

THE REAL, REAL WORLD SERIES THREE SEXUAL ABUSE

Pastor Seth Kreimeyer-Kelly
Isaiah 66:13; Matt. 5:1, 38-41

Intro

- We're going to dive right in this morning as we continue our **Real, Real World Series**. Today's time together will be spent exploring the experience of abuse, how it's permeated itself into our culture and finally how we as a community can confront this awful thing.
- Before we get to the meat of today we need to establish some real truths that everyone in this room needs to hear.
- There are people in this room that need to hear the simple phrase that abuse in any form is wrong. The underlying purpose of all abuse is to make someone feel less than human, to make a person feel less than what they were created to be and that is a sick and tragic thing.

Ill-Seth's 1st year- In many ways my 1st year as a youth pastor one of the most difficult because I had to adjust to the fact that not every young person has the same wonderful experiences that I did growing up. In fact lots of young people get dealt a pretty crummy hand growing up. I remember in my first year there was this young man who would barely talk and when he did he would say some of the weirdest and most inappropriate things. Most of the time when you were around him you never felt like his mind was completely there with you. I started talking to the people who brought him to church and I found out that he was a foster child in their home for a while and that many of his troubles were the result of his original home. He came from a home that had drugs going in and out and was verbally and physically abused frequently. If I remember correctly he had ultimately been abandoned by his parents and that's what brought him to a foster home. The people who cared for him shared with me the effect that his previous life experiences had on him to the point where he had been conditioned to live and think in ways that were less than human. I vividly remember them telling me he was at a point where he loved to be cruel and they would often find him someplace throwing animals like lizards and frogs against walls to kill them. His behavior was very inhuman as a result of the abuse that he had gone through and while we saw improvements and changes in our time with him it was a long road to normalcy for him.

- One of the desires for this morning is that you simply realize how God responds when he knows his creation is suffering and in pain.

Read Isaiah 66:13 (Slide)

- Isaiah tells us that God will pull us to him and feel about our suffering the same a mother is supposed to feel about her children.

Ill-Kathy vs. St. Joe's- I never realized how a mother responded to her children's pain until I had to have knee surgery last year. I had to stay in the hospital over night and during the night shift it was far more difficult for me to get the nurse when I needed her and so I went longer than I should have without pain medication. When my mom showed up the next morning and found me in some pretty intense pain she stormed up and down the halls of that hospital until she found a

nurse she could drag in to my room to give me some meds and then she just sat with me until the pain got better. The funnier part is now anytime you even mention the name of the hospital you her eyes narrow and she starts to angrily mutter something about how she's still made at that place for making her baby lie there in pain for so long.

t>> Now it would be easy to think that when we say how God responds like a mother to the abuse of his children we were simply talking about when a parent hits a child. The reality of this topic though is that while this is perhaps the most well known form of abuse, it's not limited to what happens at home.

- Abuse has spilled over into the schools and other arenas of life in the form of bullying, name calling, manipulating, and stealing among our peers. This used to be something that was just thought of as part of growing up, but now we've started to see the real damage that bullying from peers does to person and we've had to accept that it is a form of abuse. (Ex. Verbally picking at and spreading rumors about someone, pushing someone around because their smaller or different)
- Just because it's a mistreatment suffered at the hands of peers doesn't mean it's not painful for us and the reality is chances are that while parental abuse is common and horrible it's far more likely that the abuse that most people suffer from is from peers picking at you day after day.

t>> With an understanding that abuse is something we encounter more than just at home I'd like to spend the rest of the time discussing some action steps we as a community can take to confront the abuse we encounter in our lives.

Responding to the abuse that is suffered

- 1st rule for dealing with abuse is a simple one. If you are in a situation where you are being abused or harmed by someone then tell someone who can help you.
- If it's a family member or a family friend then tell someone like a teacher, a youth pastor, a small group leader, or perhaps a parent.
- If it's a kid at school or in your neighborhood you can tell a parent, a teacher, a small group leader, or a youth pastor also.
- Sad reality of life though is that sometimes the people in charge don't always do the best of jobs and bullying still seems to be present in schools so lets explore a few of the thoughts that Jesus had in confronting abuse.

Read Matt 5:1 (Slide)

- Jesus is teaching his disciples, but there is also a crowd listening in to the words he has to say. What he says is this long teaching we find in chapters 5, 6, and 7.

Setting:

- Canada has conquered America
- Soldiers are everywhere and are always nervous about large gatherings

- Americans still have to pay their normal taxes but now they also have to pay taxes to Canada to pay for the army that's living in America. This obviously leads to financial trouble.
- This is the situation that the Jews find themselves in during the life of Jesus. The Romans have come in and completely drained the people of possession and pride.
- From the beginning of their existence the Jewish people were part of God's story of blessing and here they are now, a picture of poverty.
- Imagine the shame, the hurt, the guilt, the humiliation as they ask why does our God not care for us anymore?
- It is to an abused people living in this world that Jesus speaks his words to.

Read Matt 5:38-39 (Slide)

- (Vs 38) Most have thought of eye for an eye as a form of getting even but in reality this was a statement or regulation meant for making sure that a person received back just what they have been wronged and not more.
- (Vs 39a) This "do not resist" phrase is fascinating as it doesn't simply mean let anyone do what they please to you. Rather it simply is Jesus saying do not have a violent military response, do not seek revenge.

***2 Volunteers (both guys-name, school and mascot)*-One is a poor Jewish peasant. The other is a Roman soldier or a wealthy landowner (Roman or Jewish).**

(Vs 39b)

- Right hand= clean (Jesus sits at the right hand of God), this was the hand you ate with
- Left hand= unclean (Latin for left is sinister), this was the hand you would perform bodily maintenance with. You would never use this hand for anything else because it was unclean.
- Word for strike here literally means to slap you with the back of the hand.
- To slap= to strike someone beneath you.
- To punch= to strike someone who you considered your equal
- If you were to turn the other cheek you would be inviting the person to punch you. You can't backhand slap a person's left cheek with your right hand. You'd have to punch thereby acknowledging the equality of the person you just struck.

Read Matt. 5:40 (Slide)

(Vs 40)

- The economy was falling apart due to the taxation.
- Land that had been in the family since the Israelites had first come into the land had to be sold off.
- The wealthy who bought all the land would then employ you to work the land you just sold him and you would get paid practically nothing.
- Between the low wages and the high taxes many people had immense debt and often they would be sued to settle the debt.
- We can safely assume that when Jesus talks here about when you're being sued he is talking about a poor person being sued by a wealthy one.
- If you were being sued and were too poor to pay what you were being sued for you would as a sign of "I owe you" give your shirt to the person who was suing you.

- Really had only two pieces of clothing back then. The tunic which was this long shirt you wore and you coat or cloak. The coat doubled as a blanket at night so there was actually tradition that you couldn't sue a man for his cloak because he needed it at night.
- Catch what Jesus says about this though if you're being sued don't just give up your shirt but give up your coat as well.
- Now if you're standing there handing someone both pieces of clothing what are you wearing? Nothing.
- If you were to follow Jesus words here you would be standing in front your accuser buck naked.
- Now here's the best part of all this. In that culture the shame didn't lie with the naked person but rather with the person who is seeing the naked person.
- Jesus suggestion takes all the humiliation and shame of a person's poverty and puts it on the accuser. First for simply being with a naked person and second who wants to be known as the heartless guy who takes all a person's clothes.
- You'll see that the beauty of all of the responses of Jesus is not only do they re-establish a person's humanity but they put the accuser or the oppressor or the abuser in a position where they have the choice to have a change of heart and do the right thing.

Read Matt 5:41 (Slide)

(Vs 41)

- Remember the Romans have conquered Israel and their soldiers are now all over the place.
- A Roman soldier carries all types of stuff in his pack to the point where it could weigh anywhere from 50 to 100 pounds.
- One of the Roman Army's rules was that at any time any soldier could force any conquered person to carry their pack for up to a mile. They said only a mile because any farther would be cruel.
- So if the rule is that you can only make them go 1 mile what happens if a soldier is seen having his stuff carried by someone for 2 miles? He's going to get in trouble.
- No soldier wants to be seen having someone go 2 miles so now you have this situation of a Roman soldier following around this peasant begging them to please stop.
- The conquered and abused person now has the power and not only that but the power is rooted in generosity.

What does this mean for me?

- What's really just happened here is Jesus has given his people some practical ways to subvert shame and humiliation and instead reassert your humanity.
- Popular thinking has always said there are two responses to abuse and injustice: Sit there and take it or fight back. Jesus offers us a 3rd way.
- Not only does Jesus give his people a way to reassert their humanity but his way allows for the abuser to have a change of heart and do the right thing.

Ill-Man stops the tanks (**Slide**)- Quick example of this method of response being put in action. This picture here is incredibly famous for bringing the world's attention to some of the human rights atrocities happening in China. The people were protesting the policies of China's government that led to extreme poverty for many of its people and the government responded with force sending tanks and troops into the area to arrest and harass and chase away the protesters. This famous picture shows a man standing his ground in front of the tanks. No one knows who this man is or what happened to him after this picture but legend says that when the driver of the tank opened his hatch to see what was going on the man simply yelled to him "why are you here?" He asked a simple question that forced his abuser to stop and think about why he was doing what he was doing.

- Our action step for confronting abuse in our lives and the lives of the ones we love is to continue to think of ways to remind our abusers that we are human beings as well and present them with an opportunity to make the right choice. (**Ex.** Asking a bully why and not allowing them to escape without a real answer)
- The challenge here is for us to continue to be creative how we go about this. For the Jews when the first guy went the extra mile I bet that kind of stuck it to the Romans when the 50th guy tried the whole extra mile thing they probably caught on. We constantly have to be imaginative and creative in finding new ways to stand up to abuse and reassert our humanity.

Closing

- The purpose of abuse, in whatever form we find it, is to dehumanize the abused.
- The call of Jesus is to all of those who stand among us abused and hurt and he gives us the words to not only regain our humanity but to perhaps also allow our abusers to regain theirs.
- Each of you is a creation of God and whether you accept Him or not Jesus is inviting you to live in His story now.
- It will be the abused among us, who take to heart and live the words of Jesus, who will act as radical revolutionaries in a world that needs a revolution.
- It is through the hurt and abused that Jesus will bring harmony, self-respect and peace to this broken world.