**Abundant Life Church**

**Sunday, June 7th, 2020**

**Title: Overcoming Evil**

**Text:**

14  Bless those who persecute you; bless and do not curse.
15  Rejoice with those who rejoice, and weep with those who weep.
16  Be of the same mind toward one another; do not be haughty in mind, but associate with the lowly. Do not be wise in your own estimation.
17  Never pay back evil for evil to anyone. Respect what is right in the sight of all men.
18  If possible, so far as it depends on you, be at peace with all men.
19  Never take your own revenge, beloved, but leave room for the wrath *of God,* for it is written, "VENGEANCE IS MINE, I WILL REPAY," says the Lord.
20  "BUT IF YOUR ENEMY IS HUNGRY, FEED HIM, AND IF HE IS THIRSTY, GIVE HIM A DRINK; FOR IN SO DOING YOU WILL HEAP BURNING COALS ON HIS HEAD."
21  Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good.
**Romans 12:14-21 (NASB)**

Intro: The Chaos of our Day

Our response must not be merely a white thing, a black thing, a brown thing but a JESUS thing.

There is no political solution to this.

There is an evil that has been exposed. It is a fair question to ask what would have happened in the death of George Floyd if there had not been video evidence.

It might be there are more instances of injustice than I want to believe.

There is a lot of pain…fear…anger…frustration…on display in our culture right now.

There is an incredible temptation to retreat from those who are different from me…attempting to find a place of safety….

**14- Bless those who persecute you; bless and do not curse**

Give up the right to be offended.

 ‘Bless’ means to speak well of, praise

 Your identity comes from the King of Kings and the Lord of Lords.

The temptation to respond with a curse is strong. You’ve hurt me so I’m going to hurt you.

54  Now when they heard this, they were cut to the quick, and they *began* gnashing their teeth at him.
55  But being full of the Holy Spirit, he gazed intently into heaven and saw the glory of God, and Jesus standing at the right hand of God;
56  and he said, "Behold, I see the heavens opened up and the Son of Man standing at the right hand of God."
57  But they cried out with a loud voice, and covered their ears and rushed at him with one impulse.
58  When they had driven him out of the city, they *began* stoning *him;* and the witnesses laid aside their robes at the feet of a young man named Saul.
59  They went on stoning Stephen as he called on *the Lord* and said, "Lord Jesus, receive my spirit!"
60  Then falling on his knees, he cried out with a loud voice, "Lord, do not hold this sin against them!" Having said this, he fell asleep.
**Acts 7:54-60 (NASB)**

**15 Rejoice with those who rejoice, and weep with those who weep.**The agenda of my heart is set by the need around me, instead of the need within me!

There are huge swaths of our community weeping right now – we should be weeping with them.

I’m not here to bring you down, nor fix your pain. I’m here seeking understanding.

When there rejoicing, I will set my own sorrows aside and rejoice with you.

When there is pain, I will set my own joys aside and weep with you.

Who should go first? YOU!

**16  Be of the same mind toward one another; do not be haughty in mind, but associate with the lowly. Do not be wise in your own estimation.**

Let’s get rid of the notion that I understand what’s going on, better than anyone else.

I don’t. We don’t.

I know my pain, my hardships, my challenges but it would be very presumptuous of me to think I know yours.

Why the exhortation to not be wise in your own eyes?

Our pride is stronger than we think it is.

I could fix this if only everyone would listen to me.

There is a human tendency to exalt your own opinion to that of God’s. So that you think you are thinking what God thinks. If the life of Jesus shows us anything is that God’s plan was nothing like anyone thought it would be.

He came in weakness, was a man of sorrows, suffered abuse and rejection by all men, then died alone on the cross – But there was a resurrection coming.

 Maybe God’s plan for your life looks more like Jesus’ than wealth & success.

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18  If possible, so far as it depends on you, be at peace with all men.
19  Never take your own revenge, beloved, but leave room for the wrath *of God,* for it is written, "VENGEANCE IS MINE, I WILL REPAY," says the Lord.
20  "BUT IF YOUR ENEMY IS HUNGRY, FEED HIM, AND IF HE IS THIRSTY, GIVE HIM A DRINK; FOR IN SO DOING YOU WILL HEAP BURNING COALS ON HIS HEAD."**

**21  Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good.**

When evil is paid back with evil what happens? Evil gets reproduced. Nothing gets fixed, nothing gets resolved.

I hurt you…

You hit me with your words

I hit you back with my words

You strike back with bigger and more harsh words

I get louder and red-faced yelling my response

You hit me with your fists because the words didn’t work.

I get a stick and hit you back because talk is useless

You get a knife and stab me

I get a gun and start shooting

We finally become silent as we are laying in our respective pools of blood dying.

Until our sons come upon the scene and start hitting each other with their words…

Jesus said to turn the cheek…

This passage says to feed my enemy is he is hungry or give him a drink if he is thirsty….

 Spend what God has given you to meet the needs of your enemy

 This can’t be done over social media – you need to meet your enemy, touch them, help them, love them and see them like yourself…another fallen individual who, like you, needs Jesus…

**OVERCOME EVIL WITH GOOD.**

Serve.

Wash your neighbor’s feet.

Give your life away cleansing wounds.

Care for the weak, orphans and widows…

Die for your enemies.

*Lord, make me an instrument of your peace:
where there is hatred, let me sow love;
where there is injury, pardon;
where there is doubt, faith;
where there is despair, hope;
where there is darkness, light;
where there is sadness, joy.

O divine Master, grant that I may not so much seek
to be consoled as to console,
to be understood as to understand,
to be loved as to love.
For it is in giving that we receive,
it is in pardoning that we are pardoned,
and it is in dying that we are born to eternal life.
Amen.*

-Prayer of St. Francis