

“The Sin of Indifference”

8/26/2018

Over the past two weeks we have been in this series called Embrace the Awkward. Sam has showed us that we have a God who is not scarred of the awkward, in fact this book is filled with situations that were more than a little awkward: God calling Noah to build a giant boat when the sky was bright blue and the sun was shining...that's a little awkward. God calling the Israelites to march around the city of Jericho for a week and then the last day to march around it 7 times...that's a little awkward. Jesus telling his disciples to go to various towns, but don't take any provisions with you...rely on the kindness of strangers...that's a little awkward. And the awkward continues today...many times talking with others about what we believe and why we believe it...it gets a little awkward.

Ed Lattazio:

My awkward moment, or at least one of them, took place on January 4, 1998. It was my very first visit to GCC. I had not been to church in over 30 years. I had just received a new Bible for Christmas, complete with leather cover monogrammed in gold lettering; was my name. The page edges were still stiff with the same gold paint. There I was, going into a church for the first time since I was ten years old. I was feeling a bit anxious.

The car I was driving was loaner and I had not become completely familiar with all its features yet. So as I exited the car, for some reason, I hit the lock button before opening the door. **Then it happened.** The Alarm!! Horn blaring, lights flashing, birds dropping... **AND** I had no idea how to shut it off. I quickly popped the hood and tried removing the battery cable. No chance.

Meanwhile, scores of people walking past. I could feel their eyes on me as I continued to battle the unknown. What seemed to be an eternity, eventually the alarm stopped. Thank you Jesus. Instead of heading for the highway in complete shame, I decided to go inside anyway. I found my way to the restroom to wash up, only to be greeted by two elementary boys that said “Hey! You're the guy with the car alarm!”

I love that, because Ed Lattanzio decided to embrace the awkward and walk into GCC in spite of all that happened. Many would have said, “That's it, I'm packing up and going home.” But Ed embraced the awkward moment and he would tell you that the trajectory of his life was forever changed from that moment.

But notice what Ed said when the alarm was blaring...he said “Meanwhile, scores of people walking past. I could feel their eyes on me as I continued to battle the alarm.”

Not only was it awkward for Ed...it was probably awkward for passersby...I don't know who this person is...will he welcome my help...I don't know what to say if I do approach him!

For many of us the awkward scares us into inaction. So we walk by and hope for the best. The danger is that so many years of inaction can lead to indifference.

Jesus warns us about indifference. In Matthew 25 Jesus is telling his disciples a series of stories about what his return will be like, the last story that he shares is about an actual judgment that will take place. That all of humanity will be judged according to how they lived their life here on earth. Jesus says, starting in verse 31, that when I return, I will sit in on a throne and judge the world. He goes onto say that he will form two groups of people...On the right he will place “the sheep” and on the left he will place “the goats.”

Now what does he mean by that? Well Jesus tells us...”**34** Then the King (he is talking about himself) will say to those on his right (the sheep), ‘Come, you who are blessed by my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world.**35** For I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me drink, I was a stranger and you

welcomed me, **36** I was naked and you clothed me, I was sick and you visited me, I was in prison and you came to me.'

Then he says...the people will ask, when did you see you hungry and feed you or thirsty and give you something to drink, or when did we welcome you as a stranger, or clothe you?

Jesus responds in verse **40** And the King will answer them, 'Truly, I say to you, as you did it to one of the least of these my brothers, you did it to me.'

Then Jesus says in verse 41, **41** "Then he will say to those on his left (the goats), 'Depart from me, you cursed, into the eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels. **42** For I was hungry and you gave me no food, I was thirsty and you gave me no drink, **43** I was a stranger and you did not welcome me, naked and you did not clothe me, sick and in prison and you did not visit me.'

And the people (these are the goats) will respond, "When did we see you hungry or thirsty or a stranger, or naked, or sick or in prison and not minister to you.

And Jesus responds, **45** Then he will answer them, saying, 'Truly, I say to you, as you did not do it to one of the least of these, you did not do it to me.'

And notice how he finishes the story..."And these will go away into eternal punishment, but the righteous into eternal life." Where do you want to be? Just want to recognize that "Goat" doesn't mean greatest of all time. You don't want to be with the goats!

Jesus is telling us something about our spiritual walk that we need to recognize, **Love is never indifferent.** Jesus is not leaving any room for debate. Love is never indifferent.

It's easy to give lip service to a thing like love. We might say we love, but when it comes to what's really going on inside, well that's another story. It's easy to put up a mask and put up an image, and we might be able to fool each other...but Jesus says you can't fool him. He knows what real love looks like and love is never indifferent.

Indifference is when we have simply stopped caring or stopped having concern, for those whom God cares deeply about. Indifference does not mean hate. Hate is a strong emotion, it's a strong dislike for someone...love is a strong emotion. Indifference is no emotion...you simply don't care, don't think about the situation enough to care...you walk by and don't notice.

Indifference extinguishes any compassion we might have toward others. Indifference can rule our minutes and hours and we don't even realize it until the day is over, and we look back and think...I had an opportunity right there to help but didn't even think about it at the time. So we quickly walk past an opportunity to show compassion and share God's love.

Now some of you might be sitting there thinking, so God is going to judge us on what we have done in this life...so we need to be all about doing the best we can. Please hear me when I say this, God is explicitly clear throughout this book that we are saved by grace through faith in Jesus Christ. By believing in Jesus, putting our faith, hope, trust in Jesus...our sins were nailed to the cross with Jesus...and in return Jesus' righteousness, Jesus' perfection was given to us. That is the free gift of salvation...no one can boast about how good they are.

In this story Jesus is not telling us how we are saved, he is showing us how we can tell that we are saved. How do we know if we have a real saving faith? If our faith in Jesus is real...then our love should never be indifferent. And if we don't care when someone is oppressed, addicted, trapped, looked over, judged, cast out, then we don't really know God and our faith is not real. I love how James explains what a saving faith looks like. He says in **James 2:18: "But someone will say, "You have faith and I have works." Show me your faith apart from your works, and I will show you my faith by my works."**

Christian author Tim Stafford recently shared [a moving story](#) about his mentor Max Dunn, who died at the age of 95:

Max had worked as an executive for a big department store chain. After his retirement he did a master's degree in world mission at Fuller Seminary, then traveled all over the world in a wide variety of missions.

Max was good-looking, athletic, and friendly. But when I met him, what Max most loved to do —passionately—was to visit men at the local Salvation Army drug and alcohol rehab program. He went nearly every day, meeting individually with men and teaching an anger management class.

As much as I admired Max's capability, I admired his friendliness more. He really loved those men, which is saying something. By the time somebody gets to a free, residential, long-term rehab program, they have usually burned every last bridge to family and friends. Many if not most have been in and out of jail and prison. They have little education and many tattoos. In short, they tend to be quite different from the people Max met [in the business world]. I don't know whether Max really noticed. Even when he was in terrible pain, he wanted to be at the Salvation Army more than anywhere.

I did wonder how Max became so indiscriminate in his friendliness. It really was unusual. His peers in business were willing to help out in good causes, but they didn't choose to hang out with addicts. Max did. Max had a profound spiritual transformation that helped him know that *Jesus* is alive and active through the Holy Spirit. For people like Max, that turned faith from a list of beliefs to an experience—an experience of Jesus. That explains, I think, why Max liked everybody. If you want to see somebody who talked to everybody, helped everybody, believed in everybody, but especially the poor and the desperate, that would be Jesus. I think Max learned it from him.

Love is never indifferent. Author Caleb Katlenback in his book, *The God of Tomorrow*, says it like this: **"It doesn't matter how much you know if you have no compassion to show."**

The challenge throughout this series is to embrace the awkward unknown moments that God is leading you into. Step into the mess, knowing that God will see you through it, because he is leading you into it. Love is never indifferent.

Paul writes in **1 Corinthians 4:20 "For the kingdom of God does not consist in talk but in power."** A kingdom worker is one who is not indifferent to people...a kingdom worker steps into the mess because God is there.

Did you hear that Tom Hanks will be portraying Fred Rogers in a coming biopic? Lately there has been a new documentary about Mr. Rogers, called "Won't you Be My Neighbor." He was [a man defined by his Christian faith](#), and the message that he taught every day on his beloved children's show was shaped by it. Rogers said over and over again: "You've made this day a

special day by just your being you. There is no person in the whole world like you, and I like you just the way you are.”

"I think everybody longs to be loved, and longs to know that he or she is lovable," he said in the 2003 documentary "[America's Favorite Neighbor](#)." Rogers echoed the sentiment of the biblical passage 1 John 4:10, "This is love: Not that we loved God, but that He loved us and sent his son as an atoning sacrifice for our sins." The focus is not just how important it is that you're loved, but also how vital it is to be loving.

Rogers said in a 2001 commencement address at Middlebury College: "When we look for what's best in the person we happen to be with at the moment, we're doing what God does; so in appreciating our neighbor, we're participating in something truly sacred." It may sound old-fashioned, but Mister Rogers's theology was radical in 1962 when his show debuted, and it remains radical today. That's why it resonated. That's why it's still necessary.

So how do you let go of indifference?

The first step is that you need to **allow your heart to break**. Jesus says, you are blessed if you are poor in spirit. Poor in spirit means that you come to the realization that you are spiritually bankrupt before God. That your sin has put you in one deep hole that you can't get out of. And we come to the place where we say, I need Thee, oh, I need Thee; Every hour I need Thee; Oh, bless me now, my Savior! I come to Thee.

When you realize what Jesus has done for you, you understand that there is nothing that Jesus can't ask of you. There is no one that is out of God's reach...so we step into the mess. So you begin to live each moment with the expectation that God is leading you and that will show up in those moments.

That leads us to the second step, **ask God to give you a mission**. Begin each day, saying as I put my feet on the floor this morning, lead me to those moments and situations where you want me to step into the mess. I want to challenge you with a mission...

- In a few weeks, on September 16th, we will be launching our new sermon and Grow Group Series called Out of the Shadows. Using Psalm 23, we will be looking at various shadows or messes that we find ourselves in and how Jesus helps us through: the shadows of worry, guilt, grief, hurt, fear.
- We have been praying all summer that God would raise up men and women to host 30 new Grow Groups this series. What does this mean? It means opening your heart and meeting with others to talk about God and about life together. It means stepping into their mess and letting them step into yours. It means helping one another intentionally grow closer to Jesus.
- Some will meet in homes, others at church, and others at Starbucks or McDonalds. We have the teaching taken care of, but we need you to gather your friends, family, neighbors, or co-workers together. If you are ready to say "Yes!" to hosting a Grow Group for this campaign, go ahead and take out your connect card, fill it out with your contact information, flip on the back and check the box that says, "Yes, I will HOST a Grow Group." Do that and our connections pastor Sam will get with you this week about the next step.

It could be in this group that God might be leading you to step into the mess and step out of indifference.

Communion then pray