

John 18:33-37
Creekside COB
November 15, 2009

“Tattooed”

One night a teenage girl brought her new boyfriend home to meet her parents, and they were appalled by his appearance: leather jacket, motorcycle boots, tattoos and pierced nose. Later, the parents pulled their daughter aside and confessed their concern. "Dear," said the mother diplomatically, "he doesn't seem very nice. "Oh please, Mom," replied the daughter, "if he wasn't nice, why would he be doing 500 hours of community service?"

We are a tattoo generation. Tattoos are very popular now. Do you remember a time when only the tough guys and military members would get tattoos? However, people from all cultures, any socio-economic background, any gender and really all age groups – even senior citizens are joining the tattooed generation.

I want you to notice that Jesus speaks very little today. He never denies or tries to convince anyone who he was. People know him. His miracles were known to all. That is why he is standing here. Because they want him dead. But he only says a few words. His actions speak louder than his words. He doesn't have to answer. We know what he has done.

When we look at Jesus' actions we see His love for people tattooed on His heart. His love is revealed through His acceptance of people.

Our love is revealed through our acceptance of all people.

Jesus' love had no boundaries and reached out past societal norms to love the people that society had cast out - the lepers, the physical handicapped.

Dudley Moore, the successful movie actor, has that need. As a youngster, Dudley was born with a clubfoot. He was smaller than the other children and one of his legs was shorter than the other. Kids laughed at him and called him Hopalong. Dudley felt humiliated. "I felt unworthy of anything," says Dudley, "a little runt with a twisted foot." His parents felt guilty about his defect, so Dudley felt that he had done something wrong. His home lacked love, and his parents seemed characterized by fear and anxiety.

When he was six or seven, Dudley spent a lot of time in hospitals. One night, a nurse named Pat gave him a goodnight kiss. Forty years later, Dudley says, "I almost spin when I think about it. She was truly an angel of mercy, and that kiss was probably the first taste of real, unqualified, uncomplicated affection I had ever had. In many ways my entire life is based on recapturing that single moment of affection."

However, you may think it isn't hard accepting those who have physical challenges but what about the people who have emotional challenges. Sometimes their need for acceptance is even greater than those who have physical challenges.

It reminded me of Jesus who accepted the woman at the well despite her multiple marriages. He accepts us just where we are and draws us into Himself through that acceptance.

We all have a need to be accepted. Some people will do far worse than become the class clown to be accepted. How many young people take their first drink, or smoke their first joint, in a bid to be accepted? How many have their first sexual experience for the same reason? The drive for acceptance is a powerful one. For some people, it is their greatest need.

Henri Nouwen reminds us that:

Our true challenge is to return to the center, to the heart, and to find there the gentle voice which speaks to us and affirms us in a way no human voice ever could. The basis of all ministry is the experience of God's unlimited and unlimiting acceptance of us as beloved children, an acceptance so full, so total and all-embracing, that it sets us free from our compulsion to be seen, praised, and admired and free for Christ who leads us on the road to service.

We not only accept those that society says no to but we accept the people in our own inner circle. Our family members, our spouse - the people that are part of our daily lives. We accept them and embrace their differences.

Our acceptance of all people is a tattoo of love in our hearts.

I heard about a man that went to see his doctor because he was feeling absolutely terrible. The doctor gave him a careful examination, left the room to look at some tests, came back in with a very somber expression on his face, and said: "Sir, I don't know how to break the news to you, but you have rabies and you're going to die very soon."

The man very calmly got out a piece of paper and began furiously writing. The

doctor said: "What are you doing, making out your will?" He said: "Oh no, I'm writing out a list of people I'm going to bite."

When we look at Jesus' actions we see His love for people tattooed on His heart. His love is revealed through His forgiveness of people.

No one condemns you - you are forgiven go and sin no more Jesus says to the woman caught in adultery. Or the man whose friends carried him on the mat - Jesus says "Son, your sins are forgiven."

In one of her books, Corrie Ten Boom tells of meeting the guard from the concentration camp where she and her family had been held by the Nazis. She had been speaking at a large church meeting, and after the meeting he had come forward. He put out his hand to her, and she instinctively pulled back, remembering the horrors to which that hand had been put or in which it had cooperated, but then, she testified, something came over her, she knew not what, and she reached out and grasped his hand and extended her Forgiveness as the tears rolled down his cheeks.

We have a hard time with forgiveness. We are angry and our feelings aren't validated. Someone has wronged us and we don't want to forgive. But forgiveness is for us as much as it is for the restoration of relationships.

Forgiveness means "to let go" or "to send away." Forgiveness is you giving to God any bitterness that you might feel you have a right to have toward someone else.

It is the choice to send the offender and the offense away into the hands of God, and let God take care of the matter. Even if we don't want to, God honors that and as we give it to God, we offer it up as a sacrifice because it is difficult for us to let go.

The love tattooed on our hearts is revealed in our action of forgiveness.

And lastly Jesus' actions always glorified God. Each act of acceptance - each act of forgiveness brought glory to God.

When we choose to accept and forgive this is our devotion to God tattooed to God. These actions reveal our own love with God. Each time that we decide to release our hurts to God, we are showing our devotion to Him and our own acceptance of His love for us.

Our actions are our form of worship throughout our lives.

Mother Teresa worships in this way.

Loving as He loves,
helping as He helps,
giving as He gives,
serving as He serves,
rescuing as He rescues,
being with Him for all the twenty-four hours,
touching Him in His distressing disguise.

She says, When she meets someone who is particularly obnoxious, or hateful, or mean, or disturbed, she says only that he or she is Jesus in a "distressing disguise," and on that basis she reaches out to touch them

CLOSING

Our actions reveal our devotion to God tattooed on our heart. All of Jesus' actions on earth brought glory to God. Our actions will bring glory to God. It is our devotion to God, not the rule-following devotion - the doing everything right kind of devotion but the kind that comes out love and gratitude for who God is.