

GROW: PUTTING AGAPE LOVE TO WORK

Scripture used: [Luke 6:27-37](#)

OVERVIEW

Pastor Hurmon invited the congregation's participation, either in-person or via prayer, in a prayer vigil at Palo Alto City Hall on May 22 to mark the one-year anniversary of George Floyd's murder and the opportunity for the church to demonstrate that we are movement united in love for one another in the goal of greater justice and freedom for all. Today's message, from Pastor Rene Schlaepfer from Twin Lakes Church, continues in our Grow message series and specifically examines how the church is called to follow in the way of Jesus and not be provoked or manipulated into anger and outrage but instead to work for justice with the tools of radical love, grace, and forgiveness. The goal of the church is not condemnation, but redemption.

KEY POINTS

- 1) In our text, Jesus says: love your enemies, pray for those who curse / mistreat you. Give to anyone who asks. He lays out the "Golden rule." The historical context: Romans could confiscate anything and were oppressors, and, in reaction, Jewish zealots rebelled. Jesus grew up in this culture and saw the cycle had to stop. Lasting change comes from personal transformation, not armies or political power. In the same way, we must act like Jesus. This is the battleground for our identity as Christians. We must resist the culture of outrage and anger, and embrace kindness. "Christians in the Age of Outrage" by Ed Stetzer elaborates on this. This is our moment where we need to live like Christ, instead of us doing the shouting.
- 2) A few years ago, a blogger tweeted a "funny" picture of Bibles for sale in the fiction section at Costco. This set the polarized Christian outrage machine at work. Meanwhile, in 2017, comedian Sara Silverman was viciously attacked on her social media account, and responded with astonishing grace and compassion. She asked the attacker for his story and his motivation, and ultimately offered to help the attacker and created a crowdfunding campaign for him, resulting in an apology from him. We must remember the Good Samaritan – a man of the "wrong" ethnicity and faith – yet who behaved with compassion and kindness.
- 3) We must swim upstream, resist tribalism, embrace grace, stop seeing others in categories of friend or foe. Jesus says: if you love those who love you, what credit is there? Even sinners do that. Jesus calls us to be exceptional. [Daryl Davis](#), a blues musician, is a Black man who has made it a passion to befriend members of the KKK. He has caused 200 of them to "give up the robe". He believes in the redemptive power of loving friendship, and he starts by making contact, sending an invitation, or doing a favor. We are called not to fight evil with evil, but to overcome evil with good.
- 4) Dr. King, speaking to the Church in Alabama in 1957, told us that this attitude is not hyperbole; it is the core philosophy of agape love. "I would rather die than hate you. Men of the most recalcitrant bent will be changed. Don't destroy your enemy but redeem him." Micah 6:8 says this: do justice, love mercy, walk humbly with your God.
- 5) Reverend Sean Smith – his father was an IBM chemical engineer, killed by rogue SJPD officers. Sean was initially consumed by animosity and depression. Then he was overwhelmed by agape love, forgave the officers, felt the elation gained from freedom from hate. Bitterness is a prison. We are meant to be honorable, to choose contrition and restitution, justice and love, and forgive people because we have been forgiven by the One who is the light in the darkness. We fight in different ways the world fights, because we are called to change the world through the same tools that Jesus used.

DISCUSSION

- 1) **HEAR** - What are the sources of provocation in your life? What causes you to be angry and outraged, and what do you do with these emotions? What is the difference between responding to these emotions in a redemptive way or a destructive way?
- 2) **UNDERSTAND** - Consider [Luke 6:27-37](#). What verses jump out at you as particularly relevant right now? What makes it hard to live in the way Jesus is calling us to live? Besides the voice of Jesus, what other voices are we listening to? Are those voices helping us to walk in the way of Jesus? Do they help us to redeem and befriend our enemies, or do they cause us to condemn them and tear them down?
- 3) **DO** - Consider one step you can take this week to build a bridge of love with someone who is provoking to you. Ask God for wisdom and clarity on how to work for redemption rather than condemnation. Join us next Sunday as we continue our GROW series!