



Jude 1:17-25
 Five Guys
 “Bob the Builder”

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Last Sunday we took a look at the first 16 verses of the book of Jude. A good chunk of those verses go back and forth between historical events mostly recorded for us in the Old Testament, and present-day problems in the church to whom Jude is writing (2,000 years ago for us, of course). The historical references are illustrating the kinds of problems they’re facing in the church to whom he writes, and the consequences that come from allowing these kinds of problems to fester and grow in the church. And the impact is divisive because, according to what he writes, the people causing the problems are slanderers, selfish, grumblers, and fault-finders. It’s really uplifting to read! 😊

So, **Jude writes in verse 3 that he felt “compelled to write and urge you to contend for the faith...”** This is his purpose for writing. There’s a spiritual battle they’ve got on their hands with these folks who have come into their fellowship but are derailing the church with their attitudes, and he wants the others in the church to “contend for the faith” as he puts it.

And in today’s passage, we see him reiterate this purpose for his writing: to encourage them to contend for their faith (he doesn’t use that exact phrase, but nonetheless he’s returning to the purpose for the letter). For sure, we all face stuff in our lives that seeks to derail us and our faith – in our individual lives dividing us from Jesus, in our families, and in our church. Sometimes, it’s a back and forth volley between who God is calling us to be now, and who we once were. So, as we continue in Jude and in our series called “Five Guys” on the 5 shortest books in the New Testament, I want to address this question: **How do we prevent ungodly things from taking root and dividing us?** This is a key question Jude addresses. “Church” is the context, but it could be in our families or even our own personal walk with Jesus. So, we’re in Jude 1:17-25 today. It’s all God’s Word to us today, but we’ll take the passage in a few different sections today, starting with verses 17-19...

So, you get the sense of transition from the back and forth stuff of the previous verses with the very first word, “But....” And: **The first thing he**

does is remind them that this kind of challenge they're facing was foretold by others. Verse 18 is a quote of a verse in 2 Peter, a book we will look at in its own series starting in April. In fact, Jude and 2 Peter have similarities in their linguistics, themes and OT references; and we'll explore that more when we look at 2 Peter starting in 6 weeks.

But the point is: divisions in the church should come as no surprise because it was foretold. And as we talked about last week, challenges like this are nothing new, even without them being foretold: Selfish desires, and pride, and so forth, are human problems that God's people have wrestled with in every generation, going well back into the Old Testament.

Then he writes in verse 19, "these are the people who divide you, who follow mere natural instinct and do not have the Spirit" (Jude 1:19). **They're giving in to what comes naturally to them, rather than living into God's plan and vision for their lives.** Sometimes, God's truth, and God's ways for us, goes against our natural instincts; that's what's happening here. This gets back to the root of the divisions they're experiencing, that the ones causing division don't acknowledge Jesus as Lord. He says that back in verse 4. This is the fundamental problem, that people who are influencing this church don't follow Jesus; he's not Lord. And instead, they follow their natural instincts. Let's continue reading, picking up in verses 20-21.

So, the solution, the way to combat these problems is found here in these verses. And to help you remember the key verb, and the main goal expressed here, I have a little video to share with you... (["Bob The Builder" Intro. Video](#))

Bob the Builder is a great visual and musical representation (not saying it's great music, btw!) **of what we are to do: and that is to build one another up, as Jude writes in verse 20.** The tools and materials we use are not physical construction items, of course; but spiritual ones that Jude lists here: our faith, prayer, the Holy Spirit, the love of God. And all of it eventually leads to eternal life, which is a gift of the mercy of Jesus. We'll come back to this "building" theme, but I want to take a moment to look at "mercy."

This word “mercy” is a good reminder that even though it’s easy and tempting to point fingers at people who cause divisions – whether that’s in a church or in our places of work, or our schools, or in our homes or neighborhoods – no matter how much we feel like someone *else* is the problem (and it’s always someone else’s fault, right?): the fact is, we are ALL in need of Jesus’ mercy. We “all have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God” and “the wages of sin is death,” as Paul puts it in Romans. The Good News is that: **In Jesus’ mercy, because of the cross of Christ, there’s a way *through* death to eternal life on the other side.** None of us can achieve that on our own; all people need His mercy.

So, the playing field is level among us, no one can boast, and we are therefore drawn together in Christian community because of Jesus and his mercy, where we build one another up. We all have room to grow closer to Jesus. So, we stay centered on him and his mercy, and find our unity and common ground in him and the cross of Christ as we seek to build one another up in the faith. In the next couple verses (22-23) we see this explained even more...

So now, we see that not only are we *recipients* of mercy, but we are also *dispensers* of mercy to those who have doubt. **Twice in verse 22 he tells them to be merciful.** The doubt mentioned here is certainly referring to doubt about Jesus: We are to have mercy toward people who have doubts and uncertainties about Jesus. If we’re honest, we all have questions – even those of us who have followed Jesus for decades. But some have more serious doubts even, and we are not to judge them, not to cast them out, not to consider them evil; rather, we are to have mercy on those who have doubts. We are to help save them from the “fire” as he puts it, while making sure we don’t get ourselves caught in the trappings of the world or other theologies and spiritualities that have ensnared them.

This is a needed word in today’s world where, unfortunately, many Christians demonize people who think/act/believe differently than they do. It’s like we expect Christian values, attitudes and behavior from people who don’t have Jesus as Lord. If Jesus isn’t Lord, of course they’re going to

have different values, attitudes, and behavior. We should expect it, and have mercy toward them so that they might come to know Jesus.

But so frequently, we Christians, particularly those of us of a more evangelical stripe, have shown a lack of mercy and an inability to see other people as humans also created in the image of God. And so, we've built walls out of judgment, rather than building people up in Jesus. **Walls only keep us from building people up in Jesus, whether that's our Jesus-loving neighbor in the pew or our secular neighbor across the street.**

So, let's be sure to extend mercy to those around us who think differently. The only way to "snatch them from the fire" as he puts it here, is through this avenue of mercy, and sharing the love of God, by the power of the Holy Spirit, rather than living in judgement and condemnation. **Let's finish out the passage... (verse 24-25).**

So: As Jude ends his letter, he brings it back to the one who gives us all that we need to contend for the faith together: Jesus Christ. He started his letter there, and now he ends it there. We're reminded of our need for Jesus because he's the one who can "keep you from stumbling and to present you before his glorious presence without fault and with great joy..." Why would we have any pride about ourselves and judgment toward others, when Jesus is the one who does this for us? It's not our efforts...it's his. He makes it possible through the cross and the empty tomb. So, all that we are, all that we do...all of our "contending for the faith" that Jude encourages in this letter...all the building up that we do: it's all because of, and for, the "glory, majesty, power and authority, now and forever more" of Jesus. Jesus is what our faith is all about, and when we stay centered on him as Lord of our lives, we can build one another up in him. So, that's the end of Jude, but the sermon is not done. 😊

The last few minutes are particularly addressed to those of us here who call Rose Hill "home." I planned this passage for today last August when I laid out all the sermon series for the year, but it's a timely word for us as we continue together in our single service on Sunday mornings. And so, I want to close out the message by applying these verses to our life together as a

church. **Since merging services together last July, I have received very few “grumblings”** (to use Jude’s word) **about the service.** 95% of what I’ve heard has been positive; and not because every element of the worship service each week is exactly the way each person would have it if the service catered to their preferences. But there’s been a focus on the bigger picture of what God is doing among us, such as the sense of unity on Sundays, and the opportunity to experience a different style of worship. I have literally had people tell me they are grateful for being stretched and experiencing something new in worship. And we all love watching and hearing all the kids every Sunday literally running off to classes when they’re dismissed.

And as you may recall, last Sunday I made a comment in the sermon that we are a healthy church without divisions. The worship service was one of the things on my mind as I said that, because worship styles can be one of the most divisive things in a church. And then on Tuesday I heard about some things that could lead to divisions – and they revolved around our worship service. So, I’ve learned my lesson, and I’ll *never* say we’re a healthy church without divisions again! ☺ Murphy’s Law, right?

Now, actually, I wouldn’t say there are “divisions” in our church, based on what I’ve heard. Truly, I believe that. I would say that we have *differences of opinion*, and *different personal preferences* – “natural instincts,” perhaps, to use Jude’s phrase. **It just goes to show we’re a normal church with normal people who have room to grow in being Christ-like.** This includes me, for sure. But, there were some concerns and opinions about worship, from both sides – people who prefer traditional worship and people who prefer contemporary worship. So, there are two very important things that I want to make sure we all hear. Please listen carefully: First, *everyone’s* got something to grumble about; Second, that means we’re doing a blended service *perfectly*. ☺

The place for deeper discipleship, and the opportunity to build one another up in Jesus is to see this as an opportunity to lean into Jesus and be a part of something bigger than each of our own desires, and realize that a bunch of people around you appreciate the very thing that you find least meaningful in a worship service. What a gift! What an awesome experience! Allow *that* to

bring you some joy. The thing that someone else appreciates that you might not could be: the band, or the organ, or the clothes that the pastor wears 😊.

So, let's remember each other's humanity and appreciate the differences between us, rather than grumbling about them, because the enemy is not the worship style or the person with you in the pews. It's like Bob the Builder: his team is comprised of himself and Wendy and, a dog, a cat, a bird, and a whole lot more – some of whom are natural enemies. It's like getting Cougars, Huskies, and Ducks all on the same team! And yet they come together to build stuff. **Much the same: We have our differences and our personal preferences: but we're on the same team, contending together, building one another up as disciples of Jesus.**

I read something in a devotional this week, that makes this point: “And the cross redefines our relationships as well. Through his death, Jesus has brought together separate, even hostile, people and bound us together into a new family called the Church. He shows that what ultimately unites the Church is not genetics, culture, nationality, politics, a family name, ancestry, or even a particular worship style, theology, or approach to mission. What gives birth to the Church and unites us is the cross...The Christian community comes into being without regard to differences. Personal likes and dislikes have nothing to do with the body of Christ.”

Look, if the music on Sundays catered to my “personal likes” there *might* be about 10 of you here, and my *own wife* would not be one of them. I want raging guitars and thundering drums and bass that I can feel in the chest. Fortunately for you, I set my preferences aside. And we're not here because of me or the music, whether it's my preferences or anyone else's: **We're here because of Jesus, committed to showing mercy and building one another up in the faith, as well as others God brings into our lives.** This is, in essence, the answer Jude gives to how we prevent ungodly things from dividing us, which was the question I posed near the start of the sermon.

The good news is that unlike the church to whom Jude wrote where there seems to have been a pretty long list of problems all rooted in not agreeing that Jesus is Lord: we who call Rose Hill “home” and have put our trust in

Jesus *all agree that Jesus is Lord*. That's not an issue. We've got that foundation. For those of you who are still trying to decide on Jesus, you are more than welcome to be here and participate, ask questions, and discover the truth of Jesus at your own pace; there is mercy here for those who doubt. **But for those of us who call Rose Hill home, and are committed to Jesus here, we're in this together because we agree that Jesus is Lord.** Our foundation is good. Let's make sure we continue to grow deep roots in Jesus, showing mercy where it's needed just as Jesus has shown us mercy, and let's *build one another up* – like Bob the Builder, working *together* to get the job done...because it's not about us; instead, it's all about Jesus. Let's pray...Amen.