

Inside Out
Disgust
Romans 14:7–11 (NRSV)

We do not live to ourselves, and we do not die to ourselves. **8** If we live, we live to the Lord, and if we die, we die to the Lord; so then, whether we live or whether we die, we are the Lord's. **9** For to this end Christ died and lived again, so that he might be Lord of both the dead and the living. **10** Why do you pass judgment on your brother or sister? Or you, why do you despise your brother or sister? For we will all stand before the judgment seat of God. **11** For it is written, "As I live, says the Lord, every knee shall bow to me, and every tongue shall give praise to God."

Introduction. During this month, Amanda and I have focused on a sermon series related to emotions we experience and how to deal with them. We drew inspiration from survey we conducted this summer and from the movie *Inside Out*. We then turned to scripture for guidance on dealing with our emotions.

The cartoon movie, *Inside Out*, is a Disney/Pixar creation. In the movie, 5 of universal emotions are explored in the lives of a particular family and how they express these emotions – Fear, Sadness, Anger, Disgust and Happiness On one hand the movie is fun and entertaining but on the other it is revealing in how we often mishandle our emotions. (Share the emotions from slides.)

These 5 emotions are those shared by us. They are gifts from God and to have them is to be human. If for some reason, someone cannot experience them part of their humanity is missing. These gifts need to be handled with great care. If we fail to manage these emotions well, they will manage us.

During the past 6 ½ months, most of us have experienced an increase of these emotions with perhaps except the sense of happiness. (Some of us have found ways to experience this life giving emotion even though the others have been prominent.) Part of the purpose of this series has been aimed at helping each of us move through the emotions and find joy.

Disgust.

This morning I have a confession. The emotion we are going to examine is the one I find myself struggling to wrap my mind around as a preacher. A couple of months ago, I asked Amanda to develop the series topics for this month. Honestly, I would not have chosen this one but she double-dog-dared me to speak on it. So here I am attempting to talk about disgust. So my aim for this message is not to disgust any of you.

Disgust is rather easy to detect on a person's face when she experiences it. Disgust is the emotional "yuck" reaction. It is the reaction when one experiences revulsion. On the most basic level we experience it through our senses.

The makers of Jelly Belly's make some delicious jelly beans. But they also make some disgusting ones as well. (Dog food, stinky sock, spoiled milk, barf, skunk spray.) Look at this slide and see if you don't feel some disgust. Our sense of taste provides a source of disgust.

But so does our sense of smell. Several years ago I sat in the living room of a family from the church. I noticed a revolting odor. Being pastor, I could say, "What that awful smell?" About 20 minutes into the visit the wife said, "Oh my goodness." She stood up and came to my chair, picked up her husband's work boots and said, "I bet that smell nearly killed you." It was quite revolting. Fortunately, I lived through that disgusting experience.

Even our sense of touch can cause us to experience disgust. "Have you ever clean out your garbage disposal in your sink? Enough said.

Many psychologists believe the emotion of disgust was designed to help us avoid substances that are not healthy for us. Few of us would put something that smell putrid in our mouths. Psychologists also believe that what we find disgusting flows both from our nature and our nurture.

Now all of this is interesting, at least to me, but seems to fall short of material worthy of a good sermon or much benefit to your growth as a disciple. So is there more to this emotion of disgust that takes us deeper?

Social, moral and spiritual Disgust.

I believe there is. It is in the area of social, moral and spiritual disgust.

Imagine you go on vacation to Germany. As part of that journey you visit an old stone mansion. Inside you find it damp and cold. Unfortunately, you were not dressed for that

climate so your host offers you a sweater. Then she says, “This sweater was worn by Adolf Hitler.” Would you wear the sweater? I probably would gratefully decline and have that yuck feeling. Sharing anything that belong to Hitler sounds disgusting to me. **This is social disgust.**

A subset of social disgust is political in nature. We are in the midst of presidential election cycle and many feel disgust toward one of the candidates. Go into the midst of a group of people who lean to the left and mention the name, Donald Trump and see how many facial expressions of disgust you will see. Go into a room of right leaning folks and mention Nancy Pelosi and see how man expressions of disgust you see. **Many of us have learned political disgust well.**

Here is where a problem can develop for us. Imagine you have a Christian friend who shares with you that she likes and intends to support the candidate you find disgusting. Even though she explains why she supports that candidate, you can’t get over her being so “stupid” to be on that side. **Soon you find yourself thinking your friend is disgusting because her political beliefs are corrupted and rotten.** A wedge is driven between the two of you over political preference.

Central to our scripture lesson in Romans 14 is a “spiritual/moral” disgust that was dividing members of the Roman church. In the verses preceding our lesson, Paul pointed to the problem. He said that some of the believers in Rome for spiritual reasons adopted a vegetarian diet while others felt free to eat all kinds of food. Also there were some who regarded some days are more sacred than others. (Paul did not go into detail as to whether this is a reference to Sabbath worship or observing Jewish or secular holidays.)

These matters for many of us make a connection because of our living near an Adventist community. Some time ago I was speaking with a person who had been raised in a strict Adventist home. This person shared with me how uncomfortable it was to think of eating certain foods even though he was no longer a practicing Adventist. I imagine that when he was with those eating pork, he may experience the disgust emotion.

In the Roman church, some on the other side of the issue looked down on those who ate a certain way or kept certain days. They looked at the other believers with contempt or in disgust. By doing so, they were judging the others believers. **As a result, a wedge was being driven in the church community.**

It seems to me that we have been confronted with many issues in the past 6 ½ months that have threatened to become basis for judging others and dividing Christ’s Church – whether to wear masks or not wear masks, have in-person worship or have only virtual, support Biden or support Trump, follow the Bishop’s directives or blaze our own trail, what guidelines should we follow, etc. It is easy for some of us to be firmly rooted on one side of any of these matters and then to look down on those on the other.

Will you allow me to share from my heart for a moment? This has been a tough season for our church. We have been traveling in places where we have never been before. We have been forced to make decisions based on limited information and experience. Some feel strongly on both sides of several matters. We have wrestled with many decisions as staff and leaders of OUMC. But we have done the best we know how to do. We have tried to lift up Jesus, care for the people here and continue to be engaged in the world around us. I don’t know that we have gotten it all right or made all the right decisions but we have sought to do so.

Anchored in the Gospel.

Paul in dealing with this matter of moral and spiritual disgust thrust his readers to the core of the gospel. He knew if we could anchor our understanding and relationships at the heart of

the gospel, we would end up in a healthy place that would enable the church and each believer to thrive.

At the heart of the message of Jesus Christ is the purpose he fulfilled. Jesus came into this world, lived life here fully, died on the cross and was raised from the dead. All of this made possible for him to fulfill the divine goal – to be Lord of both the living and the dead. Jesus supersedes all authority and rule in creation and our world.

At the heart of being a Christian is serving Jesus as Lord. This is essential to our salvation – (If we confess, “Jesus is Lord” and believe in our heart God raised him from the dead, we are saved – Romans 10:9). As Lord, Jesus is the supreme commander and chief in our lives. Paul wrote that as believers whether we live or die, do so for the Lord. Our whole life in all we do is to be done in relationship to the Lord. Our personal desires, our culture, our background, our beliefs and even our priorities are to be subservient to Jesus.

From the first day I moved into this area, there were rumors circulating that Chick Fil A was coming to Exit 11. It took 5+ years for it to become a reality. If tomorrow, you pull into the line you will find young women and men wearing the uniform. When they put on the uniform, they are trained and expected to live out the culture of Chick Fil A. While in that uniform, they are Chick Fil A – “It’s my pleasure.” When we put on Christ, we are to live our lives in and for him.

If we can wrap our minds around this and live into Jesus is our Lord, then it will impact this discussion in two powerful ways.

It will give us an understanding that in matters of conviction and preference that our choice and practice will be efforts to please the Lord. For those who eat only veggies for spiritual reasons, do so for the Lord’s sake. Those who have liberty to eat all foods, do so for the Lord. If one worships on Sunday, she does so for the Lord. If one seeks to please Jesus and carefully thinks through who to vote for, he does so for the Lord. One may feel have the desire to worship in a traditional fashion or contemporary fashion but each is for the Lord. We may come to very different decisions and actions but do so for our Lord’s sake and to please him.

If one is doing something for the Lord’s sake, then who am I to judge that person? Who I am I to hold them in contempt? Like them, I am a servant of the Lord and not the Lord. I may not share their conviction or do the same practice but I have no place to regard them as disguisable and condemn them.

Holding this in mind can help each of us when we find “disgust” rising within us toward another believer. If their convictions or beliefs differ from us, it is not a basis to judge them. Like us, they seek to please the Lord.

If we understand that Jesus is Lord, then we know that his responsibility is to judge. Paul wrote that “we will all stand before the judgment seat of Christ.” Since Jesus is Lord, he determines the nature of our actions. He does so with a full understanding of our intentions.

What is fascinating in this passage is Christ’s judgment is not something designed with the aim to punish wrong doers. It is not designed as a threat so we will all submit to Jesus in fear and trembling lest we be punished. Rather it is the design of judgment that “every knee will bow (this is to affirm Jesus is Lord) and every tongue give praise to God.”

This morning I want you to ask yourself the question, “Is Jesus truly my Lord?” Have I submitted my life and will to Him? Am I living for and into Him?

I invite you to join me in this prayer:

Jesus – I confess you as Lord. Help me to live for and into you completely. I submit all I have and am to you as my commander and chief. Amen.