

Come and Become pt. 11: Children of God

-Intro : Seinfeld Serenity Now. (clip: Serenity now montage)

- George Costanza's dad learns a stress/anger management: serenity now
 - he passes it on to Kramer
 - the short explanation is that when you are tempted to lose your temper, instead quietly chant "serenity now" until the anger passes
- Kramer's character encounters quite a few frustrating moments and instead of expressing them he restrains them with "serenity now"
- then the moment comes when it all BOILS OVER.
 - you can hear him in the other room screaming SERENITY NOWWWWW!!! While he smashes 24 computers
- Restraint has a limit,,,,,
 - this show just takes a funny look at that*

-Problem: We can only restrain impulses for so long.

- Without a change in circumstances, restraint eventually gives out.
 - example: maybe you have decided to give up sweets,,, and you REALLY LOVE THEM*
 - you eat sweets constantly
 - starting tomorrow,,, NO MORE
 - If your house is still FULL of sweets **will power it will eventually fail you**
 - maybe you have abused alcohol or had a dug habit: if you stay in the circumstances connected to that activity it is just a matter of time::: friendships,,, behavior and coping patterns,,, environments need to change*
 - if not, eventually there will be a lapse in your inner strength...
 - Maybe you spend too much money, maybe you are addicted to stuff: if you keep killing time by walking through stores "just to see what they have" if you keep surfing Facebook marketplace,,, if you keep following those emails luring you back onto Amazon.....*
 - you are going to find yourself in the same situation....

-Most of us know that we don't overcome impulse by staring it down until we don't want it anymore. You change up the equation.

- get out of those friendships, cut up the card, get rid of any trace of what tempted you
- we know that**

-How many of you have ever tried to restrain negative impulses when it comes to People Who Bother You?

- that OBNOXIOUS person, or the constant interrupter, or the person who only comes around when they want something:
 - you are patient -you are positive. -you don't really know how to address it so you don't
 - you just **focus on controlling yourself**
 - maybe you go months or years without letting on how much they bug you**
 - until that one day when your self control is LOW and you LET THEM HAVE IT*
- You say out loud all the stuff you have said in your head all along.

-There is a scene in a movie where someone go on this crazy rant.

-when they are finished, one of their friends (not the one being ranted on) says this

-*"You kiss your Mom with that mouth, you are trippin"*

-We all have people we don't like.

-mostly we would not go so far as to call them enemies but maybe it fits????

-people who we have to be careful not to roll our eyes when they talk.....

-people who, if we gave them what we thought they deserved it would be messy

-If our primary Christian strategy is sin restraint we are setting ourselves up for eventual failure.

-We talked last week about Overcoming Offense.

-to not return evil for evil

-to not RETALIATE OR RESENT

-But this is all about what we do.

-it is about restraining what we want to do, in favor of what Jesus would have us do

-Today we are going to take a **step past what we DO, and talk about how we FEEL** about people.

-because we can only restrain what we do for so long

-Our hearts for people need to change.

-Matthew 5: 43-48 "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. 46 If you love those who love you, what reward will you get? Are not even the tax collectors doing that? 47 And if you greet only your own people, what are you doing more than others? Do not even pagans do that? 48 Be perfect, therefore, as your heavenly Father is perfect.

--Quote: Charles Spurgeon "We do not merely cease to hate, and then abide in a cold neutrality, but we love where hatred seemed inevitable."

-Spurgeon is talking transformation. Not a simple ceasing of aggression, but actually **LOVING** where other would expect hatred.

The key to being what Jesus invites us to be, and what this world NEEDS, is moving from Godly Restraint into Enemy Love.

-we are not calling Restraint Bad, restraint is Good and Godly,,,, but it is the JV TEAM, enemy love is VARSITY,,,,, restraint is the appetizer,,,,, Love is the Main Course

- In verse 43 Jesus said *“you have heard it said, love your neighbor and hate your enemy”*
- That was a saying in Jewish Culture,,, and it was passed off as being from the Bible.
- it was a the result of twisting a verse to make it say what people wanted*
 - we still have sayings like that today: “God helps those who help themselves”*
 - that is actually not taught anywhere in the Bible and is really our way of saying “you are on your own buddy”. But trying to make God say it for us...

-Sometimes “Spiritual People” put words in God’s mouth.

-In verse 44 Jesus gives the overall command “Love your enemies”, and then he gives examples of what that love looked like in action.

-Luke records this same sermon but he includes a few details that Matthew leaves out.

-Luke 8:27-28 “Love your enemies, do good to those who hate you, 28 bless those who curse you, pray for those who mistreat you.

-People didn’t know how to love their enemies that is why they distorted what scripture said, to begin with. (*“this seems impossible, it cant be what he meant”*)

-they could not figure out how to win at that game so they adjusted the rules so they could win.

-that is why he spelled it just to remove any confusion:::: *“Yes I really mean love your enemies,,, for example, do good to people hate you, bless people who curse you and pray for people who mistreat you....”*

-Jesus is giving instruction for How to Cultivate Love where hatred seems the most natural response.

Love can be felt in our hearts but it must be birthed in our actions.

-Love for those who are good to us is a very different scenario.

-that is simple: they are good to you so fond feelings may even precede the actions which make that love real

-you probably feel fondly for those people long before you would do any actions that really classify as love and make that love real

-But when talking about loving enemies the equation is different:

- fond feelings are not there to begin with, only the command to love
- so Jesus instructs us to use Actions to Prime the Pump, and get it flowing
 - example: *Shane and Chris trying to suck water through the hose to drain the baptism tank.....*

-Jesus' practical action plan for Priming the Pump of Enemy Love:

-Do good to people who hate you

- do you have really difficult neighbor??? Next time it snows, shovel for them.... Next time there is a holiday, drop off a plate of cookies
- this requires courage::: you have to step out and act because you know its right, not because you know it will work.....
 - when you have an idea for a way to do good for a hostile person, you usually need to **act right away** BEFORE YOU TALK YOURSELF OUT OF IT

-Bless those who Curse you

- sometimes christians are guilty of saying weirdo stuff: when someone is angry we say "Jesus loves you in response" that probably makes them more angry
- or "god bless you" in a really quick response to someone yelling at us in traffic
 - in honesty sometimes those boarder on passive aggressive....**
- this instruction is really about using kind words WITH and ABOUT people who's words with our about us are not kind.
 - when someone is angry it is just saying "i am sorry" and calming the situation
 - when someone is talking bad about you,,,,, MAKING THE CONSCIOUS CHOICE that you will say GOOD THINGS about them to others
 - if you speak well of them long enough, first of all they are going to feel like a jerk for talking badly of you,,,,, but more to the point,,, YOU WILL BEGIN TO SEE THEM HOW YOU TALK ABOUT THEM..... Your words are building and reinforcing your new view of that person

-Pray for those who mistreat you

- not pray against them or about them, pray FOR
- think and act as an advocate for them before GOD
- I know this seems far fetched but if you try it consistently you will find your heart changing in favor of those you are praying for.

-Barclay: *"Love is not only something of the heart, it is also something of the will"*

- To consistently pray for people who wrong us, people whom we harbor negative feelings toward changes us in a profound way.
- In Prayer you are subjecting your mind and thoughts, as well as your body and emotions to your will, which you have subjected beneath God's will.
 - given enough time your Mind and Emotions will fall into line with your will if we repeatedly subject our will to God in prayer

-As we practice these 3 exercises consistently over time, Hatred, Resentment, and Frustration give way to sincere love.

-that is how we move past restraint

-at that point you will not be *Biting your Tongue*

-because the things that will be in your heart to say will be kind and redemptive

-you wont be fantasizing about putting that persons head between the toilet and toilet seat and smashing the seat down repeatedly

-Imagine if the first response of your heart and mind was your best one:

-if what came to mind to do and say was what was good for others and you

-if it closed chasms between people

-What if all of that flowed out was a result of a new nature in your heart rather than white knuckled restraint?

Redemptive Love is God's natural response toward us, even when we act and think like enemies.

-Romans 5:6&10 You see, at just the right time, when we were still powerless, Christ died for the ungodly. 10 For if, while we were God's enemies, we were reconciled to him through the death of his Son, how much more, having been reconciled, shall we be saved through his life!

-You may not feel like you were ever an enemy of God but:

-in our rebellion against God's authority all of humanity made itself an enemy to God

-we push off his authority and tried to be our own: INSURRECTION,, MUTINY,, COUP

-i understand that we often disagree with God and think we are right..... SO DOES EVERYONE WHO COMMITS MUTINY.

-We have been deceived by an enemy who tells us we can have it better by going our own way

-In believing that Deception our sin invites Destruction, Death, and boundless heartache into GODS WORLD

-Imagine a family with lots of kids:

-one of the kids,,, a 10 year old launches a coup and declares himself head of the family, and locks mom and dad out of the house,,, even gets a restraining order

-you can imagine what its like with a bunch of children trying to run their own lives

-people eat candy all the time, people are getting sick

-everyone has pink eye and nobody is getting better

-constant fighting that spins out of control,, everyone is being hurt by everyone else,,, everyone is mad at everyone else

-the boys all thought they could use umbrellas to parachute off the roof, there were a few broken bones,,, no one can drive to the hospital or even knows where it is.....

-one played with matches and burned half the house down, exposing the kids to the elements with winter on the way

-its only been a few weeks but the STAND OFF WITH MOM and DAD is destroying these kids

-its getting dangerous, people are going to start dying

-That is what Romans 5 was saying about our condition and our relationship to God, without Jesus.

- we pushed God out choosing our way over his
- in doing that we made ourselves enemies of God
- our rebellion brought untold destruction to ourselves, others, and the world
- there was nothing we could do to fix it**
- In that situation God responded in mercy kindness and self sacrifice**
 - He did that not against his desire
 - He did that because that is the nature of his heart
 - that is what he desires

-God is For Us, even when we are not For Him.

- he is seeking restoration even while we are actively seeking his REMOVAL from the premises

-We talked last week about the fact that Jesus reconciled us to God and then he gives us the Ministry of Reconciliation.

-2 Corinthians 5:18

-But while we may start off focusing on actions and responses, Jesus wants to take us into a Heart that Beats Reconciliation.

- as we Pray for those who hurt us, bless those who curse us, and are good to those who mistreat us, we are Slowly Seeing the Transformation of our Heart.

-Through obedience Jesus transforms our heart into one that honestly and completely Loves Enemies.

-Jesus will recreate in you the heart of the Father.

This new kind of heart in you is the solution for what is missing in the world around you.

-Reconciliation will become a byproduct of your life, like photosynthesis.

- plants take in the carbon dioxide that we expel, which is harmful for us
- they process it and expel oxygen which gives us life

-When we have the heart of God we become capable of absorbing the hurt and hostility around us and expelling life giving love.

-Romans 8:19 For the creation waits in eager expectation for the children of God to be revealed.

-Evidently there are these CHILDREN OF GOD, these special sons and daughters, and when they are revealed to the world, it changes everything!

- Who are they?

--Matthew 5: 43 "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**

-When we grow to Love our Enemies, then the heart of the Father is recreated in us; and we truly become the Children of God this world is breathlessly waiting for.

-The heart of God alive in us, is all that is missing for the Redemption of the world Around us.