

**Sermon:** When Love Makes War

**Series:** When Love Hurts (2)

**Bible Passage:** James 4:1-6

**4** What causes quarrels and what causes fights among you? Is it not this, that your passions are at war within you? **2** You desire and do not have, so you murder. You covet and cannot obtain, so you fight and quarrel. You do not have, because you do not ask. **3** You ask and do not receive, because you ask wrongly, to spend it on your passions. **4** You adulterous people! Do you not know that friendship with the world is enmity with God? Therefore whoever wishes to be a friend of the world makes himself an enemy of God. **5** Or do you suppose it is to no purpose that the Scripture says, "He yearns jealously over the spirit that he has made to dwell in us"? **6** But he gives more grace. Therefore it says, "God opposes the proud, but gives grace to the humble."

Let's pray together please.

*Our great Heavenly Father, we ask that as we open the Word of God today, Your Word, that you would speak to us. Whether we've studied this Word all week, reading the Bible as a daily practice of discipline, or maybe this is the first time in a long time, or we've had a spotty habit, Lord we know that the effectiveness and the power of the Word is not in our discipline to read it, but the truth that it contains and the Spirit that moves us and opens our eyes to see this truth. We pray that you would do that in our hearts and lives. If we need refreshment and encourage us, would you refresh us this morning? If we need chastisement and rebuke and correction, would you humble us and work Your way in us this morning. We pray that, in all these things, that You would be glorified in Your Word. In Jesus name we pray. Amen.*

Why do we fight? Why do you fight in your marriage? Why do you have such a hard time with your kids? Why is it, at work, when you get into a team meeting or conference call, maybe you don't openly fight because you're being professional, but you become angry and frustrated. It's easy in life to learn that some people are simply disagreeable and like to fight and we should just try to avoid those people. I have quite a few books on my counseling shelf that say things like that. There are just some people who are dysfunctional and they fight a lot. Stay away from them; don't date them; don't marry them; don't get into a home owners association with them; don't rent to them and don't rent from them.

I think today, as we look at James, he asks this big question. He's asking it, not to a bunch of people who are straight out selfish, but to people who supposedly have given their lives to Jesus

Christ, who know the goodness of God, and have been transformed by the power of God. He says to this group of Christians, “what causes all the fights and quarrels among you?”

This is for all of us this morning who have fights, who are good at fighting, or are bad at fighting but fight a lot anyway. I come from a family of fighters who argue a lot at the dining table, who have a lot of strong opinions, and are kind of feisty. I get to serve on many ministry teams where there are a lot of people who have strong opinions as well.

This morning, as we study this passage, I believe this passage will show us three things about why we fight:

1. What causes fights?

Why do you and I get into fights, whether it’s in our marriage, whether it’s with our roommates, whether it’s in our businesses, whether it’s with our families, whether it’s with our neighbors.

Why do you and I get into fights?

2. Are those fights healthy?

Are those fights valid? Are those fights legitimate? Or are they unhealthy, unholy, damaging, and ungodly? Are those fights good or bad?

3. What do we do about those fights?

We’re in a series called “When Love Hurts” and we’ve been doing this topic for the past couple weeks now. Pastor Steve did a sermon a couple weeks ago on 1 John 2, titled “The Love God Hates”. Picking up that theme, last week I preached on 2 Timothy a sermon called “Abandoned Love”. Now here we are on a sermon that I’ve titled, “When Love Makes War”, which is a Biblical take on the common phrase “Don’t make war, make love”. The Bible says that that is well and good but sometimes love makes war.

1. Why do we get into fights?

Now, I want you to think of the last time you got into a fight, a quarrel, a heated argument. It might have gotten physical, been all verbal, or even all virtual. When was that? Was it last week? Was it during the work day? Was it this morning? When was the last time you fought? Now, I want you to think about why did we get into that fight? If you’re like me, you might just think of the circumstances (“we were just tired”) or social skills (“I don’t know how to tell that person that it hurts me”), or it’s simply disagreement (“we just disagree”).

However, this passage says that the main reason why we fight is none of those reasons. It's not because of our stress or situation; it's not because of social skills or lack of; it's not even because we disagree. Frankly, there are a lot of people we agree with but we cannot just get along with. Same political views, same religious views, same moral views, yet we just cannot get along. There are people who have a totally different view from you but you don't fight. You think disagreement is the reason but it's not.

I call it FED (frustrated, entitled desires). We're going to see this in James 4. Let's take a look at verse 1 where James tells us that the reason why we fight isn't because of our social setting, our social skills, or even simply disagreement, but the heart of it is our frustrated, entitled desires:

**4** What causes quarrels and what causes fights among you? Is it not this, that your passions are at war within you? <sup>2</sup> You desire and do not have, so you murder. You covet and cannot obtain, so you fight and quarrel. You do not have, because you do not ask. <sup>3</sup> You ask and do not receive, because you ask wrongly, to spend it on your passions.

What causes fights and quarrels among you? It's your passions. Maybe to put it this way: it's your frustrated, entitled, unmet, desires. It's the desires I think I deserve, I should have, I have a right to. It's those desires that I believe aren't even selfish, but simply proper, and they are unmet. They are frustrated. The frustrated, entitled, unmet desires (I should have called it FEUD...).

He goes on to give this parallelism in verse 2. The word murder is in there although it can be applied to a physical murder, I think it's more of a relational, figurative meaning. Take a look at verse 2:

<sup>2</sup> You desire and do not have, so you murder.

The first thing is your desire. The second thing is your reality: you don't have what you desire and so you murder.

The second sentence:

You covet and cannot obtain, so you fight and quarrel.

You have this desire; you covet. The reality is: you cannot obtain it. So what happens? You fight and you quarrel.

There is this parallelism here: You desire and you covet, but you cannot have it or get it, and so you murder and quarrel. Again, it could be that people are actually murdering each other to obtain what they want.

But I think if we heard the word “murder”, we wouldn’t think this could apply to us. However, if you parallel murder with the idea of quarreling and fighting, it makes me think about a couple sermon series ago when Calvin was preaching on Cain and Able. We may not physically murder but the Lord connects murder to hatred. Matthew 5:11-16 from the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus says if you hate someone, you have murdered them in their hearts. Maybe some of us have actually committed the act of murder, but all of us can relate to the idea that our relationships, our marriages, our friendships, our families have been murdered.

At the heart of a marriage that is dysfunctional, at the heart of a family that is dysfunctional, even at the heart of a church that is dysfunctional, where there is constant fighting, while it could be that everyone is stressed or in hard circumstances or it’s part of the culture or there are just disagreements on views, while all those things may aggravate a conflict, James says the real reason under it all is that we have this desire in our hearts and it makes us want something. That is why we have fights.

I think the example for me is when I’m driving around in these lovely New England rotaries, round-about, circular chaos, etc. Rotaries are pretty interesting concepts. Have you ever driven in a rotary thirty times around just to see what happens? I’ve done that. The best rotaries in New England are the ones with the traffic light; I happen to live by one. There are a ridiculous number of things you can do in these rotaries. When there happens to be traffic, a number of people will go into the rotary when the light is green even though the intersection is crowded with cars already. Have you ever been in the car when the light turns green and you want to proceed but you can’t because you’re faced with a wall of cars? I think this is a great example of: I want to go there but I cannot because you are literally in my way. Then, all the wonderful New England driving behavior ensues with nice gestures of the hands and kind words.

You have got to understand, when you and I fight, even if it’s something you think is good, the reason why we have these quarrels and issues is not because of stress or social skills, but because “I want something and you are in my way. You are preventing me from my goal. It’s you.” Even in the best of intentions, this applies. Maybe you both are partners in a business and you want the business to do well. Maybe you both are even Christians and you want this business to be a beacon of hope and a business where the employees are treated fairly and generously. However, you disagree as to how things should be run and you begin to fight with your business partner because you begin to see him or her as an obstacle. That is what Jesus is saying when he talks about anger and hatred and that is what James is talking about here.

You know it's an issue of your spirit when you don't just look at someone and think "oh, we're just having a fight" but rather "if only you could be out of the picture, life would be better". That's why we fight. We think things like, "if only you would get out of the way."

## 2. Are those fights healthy?

We might raise this question: well, if the reason why we fight is because we have these frustrated, entitled, unmet desires, we desire and covet but we cannot have or get and so we fight, is it ever possible that these conflicts are legitimate? Is it ever possible that what we want is proper and maybe it's a fight worth having?

In this context, the answer is no. The word James is using for desires, most Greek experts would say means "evil desires". However, I think there is a way to tell if that desire is legitimate, healthy, and valid. That answer, I believe, is in verse 3 but let's begin at verse 2 for context:

<sup>2</sup> You desire and do not have, so you murder. You covet and cannot obtain, so you fight and quarrel. You do not have, because you do not ask. <sup>3</sup> You ask and do not receive, because you ask wrongly, to spend it on your passions.

How do you and I know if our desires are unhealthy, selfish, and evil, or a good one? It's a very simple thing. Can you spend a long time praying and asking God for that thing? Here's one way to figure out whether the desire is for the sake of others or for the sake of the kingdom: could you email or ask all your friends to pray for this thing in your life? Could you say: "I want something and I want all my friends to join me in praying for this thing." If you can tell others about what you want and ask them to pray for it, then chances are, it's a good desire. However, if I say, "I can't tell everyone to pray for that because it's embarrassing or self-centered", that is why you don't pray for it and you don't have it.

There are times I have been in my public library in Medford and I didn't bring a computer, so I needed to use one of the public library computers. I never use public computers now and I really don't like to use them because they're dirty and slow. However, I was desperate and needed to use email so I had no choice. There's a computer section in our library that has a sign that says "When others are waiting, please limit your computer use to \_\_\_\_ minutes." I have been there at the computer terminal and there has been a line for the computers. I'm sitting there doing work, doing God's work, when someone comes taps me on the shoulder and says, "Excuse me, how long have you been on the computer?" which essentially means "You're over time. Get off the

computer.” I log off and I get back in to the line. What am I thinking? “Hurry up. Get off the computer. I have things to do.” Of course they use the computer and open up a game...

Now, I could go to the reference desk person and say, “Can you go tell that person to get off the computer?” They’d ask, “Why sir? Are they taking too long? Are they not letting you have a turn? Have you had a turn? What do you want?” And for me to respond, “I want them to not have a turn. I want my turn to be unlimited because I feel like my work is more important and I’m more important.” I think most people know not to say that. Once I say it, I think I’ll realize that that probably counts as an evil, selfish desire.

Here is what James is saying: do you know why some of us don’t pray? It could be that we don’t have discipline. It could be that we don’t love God. It could be lots of things. One of the reasons why we don’t pray is this: deep down we know that we have no business asking God for that thing. Deep down we know that we have no business going on Facebook and saying, “Dear Friends, I really ask that you take time out of your day to pray for me because I want to use the public library computer and I don’t want anyone else to have a turn.” That would be extremely selfish. The fact of the matter is that you and I know that. There are disconnects between the things you and I spend time on and what we pray about.

I’ll give you an example. Both when I was younger and now, I think care about my image and I would say that most people do. As a pastor, image takes on different terms – it has to do more with competency and status. Maybe when you’re younger, image is about physical appearance because when you get to my age, you figure it’s hopeless to worry about that anymore. When you’re younger, it’s about your looks, your dress, your physique. When I was younger, I worried about things like my hair, my physique, my weird tan lines, and all these things I know you all probably think about. Here’s the thing: I might spend two or three hours a day thinking about my physical appearance.

Can you pray about the things you spend most of your day thinking about? Can you actually get on your knees and ask God, “God, as a child of God, would you crush my co-worker? Would you just screw up my boss’ life because she’s making my life miserable? Could you get my neighbor to move by getting him fired and the house foreclosed? Or better yet, have the house burned down so no one can live in that lot in the future? God is it possible for you to get that girl to notice me because I spend a lot of time thinking about how I can walk by her locker or her classroom or her car? God, can you help her notice that I’m better than all the guys in her

grade?” Can you really go around asking God about all these things? If the answer is no, then why do you we spend so much time trying to get those things in our lives?

We have these desires. When those desires are unmet, they make us fight, they fuel us, they make us feel entitled, they make us feel indignant, they make us murder in our hearts. How do we know if these desires are good? You know it's not good because you never even thought to pray for that because you know deep down that it's a terrible, selfish, vengeful, hateful thing to pray for. When you do pray, you don't get it because deep down you know it's a selfish, bad thing. This is when love makes war.

When our love of the world and the things of the world become our desires and therefore we fight about it, we argue with each other, and we begin to look at other people created in the image of God and need love, grace, healing, correcting, shepharding, and community, but as obstacles to move or to remove because the desire we want we wouldn't ask God for or ask our friends to pray for.

Here's the flip side: if there is something you really want, and it's not necessarily something that will bring people to God or rescue people from hunger, but it's something you really want, I challenge you to pray about it daily for 30 days. If it's something you want and it's causing frustration in your home, in your marriage, in your family, in your life, pray about it. If it's something good, something that could be a blessing to you, why don't you just ask God for it? You might be surprised. He might just give it to you. However, if it comes at the cost, pain, hurt of other people, then you know He is not going to give it to you. If anything, He might be asking you to make that painful, costly sacrifice in the name of Jesus to bless your neighbor, to bless your coworker, to bless your friends, to bless your roommate, to bless your children, to bless your spouse. Here, he is saying this: if it is something that is worthwhile, pray.

I'm going to use an example from my missions trip experience in the Philippines. Last year, when I went, there was a hole in the ground that had a few things at the bottom. I asked Pastor Manny and Sharon and they told me, "That was a swimming pool." I asked her to tell me the story and she said, "Well, we have these hot springs under the Bible school and we thought 'Wouldn't it be nice to one day dig a hole and one day we can just sit in the spring and relax'. Do you know what some of the boys did? They began digging out the hole and would go to the garbage dumps and recycling centers to get tiles." Last year it was a bare hole in the ground with a few tiles and now there are more tiles. Sharon told me, "You know this swimming pool is not really a priority. I ask God, 'God, it would be so nice if there was a pool here I could sit in and

ease my aches.” That’s how she looks at it. She basically says: God, if you want to give me a pool to sit in, that’s great. There it sits for several years and ever year maybe it’ll grow a little more. She thinks: Yeah, I would like that, but I’m not going to pray and fast every day and ask all my friends in the United States to pray for the completion of my swimming pool.

This is the great thing: when your desires line up with God’s desires, you can ask God for those things. There are countless examples. I know some of you have really wanted to get into prestigious schools and have prestigious jobs and I know God has blessed you with those things because you want to serve God with your careers. Then, by all means, you can pray to God, “God, would you help me get this job, not because I want to be prestigious, but because I believe this is a chance to be a witness for Christ.” God will know whether we’re sincere or not. Some of us might pray, “God, I would love to have a home where I can open up and be hospitable and be share my home with people.” Karen, my wife, and I, actually prayed, “God, if you want us to have the kind of ministry where we would have people in our home, then please give us a home that allows for that. If not, that’s fine. Give us a small home. We can rent. Whatever. God, we desire to have a ministry of hospitality. We desire to have a home open for people. We desire to have a big home.” God didn’t give it to us for a long time, probably because my heart was in the wrong place. Finally, when I said I didn’t really want a home for the wrong reasons, God gave us a home faster than I could spin my head around.

There are countless examples in your life. There are times when you wanted something but you knew your motives were mixed. Maybe you wanted to get into a relationship. You knew you weren’t ready at the time. Maybe it was inviting someone to church. What better than to invite someone to come hear the Gospel. You knew it wasn’t the right time. Maybe you were romantically interested in this person. Maybe you had ulterior motives for inviting someone to church. God has a way of saying this: if it is good for you, good for people, good for society, good for the church, good for the glory of God, then friends, ask God for it every single day. When you ask God and He says yes, wait, or no, you will find that the fighting and quarreling will go down because you’re actually doing something about it. Pray, “God, please give me A and B and C, but in Your time. If you never ask God for those things, but you feed the desire for those things, that’s called the frustrated life, an extremely spiritually self-destructive life.

If you want something so badly, I challenge you to put it on the table before God and say, “God, I don’t even know if this is good maybe this is selfish, but I really want this. Honestly, it’s probably not for the kingdom of God. It’s probably not to help other people. I just really want this for me.” Pray like that. I think God will do something. God will change something. God might bless you

and show you that He is still interested in your good. Or He might say, “You don’t need that. I have something better in store for you.’

What causes fights and quarrels among us? James says it’s these desires. The things we covet and desire but cannot obtain so we fight and quarrel. We want but cannot have and so we murder. A lot of the time, those desires, we know are wrong and selfish because, deep down, we would be ashamed to ask anyone to pray for that for us because we know those desires aren’t really legitimate. We would not ask God for it. We would not ask other people to pray for it. We would not ask our parents to give us a loan to buy this because we know no one would be for it because we know it’s not the best idea. The flip side is that, if it’s something that is really good, by all means, ask God, tell your friends, invite people to support you in getting what you want.

### 3. What do we do about those fights?

What’s to do? Let’s say we’re fighting with these desires that aren’t the holiest or the purest because they’re causing us to have fights and we don’t have the guts to ask God for it. What do we do? Let’s pick it up in verse 3:

<sup>3</sup> You ask and do not receive, because you ask wrongly, to spend it on your passions. <sup>4</sup> You adulterous people! Do you not know that friendship with the world is enmity with God? Therefore whoever wishes to be a friend of the world makes himself an enemy of God. <sup>5</sup> Or do you suppose it is to no purpose that the Scripture says, “He yearns jealously over the spirit that he has made to dwell in us”? <sup>6</sup> But he gives more grace. Therefore it says, “God opposes the proud, but gives grace to the humble.”

What to do when we realize that maybe our desires are selfish passions that are maybe no good for ourselves and no good for other people? I believe this passage gives us two things: one thing to know and one thing to hope:

Here’s the thing to know. It might not feel very positive, but I believe it is. We need to know that when we want something that is of the world and not of good, we are committing spiritual adultery. Isn’t that great to know? You and I are spiritual adulterers.

<sup>4</sup> You adulterous people! Do you not know that friendship with the world is enmity with God?

Another way to translate the word “enmity” in verse 4 is hatred. Verse 4 again with the replacement:

<sup>4</sup>You adulterous people! Do you not know that friendship with the world is *hatred* with God? Therefore whoever wishes to be a friend of the world makes himself an enemy of God.

Now, how does that work? Isn't that a little bit of a leap James? What does that mean? Here's what it fundamentally means: where do you put your sense of fulfillment in? If your fulfillment is in the things of this world, then it is like hating God. If God is not your end, your purpose, and He is the means to an end, the means of some other sort of fulfillment in success, in relationships, in physical pleasures, in accumulating goods, whatever it is, then you are essentially using God. You are hating God. I am hating God.

That's why we stop praying. If we want worldly success and we just want to accumulate a lot of worldly stuff, then God is in our way. He is the ultimate obstacle to what we want. That is why we don't pray. Why would you pray to the God whose purpose is not to give you all these worldly goods, but whose purpose is to give you purpose and fulfillment in Him. That's why we don't pray. James is telling us that if we put our hope in these things, it's like we are essentially hating God.

Think about it this way: the difference between loving the world and loving God is not selfishness. I know many translations use the phrases "selfish desires" or "selfish passions", but here's the basic idea: if your fulfillment is in the world, then you are going to try to get as much from the world as you can. God is the means to getting as much of the world. If your fulfillment is in God, then everything in this world is a means of getting to know God more and experiencing God more. That's the difference.

To tell a Christian, "look, you are a Christian and therefore you shouldn't have selfish desires" is what makes so many churches weak and makes Christians ineffectual because Christians need to have strong passions and desires for God. To tell someone, "you're a Christian so don't have strong desires" is terrible. It is committing spiritual entropy. You are crippling someone spiritually. The desire you have for fulfillment in the world, in sex, in pleasure, in success, in fun times, etc. is a legitimate desire, but will never be met in the world; it will be frustrated in the world. You need to take your desire in hope, in fulfillment, in joy and find it in God –your proper spouse. That is why James calls us an adulterous generation. We need to find our purpose, our hope, our meaning in God. When it is in God that is when we drive hard in everything in life for God.

Friends, your desire and your love in the world is not because you are selfish. It is because you have been tricked that your fulfillment can come from the things of this world. That is the

difference. I don't think you're selfish. Obviously if I love the world, I will look selfish because loving the world means I want more stuff for me which means I'll have to step and walk over you to get what I want. It's not that I hate you—I just want more stuff for me. However, if I want more God, then it looks different. God says the way to get more of God is to give Him away and to bless other people. That is the thing to know. You cannot be a friend of the world and a friend of God. You need to forsake the world. That is sometimes why God, in His own way, does not give you the things of this world. That's the first thing we need to know: friendship with the world is like hating God.

Here's the thing to hope: God is a jealous god. What does it mean to have hope in a jealous God? Let's take a look at it in Scripture, starting with verse 5:

<sup>5</sup> Or do you suppose it is to no purpose that the Scripture says, "He yearns jealously over the spirit that he has made to dwell in us"? <sup>6</sup> But he gives more grace. Therefore it says, "God opposes the proud, but gives grace to the humble."

Here's the hope: when you and I have a desire that is for personal gain because of our love for the world and therefore it makes other people appear as not our friends or family but people in our way to get what we want and we know that's the case because we don't have the guts to ask God to remove those people, then our hope has to be that God loves us even in our adulterous states with jealous love. He will pursue each of us and bring each of us back because He has a jealous love. He looks at you and He made you His perfect image. He is angry with us when we are unfaithful to Him. He is angry with us because He loves us, He is jealous, and He wants us back. God always gets His people back. That is the hope. The hope is: no matter what you and I do, God will be jealous and care.

I've done some marital counseling in my time and one of the common things is when a spouse comes in and shares that they feel like their spouse is spending too much time with someone else or is not giving him or her enough attention. I tell them, "it sounds like you're jealous" and they'll deny it, but eventually come to the realization that they actually are jealous. It's kind of a hard thing to admit and it's a scary to admit that that person's marriage is in a place where the other spouse might be unfaithful. Inevitably, when the spouse is jealous and there is this conflict that actually gives me hope.

I have also seen couples that will come into my office and talk about marriage and one person will say, "My spouse is spending time elsewhere but I don't really care. I just want to know how to deal with it. Do I have to confront this person? What do I do for my kids?" Let me tell you: I

would much rather work with a married couple that is bitterly angry and jealous of each other than a married couple who says, “I don’t really care. I’m not really jealous.”

Wouldn’t you want your lover to be jealous of you? Wouldn’t you want your friends to be jealous of your time? Wouldn’t you want your savior, who shed his blood for you, to see you wander away from Him for years and jealously yearn for you to come back home? Jealousy may seem terrible and it may seem weak, but what does the first commandment say? “You shall have no other gods before me.” Why does it say that? Because God is a jealous God.

In history, jealousy is a divine attribute. In America, it’s a sign of weakness. God says, “No. I am secure. I am so divine. I am jealous.” Jealous means: I have a right to this relationship. God has a right to you and me. He made us. If you’re a believer, God has a right to you; He redeemed you. God is jealous and that is why you read the rest of James 4, there are a lot of commands: “resist the devil”, “draw near to God”, “mourn your sin”, etc. What am I supposed to do when I realize my desires have made me an adulterous person with God? James tells us this: God gives us more grace.

<sup>6</sup> But he gives more grace. Therefore it says, “God opposes the proud, but gives grace to the humble.”

You might say, particularly when it comes to your family, that you don’t have fights and things are a lot better now that the circumstance is different – perhaps you moved out. Sure, you aren’t fighting because you aren’t physically there anymore, but you still have those desires. You know this because when family reunions come up and family dinners come up, things get tense. If you and I are having conflicts, if you and I are having fights, sure it’s a stressful time or there’s a lack of communication, but I want us to remember that the cause of inner turmoil and hostility is our desires. If that hostility is valid, then I challenge you to pray to God about it every day: “God, please give this to me. I know people might think it’s selfish, but I want it for your kingdom and your glory.” The point is: can you really pray for the things you desire?

If God gives it to you, the second you start using the thing he has blessed you with for your own selfish desires, I have no doubt that God will take it away. He will take away your position. He will take away your status. He will take away your reputation. Do you know why? Because he is a jealous God. If he gave you power, reputation, influence, status, wealthy, and all these things, then He has a plan for you. However, the second we fall in love with those things instead of using them the way God intended for our good and His glory, He is jealous. You will find that He will probably take many of those things away. I can say Amen to that in my own life.

God gave me something and I thought, “Yes, I finally earned it.” Then God said, “Well, looks like you’re getting a little too big in the head.” He just took it away. I thank God for that because God is a jealous God.

Maybe you’ve been wanting something for years but you haven’t gotten it. Would you just ask God for that thing for the next thirty days? God, I believe, will do something in your heart. Maybe He is just waiting for you to ask. Maybe He is waiting for something to happen in your life. Here it is friends: love can make war when you love the wrong thing, but God gives grace; he is still humble.

As we think about our fights, our conflicts, and our battered down relationships at work, at home, and in our families, I want you to have hope. The hope is not in overcoming a language barrier alone, overcoming a cultural barrier alone, or overcoming our differences. The hope is: “I have this desire God. It might be out of order. Please restore it by Your grace.” And I believe He will.

Let’s pray together.

*Gracious Father, I think the one time someone actually asked for something from You, I think of the time when Jesus said, “I don’t want to go to the cross. Take this cup from me if it’s possible.” He actually asked you. It’s a funny prayer because He knew the whole purpose of coming to Earth was to go to the cross. That is why Jesus was born. That is why Jesus did His ministry. Jesus even predicted that He would go to the cross. Yet, hours before He would be nailed to the cross, Jesus demonstrates to us that He could still open His heart up to you and He could still say, “Father in Heaven, I know this is why I am here; I know that I volunteered for this; I know that this is the only way to save humanity. Yet Lord, I don’t want to. Could you take this cup away?” Yet, Jesus obediently went to the cross. The spirit filled Him and helped Him rise from the dead and His Father was pleased in all those things.*

*Father, as we think about that and we think of the conflict we have, maybe we’re too ashamed to ask for the things that we want, and that’s why we’re angry. Show us, Lord, that the only way we will ever be able to truly trust that You give us things in Your timing is to see how you treat Your own son.*

*Lord, I pray that this church would be a church that prays for their own selfish prayer requests, not because it’s good to be selfish but because I believe that as we verbalize them in*

*prayer and really put them out to the light that you might change our hearts. May this church, even people who are just visiting this church, be a people who have told you what we really want and may you be a God that has taken the things we want and begun to fashion them in our hearts and minds for Your good because You still give grace.*