MESSY GRACE **– A study of 1 Cor -**

**Today we kick off a new series, Messy Grace with a controversial, powerful, dysfunctional letter - covers a lot of ground and shocking.**

**That speaks directly to current issues still - 2000 yrs later.**

**What you might find shocking as we go through it – is how many of the principles are ignored by churches today.**

**WELCOME TO CORINTH**

**1 Corinthians 1:1 Paul, called to be an apostle of Christ Jesus by the will of God, (sent by Jesus - listen) and our brother Sosthenes, (says hi, scribe) 2 To the church of God in Corinth, (the church- this church belongs to God) to those sanctified (v. practice) in Christ Jesus and called to be his holy people, (n. position. Followers of Jesus are called to be set apart, major theme of letter - Be Different!) together with all those everywhere who call on the name of our Lord Jesus Christ—their Lord and ours: (big family - for all followers of Jesus) 3 Grace and peace to you from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.**

**Who are these people and this place called Corinth? – MAP**

**Corinth was the original sin city**

**“What happens in Corinth stays in Corinth”**

**a cosmopolitan sea port city – people would come party and leave. It was a get away destination in the ancent world.**

**Corinth was a very sexually charged city**

**10 yrs ago when I last went through this we called it - Christians Gone Wild – Corn-fornication, Jesus in a jacked up church, Controversies that almost killed a church, 1st Californians,**

**Temple pic - In Corinth they literally worship the god of sex – it was the town mascot – the goddess of sex (Aphrodite - Venus)**

**Primary temple at one time had 1000 prostitutes (men/women) Go often to worship have sex with them, the goddess would give fertile land, homes, livestock. “Corinthizing” = living wild / Corinthian girl = harlot. Ancent plays – immoral or the drunks**

**5 yrs before this letter Paul had planted a church in this hard soil. Started in a house now in several. Acts 18:1-18 tells the story.**

**He pastored them 1 ½ year, followed by Apollos (great pastor) They had a great foundation but struggled to get it together.**

**Corinth church was made up of new and immature believers**

**They had a lot, did a lot, and knew a lot – but lacked discipline**

**So, they send a letter with a series of questions to Paul, dealing w/ diff issue. He responded with 4 different letters – we only have 2**

**This letter is all over the map. Arguing, suing, rampant immorality, drunk at church potlucks, divisive, arrogance, misuse of spiritual gifts, doubting the resurrection and the words of Jesus, ignoring sin, incest, still going to idol temples, they were progressive and proud of it – all over the place – messed up.**

**But what we find as he addresses each issue – is grace.**

**Paul approaches the issues with patience and care.**

**1 Corinthians 1:4 (He starts out, “I am shocked and disgusted by what I am hearing about you all…” No - In spite of all that God gave grace -) I always thank my God for you because of his grace given you in Christ Jesus. 5 For in him you have been enriched in every way—with all kinds of speech and with all knowledge— 6 God thus confirming our testimony about Christ among you. 7 Therefore you do not lack any spiritual gift as you eagerly wait for our Lord Jesus Christ to be revealed. 8 He will also keep you firm to the end, so that you will be blameless on the day of our Lord Jesus Christ. 9 God is faithful, who has called you into fellowship with his Son, Jesus Christ our Lord.**

**That does not sound like the church I just described. They were a messed up church, in a messed up city, yet still blessed up by God. HOW are they blessed? With grace.**

**What Makes Grace So Amazing?**

**While justice is paying for what you did or serving time…**

* **Grace – unmerited favor = getting what we don’t deserve**

**We forget - Grace not only forgives us when we sin, but restores us when we do, and empowers us, so we don’t.**

**When we are weak, tired, and fail – Paul writes “"My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness." 2 Cor 12:9**

* **Mercy – unmerited forgiveness = not getting what we deserve**

**Thank God, He is not fair. I don’t get what I deserve – Hell.**

**SO - How does grace, faith and works - work together? Which is it?**

**Larry Osborne – “God’s saves us and blesses us in ways we could never earn or deserve – now live like it is only God who saves you and blesses you.”**

**True life change results in a life change. The proof that God has moved in your life, is that there is movement in your life.**

**Say you bought a fruit tree… mislabeled. (Apple vs. Avocado) When you plant it and it begins to bear fruit, it will not bear fruit based on what you paid for or hope for – but by what it is inside. No matter the receipt you have or what you have been told. \*\*Grace produces fruit.**

**He starts off by saying How great God’s grace it – A grace that had saved them, set them apart, and will finish what he started in them.**

**Paul is the expert of the love sandwich (explain) that’s messy**

**What a great attitude. Diff than how many Christians treat each other and new Christians struggling to walk in line with grace.**

**After he loves on them… he lovingly lays into them**

**The first issue he had to deal with - They Were A Church Divided**

**1 Corinthians 1:10 (he loves on them then says - but…) I appeal to you, brothers and sisters, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that all of you agree with one another in what you say and that there be no divisions among you, but that you be perfectly united (knit together – like a fishing net) in mind and thought.**

**What Makes Unity So Important? Jesus the pastor says…**

**\*Unity is for your sake - Jesus commanded it, we should obey it**

**John 13:34 – I command you to love each other – you must!**

**\*Unity is for our sake - Jesus Prayed for it, we should prioritize it**

**Jo. 17:20-23 – I pray they are one as we are one / Ep 4:3 – Make every effort.**

**\*Unity is for their sake – Jesus says our impact is affected by it. Non-Christians will judge us by it. It’s for them**

**John 13:35 – they will know us by our love for each other.**

**I think - a big reason why we are seeing such a decline in Christin influence is not because of Satan (he is defeated) – it is because we fight each and tear each other apart – look in the mirror.**

**Illustrate - We are like a bunch of kids in the back seat on the way to heaven nagging each other. Dad – is saying settle down or I will turn this car around – or smack you while I’m driving.**

**11 My brothers and sisters, some from Chloe’s household have informed me that there are quarrels among you. 12 What I mean is this: One of you says, “I follow Paul”; (THE apostle – our founding pastor – I am his disciple) another, “I follow Apollos”; (known for his apologetics – Paul has no depth, but Apollos…) another, “I follow Cephas”; (Peter the original disciple - walked w/ Jesus - he can preach!!) still another, “I follow Christ.” (hyper-spiritual, I follow… Jesus. Don’t need others, just Jesus. Making it about their own spiritual-ness - we have our teams!)**

1. **We often divide over dumb stuff**

**Stupid Things They Divided Over - They**

* **Fought over favorite leaders / teachers – styles**
* **Fought over food preferences – food offered to idols**
* **Fought over when the sabbath started – and what day**
* **Fought what it takes to be a real Christian – circumcision**

**We do the same: (our teams) I’m Calvinist, Wesleyan, Arminian, charismatic, dispensationalist, rapture ready, only 2nd coming, I drink - I don’t, no R movies - your legalistic, dress up or dress down for church, Sat service or Sun, no diet coke. You let them read Harry Potter, you had an Easter Bunny, you dressed up for Halloween, I like to dance – you can’t do that, tongues, music styles matter – no the heart matters – I prefer deep preaching – no it’s deep worship… etc.**

**It is still happening today! We haven’t changed!**

**Sadly, some of you have lived through church spits, painful divisions, exoduses – friends church imploded two weeks ago.**

**\* Take note - a divided church is a dying church.**

1. **If you are saved by Grace – live and give grace**

**1 Corinthians 1:11-13 & 3:1-9, 8:1-9, Romans 14:1-15:7**

**Paul says, if you are truly in Christ, then you are saved by grace, give it**

**\* Case of Grace Amnesia – We forget we are given daily grace**

**Funny thing about grace & mercy, we get grace just like they do, but like them we start to think we earned it or deserve it.**

**It dishonored God then, it dis-honors God today.**

**We must never forget it all begins, sustains, and ends with Jesus. Anything we have that is good (spiritual / physical) is His grace!**

**1 Cor 1:13 Is Christ divided? (Does Jesus only love some people?) Was Paul crucified for you? (I never carried your sins) Were you baptized in the name of Paul? (this is not my church, but Jesus’! Good pastors point to Jesus not himself) 14 I thank God that I did not baptize any of you except Crispus and Gaius, 15 so no one can say that you were baptized in my name. 16 (Oh, wait…) Yes, I also baptized the household of Stephanas; beyond that, I don’t remember if I baptized anyone else. (so personal, writing to a real letter to real people)**

**It doesn’t matter who baptized you – What matters is, was it a reflection of your love and submission to Jesus!**

**17 For Christ did not send me to baptize, but to preach the gospel… (does not mean we are not to baptize, but rather don’t confuse the symbols w/ the savior!)**

1. **The way that a church maintains unity - is that the Gospel of Jesus Christ is continually preached**

**The number one essential issue of unity is – Christ and the cross.**

**Jesus says, “If I be lifted up, I’ll draw everyone to me.” John 12:32**

**1 Cor 1:17 …but to preach the gospel – not with wisdom and eloquence, (no flash and hipster cool persuasion) lest the cross of Christ be emptied of its power. (When our faith becomes about a style, person, denomination, tribe, or a group, lights, and cool people, or clothes – it robs the cross of its power)**

**Paul says - Here is the point, don’t make this about me, Peter, Apollos or anyone – only Jesus. Don’t lose sight of the cross!**

**So, What Does Real Unity Look Like?**

**1 Corinthians 1:10, 12:18-27, Phil 1:15-18, 27, Ro 12:16, 14:1-4, Eph 2:14**

**Unity is not - uniformity – agreeing on styles, methods, conviction. Ever walk into a church and everyone is wearing the same clothes… might be cult. Unity is not uniformity – or that we agree on everything.**

**Unity is not - avoiding issues – does not mean that for the sake of unity we ignore false and dangerous teaching. Paul addresses a lot of issues in 1 Cor – but only after he affirms their unity.**

**Unity is not - overlooking sin – It is not ignoring clear guidelines – or tolerance of all views – BUT - as we see in 1 Cor, there are instructions to deal with it – in humility and conviction.**

**1 Corinthians 1:10 I appeal to you… in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that all of you agree with one another in what you say and that there be no divisions among you, but that you be perfectly united in mind and thought.**

* **Unity - gives other Christians the same grace God gives us**

**If you have ever changed your mind – raise your hand**

**If you have realized you’ve ever been wrong – raise your hand**

**How much grace do you want God to give you in your walk??**

**\*\*This means - at the heart of unity is the value of relationships over the need to be right. Our relationship is more important!**

**\*\*This also means we understands we all have blind spots**

**It means we give people grace in areas of their own growth**

**\*\* This means unity is motivated by an authentic mutual love**

**It does seek to its own way – but to serve others.**

* **Unity - distinguishes between the essential and the important**

**Unity defines what is essential - there are lines to be drawn. There are cults – and false faiths… Not every way is the way to Jesus.**

**We are united by the core truths: the need for salvation, the cross of Christ, resurrection, eternal heaven & hell, faith in Jesus alone, God’s purpose and design for us as humans.**

**Unity in the essentials / liberty in the no-essentials / charity (love) in all**

**As Christians - there are things we can debate and discuss, but do not need to divide over… The rest is messy grace**

**\*\* Preference not prejudice: Preference says you like certain things, over others (music, styles, dress). Prejudice arrogantly says yours is better than others. \*\*\* It is not about the style, it’s about the savior.**

**Like a multilane highway – diff lanes going in the same direction. You can progress in Jesus at your own pace. Pick a lane, I’ll met you there.**

**When something is important but not essential what do we do?**

**Dialog about it but don’t divide & devour each other. Grace is messy**

**There are things you are willing to die for and there are things you are willing to discuss.**

**\*\* This means we are unified in the essential mission and purpose to be JESUS the world. We are of the same mind in this!**

* **Unity - honors diversity in spiritual gifts, calling and taste**

**Unity embraces and acknowledges the beauty of diversity in ethnicity, culture, calling, gifts and preferences. 1 Corinthians will cover this!**

**God uniquely gifted us w/ different traits and abilities to shape the kingdom and to reach the world that He loves so much!**

**The benchmark of what we do is in unity is this…**

**Is it faithful to Scripture - and is it fruitful for people?**

* **Unity – invites Dad’s presence**

**25% of 1 Corinthians deals with unity – why? Because as we will see the presence of God is in large part driven by our unity with each other.**

**They were a church of new and immature believers lacking discipline. But good news, Paul writes- 1 Cor 1:8 He (God) will also keep you firm to the end, so that you will be blameless on the day of our Lord Jesus Christ. 9 God is faithful, who has called you into fellowship with his Son, Jesus Christ our Lord.**

**Maybe your life is messy – faith is messy – self-control is messy – God has not given up on you! God is not done w/ you.**

**Corinth (and you) are a mess – But God gives grace!**

**God see you and thinks - YOU Guac!**

**SO - Settle down in the back seat - we don’t get to pick our family. God is taking you on the ride of your life. Dad has got you! So, enjoy the ride!**