

This week has been an interesting week for me. I've had a lot of people come up and ask me, how do you love someone you hate? Not always directly like that, but in different ways. How do we do what we're supposed to do? How do we love one another as Jesus commanded when there are people that we absolutely hate?

If I asked you all right now to think of somebody that you despise, that is terrible, that is opposed to everything you absolutely believe in. I'm sure you can think of one person. It doesn't matter who it is. Doesn't matter if you know them personally or not, but I'm sure there is somebody that you can think of that you absolutely do not get along with. That you don't care for.

How do you deal with that person? Sometimes it's very easy, right? We just ignore it. We can ignore everything they do. We can ignore everything they say. We can ignore what they represent. Sometimes we can't. It's somebody we work with on a daily basis. It's someone we see constantly. It's somebody. that is always there.

I had a boss, hated this guy. He was the absolute opposite of everything I believed in. All he cared about was making money. He wanted to be the top of everything. He wanted everybody to do exactly what he says without having to do it. And I despised him. He enjoyed making people unhappy. He enjoyed being a jerk. It took me 15 years to get to the point that I can say hi to this guy without being upset about this really being angry, seeing him.

That's not what Jesus teaches us. He teaches us that everyone should be forgiven. He teaches us that we should love one another as we want to be loved. So, how do you put those feelings aside?

Today's reading we're hearing about Saul? We know that he becomes Paul. We know the great and wondrous things that Paul does. Going around teaching, telling everybody about the good word, telling everybody about Jesus and who he is and what it means to follow the way.

But he was a terrible, terrible person. He persecuted the Jews that believed in Jesus. They tortured him. They murdered him. And yet, now He's being raised above all of them. How are they supposed to handle this? He is the opposite of everything that Jesus stands for. He is the opposite of everything the disciples have been told to do. He is the opposite of love, of hope, of forgiveness.

And now he's seen the error of his ways. He goes through the transformation and is resurrected again. He goes three days without food, without water, without vision, without love. And it comes out of it because he believes finally, in what Jesus represents. That he is the Messiah. That he is telling them the good news, that he is living a life that is beyond what would originally be within his capabilities. And now he's going to go and tell all these people that he hates, hated, and that he knows who hates him what it means to find Jesus's love. What it means to follow the light and come out of the darkness. What it means to be wonderful, to be the embodiment of love, to be a believer.

We all have moments where we fall back into that right. We have moments where we fall back into the hate. Where we fall back into the wrong ways. But that doesn't make us bad people. But it does make it harder for us to love one another. It makes it harder to love those people that we hate. It makes it harder for us to set aside those differences.

We do a fantastic job of living a righteous life. We do a fantastic job of taking care of our neighbors. We do a fantastic job of taking care of our friends. We don't always do a fantastic job of taking care of the ones we don't like, because it's hard.

If it was easy, anybody could do it. If it was easy, we wouldn't have a problem. We have the option. We have the opportunity to walk away at any time. We have the opportunity to ignore, to turn off the TV when we see something we don't like, to not open a newspaper because there's something in it we don't like, to stop talking to people we don't like. We don't have to answer a phone call. We don't have to respond to a text message. We don't have to cross the street to see somebody and talk to him, but we get to do that.

We get to be reminded of what I just said. We get to share the love that Jesus gave us. We get to remember the sacrifice that he made, so we don't need to worry about those things. We don't need to worry about forgetting where we're at. We get to share our love.

It is hard to share that love with someone we hate. But we can also help them. We continue to be who we are. We continue to teach what we teach, we get. We continue to share and love and be a part of each other's lives, even with them, and eventually it'll change. Eventually, that love will start showing, rubbing off on them, eventually living the life and showing them Jesus's love will be. It will be best for them because they will see the light like Saul.

He felt the kindness of the strangers. He felt what it meant to share that love, by helping others, by teaching them, and telling them the good news. He no longer became a person that we hate. He became someone that we love.

And we can do that. We continue to show love to people we hate and who hate us. They won't always turn, but many of them will, because so many times it's just a simple misunderstanding. It's just a simple something got said the wrong way.

We know many of us know this week 've had a lot of conversations with people because there's a miscommunication at city council about me. There is a miscommunication because somebody thought I was teaching hate. I was teaching the opposite of what they believed, and they didn't come and talk to me. Finally, that person did come and talk to me and realized that that's not what I'm trying to do.

I would not say that I love this individual. Well, I would say that I don't hate this individual. We might not always see eye to eye, but we can always find a common ground. And through that we can share God's love through that. We stop hating everyone else. We stop trying to find ways to love people that we hate because we no longer hate them because we have found that middle ground. We don't have to love them, but we don't have to hate them either. That's what's important, is remembering we are always sharing the love and in turn, that does well for others.

Let us pray.