly equipped. They felt that a more comfortable place should be provided as the first refuge of those saved from the sea.

So, they replaced the emergency cots with beds and put better furniture in the enlarged building. Now the life-saving station became a popular gathering place for all of its members, and they re-decorated it beautifully and furnished it as a sort of club.

Fewer of the members were now interested in going to sea on life-saving missions, so they hired lifeboat crews to do this work.

The mission of life-saving was still given lip-service, but most were too busy or lacked the necessary commitment to take part in the life-saving activities personally.

About this time a large ship was wrecked off the coast, and the hired crews brought in boatloads of cold, wet, and half-drowned people.

They were dirty and sick, and some of them were foreigners, and some spoke a strange language, and the beautiful new club was considerably messed up. So, the property committee immediately had a shower house built outside the club where victims of shipwreck could be cleaned up at least before coming inside.

At the next meeting, there was a split in the club membership. Most of the members wanted to stop the club's life-saving activities as really being unpleasant and a hindrance to the normal life pattern of the club.

But some members insisted that lifesaving was their primary purpose and pointed out that they were still called a life-saving station. But they were finally voted down and told that if they wanted to save the lives of all the various kinds of people who were shipwrecked in those waters, they could begin their own life-saving station down the coast. And so, they did.

As the years went by, the new station experienced the same changes that had occurred in the old. They evolved into a club and yet another life-saving station was founded at least on the sign.

If you visit the seacoast today, you will find a number of exclusive clubs along that shore. Shipwrecks are still frequent in those waters, only now most of the passengers drown.

- Author unknown