

The Rev. Michael J. Bridge  
Sermon- 1 Peter 3:8-18  
Sunday, May 21, 2017

### Evil for evil?

1. I am a pretty laid back guy, and I have never been one for things like road rage. That isn't to say that I never get angry or frustrated. That just isn't usually how I respond to things. My mom gets road rage big time. I will talk to her on the phone and she will tell me to hold on so she can yell at someone, or she will stop a serious conversation dead in its tracks to tell me what ridiculous thing some driver just did and how big of an idiot they are.
2. My friend Mike takes things a step further. He is also a pretty laid back guy, so when he told me about his road rage, I was pretty surprised. He said that he gets so upset that he has gotten the other person to pull over so that he can yell at them. While he has never been in a fist fight with anyone, he said that he is worried that one day he is going to get shot because of it.
3. Ironically, the one area where I tend to not be laid back is when it comes to false teaching and theology within the church. I don't mean that I get mad when I disagree with someone. I am talking about when people teach heresy or deliberately alter the Word of God. While that should anger me, it shouldn't move me to angry behavior, which it often does. I spent six years pastoring in a diocese in Kansas where I was one of the only clergy who even believed that Jesus is God, and is necessary for salvation. I would get so angry that I wasn't always friendly to those with false views.
  - a. So in the instance when Christian behavior would be most important- when actually dealing with Christian life and teaching- was when I was most susceptible to poor behavior.
4. It is easy to live in our own little bubbles, living as though we are at the center of the world and everyone/everything else should revolve around us. For the most part, I don't even think we intend to be this way. We just are. Not everyone, and not all to the same degree. But to some extent, most of us can get so caught up in ourselves that we can justify anger and even abusive behavior towards another because we feel that they have violated us, disrespected us, or mistreated us in some way.
5. We need to always keep in mind that if we are a Christian, we are a Christian always, everywhere, at all times. You aren't a Christian while worshiping on Sunday, but not a Christian when you are belittling some cashier for some mistake they made ringing up your groceries. Our actions in more stressful situations can give us (and others around us) a deeper insight into our spiritual maturity.
  - a. The question I really have is this: if we can struggle to keep it together over minor infractions, and what are often accidents or mistakes that others make; how will we respond if we are ever in a situation of real suffering for the gospel?
  - b. Will we "suffer well" for the sake of the gospel? Or will we be defiant and angry, killing any witness we have for Christ?
  - c. "Do not repay evil for evil or reviling for reviling, but on the contrary, bless, for to this you were called, that you may obtain a blessing." (v 9)

## Always godly

1. Peter cites Psalm 34 and says, “For the eyes of the Lord are on the righteous, and his ears are open to their prayer. But the face of the Lord is against those who do evil.” (v. 12)
2. Yes, the face of the Lord is against those who do evil to us because we serve him. But Peter is saying that the face of the Lord is against those who do evil, whether it is the initial evil, or whether it is the Christian repaying evil for evil. We are called to something better. The eyes of the Lord are on the righteous, and his ears are open to their prayer. So we pray for those who would harm us, particularly those who harm us because of Jesus. We let God repay evil for evil- or, more accurately, we let God bring justice and vengeance. Our job is to suffer well so that we exhibit Christ in our lives.
  - a. How many absolutely incredible, amazing stories of God’s grace do we have to hear from Africa and Asia before we are moved to similar behavior? For example, the Muslims come in, destroy villages, rape women, and take men prisoner for being Christian. Then the men, while in prison, witness to these same Muslims about Christ and see some of them converted.
3. If we can look at our good friend Samuel and see him with a smile on his face all the time, being kind to everyone in light of what he has been through; then how much more can we, in our significantly lesser persecutions and sufferings for the gospel, behave the same way?
  - a. Is loving our enemies hard? Absolutely. If it was easy, it wouldn’t need to be commanded. Is it possible? Absolutely. We have the Holy Spirit dwelling within us, and his power is sufficient where our own power is lacking.
4. Peter tells us to always be ready to give a defense for the hope that we have in us, but to do it with gentleness and respect. This is all in the context of suffering for the faith. When someone treats you poorly for being a Christian, respond with gentleness and respect about the hope that you have in Christ. Why? So that those who revile you may be put to shame.
5. Peter then holds up the ultimate example for us: For Christ also suffered once for sins, the righteous for the unrighteous, that he might bring us to God. (v. 18)
  - a. You haven’t suffered for your faith more than Jesus did. He suffered and died to bring us to God; to wipe away sins.
  - b. So when we suffer, let us suffer as those whose consciences are clear and whose sins have been wiped away. Let us suffer for the sake of the gospel in a manner befitting the gospel, so that our character will be unassailable, our message confirmed, and our Lord visible through our actions.