

Oct 28 07 I Samuel 19:1-3- 2 Samuel 9:1-5, 12

FACING YOUR GIANTS III-

HOLDING GRUDGES

The other day I received an email from a dear friend letting us know that her sister had died. But the part of the email that disturbed me and I believe brought about a nudging from God for this sermon said that she wished someone would preach a sermon about not holding grudges. Now that's a tough subject. After all how many people, especially Christians, would admit to holding grudges. Not us. No! We are God's perfect people, right? Well something must have happened in that family of my friend between she and her brother-in-law. Maybe it was about funeral arraignments, or maybe it was something in the past, so through this tough time for both of them and their families, the visitation and funeral, they really could not console one another. Stress was more the order of the day rather than comforting one another. Instead of letting bygones be bygones it seems they were at odds. The hurt, especially for my friend kind of put a damper on the celebration of her sisters new life in heaven. I don't know the whole story, but, well you know sometimes it is difficult when relationships get strained, especially at times like this. So that email gave birth to this sermon. I'm not sure if someone here today is holding a grudge, but I know God can and will speak to all of us about our Christian attitudes while facing many giants we come in contact with.

Because of what my friend said I searched the internet and found a sermon on grudges. Let me share with you from part of that sermon. He said:

“A grudge is a beast that conquers its owner.

Acting like an internal contract, the grudge obligates us to be unhappy and unhealed. Most people with a pulse hold some kind of tiny or large quantity of bitterness in their heart from the past or present-because the world can be a hurtful place.

- Sometimes a grudge starts with a tangible offense, but over time it imbeds itself cleverly. All that’s left then is a sensation of mistrust or dislike.
- Sometimes we remember the intricate details of our resentment.
- It is an internal standpoint hurting the wounded more than the wrongdoer.

Grudges are fortresses of the malcontent.” (Sermon Central)

Friends, I know as Christians we aren’t perfect. I like to think of being a Christian as one who is learning, who is under construction. You know there are those things still left to learn, areas of our lives left to grow. Sometimes we say the right things, but our actions might be saying something else. God tells us to “love on another” but at times we say, “but you don’t know what that person did to me.” When I hear that I think of what people did to Jesus. I think, hey, they rejected him. Some tried to stone him. Many turned him away. At one time his own family disowned him called him crazy. Religious leaders tried to trick him into

blaspheming God. One of his own turned him over for 30 pieces of silver. Another denied him 3 times. The others ran off and hid when he was arrested. Roman soldiers spit on him, crushed a crown of thorns on his head, and even whipped him till he almost died. Pilate turned him over for crucifixion while the Jewish religious leaders and the crowd shouted for him to be crucified. Criminals who were on crosses beside him yelled at him to save himself and them as well if he was the Messiah. People at the foot of the cross yelled they would believe if he would perform a miracle and come down from the cross. Soldiers hammered nails into his hands and feet and lifted him high for all the world to see. How did Jesus deal with all of this? His last words from the cross were, “Father, forgive them.” He didn’t hold a grudge. In fact, when he rose again salvation was offered to “whomever would believe” and receive and that included those who were at the foot of the cross. It meant the disciples who ran away. It meant the soldiers who beat him. It meant Peter who denied him three times. It meant the Apostle Paul who persecuted and had Christians arrested and even killed.

Grudges. We hold them. Sometimes they happen when we are kids. Sometimes it happens between high school friends. Sometimes it happens at work. It’s harder to accept when grudges happen in families. I know that one for a fact in my own family. And boy it is truly sad when it happens in the church. Let me give you an example. In one of my churches I served I visited a family who had not

been in church for a long time. I asked if they were going somewhere else and they said no, so I asked the question, “why aren’t you attending our church?” The husband answer was, ‘is so and so still going there?’ and I said yes. He said he would not attend as long as that person was there because he had stolen his hammer while they working at the church. The other man denied it, but you could not convince this man that he didn’t take it. So he and his wife left the church and it still bothered him months and years later. Can you picture that! This man held a grudge right up until his death over a stupid \$5 hammer.

Hey, it isn’t just hammers that get people to hold grudges. Why it could be the color of the hymnals or the color of carpet. Dare I say even the style of worship? Why, it might even be over what kind of roof to put on the church. When people don’t always get their ways, sometimes they hold grudges. The way they solve them is to leave the church. Break all ties with people involved. Speak ill of them. And this broken relationship often festers and never ever gets settled. When they run into that person or hear their name, well all that stuff raises its ugly head. It’s too bad we can’t learn to let go of them. My philosophy has been it is okay to disagree with one another. But let’s not let that disagreement cause so much friction that it destroys relationships and even the church.

In that sermon the preacher wrote, “We harbor grudges because...

- 1) We are still wounded and unhealed

2) It makes us feel better to keep the grudge.

a. We believe injustice should be remembered so it punishes the wrongdoing or saves us from future pain.

b. We feel more in control.”

This morning I turn once again to King David for help in addressing this situation. He helps us to face the Giant of holding grudges. Let’s see what he faced. Listen to God’s word found in 1 Samuel 19:1-3. **READ**

There is our hero once again facing another giant. Not only has he beaten the real giant Goliath, now he has to face other giants. Instead of enjoying life as a hero he has to face many giants that pop up in his life. Giants like the kings jealousy. Even his own wandering eyes that led to David’s adulterous affair and later murder of one of his generals, and loss of a son. Later the story of his wayward family, almost losing his kingship, and dying a lonely death. And on and on it goes. You wonder how God could call David, “the man after my own heart.”

Here he faces a King he loved and served who is jealous and wants to get rid of him. The King tells his son Jonathan, who just happens to be best friends with David, his intent. He is going to kill David. We know he tried to kill him by throwing spears at him. He even wanted to trick him by using his son. He ran

David out of town and searched for him in mountains with no luck. David always got away.

So as you can see, David could have held a grudge against King Saul and his household. Once before, or maybe it was twice, when David had a chance to kill King Saul he didn't. Later, David heard that the King and Jonathan were killed in battle David and he was anointed king, he could have rejoiced and said they got what they deserved, he could have told the people all the nasty stuff the king did against him. But instead he was saddened by the news. You see, David believed Saul was God's anointed and God would handle the situation. It wasn't up to David to take revenge.

We all know the definition of 'grudge,' but in case we aren't sure Webster says, 'grudge is a feeling of deep-seated resentment or ill will.' It is also defined as 'to be unwilling to give or admit' and 'to grumble, complain.' You see, it's not just the deep seated resentment, but it's also that unwillingness to change, to give in, to be the first, perhaps to say those forgiving words.

Yes, there are people like that. People who hold grudges until the day they die. What a shame. I wonder what God says to them when they get to heaven and stand before him? It may not keep them from entering heaven, but is it possible their rewards may not be as great? But hey, that's not up to me to decide. Richard has to take care of Richard and make sure he's okay, right? Right!

David could have held a grudge against the whole family of King Saul but he didn't! No! Turn with me to 2 Samuel 9:1-7 and hear about the grace of David.

READ

How many of you know some one by the name of 'Mephibosheth.' As far as I'm concerned that's a mouthful to say. He was the grandson of the king, but more importantly he was Jonathan's son, David's best friend. And now that David was officially the King of Israel maybe he should not be welcomed. After all he might want to hurt David, you know trying to fulfill the grudge that his grandfather had against David. Forget your promise to Jonathan one might have said. No one would ever know of that promise you made. By the way he was also a cripple and really, David, do you want someone like that at your table every meal? David, as king it just isn't done! Surround yourself with the best, not the inferior.

But David had a heart of gold. His heart was so big that he gave Mephibosheth all the land of his father and grandfather. Oh, we know how David strayed later on with those lustful eyes. But right now we know that for him a promise was a promise. It didn't matter what King Saul tried to do. No! He would not hold a grudge against one of God's anointed ones. Therefore, this crippled son of Jonathan's was welcomed to the table of grace of the king for the rest of his life, no questions asked.

You see, the love of his friend Jonathan, and the promise and covenant he made with him was must more important than getting even or holding a grudge. It's like one of those old covenants we used to read about when people became blood brothers by cutting their thumbs and joining hands and mixing the blood together. You became true blood brothers for eternity. It's like one country western song that tells of friends that are always there when you need them.

Isn't that what we understand from God? His great promise is that anyone, the 'whoever's of this world,' no matter who they are, or what they have done, what they look like, how they have acted, the amount of sins committed, or what they have committed, are saved by his grace and are welcome into God's Kingdom, IF, IF they believe in his son Jesus, repent of their sins, and begin to live a new life through Jesus Christ. That promise is for all people. It's that marvelous, wonderful Grace of Jesus that kicks in for those 'whoever's.'

Now I know we hear of grudge matches between 2 teams that hate each other, or two boxers who trash talk each other. But that stuff is more for show. It sells tickets. And folks, as Christians we live by a higher standard. We live by the laws of God, and that law says to love each other. It tells us that even if we get angry from time to time don't let that anger fester and cause death in a relationship. It doesn't say we will always agree, but folks, when we disagree let's not let it destroy you. Satan loves to do that. I believe you have heard me say that

the church will not be destroyed from outside. It will be destroyed from within, when God's people don't behave as God's children but act more as tools of Satan. And folks, getting even with someone is not the answer when someone goes against you.

You know Mephibosheth had more right to the throne of Israel than David did. After all he was grandson of king Saul, so he was the rightful heir to the throne. As Max Lucado writes, "The king is kind, not because the boy is deserving, but because the promise is enduring. God sets the standard for covenant keeping. It runs like a scarlet thread through the tapestry of scripture."

I'm sure each of us could "dig" up someone who has hurt us whether it was in the past or just this morning. The thing is, what are you going to do about it. Maybe it's a skeleton from your family closet. Maybe it's an old friend. Maybe it's a person who sits in the pew just a few rows in front or behind you. God's word tells us it's time to put all that stuff aside. After all this grudge holding is not only hurting you, but also hurting the church. Remember this, if you don't make amends now, some day it might be too late.

A few weeks ago Heidi touched on almost this same subject and her confession was, this particular sermon may not be for everyone, but it was for her. You see, if we are honest and open as Christians we aren't perfect. In reality being Christian means we belong to Christ, we are saved. But now we have to live like

Christ did. And folks, one of the things he teaches us is to turn the other cheek. He also teaches us to love one another. He teaches us to welcome a brother or a sister in trouble. He teaches us to help one another. He teaches us to learn together. For we are the body of Christ. We are brothers and sisters in the faith. We have unity, not because of who we are, but because of whose we are.

Well, I don't know if this sermon would help my friend with her relationship because I don't know the full problem. I don't know if she can forgive her brother-in-law, or if he would forgive her, but I hope this sermon has helped someone here this morning. It's time to let go and let God work in those relationships.

God's promises to love us always. So if he loves us always, and forgives us, and even forgets those things we've done and doesn't hold any grudges, can we do anything less? If we want to be more Christ like then we need to work on this giant that keeps popping up his head.

And by the way, you don't have to worry about working out things, all you need to do is ask God's help. Let him take those feelings. And each time Satan brings them back when you see that person that may have hurt you, pray for them, pray and ask God to love them as much as he loves you. After all they are as much a child of God as you are.

If you remember the story of Corrie Ten Boom you remember how she, with the help of God, was able to shake the hand of a prison guard who mistreated her and her sister and other Jews while in a concentration camp. It wasn't easy. But with God's help she was able to do it.

It's easier to hold grudges and to hate than it is to love and forgive. But what do you think God wants you to do? That's a bigger question.

By the way the stone that kills this giant of holding grudges is the stone of forgiveness. Remember the Lord's prayer that line that says, "Forgive me as I have forgiven those who have sinned against me."

So this morning, let's not just talk the talk, but let us walk the walk.

Remember this....Focus on giants---you stumble. Focus on God---your giants tumble.

So may it be today with those who are holding on to a grudge. Let it go today.....