

Date of sermon: 4/3/2021
Speaker: Pastor Mark Hanke
Bible passage or verse: 2 Corinthians 5:11-15
Title of sermon: Strange Behavior
Series: What Matters Most - #3

2 Cor. 5:11-15 NIV:

¹¹ Since, then, we know what it is to fear the Lord, we try to persuade others. What we are is plain to God, and I hope it is also plain to your conscience. ¹² We are not trying to commend ourselves to you again, but are giving you an opportunity to take pride in us, so that you can answer those who take pride in what is seen rather than in what is in the heart. ¹³ If we are "out of our mind," as some say, it is for God; if we are in our right mind, it is for you. ¹⁴ For Christ's love compels us, because we are convinced that one died for all, and therefore all died. ¹⁵ And he died for all, that those who live should no longer live for themselves but for him who died for them and was raised again.

Happy Easter! Happy resurrection day! And to God be the glory. Isn't it great? I know some of us are venturing back, and some of you are online, and -- this has been a strange and a difficult year. But it's great to have those moments in our life where it's like, "Yup. This is when the church gathers all over the world, all over the world, and remembers this incredibly special day."

If you were to take a trip with me, and we were going to fly into South Africa -- we'd probably land first of all somewhere in Europe -- and we'd maybe hang out in Frankfurt for about ten hours, and then we're gonna fly down to Joburg, and we're gonna have an opportunity to go to a place by the name of Kimberley. Kimberley is a place -- if you ever get the opportunity to go there -- a lot of tourists do, and the reason is because they want to go see the Hole. It's legendary. It's like one of those things. When you're here in Oregon, you go to the Tillamook Cheese Factory. It's legendary. And if you like that squeaky cheese, like I do -- way too much -- you drive there, and an hour and a half is nothing. Well, you're going to drive a little ways to get to the Hole, and when you get there, you're gonna see this slimy little green, and you're gonna be amazed at the size of this. It is a mile in circumference all the way around. And off to the right, there, you're going to see a little hut, and in the hut it's going to tell you the story of how, because this hole used to be a hill. It was just a pile of dirt. A pile of dirt out in the middle of nowhere! And then you see all of the people, over a hundred years ago, that were digging into this hole, with this elaborate kind of pulley system where they were with buckets and shovels, just digging this dirt, and digging more dirt, and digging more dirt. And you have to ask yourself the question -- why would anyone dig a hole a mile in circumference, a couple hundred feet deep, with shovels? Backhoes, maybe. Backhoes didn't exist back then. If you go to that little hut, it'll tell you the story, that there was a day a couple of little boys were out there. They were just playing around, and they were throwing things. In fact, weirdly, they were kind of like we did when we were kids -- they'd throw things at each other, and they were throwing these pebbles at each other. And this guy that was walking by noticed a glint in one of the pebbles that was being thrown. And he walked over there, and lo and behold, these little boys -- completely unbeknownst to them -- but to this guy, those were diamonds! He didn't want to tell anybody, but let's just be honest -- when you start to find diamonds, it gets out. And it got out, and people came from everywhere -- 6,000 pounds of diamonds were dug out of that hole! That's why it's a mile in circumference. That's why it's a couple hundred feet deep. Why? Because they were compelled.

You can go up into mountain towns. One of the fun things Kerri and I would do periodically -- we would go to old mining towns in Colorado -- long-past used. Oh, the old street corners are still there. It's just like the old movies. It's really good unless your transmission blows out when you're up at one of these mountains, which happened to us. That trip wasn't memorable. But you'd go up there, and there are old houses, and -- it's like, you know, the old Gunsmoke movies. You can drive to these. What built these, and what abandoned them? Gold. Silver. People would leave their homes in New York and everywhere in the east -- why? "Because if we can get to the west, we're gonna be rich!" And sometimes they would do the

most absurd things -- they would abandon it all, and they would get down into the ground and dig a 200-300 feet deep hole. A mile in circumference. Because they discovered there's diamonds in that hole.

Sometimes people can be compelled by the strangest things. That's what Paul is talking about in his text. In fact, he says, "If people think we're weird -- kind of 'out of our mind' -- would you be sure and tell them why? We're not after gold. We aren't hunting diamonds." Oh, there is something that motivates this. I don't know about you, but what would it be where people would say, "That guy's out of his mind"? I mean, if you take the Four Spiritual Laws and put it in somebody's lunch pail, I don't think you're going to be out of your mind. Rude, maybe. "Keep your hands off my lunch pail!" You know, if you get in your car and you turn your radio, your husband's radio, because you want him to listen to Christian music, and you turn it, and every time you get in you turn it to Christian music, he'll probably be annoyed at you -- "Hey, quit messin' with my music!" But out of your mind? No. That's going a little further than that. What would it look like to be out of your mind? It's to leave a great paying job. It's to abandon your life's education and lineage -- to walk away from all of it and to call it, or consider it, he says, "rubbish." And to travel around the world, to be shipwrecked, snake-bitten, beaten beyond imagination, left in the ditch for dead -- and he gets up, like an Energizer bunny -- he says, "Can I tell you about what compels me?"

You see, when you understand the love of Christ, it'll make you do the strangest things. What is it? Well, he says, "I am compelled by Christ's love." Verse 14 simply says that. "For Christ's love compels us." What does that mean? It's an interesting word. It means to be hemmed in, to be boxed in -- to virtually have no other options. "I have no options -- I have nothing else I can do. I'm hemmed in. I'm blocked in," he says. By what? This strange, strange love of God. Paul, like you -- he knows a mother's love. Paul probably had a good mom. We don't know anything about her, but I would imagine she was a good mom. And he knows what it's like to be loved by a mom. You know what it's like to be loved by a mom. And you who are moms, you know what it's like to have your own children and just to cherish them, and you know what it's like to have family members that you would drive across the state just to have lunch with them. You know what it's like to love people.

But Paul encountered a different kind of love. It was strange. He said, "It was a love that came after me when I ran away from him. "While I was still a sinner," Paul writes in Romans chapter 5 -- "When I was a sinner --" In other words, "When I was running away from God, when I had no interest in God at all -- and in fact, the only thing I wanted to do was persecute people who said they were worshiping God! When I was that guy, Christ died for me." It's a strange love. It's not a love that says, "I'll love you when." It's not a love that says, "I will love you if." It's a love that says, "No matter how you act, no matter what you're going to do, no matter how reprehensible your behavior is, I love you. I died for you." It's a strange love. It's a love that Paul couldn't get over. It's a love that he couldn't figure out what to do except for to yield to it. He could never recover from this love of Christ that, when he was on his worst day, God says, "I died for you on that day." He says, "I'm hemmed in by that love. I'm compelled by it. I've moved by it. It stirs within me. Not only that, but I'm compelled by something that I'm convinced of." He goes on in this text -- "For Christ's love compels us because I am convinced." It's a conviction, in other words. It's something that moves deeply in Paul. It's not something that's up for grabs. It's not something that some days I believe it and other days I don't. No, I'm convinced of it. I absolutely am convinced -- as convinced as you are sitting on a chair right now, Paul was convinced of something. And when he's that convinced -- and when you're that convinced -- he says it hems you in. It gives you no other options. Well, what is it? He says, "I'm convinced that one died for all, and therefore, all died. I'm convinced that Jesus Christ died for me." He says, "I'm convinced that it's not just a story, it's not an event. I've heard about those things -- I've heard about all kinds of events. I've heard about famous people doing things! But I'm convinced that Christ died for all, and in that moment, all of us who believe died."

He writes about it in Galatians 2:20. In fact, he makes that very statement from here. He says, in Galatians 2:20, "I have been crucified with Christ. It is no longer I who lives, but Christ who lives in me. The life I now live in the flesh I live by faith." What Paul is saying -- and it's fairly radical -- "It will alter your life if you believe this. I believe Christ died, and because of Christ's death, I believe I died. I believe that Christ rose

from the dead, and, because I believe that Christ rose from the dead on my behalf, I rose from the dead." He was convinced that what happened to Christ happened to him. Paul was convinced that what happened in the body of Christ was like it happened to him. "I died." It makes sense why the early church practiced a baptism by immersion, because they wanted the world to know that when I'm going down into the water, it's like saying, "When Christ died, I died on that day." Christ died, Paul died. Christ rose from the grave, Paul rose from the grave. You see, he was convinced of that. The implications of that are rather stark and significant. When the Scripture says, "I have died to sin," it means just that -- you're no longer a slave to sin. You're no longer mastered by sin. You're free. You're free to walk away from it. You're no longer even defined by it. You're no longer defined as a sinner. That's not an appropriate definition of you who believe in Christ. You died. And you were given a new life in Christ. He's convinced of that. He's so convinced he says that "it hems me in," "it boxes me in." "I have no other option at all. Because of that," he says, "I was bought with a price." And because he was bought with a price, he says, "I don't belong to myself anymore. I no longer have jurisdiction over my life. I died. And I'm alive in Christ. I'm hemmed in," he says. "I don't have any options."

The man you see, Paul would say, is a man who's been purchased by Christ. "And therefore, my life is in Him. My life comes from Him. I'm hemmed in." And he's compelled by the transformation that occurs. There are two of them in this text. And they go together, but there are two distinct ones. He says, first of all, in verse 16, "So from now on, we will regard no one from a worldly point of view. Though we once regarded Christ in this way, we do so no longer." That passage has always struck me. What does it mean to view people from a worldly perspective? What would it look like if we were to just put a list -- what are all the ways the world judges people? Well, we judge people by race. We judge people by vocation. We judge people by lineage, where they come from. What country -- what their passport says. We judge people by their wealth. We judge people by their looks. They tell you that big-nosed individuals like myself have it harder in this world. Amen! I've never seen that, actually. Ugly people, yes -- but who's gonna say, "Well, I can attest to that!" But we do. We do it all the time. They let pretty people on TV. Let's be honest. You know, it's a world that judges by external things. And Paul says the transformation that has occurred -- "Number one -- is, it changes the way I see people. You see, when I died with Christ, and He gave me new life, I see people differently. So, from now on, I regard no one from a worldly point of view."

So, how do you see people? Number one, God says, you see people made in the image of God. They're all image-bearers. Doesn't matter what color their skin, doesn't matter where they come from, doesn't matter how much money they make. It does not matter where they went to school, and God is not overly interested in IQ. He says, when you see people, do you see them through the lens of Christ? Do you see them as a person that matters to God, and matters to you? Do you treat people with a varying degree of attention based upon what they will do for you, or do you treat them as Christ did? "Let the children come to me -- it's okay, don't hold them up. I know, disciples, children mean nothing to you." In the culture that Christ lived in, they didn't. They were to be seen and not heard, and hopefully not even seen. But on that day, Jesus says, "No no no, bring them in." And then He went through Samaria. Not supposed to go through Samaria! The disciples tried to say, "Uh uh, go around," but Jesus said, "Let's go through Samaria." And he stopped and had a conversation with a woman. A Samaritan woman! See, Jesus forever broke codes. I sure hope I have the courage to live that way.

Why? Because He didn't see people the way the world did. They saw people -- "You're a Jew!" "You're a Samaritan!" "We're not supposed to talk." But when God transforms you, Paul says you're compelled to see people differently. You're hemmed in. You don't have any options. Ah, but not just that -- you're taken, not just by the transformation of how you see people, but you're taken by the transformation of how you see yourself. He goes on, and he goes, "Of course I see people differently, but ah, because of Christ's love, I am compelled to see me differently." What does he say? He says, "If anyone is in Christ, he's a new creation. The old is passed; behold, all things have become new."

Well, I don't know about you, but when I became a believer, I didn't get new hips. When I became a believer, I still had a jammed thumb that doesn't straighten out. It just goes here. This one's a nice "L" -- it's

really good. This one is like -- won't go! When I became a believer, this didn't get new! All the scars I had on this carcass, prior to Christ, are still there! So, what's all this nonsense he talks about there in verse 17? "If anyone is in Christ, he's a new creation. The old has passed. It's gone. The new has come." What passed away in you? Your dead heart. Your dead spirit. A soul that was bound towards Hell. And when Christ came into you -- that's what Paul's saying in Galatians -- "the life I now live in the flesh I live by faith. I was crucified." So as a believer here, you should no longer call yourself and identify yourself as a sinner. Uh uh! Wrong! Do you sin? Yes! Is your identity a sinner? No, your identity is not a sinner. Look at the Corinth church. He calls them saints. Why? Because they have a new heart. Because the spirit of God indwells them. No wonder why Paul says, "I'm compelled. I'm hemmed in. I have no options." No options to do what? To be an ambassador. I'm compelled by a life-altering commitment.

You see friends, Christ really did die. It's not just a story. It's not something that we celebrate once a year called "Resurrection Weekend." It happened. And Paul's thinking was this -- "He died, I died. He rose from the dead, I rose from the dead. He's given me new life, I have a new life. And because I have a new life, I am compelled." To do what? Persuade people. I am compelled to change the identity of the origin from where I'm from. I have a passport. It lies. If you look at my passport, it says, "Issued by the United States of America." That's a true statement. It lies in the sense that that's no longer home. Not when I'm a follower of Christ. It's impossible, because Paul says -- what -- "All this is from God, who has reconciled us" - - verse 18 -- "to himself through Christ, and has given us the ministry of reconciliation, that God was reconciling the world to himself through Christ, and he's committed to us this message of reconciliation." The result? We're Christ ambassadors.

What's an ambassador? Well, you know. An ambassador is one of those individuals who lives in another country, not the country of origin. They live in another country. And they have primarily one responsibility. You know what that is, right? To represent the affairs of the country of their origin. Doesn't matter where they live. They can live in Greece, they can live in Germany, they can live in Australia. If they're an ambassador from the United States, they have one -- absolutely one -- assignment, and that is, to represent the -- what? The affairs of the United States. They're not there on a personal agenda. They're not there to buy personal property. They're not there to do their own personal deeds. They have one assignment -- to represent their home country. My friend, as a believer here, Easter has changed your life, if you believe in the resurrection. How has it changed you? It's changed your point of origin, your home. And it's given you a new assignment, because Paul says, "I'm hemmed in. I'm compelled. I'm arrested," if you will. "I have no options." But to do what? It is this glorious opportunity for ambassadors who unashamedly represent their home country in alien territory.

My friends, the implications are significant. This is not your home. You may live here, but this isn't home. You're not here to dig deep roots into this location and make this home, and to retire here, and to be buried here. That's not your goal anymore. It's not your goal to live out this life in comfort and glory. That's not your assignment! Paul says, "I am compelled, I'm moved. I have no options but to declare a message." What is this message? The day is coming when the King will appear in great glory, and when the King appears, human history is going to come to a divinely ordained end. I am compelled, by the kindness and the grace of God that transformed me. When Christ died some 2000 years ago, it was as if I died. And when He rose from the dead, it was like I rose from the dead. And He has given me a new assignment, and He's given you a new assignment. He has said to you and me, "You have no options." How do I know this? He says He died, and those who would live should no longer live for themselves, but for Him who died. That's resurrection power. It'll alter your life -- it will. For those of you who have never trusted Christ, Christ's love is compelling you. It's drawing you in. It's asking you a question -- do you believe in the resurrection of Jesus Christ? Do you believe life is found in Christ? And if so, He says, "Would you receive my forgiveness? Would you allow me," Jesus says, "to die for you?" Oh, yes. But think carefully. Because Paul says that if you believe that, if you're convinced that one died for all and therefore all died -- if that's my life -- then I no longer own me. I'm no longer the master of my ship, I am no longer the one who determines where I live, I'm no longer the one who determines what I do with my life. That's up to you, Christ, who has given me life. Because He's compelled me. He has moved me, He

directs me, and He ordains me. When you understand the love of God, it will motivate you in many ways. Most directly, it will compel you.

It will compel you the way it did Billy Moore. Billy was going to be electrocuted. I know the State of Georgia is well-known these days for these voting laws. Years ago, 1990, was the year; August 21st was the day. It was going to be the day that Billy was going to be electrocuted. He wasn't fighting it. In fact, he says he deserved it. He was on death row for heinous crimes that he committed. But strangely on this day -- strangely -- this model citizen who did not fight his death sentence; in fact, freely told people he deserved it -- on that day, the parole office held an emergency meeting and asked for a stay of his execution. And they canceled it that afternoon. They went a little further. They did something they'd never done in the State of Georgia, ever -- they removed his record. They cleared it. Not only did they stop the execution, but this death sentence inmate, Billy Moore -- they freed him, and they walked him out of prison, of all things.

Years down the road, he was being interviewed by a gentleman by the name of Lee Strobel. Lee was interviewing him -- he asked him, he said, "Billy, what changed you? Was it the rehabilitation? I mean, you were a model citizen. What changed you? Was it the classes? Did you have a phenomenal counselor?" And he goes, "No, I had counselors, but --" He goes, "None of that changed me. There was one person who changed me -- His name is Jesus Christ. And He changed me so dramatically that the only thing I care about in this world is telling people about the power of Christ, the One who died and rose again for me." You can find Billy today. He's in church every weekend. Most pastors are. That's where he lives. He serves. He has no option. He's hemmed in, because he's compelled by the love of Christ.

My friends -- there are two compulsions that come to us in this text. The first one is -- there was a day where Paul, where Billy, was dead in their sins. And Christ's love drew them to the cross. Some of you are here tonight, and you're feeling that. You're feeling -- it's inside, it's unexplainable. But you're here -- oh, maybe because a friend invited you, but you're here -- well, maybe you haven't been to church in a year. Or maybe you just felt like, "I want to go. I don't know why, but I wanna go." I want to tell you why you wanted to come -- it's because Christ's love is drawing you. Just like it did Paul. Just like it did Billy. Just like it did me. How do you respond to that kind of compulsion towards Christ? Trust Him. You acknowledge Christ's love is pulling me in. I am convinced that Christ died for me, and He died for me personally, and because of Him I will live. Oh, but do know -- when you trust Him, there will be another compulsion that comes in your heart, and it's the rest of us here tonight. And it's this -- He's convinced you that this resurrection actually happened, and because of that, you no longer own yourself. You're now called an ambassador. And ambassadors represent another country, and they represent another king. And because of the resurrection, all of us in this room have a new assignment. And that is, to reconcile this broken, divisive, busted world that we watch on the news every day, and we get disgusted with. And we wonder, what's the end? And we wonder, will we ever get our country back? And the Father says, "That's the wrong question. You have an assignment." You're hemmed in. You're boxed. And here's what it is -- you get the privilege of telling people the day is coming when the King will appear in great glory, and when King Jesus appears, human history will come to its divinely ordained end.

I don't care what political party you're in. You matter to God. I don't care what your background is. You matter to God. I don't care how you voted. You matter to God. That's your assignment. And this world, as tragically divisive and polarized as it is, is just the perfect place for an ambassador to represent the King.

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