

Easter Greetings to all!
Chris is risen! He is risen indeed! Alleluia!

I received a number of requests for a reprint of my sermon for Lent 5, 2010, so here are the main points from my own outline.

Peace,
Pastor Chris

Text: John 12:1-8

Topic: Complainers destroy community

Judas, of all people, is complaining about Mary's actions with the perfume of pure nard. It is extravagant and wasteful, he says. Nothing has changed today. Complainers are just as guilty as Judas was. All of us can be guilty of being complainers.

What is Complaining?

Complaining is different from talking about an issue or concern in order to try to solve a problem together.

1. Communication EQUALS Community – we talk *to each other*. (Note the similar root word “commune”)
2. Complaining DESTROYS Community – we talk *about each other*

Where does complaining happen?

1. Complaining happens at home...
Complaining is “You are always...” or “You never...” or “The problem with you is...” instead of, “I would like it if...”.

2. Complaining happens at church...

When it does it is a betrayal of the Body of Christ as bad as Judas and his betrayal. That is why the fastest way to find yourself coming under the discipline of the church, as outlined in the constitution and in scripture (see I Corinthians), is to be a complainer or backbiter. Others sins can be tolerated as sinners are invited into community. Complaining cannot be tolerated because it destroys community.

What does complaining look like?

1. When we try to incite others – “You won’t believe what Sally said” instead of going to Sally directly and finding out what she said, if she said it, and what she really meant. Giving her the benefit of the doubt – the opportunity to say that isn’t what she said OR the opportunity to ask for forgiveness.
2. When we leave notes or messages or any other indirect (passive-aggressive) behavior. This is especially true when are notes are anonymous. Anonymity just adds the sin of cowardice to our list of bad behaviors.

A special note about kids in worship and other worship distractions. While it is good to try to not be distracting to other people in worship, it is also good to and pleasing to God to forgive people who are being distracting in worship. God is happier that the kids are in worship. Worship is our service to God, so if something is bothering you then serve and honor God by forgiving! Worship is not all about us. Worship is all about God, and God is still worshipped even if we are distracted.

What Would Jesus Do about Complaining?

Look at how Jesus responds to complaining. “Leave her alone,” he says to Judas. “Leave her, him, and those kids alone!” we could say.

If our motivation is right and our heart is in the right place, like Mary’s was, then Jesus receives our actions for what they are. Jesus sees our actions as a service to him – our attempt to worship him.

Jesus is quick to defend us from those who would betray his body, just as he quickly defends Mary.

So, let’s worship and serve him boldly, and let’s not find ourselves to be the ones complaining – at home, or at church, at work, or at play, or anywhere we go.

Let’s honor Jesus and his sacrifice for us by being more like Mary and less like Judas. We are only able to do that by faith – trusting that Jesus is quick to aid and defend us when we are acting like Mary and quick to forgive us when we repent of acting like Judas.

Amen.