

THE GREAT DIVIDE

When Offense Becomes Bigger Than Love

Main Scripture:

Luke 9:51–56

INTRODUCTION

Tonight we are talking about something that every person in this room has experienced.

Offense.

Not just being annoyed.

Not just having a bad day.

I mean when someone hurts you.

Someone says something that sticks with you.

Someone betrays your trust.

Someone leaves you out.

Someone makes you feel unwanted.

And when that happens, the first thing we often say is:

“I’m valid.”

“My feelings are valid.”

“My hurt is valid.”

And I want to be clear:

Sometimes it is.

Your feelings matter.

Your pain matters.

God cares about the things that hurt you.

But here is where it gets difficult:

A valid feeling does not always create a Godly response.

SCRIPTURE: LUKE 9

Jesus is traveling toward Jerusalem.

He sends messengers ahead to a Samaritan village.

But the people reject Him.

They refuse to welcome Jesus.

And then James and John respond:

“Lord, do you want us to call fire down from heaven and destroy them?”

Now before we judge them...

Think about what they were feeling.

They loved Jesus.

They followed Jesus.

They were defending Jesus.

They probably thought:

“Jesus, they rejected You.”

“Jesus, they disrespected You.”

“Jesus, they deserve what happens next.”

They felt justified.

POINT 1:

OFFENSE CAN MAKE US FEEL RIGHT WHILE MOVING US AWAY FROM JESUS

This is what makes offense dangerous.

Offense does not usually begin with a lie.

It usually begins with something real.

Someone really hurt you.

Someone really disappointed you.

Someone really did something wrong.

But the question is not only:

“Were they wrong?”

The question is:

“Who am I becoming because of what they did?”

Because you can be hurt...

and still choose grace.

You can be right...

and still respond wrong.

OBJECT LESSON: THE GREAT DIVIDE

(Bring up two students.)

Have them stand shoulder-to-shoulder.

Say:

“These two students represent relationship.”

“Friendship. Community. Unity.”

Read:

John 17:21

“That they may all be one...”

Say:

“Unity matters to Jesus.”

Then begin adding the offense students.

REJECTION

“Someone rejects you.”

The student steps between them.

They move apart.

GOSSIP

“Someone says something about you.”

More distance.

BETRAYAL

“Someone you trusted hurts you.”

More distance.

EMBARRASSMENT

“Someone makes you feel small.”

More distance.

UNFORGIVENESS

“You decide, ‘I will never let them hurt me again.’”

More distance.

Now pause.

Ask:

“Can they still see each other?”

Then say:

“That is what offense does.”

“The person is still there.”

“The relationship is still there.”

“But offense has stepped between them.”

“Eventually, we stop seeing the person.”

Pause.

“We only see the offense.”

POINT 2:

OFFENSE CHANGES THE WAY WE SEE PEOPLE

This is exactly what happened with James and John.

The Samaritan people were no longer people to them.

They became the offense.

They became the rejection.

They became the problem.

And that is dangerous.

Because when we only see someone's offense, we forget something:

They are someone Jesus loves.

They are someone Jesus died for.

POINT 3:

JESUS REBUKES THE SPIRIT BEHIND OFFENSE

Jesus says:

“You do not know what spirit you are of.”

Notice:

Jesus didn't say:

“You are wrong for caring.”

He said:

“You are wrong about what is leading you.”

Because there is a difference between:

Being hurt

and

being controlled by hurt.

There is a difference between:

Feeling anger

and

letting anger lead you.

POINT 4:

JESUS CAME TO RESTORE, NOT DESTROY

Jesus says:

“The Son of Man did not come to destroy people’s lives, but to save them.”

Jesus understands hurt.

He was rejected.

He was betrayed.

He was abandoned.

Yet on the cross:

Luke 23:34

“Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do.”

The same Jesus who had the power to call down fire...

chose forgiveness.

RESPONSE: REMOVE THE OFFENSE

Bring the JESUS student forward.

Say:

“The only way this divide gets healed is through Jesus.”

Remove the offense signs.

“Jesus restores.”

“Jesus forgives.”

“Jesus brings people back together.”

FINAL CHALLENGE

The question is not:

“Will people hurt me?”

They will.

The question is:

“What will I do when they do?”

Will I let offense define me?

Will I let offense divide me?

Will I become someone who destroys?

Or someone who looks like Jesus?

Because Jesus said:

John 13:35

“By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another.”