

Bridging the Unbridgeable Chasm: Beyond Polarization

Summer Institute

Oblate School of Theology

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Love in a Time of Hatred - Some Commandments for the Long Haul

Outline ...

- I. **Some “Gathering Hymns”**
 - II. **The “Unbridgeable Chasm” in Luke’s Gospel**
 - III. **Living in a Time of Hatred – The Air We Breathe Today**
 - IV. **Some Commandments for the Long Haul**
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I. Some “Gathering Hymns”

- When reacting to a bad opinion? Don’t ask, in what way is this wrong? But in what way is this right? (Roosevelt Montas)
- Moral courage is not standing up for your own side, but standing up for those who are not from your own side. (Arthur Brooks)
- When Jesus says “love your enemy” it means relate to him notwithstanding your feelings. (Thomas Aquinas)
- Don’t argue with hatred. (Arthur Brooks)
- How well is hatred working out for you? (Arthur Brooks)
- The question is: How to love one’s enemy even while one’s life stands in opposition to him? (Daniel Berrigan)
- It is hard to love as God loves! (Leah Perreault)

II. The “Unbridgeable Chasm” on Luke’s Gospel (16, 19-31)

- What is that “chasm” in essence?
- Why is it “forever” unbridgeable?
- That “chasm” today?

III. Living in a Time of Hatred – The Air We Breathe Today

- No bridge between or among us in society, our politics, our churches, or our family tables, rather ...

- Polarization
- Hatred
- Contempt
- Demonization
- Ideological camps
- A billion information channels – and the ‘Tower of Babel’ syndrome
- A loss of a common sense of morality
- A loss of a common sense of truth

IV. Some Commandments for the Long Haul

1. Resist the temptation of win this battle with better apologetics and rational arguments.

- Cardinal Newman’s years-long argument with his brother and his eventual realization
- The issues here are more issues of
 - Emotion
 - Self-protection
 - History and wound

And will not “won over” by better arguments

2. Resist becoming contemptuous

- At the root of our present problem lies contempt
 - Contempt is disgust plus anger
 - Contempt is the worst thing we can offer each other
 - Contempt in a marriage is what leads to divorce
 - Turn off the influences that inflame contempt. (Arthur Brooks)

3. Tell the truth – no matter how inconvenient and painful

- The Gospels on the dangers of lying
 - The unforgivable sin against the Holy Spirit
 - John’s version of this simple - truth-telling as the opposite of blaspheming the Holy Spirit
 - Satan as the “Prince of Lies”
- Holding to the truth no matter how inconvenient and painful
- Holding our moral ground in charity

4. Never, never bracket the essentials of all fruitful dialogue – “charity, respect, graciousness”

- The temptation to give ourselves sacred permission to bracket these
- Their non-negotiability

5. Have a virtue that is deeper than that of the Scribes and the Pharisees

- The core invitation in the Sermon on the Mount
- What it calls us to
 - To forgive someone who has hurt you
 - To bless someone who has cursed you
 - To forgive a murderer
- The litmus test for what ultimately makes for
 - Love – What does love ask of me now?
 - A “practicing Christian”

6. Be rooted in Jesus and not out in ideology

- The difference between speaking out of the gospel and speaking out of an ideology
 - A story
 - The struggle with this on both sides of the ideological spectrum
- The struggle to distinguish these
 - Theoretically
 - Emotionally
 - Our struggle with political correctness, of accepting something as correct because it comes with a politically correct label.

7. Let hospitality be your main weapon

- A story
- The ultimate means towards reconciliation and understanding – being good neighbors.

8. Offer space for disagreement and anger

- The sensitive person’s fear of anger and the insensitive person’s lack of fear of anger
- The temptation in the face of anger
 - For the sensitive person - Walking away, separation, emotional apartheid
 - For the insensitive person – aggression, fight, subdue the other
- Creating space for disagreement and anger.

9. Reach across the dividing line to “wash each other’s feet”

- Jesus at the Last Supper in John’s gospel
- The meaning of this gesture
- What empowered Jesus to do this?
- How do we imitate that?
- Being “compassionate” as our heavenly father is compassionate.

10. Know that some demons are cast out only by “prayer and fasting”

- An invitation from Jesus that is not just a pious line.
- Pray to be freed of contempt

11. Never forget the power of banter and humor – as an aspect of love

- The concept of love in classical Greece – six components
 - *Eros* – infatuation and attraction
 - *Mania* – obsession
 - *Asteismos* – playfulness & banter
 - *Storge* – care
 - *Philia* – friendship
 - *Agape* – altruism
 - The place of playfulness and banter – when healthy
 - A part of love that provides the “grease” for community life
 - A part of love that helps deflate pomposity
 - Its danger when overdone – and the danger when it is absent
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