

The Hardest Thing You Will Ever Do - Mark 12.29-31, 11.20.16

Introduction:

1. It isn't – dying for your faith, standing up for your faith, submitting to a very unpleasant circumstance to the will of God, seeking or giving forgiveness, resolving conflict, rebuilding relationships, breaking an addiction, going through deliverance, dying to your will, putting up a boundary in a relationship, etc.
2. Scripture – today you will see it in a new way. 'love your neighbor like you love yourself.'
3. Review last week's image - **A stick figure under a rainbow.**
 - a. I live under the blessing of God. His love for me is the same today as it will be in eternity. The only difference between here and there is the position of my heart. Like the rays of the sun, they are constant and always of the same intensity. The only reason we experience them differently is b/c of the position of my heart towards Him.
 - b. There are at least five things which keep me from fully experiencing his blessings:
 - i. The world system – as wind
 - ii. The interference of the demonic – dark cloud
 - iii. Sin in my life
 - iv. Physically, mentally, relationally – everything is broken
 - v. My unrenewed mind. I continue to think and live from my old, unrenewed mind thinks.
 1. I said earlier there is only one thing that separates me from experiencing the love, favor, blessings and joy of God. It is the mind that is unrenewed. We don't think or express God's thoughts. We spew cultural truths, lies of what the enemy says, biased or unbalanced church teachings, family of origin scars, false beliefs
 2. **"1 Cor.13.4-7"** – Is that the way God loves us...is that they way we are to love each other...and, is that the way you love yourself?
 - a. I believe I am to love others the same way God loves me (unconditionally) and I am to love myself the same way God loves me (unconditionally).
 - b. It's not narcissistic - false, grandiose, selfish; nor self-esteem linguistics– positive attitude, "I'm great and you're great" jargon; nor self love – take care of yourself, watch your relationships, take care of your body.
 - c. Benard of Clairvaux said one of the highest degrees of love was simply that we love ourselves as God loves us – in the same degree, in the same manner and with the very same love. We love the self that God loves, the essential image and likeness of God in us that has been damaged by sin.
 3. Our unrenewed mind rebels against that thought b/c we consider how inconsistent, apathetic, and judgmental we are and it reveals how little we believe in the power of Jesus' blood which makes me

pure and whole though and through whether I feel it, live it or fully believe it or not.

4. This is so radical to some, that you think it is heresy, false teaching.

Loving yourself the way God loves you

1. You cannot do this fully without receiving/abiding in God's love – 1 John 4.16-19. In other words, positive confessions and intellectual agreement will get you to the third floor of a 100 story skyscraper. It's when the words become life and the truth changes our minds and the way we feel about ourselves.
2. What does that look like? 1 Cor.13.4-7
3. It is possible b/c of the blood of Jesus. The image of God is in me...his dna. Paul refers to Jesus as the second Adam; the first Adam brought sin, brokenness and death; the second Adam brings restoration, wholeness and life. Before the first Adam sinned, everything was good. Perfect, unconditional love existed between God and A/E; between each other; and with themselves. They could look at their lives and say, "It is good. It is whole...complete...beautiful."
4. Sin corrupted and broke everything. We began working towards love based on effort and performance. We come to believe: God loves me if I'm good; you love me if I treat you right and I'm good; I love myself if I am doing well. It is a conditional love.
 - a. What did the first Adam do to receive God's love – nothing.
 - b. What did Eve do to receive Adam's love & vice-versa – nothing
 - c. What did they do by the end of day six so they could love themselves – nothing.
 - d. God loved them perfectly; they loved him perfectly; they loved each other perfectly; and they loved themselves perfectly.
 - e. You say, "Yeah, b/c everything is perfect" and I am telling you the second Adam has made it all perfect again. I can walk under the unconditional love of God through faith in Jesus; it is possible for me to love you unconditionally; and it is possible for me to love myself unconditionally.
5. This isn't a call to mediocrity or compromise or justification...just accept who you are...sin is okay...you don't need to worry about changing... I see those things, but I accept myself unconditionally just as God Does.
6. Don't misapply Scriptures:
 - a. Jer.17.9 – I got a new heart that is not deceitful.
 - b. Rom.7.14-24 – Must be taken contextually w/in Rom 6 – 8.This is the person trying to keep the Law w/o the power of the Spirit that comes through faith in Jesus.
 - c. Change, "God have mercy on me a sinner" to "God, thank you for your mercy on me your child."
7. Every picture is a good pic b/c it is the image of God I see. I see what God sees – the child who is whole.
8. We struggle with this idea, b/c we know the inconsistencies, hypocrisy, internal battles, old lifestyle, old patterns, disobedience but so does God and a WHOLE lot better than you do or ever will and He still loves you unconditionally. The HS is absolutely aware of your scars, lies that you built your life on, cultural beliefs contrary to God's truth, unhealthy family of origin issues, sin patterns, unrenewed beliefs, and ungodly behavior and all the while He is constantly reminding you of the Father's unconditional love as a dearly loved child.
9. Love what God loves – yourself; the way God loves – unconditionally and without reserve; with the same intensity - fervently. **Love yourself fervently, unconditionally and without reserve.**
 - a. **Are we not to love what God loves...the way God loves it?!**

- b. You have to move away from performance based love for yourself “I’ll feel good about myself when I lose 15 pounds, overcome that problem, deal with my anger, stop that behavior, get the promotion, finish the project, get the degree, have the girlfriend, when I read my Bible more, more consistent in my faith, etc.”
 - c. We need to love what God loves and love the process he is using to fully renew us.
10. It has to be: I know he loves me unconditionally and so I love myself unconditionally.

Conclusion

1. Turn your phones to camera function and say, “God loves me unconditionally, wholeheartedly and without reserve and so I love myself unconditionally, wholeheartedly and without reserve.”
2. This week I want you to do it every day in front of a mirror. Note, what goes off in you. It is indication of what needs to change in your life.
3. “1 John 4.16-19”