



Jonah

#5 “After an Election”

November 13, 2016

Courage Church, Detroit, MI

Last week, we called the message “Before an Election.” and, by the way, thank you for everyone who shared that message and the clips from it online. It really means a lot. It is really great to see the way that God has taken even what we do in this little room with a few of us, and how it can go out and spread and be heard by people who have never even been here before. And I was very blessed and encouraged by peoples response to last week.

But the truth is, *THIS WEEK* is when last weeks message needs to really take shape in our hearts.

and no matter who won the election, I would have said something similar, because just like we said last week, there are two very divided sides and either way it is extremely obvious that people need a lot of healing.

So please don't go away saying “he is on this side, or he is on that side...” I am not on a political side. I am on the side that says Jesus is the only answer... and I am on the side that says that love is the only thing that will

actually change our world. Love is the only way that we can truly bring the Kingdom of Heaven to this broken Kingdom.

and undoubtably, Some of you this week feel like the Psalmist when he says “What do we do when the foundations of law and order collapse?” (Psalm 11)

and the answer is so simple and yet in moments like this are so far from easily lived out...

We remember that the Lord is the one who is on the throne. Not some elected official.

and that doesn't mean that we don't honor and respect our governing officials, we have to do that. (Romans 13)

and that definitely doesn't mean that we ignore injustice or we don't stand up for the marginalized... WE MUST DO THOSE THINGS... because the one who IS on the throne told us to do those things. He told us we should care about those things, and we should work for those things.

But words are worthless if you can't back them up with your actions... and right now the church has an amazing opportunity to actually *be the church* in a season where people need it, but truthfully at the same time, a lot of people right now feel betrayed by it.

and if I could be very transparent with you, as a pastor, that is a lot to navigate.

But I know this: it is a moment in history when **the church needs to rise.**

Because true change will not come from the political arena at all.

It will come from the bottom. Isaiah 9, which has been one of our theme scriptures this year says of Jesus that “the government will be on his shoulders.”

Not the other way around. The one who came to be servant of all will be the one who brings about the greatest change.

and I want to remind people on both sides this morning that we are citizens in a different Kingdom, and we pledge our allegiance to Jesus Christ and Jesus Christ alone.

Not some man or a man made system that just like every other man made system throughout history, is flawed, and will continue to change and certainly eventually will collapse. Because everything that was made by man will eventually be on the shoulders of a God who is so good that even in the most broken times in our world He is our refuge... and He is our restorer.

Jesus Christ is the same, yesterday, today, and forever.

So... We are calling today "After an Election."

Because everybody has a lot of questions about how to respond. And to be honest, I don't have all of the answers. I know that Jesus is the answer, and that his church is, and will always be the hope of the world. I know that this is an obvious moment in history when it is time for the church of Jesus Christ to rise up and meet people where they are on all sides.

This particular election season has been unlike anything that I have seen in my lifetime, and I know without a doubt, that people on BOTH sides need a lot of healing from the way that it all went. And only Jesus can do that.

So let me say this before we get into the scripture, and then we will dive right into it:

I stand before you a flawed man. A man who has made many mistakes and who has a past that has its dark moments, just like most people have... things that I am still sorting through.

and I think sometimes its good to just remember that. We are broken people who are saved by the grace of God.

I also stand before you a person who doesn't always fully understand everything that other people are going through... I have gone through a lot on my own, and most of what I have gone through has been on account of my own decisions. But I don't know what it actually feels like, to go through something just because someone else has a disposition against you. I don't think I have ever been victimized in that way, so there is obviously a difference in the life that I have been privileged to have been given, and the life of someone who wakes up every day afraid of the world that they live in right now.

I at times become fearful of what kind of world my children are going to inherit, fearful is probably not the right word, but I want things to be great for them.

but other people are fearful of what kind of what that their children are out in right now. And there is a very big difference.

and the only way to bridge those gaps is with love.

and I do love people. and I do trust that God is on the throne. And I want to show as many people as possible that HE IS GOOD, even when our world is corrupt. That is my mission.

So we are going to continue our series on Jonah, which I believe actually offers a lot of insight here, by reading all of Jonah chapter 3, and the first three verses of chapter four.

Jonah Goes to Nineveh

3 Then the word of the Lord came to Jonah the second time, saying, **2** **“Arise, go to Nineveh, that great city, and call out against it the message that I tell you.”** **3** **So Jonah arose and went to Nineveh, according to the word of the Lord. Now Nineveh was an exceedingly great city, three days’ journey in breadth.** **4** Jonah began to go into the city, going a day’s journey. And he called out, “Yet forty days, and Nineveh shall be overthrown!” **5** And the people of Nineveh believed God. They called for a fast and put on sackcloth, from the greatest of them to the least of them.

The People of Nineveh Repent

⁶ The word reached the king of Nineveh, and he arose from his throne, removed his robe, covered himself with sackcloth, and sat in ashes. ⁷ And he issued a proclamation and published through Nineveh, “By the decree of the king and his nobles: Let neither man nor beast, herd nor flock, taste anything. Let them not feed or drink water, ⁸ but let man and beast be covered with sackcloth, and let them call out mightily to God. Let everyone turn from his evil way and from the violence that is in his hands. ⁹ Who knows? God may turn and relent and turn from his fierce anger, so that we may not perish.”

¹⁰ When God saw what they did, how they turned from their evil way, God relented of the disaster that he had said he would do to them, and he did not do it.

Jonah’s Anger and the Lord’s Compassion

⁴ But it displeased Jonah exceedingly, and he was angry. ² And he prayed to the Lord and said, “O Lord, is not this what I said when I was yet in my country? That is why I made haste to flee to Tarshish; for I knew that you are a gracious God and merciful, slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love, and relenting from disaster. ³ Therefore now, O Lord, please take my life from me, for it is better for me to die than to live.”

Let’s pray.

We took our discipleship school students to New York City this week, and we had a great time. I was able to get some time with my mentor and pastor Brad Reed, which is always so good for me.

its always good to go back there, and be around a lot of the people that have helped to shape my life, and I loved that this week our discipleship school students were able to have an opportunity to be shaped, to an extent, from those same influences.

I had to break away for a little while a couple of times to work on this mornings message, and I wrote most of this sermon there... in one of my favorite spots. On 29th street there is this hotel called the ACE Hotel, and there is a stump town coffee shop there where you can go and order your coffee and then sit down in the lobby of the ACE hotel and drink it... it has

this super lounge feel, almost low lighting... super inspiring place. It was really great.

and as I sat there, sometimes writing, sometimes pausing to pray, or to think, or to look something up, I would look up and do a little people watching...

I would listen in to the conversations all around me because there was no way not too... and of course, the only thing that everyone was talking about was: election. election. election.

You would think that it was the ONLY thing happening.

The couple sitting across from me were talking about how different it would have went with a different candidate... and they were talking about this specific candidate and going through all of the dirt that the other side could have picked up on the other candidate... and they started talking about things that I never knew or had heard about that person... but the conversation was "those things are pale in comparison to what they found on the other candidate." - which made me realize... or should I say, it just reminded me... that we all have skeletons in our closets.

Many times the ones that we paint as heroes have just as much garbage in their past as the ones we paint as villains.

but I think that coming to the reality that at the end of the day, God can work through anybody, and even more importantly, that His grace extends to everybody, is a critical part to our moving forward as a nation.

Because the fact is, honestly, in my view at least... our nation right now is more broken than ever.

It is more split. More divided. and I know it always divides during political seasons but I am seeing things that I have never seen before. People literally telling other people that they want nothing to do with them ever again if they supported one candidate over another... and its not just from one side... its from both sides. It takes different shapes and different forms, but one way or another, a lot of people are very angry.

and where I have not seen ANY posts like that coming from Courage Church, I still want to address it because the fact is that when you see enough things like that from other people, ideas can start creeping in to your own mind. It can fuel anger in yourself, some of which could come from a righteous place but very easily could be directed in the wrong place.

A lot of people are very hurt right now, and just like we said last week... Jesus is the only answer for that hurt. I know in times like this, it sounds like a cop out... it sounds like “the right thing to say” while feeling like it comes with no practical solution... but first and foremost if we are going to be the solution we have to start with ourselves.

and if we don't bring it to the cross of Jesus Christ and place our faith and trust in him and him alone, then we are going to be a part of dividing the world that we should be working to reconcile.

So This is what I want to do today.

I want to talk about grace. I know, we talk about grace every week... its basically the point of every message. The message of the cross of Jesus Christ is grace...

The definition of grace is “unmerited favor” - something you don't deserve. It is when someone else pays, FOR YOU.

It is the point of the entire book of Jonah.

God's love for a pagan, violent city... A city that was known for siege warfare... for taking over any group of people that they felt like... for making disgusting and brutal examples of the people who defied them...

But the God that we serve let himself through grace become the God that those people served too, because his love knows no boundaries.

Grace is a constant throughout the book. When God calls Jonah to Nineveh and instead he goes to Tarshish, and the storm overtakes the boat... Jonah tells the sailors “its my fault” and what do they do?

They show grace.

Jonah says “you will all die if you don't throw me overboard” and the scriptures say “nevertheless, the men kept rowing toward dry land” they tried so hard to not throw Jonah overboard, but eventually Jonah convinced them.

Then grace came in the form of a storm calming over the sailors... and grace came in the form of a fish coming to swallow and RESCUE the wayward prophet from certain death.

Then grace came again in the form of Jonah being spit up on dry land... and then it came AGAIN in the form of God not ruling Jonah out after all of his disobedience, but instead gave him the same call on his life all over again.

Get to Nineveh. Where God's grace shined the brightest in the darkest city in the world.

so I want to talk about grace...

but I also want to talk about growth.

Because where grace is both the foundation and the constant connected in the life of a follower of Jesus Christ, whether or not you are willing to put in the work that it takes to actually grow will be a gage for how far you will go in your Christian walk. God has a whole lot of things that He is doing... and He is looking for people who will come alongside of him in that process... but you can't stay where you are if you are going to be a part of that. You can't live your whole life in your preconceived opinions and views... you can't stay your whole life struggling with the exact same things and never making an effort to go to the next level. *You are not saved by your effort*, but you won't grow without it either.

and where the story of Jonah is an amazing story of grace... woven throughout the entire thing... it is also a story that records only a very minimal amount of growth in the heart of our main character.

So lets start with grace. and then end with growth.

Grace

Grace is everywhere in this book.

and the last verse in chapter 3, and the first verse in chapter 4 are two of the most curious verses in the entire bible. Truly, they are both shocking. When you take them back to the Hebrew, what they are saying is unlike anything that we find anywhere... and it will surprise you, and make you wonder. And hopefully you can let wonder fill you a little bit... because some of these words provoke questions that I am not certain that I have the answers to.

First, look at the last thing in chapter 3:

“When God saw what they did, how they turned from their evil way, God relented of the disaster that he had said he would do to them, and he did not do it.”

A few thoughts on this, and I want you to catch this... First of all... God is not above changing his mind. He does it all the time.

but God throughout the old testament, gets more and more gracious. More and more.

Think of all the times in the old testament where God either did something like destroy a city, or at least considered it.

The first time we see it is with Noah, God saw the evil and wanted to destroy it, Noah said nothing, and it was destroyed. Everything, flooded. With Abraham, God agreed that he wouldn't destroy Sodom IF he can find even ten people there who were good... which he could not. With Moses, God saw the evil that they did against him when they build a golden calf out of their rings and started worshipping it as “the gods that brought us out of Egypt”, He wanted to destroy it, but Moses petitioned, and God changed his mind... but by the time we get to Jonah and Nineveh, God is all about

mercy when Jonah thinks God should destroy it. God wants to pity Nineveh.

God said, “these people don’t even know what they are doing, lets have mercy!” But Jonah begged for judgment.

and even though it was God’s idea to bring judgment, he then had a better idea... and it was grace.

And that was all before Jesus. So yes, God saw Nineveh, and he said “that is a place that deserves judgment” but then he said “But I am going to show them grace.

and he sends Jonah.

So understanding the way God is getting more and more gracious, lets look a little closer at this verse.

There are some key words here, and one of them is the word **relented**. The Lord relented, and another is **disaster**. That is how all of the modern translations translate it... Relent essentially means “to abandon the harsh treatment.” So it is saying that God stopped. Not terribly off, but not the right word to use there.

This is how it looks in Hebrew:

אֱלֹהִים (*Elohim*) God
נחם (*nhm*) (nahem) repent
רָע (*ra*) evil

Notice the second word. Nahem. There is not really a way to translate this word as anything other than repent. It is the word repent.

The King James version, as far as I know, is the most modern translation to actually translate this, well, pretty close to he Hebrew.

This is how it reads in the King James.

“God repented of the evil, that he had said that he would do unto them; and he did *it* not.”

I am not sure why they changed the word... I assume that the translators got to that word, and they looked at each other, and they said “can we say that? God repented? OF EVIL??? We cant say that. Lets find a nicer way to say this.

and rabbi’s and scholars over the years have debated this and tried to figure it out... what does God have to repent of? Is anything that God does, actually *evil*? Because there is not actually another way you can translate this word.

I was talking to the students a little bit about this when we were walking in Brooklyn on Friday evening... and we were wrestling with this and other hard verses to understand in the bible... and one thing that was said was that *God is about people*. And the truth is, there are a lot of verses that people read and they may at first glance feel like “God is not about people.” Like this verse that says that God was planning to do EVIL against them. That is how we read it.

But first of all, I don’t think people would ever be able to get a full grasp on the grace of God if they didn’t understand **WHAT THEY DESERVED**. Nineveh was an evil place doing every godless thing imaginable and the world would have been a better place without them if they didn’t change. So naturally it makes sense that God would paint a picture of a coming judgement because without that picture there would be no picture of grace.

But beyond that...

our conversation lead us to this reality: **THERE IS A WAY TO READ THE BIBLE** in such a way, where everything that God does, from beginning to end, is teaching us about how to love each other more and more and in greater and greater ways.

That even a simple verse buried in Jonah that doesn’t at face value make sense, is loaded with such grace and is breathed out by the Holy Spirit in

such a way that if we let it take hold of who we are at our core, it only propels us to be more loving.

I don't believe that God repented here because he feels like he did something wrong... Though the pattern throughout the Old Testament is God getting more and more gracious himself...

what was the last thing we read today, at the beginning on chapter four?

“O Lord, is not this what I said when I was yet in my country? That is why I made haste to flee to Tarshish; for I knew that you are a gracious God and merciful, slow to anger and **abounding in steadfast love**, and relenting from disaster.”

God is so good. Jonah knew from the beginning... God is good! He is merciful, he doesn't get angry quickly, and he abounds in steadfast love.

On other words, God is for people! Even broken people. Even *evil* people.

Psalm 56:8 talks about how God keeps a count of all the times that we are hurting... it says that he keeps our tears in a bottle and records every one of them in his book.

For every moment in your life that you were not who you were supposed to be, because of the cross of Jesus Christ, God doesn't even remember it.

But for every moment in your life that you were hurting, sad, broken, alone,

God meets you there. Isaiah puts it this way, (Isaiah 57:15) “God lives him who is of a contrite and lowly spirit, in order to revive the spirit and the heart of the lowly.”

He is intentional to forget the things that we have done wrong.

But He is just as intentional to REMEMBER the things that WENT wrong in our lives because he intentionally walked through them WITH us.

It is “divine mirroring” - it is the idea that God feels what we feel, on purpose.

On other words, He knows when we hurt, and he puts himself in the middle of it. It is a form of empathy that literally joins with the lost and hurting as they are walking through what they are going through.

and if you look at the last verse in Jonah chapter 3 from that angle, suddenly you have something different.

Now you have God looking at this group of utterly awful sinners... the worst of the worst... and they are all willing to repent based on a five worded sermon from Jonah, and give up their violence.

and alongside of them we have God saying, “I am with them. If there are thousands and thousands of people in Nineveh willing to repent of evil, then I will make sure that they don’t do it alone.”

Its the same words. God does the *same thing* that Nineveh does.

It is the same principle that we have been taught in church, when the pastor tells everyone to ask the person beside them if they want to go up for prayer... Pastor Dave would always tell us, “if the person next to you goes up, go up with them.”

We are not meant to face the world alone.

That is why they say that the two most powerful words in the universe for a person to HEAR, when you have come to the place that you literally just have no idea what to do next are:

“me too.”

and is that not such a reflection of the heart of God as the writer of Hebrews says it of Jesus?

“we do not have a high priest who is unable to empathize with our weaknesses”

I know that we like to think of elections in terms of winners and losers... but that is not the way that the gospel works. There are NOT winners and losers in the Kingdom of Heaven and in Christian communities... Either we move forward TOGETHER...

or we all lose.

and for those of you who were happy, or even were indifferent with the outcome, that means coming alongside of those who weren't, and hearing them. And listening to them. And NOT ARGUING with them. The division amongst the people of God over a worldly system has to stop, and grace needs to abound in this place like never before because it is as clear as day that on a massive scale people are hurting and divided like never before.

Everyone needs to know that they have a voice and they need to know that their voice is heard. and when you try and shut people down from saying something that you disagree with, what you are saying is that you value your opinion more than you value them. That might not be what you actually feel... but that is what you are communicating.

Valuing people means that you get on their level with them in their pain even when you don't understand it. As Paul puts it, you mourn with the mourning... you become weak to the one who is weak... He says “I have become all things to all people so that by all possible means I might save *some*.” (1 Corinthians 9:22)

That is how you show grace toward one another as a reflection of the grace that God has shown us all.

Now, I am just going to be a little blunt here... What I just described is NOT where we are now. We aren't there right now. And truthfully, as a corporate body of Jesus Christ here in Detroit, we need to grow. And I am not talking numerically.

Growth

Growth is almost non-existent in the book of Jonah. At least in the life of our main character. The only growth we see, God had to ultimately force upon Jonah... and it was Jonah going from disobedience, to obedience.

But his heart, as far as what was actually recorded, never learned to love.

So the end of chapter three reads:

“God repented of the evil that he said he would do to them.”

Nineveh was willing to repent of their evil.

and God was willing to repent with them.

But look at what happened *to Jonah*:

chapter 4 begins by saying this:

“it displeased Jonah exceedingly, and he was angry.”

Believe it or not, the key word here is “displeased.”

רָעָה - it is another version of the same Hebrew word that we get a verse earlier, about what God repents of. It is the word *ra*. and it means: **evil**.

So again, the translations we usually read are too nice.

and this is kind of nuts. and I've tried to research this as much as I could, and from everything I found found, this is not a simple verse to translate... but the literally there looks something like this:

When Jonah saw that God had forgiven them of *their evil*... “Jonah became evil.”

You can't miss this. Because there are only two ways that you can go when things don't go the way that you want it to go... you can learn from it, and allow yourself to grow in love even when it's difficult, or you can be consumed by it. But the problem is, when you let something actually consume you for long enough, you start acting just like that thing, when everything sensible doesn't seem to be working. And that was Jonah.

Jonah saw something in Nineveh that made him MAD. and, to be fair, it rightly made him mad. It was a lot of blatant evil. it was racism... it was hatred. It was empirically over reach, and it was violent.

But then the King came and He said "Lay down your violence, Nineveh!"

and that was enough for God.

and the moment that it became clear that Nineveh was *not* going to face the result that Jonah wanted, he became in his heart the same things that *they were* before God got their attention.

He went backward. Jonah went further backward when he should have moved forward in grace.

and in the story the only ones who we know without a doubt were changed, *were* the wicked city of Nineveh, and the pagan sailors. The ones that you would have least expected...

and the story ends with the man of God bitter about grace being given to his enemies.

He went through that entire process... running from God, almost killing a boatload of sailors, almost dying himself but miraculously being swallowed whole by a fish... living in the belly of the fish for three days and three nights, getting spit up onto dry land, finally obeying God, and watching God's amazing grace fall on an incredibly broken place...

Jonah went through all of that, and walked away no different than he started. Still angry. Still hateful. Still racist.

Church we can't be like Jonah. We can't stay in the place that we currently are in right now. and we certainly can't afford to go backwards.

We do not have a high priest who is unable to empathize with our weakness. Jesus put himself in our broken world. Jesus did too much for us to turn around now, because we are divided on issues that the rest of the world are divided over. Did Jesus not say "I have overcome the world"?

The church of Jesus Christ is a body. The person on both sides of you are parts of that body. The person sitting behind you is a part of that body.

and this is how you will know that you have grown spiritually. Because we all need to grow. We can't stay where we are. This is how you will know: When you look at those people... the ones even in our church who are different from you, and you grow in your love for that person more and more each day.

That is how Jesus says the world will know that we are his disciples, by our love, one for another. (John 13:35)

But in moments like the one we went through last week, that our love for each other goes through the crucible. It goes through that refining process, and it shows us what is really in there. and on the other side of it people find themselves wondering,

"why is this so hard?"

"Why am I so angry at my brother?"

but according to the bible, it has to do with spiritual growth. Because spiritual growth is a process, it is not something that happens in an instant, like Salvation.

and 2 Peter 1:3-8 gives us that process.

"³ His divine power has granted to us all things that pertain to **life and godliness, through the knowledge of him** who called us to his own glory and excellence, ⁴ by which he has granted to us his precious and very great

promises, so that through them you may become partakers of the divine nature, having escaped from the corruption that is in the world because of sinful desire. ⁵ **For this very reason, make every effort to supplement your faith with virtue, and virtue with knowledge, ⁶ and knowledge with self-control, and self-control with steadfastness, and steadfastness with godliness, ⁷ and godliness with brotherly affection, and brotherly affection with love. ⁸ For if these qualities are yours and are increasing, they keep you from being ineffective or unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ.**

There it is. One by one by one, the building blocks of Spiritual Growth.

But notice how it all ends:

“if these qualities are yours and are increasing, they keep you from being ineffective or unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ.”

I don't know about you all, but I want to be effective. And if it feels like you are fighting and fighting and nothing seems to be catching, and it feels like everything that you are saying to another person goes right over their head, and you feel like nothing is working in any of your approaches, take a look at what Peter says. And see where you need to start building off of.

We all start in the same place. With faith in Jesus Christ, and it is common ground and it is uniting and it is exhilarating and life giving.

But until you add to your faith all of these things, you will never truly be able to know what it means to love someone. The word love at the very top, it is *agape*.

It is a love that says “I love you, no matter what, TO THE END, without condition.” and it is impossible without grace. Because only grace can say to the person who hurt them “I still love you JUST AS MUCH as before this happened and I will never NOT LOVE YOU.”

agape is without condition. And it is the “filet mignon wrapped in bacon” of Spiritual Growth.

The love that we are striving for is agape... Jesus talks about it in John 15 when he says “**Greater agape has no one than this**, that someone lay down his life for his friends.

But nobody will ever get here (love) until they first learn all of this.

Virtue is “behavior showing high moral standards.” But this has to come after faith... after understanding that your moral standard is not what saves you and yet you need to work toward it if you are ever going to grow into who you are supposed to be.

You won't have any reason to behave, until you first have faith that there is a reason to change the way you live in the first place.

and after you are there, you can add to virtue knowledge. But the more you know, the more you will need self-control won't you?

Let me explain:

Knowledge is not wisdom. Knowledge is important, but it can also be destructive if you STOP your Spiritual Growth at knowledge. Because without self control, that knowledge is going to lead to judging people. And to thinking you are above people, and to being sure you are right when, maybe *sometimes*, you aren't.

Then you add steadfastness, and godliness, and after you have all of those things, then you add brotherly affection.

and you are finally into the territory of what Christian community was designed to look like.

You have heard me say this a thousand times... but love is a choice. And if you are going to get here (love, the last thing) then you have got to be intentional to work out all of these other areas of your life so that IF the bottom drops out of this one (love) and for whatever reason you think you can fall back into your old ways... you won't be able to fall very hard... because your foundation will be all of these things that Peter talks about.

We, right now, are here (lower than the first on the spiritual growth list) as a society... I feel like globally, this week, even as a church, we are here. and we need to get here. (love)

and ONLY when we have mastered it amongst ourselves can we ever reflect it on our world!

and we need to get there, and we need to get there soon. Because the world out there is hurting just as much as many of us are... the only difference is that Christians know where to put our hope.

Church, we need to plead the cause of the people of our world to whom justice has not been done... and we need to recast the image of what it means to follow Jesus in our world for the sake of the people who have been sold the lie that the church of Jesus Christ hates them, and wants to see all of their rights taken away, and doesn't care about them.

and we need to squash the idea that what we value is keeping our, AND TAKING AWAY OTHERS, rights, and we need to determine once and for all that we will willingly lay down our rights on behalf of others if it means drawing them closer to Jesus.

But the Apostle John says it this way... Let us not merely love with words and speech, but in deed and truth.

We need to start living like we care about people, if we truly do.

and if we haven't gotten to the point in our lives where we can actually choose to love yet, then we need to figure out where along the process we got off track, and return to that.

I mean this when I say it, if anybody's rights are taken away, let it be mine.

Because I already know that I am a citizen of a different Kingdom.

and here is the truth... if you take away the things that you think that you are owed, then all you have left is what YOU have to give. and then, the only way for you to live becomes with palms out... extending a hand.

And that is where love shines the brightest.

It shined the brightest when Jesus died on the cross for our sins. What was that?

It was *agape* love. It was a love without condition. It was a love that said, no matter how screwed up these people are, I am going to do something that proves that to them, their lives are more valuable than mine.”

So in the same fashion of the one that we call Messiah... the one who we call King... may the church of Jesus Christ rise up, by laying down.