Misplaced Fear

1 Peter 3:8-17  Finally, all of you, have unity of mind, sympathy, brotherly love, a tender heart, and a humble mind. 9 Do not repay evil for evil or reviling for reviling, but on the contrary, bless, for to this you were called, that you may obtain a blessing. 10 For "Whoever desires to love life and see good days, let him keep his tongue from evil and his lips from speaking deceit; 11 let him turn away from evil and do good; let him seek peace and pursue it. 12 For the eyes of the Lord are on the righteous, and his ears are open to their prayer. But the face of the Lord is against those who do evil." 13 Now who is there to harm you if you are zealous for what is good? 14 But even if you should suffer for righteousness' sake, you will be blessed. Have no fear of them, nor be troubled, 15 but in your hearts honor Christ the Lord as holy, always being prepared to make a defense to anyone who asks you for a reason for the hope that is in you; yet do it with gentleness and respect, 16 having a good conscience, so that, when you are slandered, those who revile your good behavior in Christ may be put to shame. 17 For it is better to suffer for doing good, if that should be God's will, than for doing evil.

I love the cluster of attributes in vs.8: unity of mind, sympathy, brotherly love, tender heart, humble mind – first and last have to do with the mind or mindset and the middle with the heart, like a “mindset of love”. Unfortunately, our default is the opposite: a divisive mind, apathy, cruelty, hard-heartedness, and an arrogant mind. Love is inefficient and takes energy and it doesn’t come naturally to us. Because love is often not reciprocated, it quickly becomes sacrificial. Therefore, we are always looking for excuses not to love people. It can feel easier for us to write people off, then cut them off so we don’t have to expend ourselves or have tough conversations. Peter uses verses 9-17 to tell us how to be like verse 8.

Big Ideas: Misplaced fear is the enemy of love.

Peter addresses two misplaced fears that keep of from loving each other: injustice and pain.

1) Fear of Injustice

1 Peter 3:9-12  Do not repay evil for evil or reviling for reviling, but on the contrary, bless, for to this you were called, that you may obtain a blessing. 10 For "Whoever desires to love life and see good days, let him keep his tongue from evil and his lips from speaking deceit; 11 let him turn away from evil and do good; let him seek peace and pursue it. 12 For the eyes of the Lord are on the righteous, and his ears are open to their prayer. But the face of the Lord is against those who do evil."

- it seems impossible to love when it is not reciprocal

- when someone is evil to us it naturally spring-loads our bitterness & self-righteousness

- his argument for love is grounded in grace toward the righteous and judgment toward the wicked

- verses 10-12 quote Psalm 34:12-16, verse 4 “he delivered me from all my fears” – David wrote it after he feigned madness before Achish king of Gath (1 Samuel 21:10-15) while he was on the run from Saul; interesting that David a way to escape without doing something evil (feigning madness apparently a non-sinful solution)

- it is evil to repay evil for evil since we are stealing God’s exclusive role (personal vengeance is prohibited)

Matthew 5:38-48  You have heard that it was said, 'An eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth.' 39 But I say to you, Do not resist the one who is evil. But if anyone slaps you on the right cheek, turn to him the other also. 40 And if anyone would sue you and take your tunic, let him have your cloak as well. 41 And if anyone forces you to go one mile, go with him two miles. 42 Give to the one who begs from you, and do not refuse the one who would borrow from you. 43 'You have heard that it was said, 'You shall love your neighbor and hate your enemy.' 44 But I say to you, Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you, 45 so that you may be sons of your Father who is in heaven.
For he makes his sun rise on the evil and on the good, and sends rain on the just and on the unjust. 46 For if you love those who love you, what reward do you have? Do not even the tax collectors do the same? 47 And if you greet only your brothers, what more are you doing than others? Do not even the Gentiles do the same? 48 You therefore must be perfect, as your heavenly Father is perfect.

Romans 12:16-21 Live in harmony with one another. Do not be haughty, but associate with the lowly. Never be wise in your own sight. 17 Repay no one evil for evil, but give thought to do what is honorable in the sight of all. 18 If possible, so far as it depends on you, live peaceably with all. 19 Beloved, never avenge yourselves, but leave it to the wrath of God, for it is written, “Vengeance is mine, I will repay, says the Lord.” 20 To the contrary, “if your enemy is hungry, feed him; if he is thirsty, give him something to drink; for by so doing you will heap burning coals on his head.” 21 Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good.

- ultimately, we should fear our own bitterness and self-righteousness in trying to replace God as judge
- leaning into God’s will frees us up to bless others with expecting anything in return

2) Fear of Pain

1 Peter 3:13-17 Now who is there to harm you if you are zealous for what is good? 14 But even if you should suffer for righteousness’ sake, you will be blessed. Have no fear of them, nor be troubled, 15 but in your hearts honor Christ the Lord as holy, always being prepared to make a defense to anyone who asks you for a reason for the hope that is in you; yet do it with gentleness and respect, 16 having a good conscience, so that, when you are slandered, those who revile your good behavior in Christ may be put to shame. 17 For it is better to suffer for doing good, if that should be God’s will, than for doing evil.

- what a beautiful and stunning question in verse 13 – “Now, who is there to harm you if you are zealous for what is good?” – answer: no one
- he is making the connection between fear and love – we don’t love people because we fear the consequences

1 John 4:18-21 There is no fear in love, but perfect love casts out fear. For fear has to do with punishment, and whoever fears has not been perfected in love. 19 We love because he first loved us. 20 If anyone says, “I love God,” and hates his brother, he is a liar; for he who does not love his brother whom he has seen cannot love God whom he has not seen. 21 And this commandment we have from him: whoever loves God must also love his brother.

- Peter juxtaposes fear of man and the fear of Christ: “Have no fear of them, nor be troubled, but in your hearts honor Christ the Lord as holy” (14C-15A)
- what does 1 Peter 2:12 look like? how will they see our good deeds and glorify God? when our good deeds trigger the why question and we explain the reason for the hope we have in Jesus (3:15)
- we can defend without being defensive: “yet do it with gentleness and respect, having a good conscience” (15-16)
- the evil of others can’t truly hurt us, only our own evil can
- self-preservation is not our job, the Gospel is our preservation – slander doesn’t define us, Jesus does

Romans 8:31-32,35-39 What then shall we say to these things? If God is for us, who can be against us? 32 He who did not spare his own Son but gave him up for us all, how will he not also with him graciously give us all things? 35 Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or danger, or sword? 36 As it is written, “For your sake we are being killed all the day long; we are regarded as sheep to be slaughtered.” 37 No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us. 38 For
I am sure that neither death nor life, nor angels nor rulers, nor things present nor things to come, nor powers, 39 nor height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord.

- because of the hop of the resurrection, we shouldn’t fear pain, but rather the pain we inflict on others

- we will never be hurt by someone as much as God has been hurt by us

- the Gospel was the reason that Jameel McGee forgave Andrew Collins for framing him for a crime he didn’t’ commit

**How about you?**
Are you afraid to love? What fears are keeping you from truly loving and blessing others?
Who are you bitter towards right now? Why won’t you forgive them?
Who are you afraid of right now? Why? What is the worst thing they can do to you?