

Resisting the System: How to Live the Jesus Way

Part 1: The Revolution of Love

Ephesians 3:16-21

Summary: Discover how God's revolutionary love empowers you to resist the systems of this world and live the Jesus Way from the inside out.

Main Ideas:

There is a power system in our world that demands our allegiance.

Resistance without roots is fury without transformation.

Before we stand against the system, we need to be rooted in love.

Living the Jesus way requires being filled by the Holy Spirit.

The Holy Spirit transforms us when we practice enjoying God's love.

We can practice enjoying God's love by...

- Reading his story and talking with him throughout the day
- Walking with others
- Thanking him for his gifts

God's love frees us, empowers us, and dares us to dream bigger dreams of resistance.

Real resistance begins in love, is fueled by love, and ends in love.

The most powerful way to resist the system is to live a life rooted in the love of God.

Invitation:

Take 5 minutes a day to practice enjoying God's love by reading, praying, and meditating on Ephesians 3:16-21.

Look for evidence of his love in your daily routine.

Discussion Questions:

1. Read Ephesians 3:16–21. What stands out to you? Why do you think Paul focuses on inner strength and love instead of praying for outward cultural change?
 2. Jon said we are transformed when we “practice enjoying God's love.” How does that language strike you? What do you think it looks like to actually enjoy God's love... not just believe in it?
 3. Think back over the past week. What's one “proof” or “sighting” of God's love that you might have missed but can now identify?
 4. What would change in your daily life if you truly believed God's love for you is “too great to understand fully”?
 5. What is one “big prayer” you could start praying this week? (Think in terms of God's kingdom, not just personal comfort.) How can your group pray with you?
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Transcript:

WE: There is a power system in our world that demands our allegiance. We feel the pull every day.

- A system obsessed with wealth, power, and image.
- Fueled by the lie that we're in control, and kept alive through exploitation and oppression.

This system can be so subtle. We are so used to it, it's hard to recognize...

We see it in our desire to be #1 / To dominate our opponents / To pursue pleasure, luxury, success at all costs

John, the writer of Revelation, called it Babylon.

Other writers call it "the World"

I think we usually call it "THEM" - "Look what they are doing."

So what do we do about this system? What do we do about "THEM"?

As a pastor, even with our small influence, I feel a pressure...

- And if you have access to the billions of people on SM you probably feel this pressure too...

We see things going on and wonder...

- How do we even know what's true, what do speak up for, or what we can even do?

We want to do good, but how do we resist w/o becoming what we're resisting?

Resistance without roots is fury without transformation.

- Creates more harm than good.
- Creates enemies instead of peace
- Creates chaos instead of understanding and conversation.

What we need is a leader to guide us...

Jesus said he was leading a revolution to fight back and resist this system... he invites everyone to participate...

Easter proved the King is alive, and he is taking his kingdom back.

- And we are all invited to join the revolution...
- But how?

How do we resist the system and truly live the Jesus way?

I've been wanting to figure this out for myself... and I figured I could bring you along on the journey as I wrestle w/ it.

Thankfully, we're not the first to ask this.

Around the same time John wrote Revelation, the Apostle Paul wrote a letter to a small group of JF's in the heart of the Roman Empire... showing them exactly how to resist this system and live the Jesus way.

It's now part of the NT... the book of or the letter to the Ephesians.

Ephesus was a rich port city

- The population was slightly larger than Salem (200,000/177,000)

And in this city was a small group of Jews and Gentiles who had begun following Jesus.

- They were trying to figure out what it means to resist the Roman system of power and idolatry
- How to live together as one group... the people of God
- How could they do anything to bring the love and peace of God to their neighbors and city?

So Paul tells them... Before we stand against the system, we need to be rooted in love.

But, where does this rootedness come from?

Paul shows us, while he's praying for his friends in Ephesus...

But he doesn't pray for political change or a bigger influence, he prays for real strength... look at this...

GOD: Ephesians 3:16-17a *I pray that from his glorious, unlimited resources he will empower you with inner strength through his Spirit. Then Christ will make his home in your hearts as you trust in him.*

The Ephesians' lives were permeated by the most powerful empire the world had ever known.

- A system that seemed to have endless money and power

But Paul doesn't pray that they would become powerful enough or gain enough political influence to defeat the empire or bend it to their views...

He prays they would receive true power from the One who has glorious, unlimited resources.

An inner power that only comes from the Holy Spirit of God.

See, in this prayer, we see a guide to resisting the system...

And the first step isn't to try to get more influence, yell louder, outsmart our adversaries...

- That only creates exhaustion, anger, enemies... FURY

No, the first step is to rely on the empowering of the HS.

We'll camp more on this idea in a few weeks... but when someone pledges their allegiance to Jesus, gives him their trust...

Jesus doesn't say, "Good luck. Do your best."

No, like a hand filling and moving a glove, the HS comes and lives in us.

- Making us more and more like Jesus as we walk through our daily lives.

Living the Jesus way requires being filled by the Holy Spirit.

That's what Paul means by saying, "Then Christ will make his home in your hearts"...

- The heart: The center/the core of who you are... your emotions, will, intellect... all of you.
- Not having Jesus be the center of your life... inviting, trusting, and allowing him to permeate every part of who you are.

For some of us, this might sound amazing... for others, that sounds scary (change is hard), sounds intense, sounds so big and overwhelming... even overly religious.

How do we do this?

And this is what is so mind-blowing about God.

- Like every human, including the ancient people in the Roman Empire, we think that to be people of God, we have to become super religious, memorize and follow the right rules, spend as much time as possible in a church,
- We need to grovel, listen only to Jesus music, maybe even eat the right way, pray the right way, and talk the right way...

Paul says nothing like that...

How do we allow the HS to transform us? Look at this... don't let it pass by too quickly...

V. 17b-19 Your roots will grow down into God's love and keep you strong. And may you have the power to understand, as all God's people should, how wide, how long, how high, and how deep his love is. May you experience the love of Christ, though it is too great to understand fully. Then you will be made complete with all the fullness of life and power that comes from God.

What?! Wait, that can't be right...

How do we become complete with all the fullness of life and power that comes from God?

- Roots growing into God's love
- Understanding how wide, long, high, and deep his love is
- Experiencing the love of Christ

Listen... this is what I missed for so long, what so many preachers and church people miss, and missing this is what has turned so many people away from following Jesus...

The Holy Spirit transforms us when we practice enjoying God's love.

This is so important, so let's break it down a bit

Paul says when we choose to trust Jesus, our roots grow into God's love.

- The more we trust Jesus, the deeper those roots go.

Faith isn't something that happens to you... faith is a choice to trust Jesus with your whole life.

When our roots are in God's love, we are rooted and unmovable.

I think of a giant ponderosa pine or Douglas fir with its roots going deep into the ground and wrapping around a massive boulder.

- Nothing is going to make it fall.
- Nothing is going to uproot it.
- It is secure

And Paul prays that as they/we trust Jesus, we would experience the love of God that is too great to understand fully

God is infinite, and his love is an unending ocean.

- The deeper and deeper we go the more love we discover, and each experience is better than the last

So, how do we do this? Again, it's simpler than it sounds...

We can practice enjoying God's love by...

Reading his story and talking with him throughout the day

When we read about others experiencing God's love, we discover how to recognize and enjoy his love for ourselves.

- The best is reading the scriptures. Both OT and NT reveal the love of God
 - Psalm 139:1-6 *O LORD, you have examined my heart and know everything about me. You know when I sit down or stand up. You know my thoughts even when I'm far away. You see me when I travel and when I rest at home. You know everything I do. You know what I am going to say even before I say it, LORD. You go before me and follow me. You place your hand of blessing on my head. Such knowledge is too wonderful for me, too great for me to understand!*
- Writings of people from the last 2000 years and today are helpful too
 - The homily of John Chrysostom from Easter
 - CS Lewis/Tolkien/Andy Stanley/NT Wright/Etc.
 - Lots more

And then talking to him... bringing him into our lives and thoughts in an ongoing conversation

Another way... walking with others

- Most of the You's in this passage are plural
- When we love and are loved by each other, we discover and enjoy God's love.
- Here on Sundays (Showing up regularly, hanging out, volunteering) and rest of the week meals, texts, SM, can get on the waiting list for Connect Groups. In desperate need of facilitators.

- Praying for someone for months and then seeing God do something... amazing

Also, thanking him for the gifts we have

- Thank you for a new day, this bird's song, this joke, this whiskey.
- The smell and feel of hiking a trail to a waterfall... Thank you God!

And within these big ideas are more specific spiritual disciplines...

- Generosity, hospitality, worship, fasting, and more.

We don't do these things to get God's attention, keep him happy, check off our religious list... We do it as a way to practice enjoying his love and sharing that love with others to bring his kingdom to earth now.

And as Paul thinks about what it's been like for him to enjoy God's love... how the experience has transformed him, he can't help but break into worship!

V. 20-21 Now all glory to God, who is able, through his mighty power at work within us, to accomplish infinitely more than we might ask or think. Glory to him in the church and in Christ Jesus through all generations forever and ever! Amen.

Glory to God- Make God and his love famous, so more and more people can enjoy it.

And this love brings new possibilities for our lives, our relationships, our church, and our community.

- If the God who has all authority and power loves us more than we can comprehend, what is possible?

Imagine what God could do in and through you... now double it.. Now quadruple it... it's still more than that.

- It's the type of love and power that, in the future when we look back on what he has done, we can't believe how small our dreams/expectations were.

How could he use you to resist the system of the empire of sin and death?

- What could he do to bring healing, hope, peace, justice?
- How could he use you as his agent of love?

God's love frees us, empowers us, and dares us to dream bigger dreams of resistance.

I remember, during a time of discouragement after covid... after we went from 100 people to 30, praying for a certain number of people to show up on a Sunday.

- I want our community to be used to bring God's love to Salem.
- I sometimes pray for numbers b/c each number represents a person God desperately loves.
- And that exact number showed up!
- I was thanking God for bringing people... and I heard a voice say... You could've asked for more!
- So I immediately prayed for \$5 million!

He wasn't saying pray for another big number... but was reminding me that he can do so much more than I can imagine... and to expand my imagination of what his love can do.

So what do we do with all of this?

What are you worried about?

- What are you passionate about?
- What breaks your heart?

You can ask for more!

- And in his wisdom, love, and power... and timing he'll do something even better.

And we can watch as we enjoy his love and sharing that love with others.

That is how we begin resisting the system.

That is how the world is truly changed by people who practice enjoying the love of God

B/c as we discover/experience more of his love, we begin to see ourselves the way he does (beloved/adored children), and we begin seeing each other the way he does (beloved/adored children).

Real resistance begins in love, is fueled by love, and ends in love.

YOU: So this week, I'm inviting you to practice enjoying God's love.

1st... has there ever been a moment where you chose to accept his love?

- He's ready and waiting.
- He's not asking you to clean yourself up 1st or be someone you're not.
- He's offering this infinite, unconditional love and you have the choice to accept it.
- So when you are ready... tell him "I accept your love and choose to trust and follow you."

And then for everyone... This week... Take 5 min a day to practice enjoying God's love by reading, praying, and meditating on Ephesians 3:16-21.

And then look for evidence of his love in your daily routine.

- Maybe even keep a journal... "Sightings /Proofs of God's love or something like that.
- Enjoying the beauty of Oregon, the laugh of your kid, unexpected support or encouragement from a friend.

Try it and see what happens... it won't just change you... It'll change how you affect the world.

WE: When we know true love and experience being loved by the source of love himself, we begin seeing where that love is missing.

- We start seeing people who need to experience that love.
- Our eyes start being opened to where that love is being resisted or corrupted.
- We more clearly see where God is calling us to resist the system and follow the Jesus way.

What if you could stop trying to keep up with every new outrage and instead live with the confidence that you're already making the difference you were created to make?

What if we, as individuals and as the Community of Crosscreek, dared to ask for more, began praying big prayers...

- Asking God to show us what he is doing and how we can follow him into it?

Imagine what he could do?

- For our families, relationships, schools, workplaces, and neighborhoods.

SO how do we resist the system?

- Not by being louder
- Not by being smarter
- Not by overpowering

Not by fighting a culture war or playing the politics game,

But by being rooted... rooted in God's love

Because in the end, the most powerful way to resist the system is to live a life rooted in the love of God.