

23T14b Love of Christ- Compassion, Tongue and Forgiveness

Hello my friends. Thanks for joining me today for an @ the PUNLA coffee table. I'm Kip your host for this series.

What does it mean to live a life centered on and around the "love of Christ?" We have been exploring this in our series "Love of Christ" based on a book by Adele Calhoun titled "*Spiritual Disciplines Handbook*."¹

Let's pray.

Last time we talked about how we can embody the love of Christ by blessing others or encouragement, and caring for our world, God's beautiful creation.

Let's remember God is very clear, we are to love others in a way that embodies the love of Christ through our lives, actions and words. We have been discussing different aspects of this throughout this series,

1. Encouragement (blessing others)
2. Care of the Earth
3. Compassion
4. Speech (Control of the Tongue)
5. Forgiveness
6. Humility
7. Justice
8. Solidarity (in Jesus' Sufferings)
9. Stewardship
10. Honesty (Truth Telling)

Each of these are part of embodying the love of Christ to the world and this list is not complete. You might be able to come up with more.

Let's start this session with, "Speech". Control of the Tongue.

"In themselves Spiritual Disciplines can do nothing; they can only get us to a place where something can be done." Douglas Rumford

Our desire is to turn our destructive use of our tongue into words that are authentic, loving and healing to those who hear them.

Next how do we define it? Control of the tongue involves an intentional awareness and governance of words as well as tone of voice in all communication. There are so many scriptures which to this, here are a couple.

The hearts of the wise make their mouths prudent, and their lips promote instruction. Gracious words are a honeycomb, sweet to the soul and healing to the bones.
(Proverbs 16:22-23 NIV)

¹ Calhoun, Adele Ahlberg. *Spiritual Disciplines Handbook* (Transforming Resources). InterVarsity Press. Kindle Edition.

Jesus called the crowd to him and said, "Listen and understand. What goes into someone's mouth does not defile them, but what comes out of their mouth, that is what defiles them." (Matthew 15:10-11 NIV)

How do we put this into practice in our lives? Speaking the truth in love not speaking out of anger or irritability. Using our words to encourage and build others up. We consciously speak life rather than death. That means not yelling, cursing or belittling It means refusing to take part in gossip, slander or backstabbing. No half-truths for personal gain. This includes non-verbal body language as well.

What is the evidence we are doing this? Building others up through words and noticing how those words are affecting others. Apologizing and forgiving when needed. Letting go of verbal defense mechanisms and instead revealing Christ in the use of your tongue.

But of course this is easier said than done. James knew this. *"People can tame all kinds of animals, birds, reptiles, and fish, but no one can tame the tongue. It is restless and evil, full of deadly poison. Sometimes it praises our Lord and Father, and sometimes it curses those who have been made in the image of God. And so blessing and cursing come pouring out of the same mouth."* (James 3:7-10 NLT)

We have to be intentional to embody the love of Christ with our tongue.

What about, "Forgiveness".

"It's so crucial to see our forgiving not simply as our own act, but as participation in God's forgiving. Our forgiving is faulty; God's forgiving is faultless. Our forgiving is provisional; God's is final. . . . The only way we dare forgive is by making our forgiving transparent to God's and always open to revision. After all, our forgiveness is only possible as an echo of God's." Miroslav Volf

Our desire is to lean into Jesus' forgiving heart and stop the cycle of hate and anger.

Next how do we define it? To forgive is to condemn the wrong but spare the wrongdoer. We turn away from hatred, revenge and self-righteous indignation by turning all those things over to Jesus and forgiving in the same way Jesus forgave us.

"If you forgive those who sin against you, your heavenly Father will forgive you. But if you refuse to forgive others, your Father will not forgive your sins." (Matthew 6:14-15 NIV)

How do we put this into practice in our lives? It includes forgiving ourselves for the mistakes we've made. It's forgiving those that we think don't deserve because God forgave us when we did not deserve it. With the help of God, we can separate the wrong from the wrong-doer. And in doing so embody the love of Christ to those who have hurt us.

What is the evidence we are doing this? Freedom from cycles of hatred, revenge and bitterness and instead breath mercy, compassion and love into our suffering. By doing this we share in Christ's suffering by understanding the gift of Jesus' death so my sins could be forgiven and their sins too.

What about, "Humility".

"Humility and honesty are really the same thing. A humble person is simply a brutally honest person about the whole truth. You and I came along a few years ago; we're going to be gone in a few years. The only honest response to life is a humble one." Richard Rohr

Our desire is to become more like Jesus by choosing the hidden way of love rather than the way of power.

Next how do we define it? Humility is not thinking less of yourself but thinking of yourself less. Humble people let go of image management and self-promotion. They honor others by making the others' needs as real and important as their own.

"Watch out! Don't do your good deeds publicly, to be admired by others, for you will lose the reward from your Father in heaven." (Matthew 6:1 NIV)

How do we put this into practice in our lives? Don't name drop, refuse the impulse to be the center of attention, avoiding favoritism. Building up others and keeping silence about you and yours except when asked.

What is the evidence we are doing this? Jesus first in everything. I like this acronym J.O.Y.- Jesus first, Others next, you last. Keeping the first things first. That is always Jesus.

I think I'll stop there for today.

Let's Pray.

Let me leave you with this. As followers of Jesus, our lives should reflect Christ. Our lives are to embody the love of Christ to the lost and broken living in His world. We can do this by intentionally practicing things like forgiveness, humility and controlling our tongue.

Thank you for joining me today @ the PUNLA CoffeeTable. If you liked the message, please share a link with a friend. You can contact me at kip@punla.org if you have comments or questions. So, until next time @ the PUNLA CoffeeTable. God bless.