

The Eighth Deadly Sin

Hatred

Proverbs 10:12, First Corinthians 13:1-8a, John 15:18-27

In the spring we talked about what are famously called "*The Seven Deadly Sins*". You'll remember the list. Pride, Lust, Greed, Envy, Sloth (or Apathy) Wrath and Gluttony. A few days after I finished that series, I got an e-mail from Jim and Betty Ball. They suggested that in today's world, there is an eighth deadly sin. The sin of HATRED. So today, we're going to talk about hatred as a deadly sin, as one of the major sins of our time. Hatred.

How else do you explain some of the things we've seen in the News recently? A mother killing her three young children simply to punish their father for deserting her. A terrorist who bombs a concert venue in Manchester filled with children and young people, or who drives a truck into a crowd of pedestrians in Paris. A police officer who is assassinated because of the colour of their skin. White supremacists descending on Charlottesville, Virginia shouting anti- black and anti- Jewish sentiments while one of their number drives their car into the crowd killing one person and injuring many more. A terrorist cell that kills innocent residents and tourists in Barcelona. These days, in which we live, are becoming defined by hatred.

Now hatred certainly isn't a new thing. History is very clear about that. It's always been lurking around somewhere. But it does seem to be reviving itself in our day. If you're on any kind of social media, you know that's true. Hatred is front and center. Hateful posts around Muslims, refugees, gay and transgender people. Hateful posts around the Independence referendum in Scotland, the French Presidential election, and the Brexit vote. Hateful posts during the American Presidential election and more hatred than any of us could imagine since that election, showing just how deeply divided the United States is. Hatred, pictured in Nazi flags and salutes, in a southern American city.

Hatred. The eighth deadly sin. I think a strong argument can be made for that. Deadly, because hatred does kill. It kills people physically. It kills family relationships, and friendships. It turns one group against another. It divides nations. It is the driving force behind racism, prejudice, and injustice.

So let's define hatred. The dictionary says, "*Hatred is a deep and extreme emotional dislike. It can be directed against individuals, groups, entities, objects, behaviors, or ideas. Hatred is often associated with feelings of anger, disgust and a disposition towards hostility.*"

Hatred is more than just a passing dislike of someone or something. It is "deep and extreme." In 2011 a CBC article described hatred this way:

The Criminal Code of Canada says a hate crime is committed to intimidate, harm or terrify not only a person, but an entire group of people to which the victim belongs. The victims are targeted for who they are, not because of anything they have done.

A hate crime is one in which hate is the motive and can involve intimidation, harassment, physical force or threat of physical force against a person, a group or a property.

Source: CBC News, June 2011 What is a Hate Crime?

Now the word "hate" appears 127 times in the New International translation of the Bible, and the word "hatred" appears an additional 12 times. We'll take a quick look at some of those verses in a minute but, for now, let just give you one verse to hang the theme of this message on. Proverbs Chapter 10:12 (NIV), "**Hatred stirs up conflict, but love covers over all wrongs**"

You'll remember that when the original list of seven deadly sins was first drawn up by Pope Gregory I in the sixth century, he gave each of them a corresponding "holy virtue". So, for example, the virtue that counterbalanced the sin of *pride* was *humility*. The *virtue* that counterbalanced the sin of *greed* was *generosity*. This verse from Proverbs suggests clearly that the corresponding virtue to the sin of *hatred* is *love*. "**Hatred stirs up conflict, but love covers over all wrongs.**" In that context then, listen to the great hymn of love found in First Corinthians 13:4-8a (NIV). It's the great corrective to hate.

4 Love is patient, love is kind. It does not envy, it does not boast, it is not proud. 5 It does not dishonor others, it is not self-seeking, it is not easily angered, it keeps no record of wrongs. 6 Love does not delight in evil but rejoices with the truth. 7 It always protects, always trusts, always hopes, always perseveres. 8 Love never fails.

OK, let's do a quick survey of those 139 Bible verses that mention hate and hatred.

First, some of those verses talk about hate being directed against a person. For example, in Genesis 37:4, when it tells the story of Joseph and his coat

of many colors, we read, "***When his brothers saw that their father loved him more than any of them, they hated him and could not speak a kind word to him.***"

Second, other verses talk about people hating God. Do you remember this line about idol worship in the Ten Commandments? Exodus 20:5, "***You shall not bow down to them or worship them; for I, the Lord your God, am a jealous God, punishing the children for the sin of the parents to the third and fourth generation of those who hate me.***"

Third, there are the things which God, in his holy nature, hates. Proverbs 6:16-19 says, for example:

***"There are six things the Lord hates,
seven that are detestable to him:
17 *haughty eyes,
 a lying tongue,
 hands that shed innocent blood,*
18 *a heart that devises wicked schemes,
 feet that are quick to rush into evil,*
19 *a false witness who pours out lies
 and a person who stirs up conflict in the community."****

Fourth, there are the lines in the hymnbook of Israel, in the Book of Psalms, where the Psalmist talks about hate. Psalm 97:10, "***Let those who love the Lord hate evil, for he guards the lives of his faithful ones and delivers them from the hand of the wicked.***" Psalm 101:3: "***I will not look with approval on anything that is vile. I hate what faithless people do; I will have no part in it.***"

Now did you notice in that verse, that the Psalmist doesn't say God hates "***faithless people***"? He says, God hates "***what faithless people do***." Maybe there's an important lesson for us here. Maybe we need to find a way to hate what someone does, without making them as an individual the object of our hate, because the moment we do that, we are forgetting that God is their Creator as well as ours, and that Jesus died on the cross for their sins, as well as for ours.

Now here's an interesting verse on hate from Ecclesiastes 3:8, "***(There is) a time to love and a time to hate***." Rabbi Shmuel Boteach, formerly the Chabad Rabbi at Oxford University, and a well-known Jewish author, commented on this verse from Ecclesiastes:

"Only if we hate the truly evil passionately will we summon the determination to fight them fervently. Odd and uncomfortable as it may seem, hatred has its place. Although they referred to a different era in history, the words of Martin Luther King, Jr., still ring true today: "We will have to repent in this generation not merely for the vitriolic words and actions of the bad people, but for the appalling silence of the good people."

Or as Edmund Burke famously said:

"The only thing necessary for the triumph of evil is for good (people) to do nothing."

In that light, listen to the Old Testament prophet Amos 5:15, "**Hate evil, love good; maintain justice in the courts.**"

Now let's look at the New Testament. We'll start with the words of Jesus in Matthew 5:43-44, "**You have heard that it was said, 'Love your neighbor and hate your enemy.'** 44 **But I tell you, love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you,** 45 **that you may be children of your Father in heaven. He causes his sun to rise on the evil and the good, and sends rain on the righteous and the unrighteous.**"

Now let me suggest something to you here. Jesus is laying down in these verses that love, the corresponding virtue to hate, is the only basis for our personal relationships. That's why Jesus tells us to pray for those who persecute us, because ultimately that is proof positive that we aren't holding on to hatred in our hearts. But also notice, in that verse, that Jesus makes a comparison between those who are captured by evil, and those who are captured by good. He says it's the difference between those who have a right relationship with God, and those who do not. That's why the commandment to love has no limit, but it does not mean that there is not very real evil, like racism and injustice, that need to be strongly resisted. Matthew 6:24 makes that clear, "**No one can serve two masters. Either you will hate the one and love the other, or you will be devoted to the one and despise the other...**"

And Scripture is clear that when we choose Jesus as our Master and Saviour, we will be hated. Matthew 10:22, "**You will be hated by everyone because of me, but the one who stands firm to the end will be saved.**" John 15:9, "**If you belonged to the world, it would love you as its own. As it is, you do not belong to the world, but I have chosen you out of the world. That is why the world hates you.**"

When Christian people stand up and speak out about sin, when we oppose evil, and when we promote the holy virtue of love, we should expect to be hated. That's part of what it means when Jesus tells us to, **"take up our cross and follow him"**.

So one final Scripture in this very broad survey of some of the references to "hate" or "hatred". First John 4:20, **"Whoever claims to love God yet hates a brother or sister is a liar. For whoever does not love their brother and sister, whom they have seen, cannot love God, whom they have not seen."** There you have it again. The sin of *hate* and the virtue of *love*.

So here's where the rubber hits the road. Each of us needs to examine our thought life, our opinions, and our actions. We need to search our hearts. We need to root out any bitterness or hatred we find there. We need to surrender it all to God. We need to make the ancient Prayer ascribed to St. Francis of Assisi our personal prayer. So this morning we will make it our Pastoral Prayer.

Lord, make me an instrument of your peace.
Where there is hatred, let me bring love.
Where there is offense, let me bring pardon.
Where there is discord, let me bring union.
Where there is error, let me bring truth.
Where there is doubt, let me bring faith.
Where there is despair, let me bring hope.
Where there is darkness, let me bring your light.
Where there is sadness, let me bring joy.
O Master, let me not seek as much
to be consoled as to console,
to be understood as to understand,
to be loved as to love,
for it is in giving that one receives,
it is in self-forgetting that one finds,
it is in pardoning that one is pardoned,
it is in dying that one is raised to eternal life. Amen.