

Hate

On Sunday, we talked about how to heal hate in our world and in ourselves.

1. Warm-up Question: Name a vegetable, song, TV show, or movie that you love to hate.
2. Hate can pop up anywhere and take many different forms.
 - a. Body hate is quite common in our culture which saturates us with narrow and unrealistic notions of beauty. Growing up, how did you feel about your physical appearance? At this point in your life, is there something about your body that you're tempted to hate?
 - b. Self-hate is even broader than body hate. Self-hate can take the form of hating our personality, our weaknesses, our disabilities, or our family, social class, or ethnicity. What form of self-hate would it be most easy for you to fall into, whether you've succumbed to it or not?
 - c. Inherited hate refers to prejudices that have been handed down through our family of origin and/or the culture in which we were raised. Another term for it would be "learned hate." Given where you were raised and how you were raised, what kind of "learned hate" could you have easily picked up?
 - d. Pastor Vivian said, "Pick up any newspaper, go to any news website, and you will see evidence of the hate that is pulsating through the collective veins of America. Transgender women are being killed, black churches are being burned, a white supremacist drives his car into a crowd of peaceful demonstrators killing one and injuring dozens of others, gay men attacked by a group using homophobic slurs, Jewish Synagogues and Muslim mosques vandalized, Hispanic men assaulted while racist slurs are shouted. The list is endless and exhausting." Is hate worse now than, let's say, 15 years ago? Why or why not?
3. Read I John 4:7-12 and 16-21.
 - a. Given all the bad things we do, it might be easy for God to hate us. Instead we're told God loves us boundlessly. Why? Based on what we read in First John, from whence does God's love for us spring? What is the generative source of God's love for us?
 - b. According to this passage, what is the greatest enemy of love? And why is it so destructive of love?
 - c. We could come up with many possible ways to test whether we know and love God. But according to First John, the greatest test is what? Once you've identified what that test is, discuss why that test is the ultimate measure of whether we know and love God?

- d. Pastor Vivian told about someone who walked up to her at church a few weeks ago and asked, “Can you love God and hate someone?” As the conversation unfolded, it became clear the real question the person was asking was, “Can you love God and hate Trump?” How would you answer that question? (Important note: Our congregation is not monolithic and includes a diversity of political views. We take pride in our diversity. So let’s discuss this question with honesty, but also sensitivity and respect.)
4. Have someone read aloud each of the following Bible verses, then say what thought or idea in them most speaks to you. I John 2:11, I John 3:15, and Proverbs 10:12.
5. In her sermon, Pastor Vivian identified several things that can cause hate to spring up within us and within our culture:
 - ✓ Fear of something outside of us that we perceive as threatening.
 - ✓ Projection, *i.e.*, hating something in someone else that we really hate in ourselves.
 - ✓ A longing for self-identity. Being part of a group of people who see themselves as superior to others is a quick, lazy way to find self-identity.

As a group, come up with a concrete example of each of these three phenomena that you’ve actually seen in yourself or others.

6. If God is love – and the opposite of love is hate – then as children of God we should be all about overcoming hate within ourselves and our world. And that requires action. Pastor Vivian said, “Hate must be countered with acts of goodness. Sitting home with your virtue does no good. In the face of hate, silence is deadly. Apathy will be interpreted as acceptance – by the perpetrators, the public, and – worse – the victims. If left unchallenged, hate persists and grows.”
 - a. What’s something you can do to heal racism?
 - b. What’s something you can do to heal xenophobia, *i.e.*, fear of outsiders?
 - c. What’s something you can do to heal hate in politics? And how do we balance political healing with the urgent need for justice? Can the two be harmonized?
 - d. Name an individual in your personal life that you are tempted to hate. What’s something you can do to help heal that hate?

Remember, “Those who do not love a brother or sister whom they have seen, cannot love God whom they have not seen.” I John 4:20.