

There are six things which Yahweh hates; yes, seven which are an abomination to him: 17 arrogant eyes, a lying tongue, hands that shed innocent blood; 18 a heart that devises wicked schemes, feet that are swift in running to mischief, 19 a false witness who utters lies, and he who sows discord among brothers.

Just before Christmas—I love the way that sounds, by the way—I mean two weeks ago, I talked about God's Hit List from Proverbs six—seven things that God hates. As I mentioned then, “hate” is a pretty strong word and we probably should take notice when God hates something.

So here is the “hit list” from two Sundays ago:

1. Pride-fulness—especially haughtiness when it applies to another person. Looking down on someone else. Elevating self while standing on others—seeking them as lesser than.
2. A lying tongue—especially when the lies hurt another person or the kingdom of God.
3. Hands that shed innocent blood. If you remember, I talked about this being more than just murder. It can be assassination of the spirit or the character of another person. I've seen this in churches all my life and I saw it in my own denomination when I was in seminary. Things were said and done that hurt people and broke their spirits. God hates that. Jesus told us that the commandments are more than just actions, but also what is in the heart.
4. A heart that schemes wicked schemes—not just falling into bad things. Not just making wrong choices, but dreaming and scheming of something. Planning it and making it happen. This is premeditation. Could be murder. Could be character assassination like I mentioned a while ago.
5. Feet that run toward mischief—allowing ourselves to dabble in and be involved with unholy things. With bad things. With things that don't build up or create or make things better. God hates for us to allow ourselves to be moths drawn to the flame of mischief.
6. God hates a false witness who utters lies. This is similar to the second one but I think it has a component of hurting others and doing that on purpose. This could be in court or it could be in the court of life. I think this also can have to do with gossiping. Gossip is sometimes true—but we often don't know that for sure when we are busy sharing those juicy morsels. When it is spread with the idea of hurting, I don't think it matters if it is true or not—but I guess I am putting words in God's mouth—so we will just say that God hates it when we hurt others with lies.
7. God hates the one who sows discord among his people. Not “in the world” but among God's people. Boy I have seen this one, haven't you? Sometimes it seems to happen over and over and over. Sometimes it is the same people doing it again and again.

But we often just say, “well, that's how he is...” and let it go. Reality is that this is one thing God makes clear and Jesus reinforces over and over. We are to get along and treat each other with respect—even when we disagree.

Notice the wording of the one about sowing discord--and of some of the others. Maybe it is intentional or not but this scripture isn't talking about God "hating the sin and loving the sinner" except for the first one, it specifically says that God hates the person who does these things—or that he hates the body-part that does them anyway.

THAT is pretty strong stuff. Of course, there is an Old Testament feel to that that we probably need to mitigate a little bit. Given that Jesus was God incarnate—God himself and since Jesus showed us God in relationship, I think we can say that God loves those who lie and those who sow discord and those who hurt people and people who are prideful.

Still, we are walking on proverbial thin spiritual ice if we are doing those seven things.

When I was almost to the end of that sermon, I think I said out loud that I didn't realize how negative and how strong it was going to come out.

So, using these seven things and using the life and work of Jesus—Emmanuel—God incarnate—God on earth, (as well as some other writings) I wanted to look at the opposites, which I believe to be seven things that God loves.

There are several passages not mentioned in the bulletin, so if you want to look them up later, be sure to write them

1. God loves a humble heart. Humble actions. A humble outlook.

Matthew 2:25-28 *But Jesus summoned them, and said, "You know that the rulers of the nations lord it over them, and their great ones exercise authority over them. 26 It shall not be so among you, but whoever desires to become great among you shall be** your servant. 27 Whoever desires to be first among you shall be your bond servant, 28 even as the Son of Man came not to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many."*

Phil 2:1ff: 1 If therefore there is any exhortation in Christ, if any consolation of love, if any fellowship of the Spirit, if any tender mercies and compassion, 2 make my joy full, by being like-minded, having the same love, being of one accord, of one mind; 3 doing nothing through rivalry or through conceit, but in humility, each counting others better than himself; 4 each of you not just looking to his own things, but each of you also to the things of others. 5 Have this in your mind, which was also in Christ Jesus, 6 who, existing in the form of God, didn't consider equality with God a thing to be grasped, 7 but emptied himself, taking the form of a servant, being made in the likeness of men. 8 And being found in human form, he humbled himself, becoming obedient to death, yes, the death of the cross.

How much more humble could a person be that to have it all, to be it all, to be the Lord of all and give that up in order to make an eternal difference for you and for me? We often try to exercise authority that we don't have and here Jesus stepped away from that and became a humble lamb.

Humility. God loves a humble heart. Scripture says he resists the proud and gives grace to the humble. Good enough for me. Now I just have to keep practicing.

2. God loves a truthful tongue. One that does not lie and one that tells the physical and spiritual truth—but I don't think he intends for us to hurt others either.

John 8:44ff You are of your father, the devil, and you want to do the desires of your father. He was a murderer from the beginning, and doesn't stand in the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he speaks a lie, he speaks on his own; for he is a liar, and the father of lies. 45 But because I tell the truth, you don't believe me. 46 Which of you convicts me of sin? If I tell the truth, why do you not believe me? 47 He who is of God hears the words of God. For this cause you don't hear, because you are not of God."

Eph 4:11ff He gave some to be apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, shepherds and teachers; 12 for the perfecting of the saints, to the work of serving, to the building up of the body of Christ; 13 until we all attain to the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to a full grown man, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ; 14 that we may no longer be children, tossed back and forth and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the trickery of men, in craftiness, after the wiles of error; 15 but speaking truth in love, we may grow up in all things into him, who is the head, Christ; 16 from whom all the body, being fitted and knit together through that which every joint supplies, according to the working in measure of each individual part, makes the body increase to the building up of itself in love.*

We also to speak in love always—especially when we speak the truth. This is certainly true in the spiritual sense. This is the “love the sinner” idea. I may say things from the pulpit that go to the heart and things that correct—but it is right and proper to do so—so long as they are from God's word and they are said in love. I trust you know that is always the case.

Guys, have you ever been asked that deadly question, “do these jeans make me look fat?” Ladies, have you ever been asked something like, “how do you like my new mustache?” Those questions don't require a lie—but they do require that we tactfully speak the truth in love.

God loves it when we are truthful—but also tactful and full of the spirit of love as we do so.

3. Hands helping the guilty. From the moment Jesus agreed to come here and be our savior, he was helping the guilty, and he continued to do so throughout his ministry with the healing and the care he gave those who came to him.

Matt 14:14ff Jesus went out, and he saw a great multitude. He had compassion on them, and healed their sick. 15 When evening had come, his disciples came to him, saying, “This place is deserted, and the hour is already late. Send the multitudes away, that they may go into the villages, and buy themselves food.” 16 But Jesus said to them, “They don't need to go away. You give them something to eat.” 17 They told him, “We only have here five loaves and two fish.” 18 He said, “Bring them here to me.” 19 He commanded the multitudes to sit down on the grass; and he took the five loaves and the two fish, and looking up to heaven, he blessed, broke and gave the loaves to the disciples, and the disciples gave to the multitudes. 20 They all ate, and were filled.

These were the unwashed masses—these were the lost. These were sinners. They were guilty—and would soon be guilty of his death, in the same sense you and I are. He fed them.

Luke 23:34 *Jesus said, "Father, forgive them, for they don't know what they are doing."*

Not only did Jesus seek out and pray for those of us who were and are sinners—he also prayed for those who were literally guilty of his death.

In Romans we are told that “while we were yet sinners...” Christ died for us.

Again—here we are seeking to follow his example. It is a hard one to follow. We want to shoot down those who messed up and especially if they hurt us in the process. If they are guilty we want to write them off, but God loves it when we hold up the guilty and not just the innocent.

4. God loves a caring heart—especially one with righteous intent and purpose.

Luke 4:16ff *He came to Nazareth, where he had been brought up. He entered, as was his custom, into the synagogue on the Sabbath day, and stood up to read. 17 The book of the prophet Isaiah was handed to him. He opened the book, and found the place where it was written, 18 "The Spirit of the Lord is on me, because he has anointed me to preach good news to the poor. He has sent me to heal the broken hearted,* to proclaim release to the captives, recovering of sight to the blind, to deliver those who are crushed, 19 and to proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord." 20 He closed the book, gave it back to the attendant, and sat down. The eyes of all in the synagogue were fastened on him. 21 He began to tell them, "Today, this Scripture has been fulfilled in your hearing."*

Jesus came with a caring heart—but one which also had spiritual intent—with righteousness and salvation as its purpose. Jesus cared but he cared with a purpose and an intended end.

You and I can never attain what he attained in this area, but we CAN hold up others—the broken and the hurting among us with the intent of helping them mentally and spiritually as well as physically.

5. God loves feet that run swiftly toward edification and building up.

In Matthew 8 we see Jesus' response to the centurion and the healing that takes place. And in Mark 10 we see how Jesus responded to children by literally holding them and building them up—something that was not normal for his time and place:

13 They were bringing to him little children, that he should touch them, but the disciples rebuked those who were bringing them. 14 But when Jesus saw it, he was moved with indignation, and said to them, "Allow the little children to come to me! Don't forbid them, for God's Kingdom belongs to such as these. 15 Most certainly I tell you, whoever will not receive God's Kingdom like a little child, he will in no way enter into it." 16 He took them in his arms, and blessed them, laying his hands on them.

In Luke 19:41ff *When he came near, he saw the city and wept over it, 42 saying, "If you, even you, had known today the things which belong to your peace! But now, they are hidden from your eyes. 43 For the days will come on you, when your enemies will throw up a barricade against you, surround you, hem you in on every side, 44 and will dash you and your children within you to the ground. They will not leave in you one stone on another, because you didn't*

know the time of your visitation.” 45 He entered into the temple, and began to drive out those who bought and sold in it, 46 saying to them, “It is written, ‘My house is a house of prayer,’ ☆ but you have made it a ‘den of robbers!’” ☆ 47 He was teaching daily in the temple, but the chief priests and the scribes and the leading men among the people sought to destroy him. 48 They couldn’t find what they might do, for all the people hung on to every word that he said.

Here we have a firm and yet loving Savior who we lamenting over those who were ignorant and lost—and yet VERY firm with those who chose to go against God.

6. God loves a TRUE witness. Jesus came to bear witness to the truth—the truth is that God loves us and has always loved us. The truth is that Jesus was born, lived, and died so that you and I might have eternal life. The truth is that Jesus is the one way to God. Jesus came to bear TRUE witness to those things.

John 8:25ff They said therefore to him, “Who are you?” Jesus said to them, “Just what I have been saying to you from the beginning. 26 I have many things to speak and to judge concerning you. However he who sent me is true; and the things which I heard from him, these I say to the world.” 27 They didn’t understand that he spoke to them about the Father. 28 Jesus therefore said to them, “When you have lifted up the Son of Man, then you will know that I am he, and I do nothing of myself, but as my Father taught me, I say these things. 29 He who sent me is with me. The Father hasn’t left me alone, for I always do the things that are pleasing to him.” 30 As he spoke these things, many believed in him. 31 Jesus therefore said to those Jews who had believed him, “If you remain in my word, then you are truly my disciples. 32 You will know the truth, and the truth will make you free.” ☆

7. God loves the sowing of peace and unity.

Romans 12:14ff Bless those who persecute you; bless, and don’t curse. 15 Rejoice with those who rejoice. Weep with those who weep. 16 Be of the same mind one toward another. Don’t set your mind on high things, but associate with the humble. Don’t be wise in your own conceits. 17 Repay no one evil for evil. Respect what is honorable in the sight of all men. 18 If it is possible, as much as it is up to you, be at peace with all men. 19 Don’t seek revenge yourselves, beloved, but give place to God’s wrath. For it is written, “Vengeance belongs to me; I will repay, says the Lord.” ☆ 20 Therefore “If your enemy is hungry, feed him. If he is thirsty, give him a drink; for in doing so, you will heap coals of fire on his head.” ☆ 21 Don’t be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good.

“...as much as it is up to you, be at peace with all men.” You know, I don't think there is any further commentary needed on that one, do you? God loves those who sow peace and unity and who build up the church of God—the Kingdom of God manifest in the world.

God loves a humble heart. God loves a truthful tongue. Hands helping the guilty. God loves a caring heart. God loves feet that run swiftly toward edification and building up. God loves a TRUE witness. God loves a TRUE witness. God loves the sowing of peace and unity.