**The World’s Gone Mad - Week 2 - Mad at Us**

**Message Big Idea**: God matures us as a community when we extend grace.

**Scripture**: Ephesians 4:3, 1 Corinthians 12:12-14, Matthew 28:19-20, Matthew 22:37-39, John 17:22-23, Matthew 5:23-24, 2 Corinthians 5:14, 18-19.

**Introduction**

It may come as a surprise, but sometimes we don’t all get along! I know. Shocking, right? But sometimes we fight! And here’s the most shocking statement of all: sometimes we fight with each other. We fight, and we fight about the silliest things. Thom Rainer, an author and church leader, did a Twitter survey to find out the silly things people fought over in church. Here were the most common responses: Just use one…

* Temperature in the church building. Everyone knows it should be set to 68 degrees!
* ~~Order of the service. Apparently people were getting red-faced about whether you sing first, then teach, or vice versa, or where you take communion, etc. Can you believe it?~~
* ~~Color of the carpet. Why would people fight about this? We all know it’s supposed to be a dark color so it doesn’t show the coffee stains!~~

Rainer listed 25 of the silliest arguments in churches, including:

* A fight over which picture of Jesus to put in the foyer. His Facebook profile pic, of course.
* A dispute over whether the worship leader should have his shoes on during the service. ~~Hopefully they had on shirts and pants too.~~
* A dispute because the church used cran/grape instead of grape juice for Communion. Jesus obviously used Welch’s grape juice when he said “this do in remembrance of me.”

While these examples seem petty and absurd, the truth is that most of us have experienced something at church that made us mad:

* A conflict in a small group.
* Poor decision by a leader or staff member.
* Getting hurt by something someone said to us.
* A few more examples… political beliefs, justice issues, social media

In fact, I want you to challenge you before we get into this to let God bring to mind one or more people that you are in conflict with, where there is disunity, because at the end we’re going to challenge each other to take action to resolve it.

The reality is that if you stick around church long enough you will probably get mad at something. I’m not sure I like that some of you are nodding “yes” so demonstratively☺ Anytime a group of people get together, the opportunity for conflict is inevitable. It’s pretty easy to get mad at “us.”

**Series Recap** Tighten this up…

We’re in week 2 of our series “The World’s Gone Mad.” It seems anger is in the air. Everywhere you turn it seems that people are mad about something, doesn’t it? And we’re getting angrier. According to a January 2016 magazine survey of 3,000 Americans by NBC News and Esquire magazine, half of the respondents said they were angrier than they were a year ago. It just feels like everyone is walking around with that “angry face” emoji above their head.

Last week we talked about “Angry at Me.” Sometimes our anger is directed at ourselves. We’re mad at ourselves for mistakes we’ve made, things we have done. Or we’re mad at ourselves for missed opportunities, things we have not done. We learned that God’s grace is bigger than anything we have done or not done and we can let go of our anger towards ourselves when we embrace that grace.

You may be wondering, “What about all the things I’m angry at in our world?” That’s a great question, and one we’re going to address next week as we talk about “Angry at Them, so make sure you join us and invite a friend. But today, we’re talking about “Angry at Us.” Now, who do we mean by “us”? The church. Those of us who call ourselves followers of Jesus and come together in this place as a community of Christ-followers called “the church.”

Now after talking about all this fighting, I want to welcome our guests! Ha! Seriously though, this is a beautiful community who care about each other. But again, anytime you put a group of people together, there inevitably will be conflict. Chances are good that at some point everyone will experience getting mad at “us.”

**God’s Desire: Unity**

Why are we talking about this? Because what’s at stake here is something really important and something that God desires for us as a community: unity.

The Apostle Paul describes God’s vision for unity in Ephesians 4:3:

***“Make every effort to keep the unity of the Spirit through the bond of peace.” Ephesians 4:3***

Paul has just spent the first three chapters laying the foundation of unity in Jesus; that because of Jesus we are all brought together. Different people from different backgrounds, all united in Jesus. Then he gets to chapter 4 and the first word he uses is “therefore.” Whenever we see this in scripture we can basically say “here comes the application of what has been said previously.” And this “therefore” is that Christ-followers are called to do whatever they can to keep unity that God has established in Jesus.

Notice Paul says “make every effort.” That’s because unity is not easy. It can be disrupted if we don’t work at it. Unity is not something that we can just assume will be there without any effort on our part. It’s as if Paul is giving us a heads up that there will be things in the church that can lead to disunity. Not everything is going to be perfect where we’re all holding hands and singing kumbaya! The enemy wants nothing more than a church that is caught up in fighting and distracted from the mission.

“But you don’t understand! I’m mad!” I’m not saying we can’t or won’t get mad, but we’re called to maintain unity in the midst of it. But what happens to us most of the time when there’s conflict? In fact, turn to the person next to you and say, “I’m mad at you!”

So what are you going to do about it? Typically we have one of three responses:

* **Fight** – we love a good fight.
* **Flight** – we cringe at the thought of conflict.
* **Unite** – we also have an opportunity to come together!

Need to think of a personal story here that is either flight or flight that led to fracture.

Raise your hand if you tend to respond with fight? How about flight? See, half of us respond with fight and half with flight. Maybe we should put all the fighters together and see what happens☺ But this just proves what happens during conflict when we respond in these ways: a fracturing of the community.

But this is not God’s dream for our community. His dream is unity, and he’s laid the groundwork for unity through Jesus. There is a third response, and it’s to unite for the sake of God’s dream. But when a community is fractured, people get distracted, discouraged, and even disillusioned about what we’re really called to do: to help people find their way back to God. Keeping unity is so important.

**Unity: What it is not**

So if unity is so important, what does it actually look like? I think it’s important that we first talk about what it’s not. Because there can be some confusion about it.

You might be thinking, especially if you are the “flight” person, that it would be great if everyone thought and acted like you. No debates. No relational conflict. If everyone just had the same opinions there would be no disagreements or debates. We would all just get along!

Not exactly. Unity does not mean uniformity. And while uniformity would be much simpler and cleaner, God does not call us to uniformity. We’re not all the same. That’s something to celebrate. Think about it, how boring a world would we live in if we were all the same? If everyone were like me, we would be in trouble!

God never calls us to look the same, function the same, or use our gifts in the same way. He created us to thrive in different ways. A vital aspect of our unity is not uniformity, but diversity. Paul describes this diversity by using the metaphor of a body.

***Just as a body, though one, has many parts, but all its many parts form one body, so it is with Christ. For we were all baptized by one Spirit so as to form one body—whether Jews or Gentiles, slave or free—and we were all given the one Spirit to drink.Even so the body is not made up of one part but of many. 1 Corinthians 12:12-14***

The truth is the church functions best when there’s diversity, not uniformity. That’s because diversity compels us to look beyond our preferences and opinions and defer in humility to the whole. In diversity my focus is not on me as an individual, but on the community. Unity is so much deeper than uniformity.

“But shouldn’t we agree on at least some things?” Yes, we should. We would say that there are certain core beliefs that are important for us to agree on: beliefs about God, Jesus, Salvation, the Holy Spirit, and the Church. These are what we call the big ones. Outside of these big ones, we value diversity of preference and opinion because that’s what makes this community beautiful. That’s what helps us to function in the way God intends.

**Unity: What it is**

So, now that we understand what unity is *not;* let’s talk about what unity is! I could say a lot about this, but let me just jump to the bottom line and then explain how I got there! The bottom line is this -- unity is mission criticial for what Got wants to do in your life and in this world! Mission critical! And it’s important that we understand this because I believe most of us consider unity a nice thing or a good thing; but I’m convinced that we don’t understand that unity between us, God’s people is mission critical.

Let me share how I got there…

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(Create a venn diagram similar to this except use UNITY instead of TOGETHER)

**The Great Commission (GO!)**

When we think of Jesus and his mission, one of the first things that comes to mind and one of the first verses we turn to is Matthew 28:19, 20: ***“Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age.”***  This is what comes to mind when we think of the Jesus mission!

And in word it could be summarized as “GO!” And we are all for that! We believe that we have to go and take the good news of the gospel to all people!

**The Great Commandment (LOVE!)**

But Jesus didn’t just tell us to go, he also told us how we were to go. And we find that in the great commandment in Matthew 22:37-39… ***“‘Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind.’ This is the first and greatest commandment. And the second is like it: ‘Love your neighbor as yourself.”***

Guess what? When I discovered that we were not just to GO, but to go in LOVE, that helped a lot! Love helps!

**The Great Collaboration (UNITY!)**

But I had an experience recently that confirmed that in order to accomplish the mission of Jesus there is still something missing beyond the GO and the LOVE! What kind of story could all TPs use? ~~People at a Chicago Network Gathering or Exponential~~. Or talk about Explore God and what happened there. I was asked to speak at an event in Berlin, Germany a couple years ago. The event called the “European Church Planting Process” – I had no idea what that meant!?! But when I walked into the room there were 27 round tables with 7-8 leaders at each table. Why 27? One table for each of the 27 countries in the European Union.

Once I understood what I was looking at – it was beautiful! They had assembled leaders from a variety of denominations, cultures and countries; in fact all 27 EU countries to come together and strategize how they could advance the Jesus mission across all of Europe! It was breathtaking!!

And as I watched this diverse group of leader from every country across Europe work together it hit me – this is the unity that Jesus was describing as mission critical in John 17:22-23 when he said, ***“…that they may be one as we are one— I in them and you in me—so that they may be brought to complete unity. Then the world will know that you sent me and have loved them even as you have loved me...”***

Notice, Jesus didn’t say unity was a nice thing or a good thing – no, he’s calling it mission critical! Jesus says there is something about us living in unity; us getting along; us working together and loving each other that will convince an unbelieving world that Jesus was sent by God to love them! It’s mission critical!

**Jesus Mission**

So, if GO is the great commission and LOVE is the great commandment, then this is Jesus vision for the Great Collaboration!

* Yes, we are to GO!
* Yes we are to LOVE!
* But here is what I believe is so often missing from the mission: We are to GO, LOVE, in UNITY!

…and only when we put all three of these together that we will accomplish the JESUS MISSION! It’s us doing this in UNITY that is mission critical!

**“Making Effort”**

This explains why Jesus was so emphatic about unity and always being reconciled with each other. Listen to what he says: ***“Therefore, if you are offering your gift at the altar and there remember that your brother or sister has something against you, leave your gift there in front of the altar. First go and be reconciled to them; then come and offer your gift.”*** *- Matthew 5:23,24*

In these words I hear Jesus challenging us several ways regarding unity…

1. **UNITY IS RISKY. Is this the right word? Needs to be about self-reflection. Unity requires Reflection.**

First, Jesus is telling us that unity is risky. And it’s risky on multiple levels. It’s risky emotionally and relationally. Notice, in the example Jesus uses, he says, ***“You are at the altar and there remember that someone has something against you.”*** Unity requires that we regularly and honestly evaluate what is going on inside us. It’s easier to just feel. You know to just feel mad; feel disappointed; and feel like you are in the right and for some reason that other person is just a jerk! But to actually go beyond this primary feeling and ask, “Why am I feeling this from someone else?” OR “Why is someone acting distant or angry toward me?” - that is risky! Counselors will tell you that anger is a secondary feeling and that what you or others are really feeling is hurt or pain. Once you start dealing with your own inner pain or other people’s inner pain it can get messy and is risky. Dealing with that stuff is risky…emotionally and relationally risky.

1. **UNITY IS HARD. Unity requires sacrifice.**

In case you haven’t picked this up – unity is hard! It’s just plain hard work. If it was easy we’d have it. But the truth is, it’s probably even harder than you think! The kind of unity that God wants for us is best described in the Hebrew word for “peace” that is consistently used in the Old Testament, *Shalom.* And shalom-peace is different than what we think of as peace. Did we want to use the text stuff about having to make a journey from the altar and back?

* When we talk about peace, what we really mean is the absence of conflict. Like if I say, “I just want some peace and quiet” – I’m talking about the absence of something. If we talk about ‘peace talks’ between two nations the goal is for their not to be war or an absence of conflict
* But *shalom* peace was not just the absence of conflict. Instead it was the reconciliation of two people or two entities. They didn’t just co-exist without fighting; they were reconciled.

God doesn’t want us to just co-exist in a silence where no bombs are being lobbed back and forth. He wants *shalom.* Reconciliation. And that is hard!

1. **UNITY IS YOUR RESPONSIBILITY. Unity requires initiative.**

And here’s the fifth challenge from Jesus – unity starts with me! Unity is my responsibility. Unity is your responsibility. Unity starts with me!

* + In Matthew 5 Jesus uses an example of you recognizing that someone has something against you – and he says, “You go to him or her and be reconciled.”
	+ Then later in this same gospel in chapter 18 he uses an example where you realize that you have something against someone – and he says, “You go to him or her and be reconciled.”

Either way – if someone has something against me OR if I have something against someone else, it doesn’t matter. Unity starts with me! Let that sink in. Turn to the person next to you, point to your chest and say, “Unity starts with me.” (“Unity starts with me.”)

**Need ending to be about extending grace and giving room for people to reflect. Get to heart (not just head).**

Unity is risky. It’s hard. It’s our responsibility. So, why should we make “every effort”? Let me end with this -- because it’s worth it! It is worth it! It’s so worth it! Why is it worth it? Because it was worth it to God! The Apostle Paul who spent his life creating unity between people he once hated so much he tried to kill explained it this way: ***“For Christ’s love compels us… All this is from God, who reconciled us to himself through Christ and gave us the ministry of reconciliation; that God was reconciling the world to himself in Christ, not counting people’s sins against them. And he has committed to us the message of reconciliation.”*** - II Corinthians 5:14 & 18,19

I love verse 14***“For Christ’s love compels us…”*** We have been loved by God like this…

* It was risky…while we were still sinners. he left Heaven for earth.
* It was urgent…he left Heaven.
* It was costly…he came to earth.
* It was hard…he gave up his life.
* It Jesus decided, this reconciliation starts with me.
* And God says you and I are worth it!

Because we have been loved like this; we love like this!

Who is that person for you?

* Is it someone in this room?
* Is it a friend and something has come between you.
* Is it a family member and you haven’t talked for months…maybe years.
* Or there is a long held grudge between you and your spouse.

Who is that person for you? ***”…go and be reconciled to them.”***

Need better conclusion.

**Communion Idea**

1 Cor 10:16 – Not just the receiving, it is the participation – Extending it

As we come to a time of communion, I want to go back to this II Corinthians 5: ***“All this is from God, who reconciled us to himself through Christ and gave us the ministry of reconciliation; that God was reconciling the world to himself in Christ, not counting people’s sins against them. And he has committed to us the message of reconciliation.”*** - II Corinthians 5:14 & 18,19 During this communion time, the God of reconciliation is iniating with you yet again. He is coming to you in the bread and in the cup. The bread is a reminder of the body of Christ broken for you and the cup is reminder of the blood of Christ shed for you. And while you sit passively in your seat, Christ comes to you offering reconciliation with God. All you have to do is receive it. So if you want to be reconciled with God, either for the first time or yet again – we welcome you to join us in communion.