

**“TOØ MESSY / Unit 3: Monster Christians
Sermon 2: “Contemtable Christians”
November 15, 2015**

He is recognized as one of the most influential therapists in our country. And he claims to be able to predict with over 90% accuracy whether we are going to divorce by watching how we talk to each other. He calls these habits “the four horsemen of the apocalypse.” These are what kill marriages, he says.

- There is Criticism. Now this is more than just a complaint, this is the kind of criticism where you attack your partner’s personality, or their character. You say things like, “You always,” or “You never,” or “Why are you so _____” (You fill in the blank)
- And then there is Defensiveness, that’s where you try to play the victim. You start making excuses: “It’s not my fault.” And you try to flip it around: “It’s really your fault. It’s not me, it’s you.”
- And then there is Stonewalling. Some of us guys, especially, are quite gifted at stonewalling. That’s when we just shut down, we just withdraw. We act like we are trying to rise above the fight. But sometimes our silence shouts disapproval, and smugness, and rejection.
- But the worst, he says, the greatest love killer is Contempt. You know what contempt looks like. We roll our eyes, we sneer in disgust, we mock, we belittle, we put them down. Sometimes we use killer words, like: “You idiot,” Or, “You’re full of _____,” Or, “You ... there a couple of words that fit, that start with a ‘b’.” Or any of these: “You fat, stupid, ugly, lazy, slob.” That’s the worst, he says. Contempt is the greatest predictor of a marriage falling apart.

Do you know why? Because contempt is a love killer. You know what I’m talking about. You know what it feels like to have contempt for someone; you know what it feels like for someone to have contempt for you. It’s awful. The feeling that that person is beneath you, that they are worthless, that they deserve your disrespect. Contempt is related to disgust – kind of

a cousin. But contempt throws in this idea of hierarchy. You are inferior to me; I look down on you, you are beneath me.

And you know what it looks like. You can show contempt without saying a word. Your husband or your wife can see your contempt without your saying a word. Guys who study this stuff tell us that we tighten our lips, especially at the corner, and we kind of raise one side up. We kind of turn up our noses. We get this sneer on our face – I'm told I'm pretty good at it. You can hear it in the tone of their voice. You can see it as the roll their eyes. Don't you hate that? Don't you despise someone rolling their eyes at you?

And contempt acts just like disgust. We build boundaries with contempt; we build walls ... walls that God does not honor. And we want to expel, we want to banish anything contemptible that manages to violate our boundaries. Contempt builds walls, and contempt pushes people away. Which is why contempt is a love killer. You see, with love, the boundaries come down, and two become one. With contempt, the boundaries go back up, and what once was one becomes two again. When two are in love, the walls come down. They can touch, they can kiss. When there is contempt, "Don't you touch me, and don't you dare kiss me."

Now, it's possible that you don't feel disgust much. We've been talking about disgust for a couple months now. You may not feel intense disgust, much. But I'll bet most of you are pretty good at contempt. And here's the deal: contempt kills love; it's may be the most effective love killer there is. In a marriage, it's a sign of a relationship that is failing or dead. In church ... well, that's what we're going to talk about this morning.

So, if you have a Bible with you, or a Bible app, find 1 Corinthians 11. We're going to get there in a few minutes. 1 Corinthians 11. Now ... contempt has always been around, and it's all over the pages of the Bible. One of the most amazing things about God is that he is willing to experience our contempt without turning us into road-kill ... yet. His is mind-boggling restraint. As Jesus, God stepped into our world, and we treated him with contempt. The apostle John says, "He was in the world, and (even) though the world was made through him, the world did not recognize him. He came to that which was his own, but (even) his own did not receive him." (John 1.10-11) That's contempt. And the way he died

was the ultimate expression of contempt. He was mocked and ridiculed, and then mocked and ridiculed again as he was beaten, and then mocked and ridiculed again as they murdered him.

But it wasn't only at his birth, or at his death; Jesus felt our contempt constantly. He still does. Imagine the looks on their faces when Jesus called a tax collector to be one of his disciples – he saw contempt in their eyes. Imagine the looks on their faces when he went to a party at that tax collector's house, when all the guests were tax collectors and sinners – contempt. Imagine the looks on their faces as Jesus allowed a sinful woman to wash his feet, as he touched the lepers, as he leaned in to those they leaned away from.

Because ... because in that world contempt was not only normal (it still is), it was perfectly acceptable. In the world of Jesus some people just didn't matter, they thought. If you were rich, the poor really didn't matter. If you were religious, the irreligious really didn't matter. To the adults, kids didn't matter. To the free, the slaves didn't matter. To the guys, you ladies didn't matter. And then along comes Jesus, and he starts tearing down walls. To him children matter. To him women matter. To him slaves matter. To him sinners matter. He kept leaning in when the others leaned away, and it took their breath away.

And then he added something to our worship which was to remind us that contempt, the love killer, has no place in his Kingdom. If we are going to be Jesus followers, then we have to learn to treat people like he did. So on that night before he died, he gathered them for a last supper – a piece of which we reenact every Sunday with our Lord's Supper. And he tied a towel around his waist, and he took a bowl of water, and he began to wash their feet. He washed the feet of the guy who would deny him. He washed the feet of the guy who would betray him. He washed the feet of the tax collector, and the zealot, and the doubter. And then he said to them, "Do you understand what I was doing? You call me 'Teacher' and 'Lord,' and you are right, because that's what I am. And since I, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you (Jesus followers) ought to wash each other's feet. I have given you an example to follow. (Now, go) Do as I have done to you." (John 13:12-15)

And for 2000 years we have made the Lord's Supper a centerpiece of our worship. Here we do what Jesus did, we tear down the walls. We eat with sinners (because we are sinners too). It doesn't matter where you've been, or what you've done; it doesn't matter how old you are, or how young; it doesn't matter how much money you have; it doesn't matter how smart you are; it doesn't matter what color you are, or how pretty you are. It doesn't matter what they think about you out there. In here, if you are a lover of Jesus, you are family, and you are welcome at our table ... at his table. This is a table where contempt is not welcome. This is a place where people who would never have thought of associating with each other out there sit as equals, and become family. This table is a profoundly subversive place, where we declare war on disgust and contempt.

So ... So how perverse, how twisted would it be to allow contempt to contaminate this table? Which was exactly what was happening in a place called Corinth, in a church started by an apostle named Paul. Do you have your Bible opened to 1 Corinthians? We're going to get to chapter 11 in just a couple minutes. As you skim through this letter of Paul to the Corinthians you can see their contempt for each other on nearly every page.

- In the opening chapters of the letter he scolds them for their factions, for their divisions, their cliques. Because contempt is kind of what people in cliques do, isn't it? And it's a love killer.
- In chapter 6 he scolds them for taking each other to court. There are all kinds of ways you can spin contempt out of that nonsense. But here's one you may not have thought of. In that world only the rich got justice in the courts. The rich could buy the best lawyers, and the best judges. The courts were a place where the rich got more, and the poor got messed over. They were a place of institutional contempt. Aren't you glad that never happens anymore?
- In chapter 8 Paul scolds the strong Christians for their contempt for the weak. You see, in that world, the poor couldn't afford much meat. About the only time they got meat was when the pagans had a festival, when the meat from the temple sacrifices went on sale in the meat markets. So some of the poor Christians connected meat with

idolatry. And Paul had to scold the richer Christians for ignoring the sensitivities of the poorer Christians. Contempt.

- In chapter 9 he scolds the rich Christians because they were treating him with contempt. You see, Paul chose to support himself by working with his hands. And some of the rich people in that world had contempt for those who worked with their hands.
- In chapters 12-14 he scolds those who had flashy spiritual gifts for their contempt for those who didn't have their gifts. Because contempt kills love. Which is why the love chapter, 1 Corinthians 13, is right in the middle of this scolding.

But the coup de grace is in chapter 11. Because how perverse would it be, how twisted would it be to allow contempt to contaminate the Lord's Supper itself? And that's exactly what they were doing. They were dishonoring God, they were defiling this table – this table of grace – with their contempt for each other. Let me show you how – because if we're not careful, we'll do it too.

Now back then they would often celebrate the Lord's Supper rather differently than we do. And I'm not talking about the little plastic cups we use, filled with grape juice, or the cute little micro crackers we splurge on for you all. No, they often wrapped their worship around a meal, a fellowship meal. I don't know whether everyone brought their own food, or whether the host supplied the food. But here's what would happen. Those were higher up the social ladder would sit at the head table, and they would eat the best food, and drink the best wine. Those who didn't matter as much (they thought) would sit at the lesser tables. And some of them, since they had to work, would get there late. And the muckety mucks -- those with power, and with money, and with status, and with looks – they wouldn't wait. They'd go ahead and eat, and they'd go ahead and drink. And they'd be stuffed, and maybe feeling a little buzz, while those without power, or money, or status, or looks would eat whatever was left over, and they'd drink whatever was left over. And they'd be hungry, and humiliated. And then these so-called Jesus followers would come to this table to share a piece of bread – that represented Christ's broken body, and a cup of wine – that represented Christ's shed blood. It was supposed to be a table of ... grace. And Paul was ticked!

Are you ready? Let's read it together. I'm going to have the Good News Translation on screen. Paul says, "In the following instructions I do not praise you, because your meetings for worship actually do more harm than good." (1 Corinthians 1.17) Did you hear that. He says, "When you gather for worship, you are actually doing more harm to God's Kingdom than good. It would be better for the Kingdom if you weren't here." That's hard!

He says, "I have been told that there are opposing groups in your meetings; and this I believe is partly true." (1 Corinthians 1.18) In fact, in the next verse he calls them "divisions." What you can't see is the Greek word Paul uses to describe those divisions. He calls them "aireseis" ... heresies. They were acting like heretics. You see, as time passed heresy came to mean some twisted belief. But the older meaning of heresy is some twisted clique, some twisted wall we build to keep other of God's people out. Now, that would be different, wouldn't it? If we called each other heretics, when we build walls God does not honor, and when we lean away from people God wants us to grace?

And then Paul says – and this is mind blowing. He says, "When you meet together as a group, it is not (it is not) the Lord's Supper that you eat." (1 Corinthians 11.20) Did you hear that? He says, "You may be eating that cute little micro-cracker, and you may be drinking that little plastic cup of grape juice. But it's not the Lord's Supper!" Do you know why?

He says, "For as you eat, you each go ahead with your own meal, so that some are hungry while others get drunk." (1 Corinthians 1.21) It's not the Lord's Supper because you are treating each other with contempt. And if you treat each other with contempt away from this table, God will not honor what you do at this table. Did you hear that? When we treat each other with contempt away from this table, God does not honor what we do at this table!

If we skip down a few verse this is what Paul says. He says, "If one of you eats the Lord's bread or drinks from his cup in a way that dishonors him..." Do you know how we do that? We do that by dishonoring them – his precious kids. When we try to worship him, with contempt in our heart for them, then we "are guilty of sin against the Lord's body (the church) and (the Lord's) blood." (1 Corinthians 11.27) Now that's hard stuff!

So, he says, “You should each examine yourself first, and then eat the bread and drink from the cup. For if you do not recognize the meaning of the Lord's body – the church, then -- when you eat the bread and drink from the cup, you bring judgment on yourself.” (1 Corinthians 11.28-29)

So he says, “When you gather together to eat the Lord's Supper, wait for one another.” No divisions, no cliques, no contempt. “If any of you are hungry, you should eat at home, so that you will not come under God's judgment as you meet together.” (1 Corinthians 11.33-34)

Now we are going to press pause here for a few minutes. That's a “Toddism” – I kind of like it. We are going to press pause here for a few minutes and we're going to gather around the Lord's Table, his way. Guys, contempt is the love killer; but this table is the contempt killer. We invite anybody who loves Jesus, anyone who craves his grace to this table. No, that's not right. He invites anybody who loves him back, he invites anybody who craves his grace to his table.

We want this table to be what he meant it to be. Look around the room. There are people in this room you wouldn't ordinarily hang out with. But you know what – here we're family. At this table there are no rich and no poor, no blacks and no whites, no republicans and no democrats, there are no cliques of any sort at all. We are just lovers of Jesus, who have tasted grace. And we will welcome as family anyone who calls him ... Dad. So, if you are harboring some contempt for any of your brothers or sisters here, you need to let it go, you need to ask God to let it go, or else it won't do you any good to take the Lord's Supper this morning.

We're going to come to the Lord's Table a little differently this morning, a little more like they would have done it in the early church. They would have used one loaf of bread, because we are one family, sharing the same food. And they would have used one cup of wine, because we are one family, sharing the same drink. So after this next song, when you go to a worship station, you can tear off a piece of this one loaf, and you can dip it into the one cup ... if you want. Now, if you've been sick and you are concerned about spreading germs, there's a tray there with a little plastic cup and a micro-cracker as well. Our elders are going to hang out near

the worship stations, and they'll talk with you, or pray with you, if there is something weighing on you.

As we prepare ourselves, let's stand, let's take a stand, and let's worship our God. Guys, don't just sit there, don't just stand there, if you are a Jesus follower – give him the praise he deserves ... (THE STAND)

Guys, we live in a world where contempt is winning. And it sneaks inside these walls too. If you go outside these walls, it's everywhere.

- You can see it in the eyes, you can hear it in the voices of those who chant, "Black live matter," as they hurl their invectives against the police. And you can see it in the eyes, you can hear it in the voices of those who despise those who cry, "Black lives matter."
- Listen to the contempt of the Democrats for the Republican candidates for president, calling them a bunch of clowns, going around in clown cars. Listen to the contempt of the Republicans for the President, and Hillary, and Bernie, and others they ... hate.
- Listen to the contempt of so many for the Hispanics who immigrate, often illegally. Listen to the contempt of the Hispanics for any who would challenge their coming, even illegally.
- Listen to the contempt of our children towards their teachers, and the contempt of our parents towards other people's kids.
- Listen to the contempt that is building in our culture for us. We Jesus followers are the regressives now. We are the narrow, the intolerant, the obstructionists. We Christians. And it's going to get worse.

We expect it out there. It's so much harder when people feel contempt inside these walls.

- In how many churches do you find contempt of the old for the young, and contempt of the young for the old? Guys, not here!

- In how many churches do you discover this socioeconomic contempt? And those with money try to buy their way in church. And those with power try to bully their way in church. Guys, not here!
- In how many churches do those with “bigger sins” feel judged by those who think their sins are smaller? Well, not here!
- In how many churches do you still find racism, and sexism?
(*Galatians 3.28 on screen*) In this family there is no longer white or black or brown or yellow, in this family women will be honored, in this family the poor and the powerless will be respected.
- In how many churches do you find the educated honored, and those who are not book smart dishonored? In how many churches do you find the beautiful, and the fit envied, and the not so beautiful, and the not so fit, despised? Not here guys!

Because contempt is the love killer, and we want to love God, and we want to love each other. But it will be a war. Guys, contempt is something all of us deal with ... every single day. We feel it directed at us, and we use it as a weapon to hurt people. And when we do that, we not only push them away from us, as Jesus followers, we push them away from God. Did you know that one of the goals of God’s Spirit inside me, one of the goals of God’s Spirit inside you is to root out our contempt?

But here’s what makes it so hard to root out. You see, contempt is easy to see in someone else, but we’re not always so good at seeing it in ourselves. A husband can see the contempt of his wife, and a wife can see the contempt of her husband, but we’re not so good at admitting it in ourselves. I can see contempt in some of you, and some of you tell me you can see it in me. The nose gets turned up a little. The eyes roll. You can sense it in the sarcasm, in the cynicism, in the mockery that we disguise as humor, sometimes. Now sometimes we accuse people wrongly, we misinterpret each other. But sometimes we can detect that when someone thinks they are better than we are, that nothing we can say has value, or worth.

So the Spirit is there to nudge us, to convict us, to unmask our contempt. Sometimes he uses a wise brother or sister to nudge us, to convict us, to

unmask our contempt. And when our contempt is unmasked, we root it out. Because it is a love killer. It destroys friendships, it destroys marriages, it destroys churches.

Do you know how to kill the love killer? Here it is guys; here's what Jesus tells us to do. Two great commandments: love God, and love your neighbor. Contempt kills love; but love kills contempt. So love God with all your heart, and all your soul, and all your mind, and all your strength. And love your neighbor as yourself.

We love God because we understand, it's all grace. The only reason you're here is grace. The only reason any of us has any shot at all, is grace. Everything good we have ever experienced, everything good we have ever done – it's all grace. And it's hard to be arrogant, it's hard to be contemptuous when you love him because you realize it's all grace.

And then we love our neighbors as we love ourselves. Loving your neighbor takes your focus off your self, and put it on the one we love. It's not about me, it's about what pleases me, it's not about what serves me; it's about what pleases him, it's about what serves him. And that attitude will destroy contempt. You buy that! Guys: contempt kills love; but love kills contempt.

I'm going to ask you to do something really, really hard. If God has nudged you, if God has convicted you of some contempt inside you, I'm going to ask you to ask his forgiveness, and with his help, stop it! It'll take his help. Stop it! It doesn't do you any good to hear God's truth, and then go out and do the same. God didn't honor their worship because of their contempt for each other. I want him to honor our worship. I want this stuff to mean something to us, and to him. Wouldn't this be an amazing place if we did some repenting, and some transforming, and real worshiping?