

The most Neglected Commandment in the Bible

1 Corinthians 16: 20

Miscellaneous

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Introduction

Before we begin a new series on Ephesians, in September, I wanted to preach on worship (that's loving the Lord our God with all our heart, soul and strength), which we did last week, and this week, one on Fellowship (that is loving our neighbor as ourselves). To do that, I'd like to revisit a topic I addressed several years ago, "The most neglected Commandment in the Bible."

Prayer

So Lord, Jesus I ask that you would help us to preach, all of us. In your name, Amen.

Sermon

It's been about eighteen years since I went to my first parent-teacher conference. My son, Jonathan was in Kindergarten at the time. His teacher was a young recent graduate of the University of Colorado, (an institution that is known as a paragon of real virtue).

She informed Susan and myself that our son was doing "quite well" (I remember this wave of relief). Then she said, "But . . . there has been a problem;" "There was one incident" (I shifted in my seat, glanced at Susan and began constructing worse case scenarios). Miss Kowal appeared to be very concerned as she began to share what had happened during story time. She said, "I was just reading to the children and as I paused to turn the page, I looked up and I couldn't believe what I saw. Your son was just kissing Katy Tatellini." "He was kissing her." "He just kissed her!" She stopped, waiting for our response, and . . . I didn't know what to say. Finally, she said, "That is not appropriate." I think we said, "Um . . . sorry" and left, a bit confused.

I've been a bit confused ever since second grade. My friend Tim and I climbed a tree with Leslie Brown in her front yard. I thought we both kissed Leslie in the tree. But Tim betrayed the kiss and told the guys on the bus about me. So every day on the bus, they'd all sing at me, "Two little lovers sitting in a tree, K- I- S-S- I-N -G First comes love, then comes marriage, then comes a baby in a baby carriage."

Well, it wasn't long after the parent teacher conference with Miss Kowal that I read an article in the Rocky Mountain News about Jonathan Prevette: sex offender. Convicted by the authorities, Jonathan Prevette was separated from his class at Southwest Elementary School in Lexington, Kentucky, and banned from the class ice cream party. The school was very concerned about securing federal funds and therefore following federal guidelines regarding sexual harassment. You see, Jonathan Prevette, six years old (same age as my son) had kissed a girl, in class, on the cheek because he, and I quote: "liked her." Yeah, right. That's what all perverts say.

They had this picture in the paper—pretty face, coke bottle glasses—

[Image of a sweet little boy with blond hair, glasses, a smile on his face and holding a ball]

Jonathan Prevette you can just see it – “predator!”

Well, it's easy to snicker at Southwest Elementary or Miss Kowal at Shelton in Golden. It's easy to snicker until you've spent some time with someone who's been sexually abused. A deacon in our church sexually abused someone very close to me when I was a child.

I've worked extensively with several women who've been sexually and ritually abused (I don't remember them saying much about kissing, but we know what kissing can lead to and what a Jonathan Prevette can become.) And let me tell you, the pain inflicted through sexual abuse is so horrifying, and so extensive, we ought to do all we possibly can to stop it.

In Romans 13, Paul argues that God has instituted governing authorities to carry the sword for the common good, so as a society, we ought to have laws and safeguards, and sexual harassment policies. Here at the Sanctuary, we have a sexual harassment policy. I discourage staff from being alone in a closed room with a member of the opposite sex. And we run background checks on all our children's workers.

In the United States, we have some of the best laws in the world against sexual harassment and sexual predation. And yet, we're still the world's number one producers of porn and hardly a model of sexual virtue. Perhaps we need to better legislate against kissing, like in Saudi Arabia, or Iran. Or, perhaps we need better enforcement of the law we've already got.

According to one website I found, it's still illegal in Colorado to kiss your wife on Sunday (or to kiss a woman that is sleeping.) In Boston, Massachusetts, it's illegal to kiss in front of a church. Those old puritanical laws make some sense in light of the Biblical standard of sexual purity. It was Jesus who said, *“Everyone who looks on a woman with lustful intent had already committed adultery in his heart.”* That's really intense, but rather hard to legislate. Paul's first letter to the Corinthians contains the most extensive discussion of church discipline, or legislation in the New Testament. Paul tells the church to discipline a man who was having sex with his mother-in-law and bragging about it at church.

Well, that's helpful, but it sure would be nice to put some rules for the stuff in between: lustful intent and bragadocious sex with your mother-in law in church. When I was a youth pastor, we spent hours trying to decipher Biblical texts in order to produce some laws for the kids answering the question, “How far is too far?” and in the end, we kind of just had to make stuff up. See, the New Testament has an extremely high standard of sexual purity, and yet, one that's almost impossible to regulate with legislation.

Well, in all the New Testament, I Corinthians contains the most detailed discussions of sexual purity. And, I suppose that's because of all the churches and cities in the New Testament, it was Corinth, that struggled the most with sexual sins. In fact, Paul writes his letter to the Corinthians in tears over their sins, and in tears over their rejection of him. And then, he ends his letter with a commandment – imperative tense – I Corinthians 16:20b (ESV) *“Greet one another with a holy kiss.”* After all that, and in Corinth, of all places, *“Greet one another with a holy kiss.”* So we think, “surely, that must be some sort of anomaly.” 2 Corinthians ends this way, *“Greet one another with a holy kiss”* (2 Corinthians 13: 12).

Well, Paul, it's illegal on Sunday in Colorado. The highly theological treatise of Romans ends with two chapters of greetings and this verse, *“Greet one another with a holy kiss.”* “Well, surely

that's just for old nuns (or something) right?" Paul ends I Thessalonians this way, "*Greet all the brothers with a holy kiss.*" That is "*Holy kiss all of them.*" So, we think holy must mean without feeling. Well, Saint Peter reveals what the holiness is. I Peter 5: 14, "*Greet one another with the kiss of love*" – *agape*.

Peter doesn't use the word *eros*, he doesn't mean erotic kisses, yet *agape* doesn't mean without feeling, just the opposite. In Luke 7, Jesus, the same guy that said the thing about lust – thirty years old and single, is at a formal dinner with the community religious leaders. A woman (probably a prostitute) crashes the banquet by washing Jesus' feet with her tears and covering them with kisses.

When Simon, the Pharisee grows indignant, Jesus reprimands him for not being like her. The Pharisees seemed to have a hard time with kissing. They kissed, but it was highly regulated through religious legislation. So, if you're thinking these kissing commandments are just cultural, I'm sure there is a cultural element. It may be working in the opposite direction of it. Perhaps the most thorough and well respected of all Bible Dictionaries, the *Anchor Yale Bible Dictionary* has this to say:

There is general agreement that the "holy kiss" had its origin in the practice, which emerged in the early church among the believers themselves, with the impetus probably coming from the shape of their life with Jesus himself. Nothing analogous to it is to be found among any Greco-Roman societies, nor indeed at Qumran" (That's the Jewish community that left us the Dead Sea Scrolls.)

So the kissing commands were not social custom. They appear to be Jesus' custom. It's also clear that the early church took these commands quite literally. The kiss of peace became an integral part of the church liturgy. There were kisses at baptisms, funerals, and ordinations. Most important, was the kiss of Communion ("body broken and blood shed"). And it was customary to kiss the *marturas*, the imprisoned, the witnesses that were about to be killed, and even more, to go to prison and kiss them on their wounds, their body broken, their blood shed. Tertullian, the church father, asked if any prayer could be complete apart from the holy kiss. Clement of Alexandria complained that church was full of the sound of kissing. So over time, the kiss became more and more regulated and legislated. By the third century, (when the church went political) kisses were no longer allowed between the sexes. In the thirteenth century, in Britain, they finally stopped kissing people and substituted an antiseptic kissing tablet, called an "osculatorium." A Catholic encyclopedia said that they had people kiss the tablet so the kisses wouldn't be promiscuous. But really, that means the kisses weren't kisses. In the Eastern Church they still kiss; they kiss icons. Yet, I don't think those kisses look much like those of that harlot as she kissed Jesus' feet at Simon's house.

Here in America, even at the most Bible thumping, literalistic church, if you went around and kissed everybody with the kiss of love (obedient to the Scripture), I bet you money they'd kick you out and call the police. Now, some of you are sitting there terrified, terrified I'm going to make you kiss that stinky person sitting next to you. Well, I'm not.

And, before we go any further, I want to make one thing very clear. And I want you to listen very carefully. If you think anyone in this church, other than your husband or wife, (but including your father and mother) kisses you in a way that feels at all erotic and you tell them to stop, but they don't immediately back off, I want you to tell me or one of the board members and we will enact church discipline. Is that perfectly clear? I want to hear you say, "Yes, Peter, that's clear." Good.

But now we still have to deal with the biblical commandment “greet one another with a holy kiss.” And we have this question, “Isn’t that dangerous? Answer, “Yes. Kisses are dangerous.” Obedience is dangerous. Love is dangerous. Obedience is always dangerous, but disobedience is far worse.

You know, the most famous story Jesus told is about kissing. We call it the story of the Prodigal son, a better title might be the story of the Prodigal Father, the prodigal kisser. You’ll remember, that the son comes to his father and says, “I want my inheritance now.” That is, “I wish you were dead and I want your stuff.” The father gives him the money. Then the son goes to a far country where he blows it all in profligate living. The older brother claims he blew it on hookers, immoral, erotic kisses. Now you do understand that erotic kisses are not necessarily immoral. In the covenant of marriage, they are holy and mandatory. They are a sacrament of fidelity that pictures our exclusive fidelity to Jesus, our bridegroom. But outside of marriage, they become like an evil sacrament of infidelity.

Well, the son blows his inheritance on profligacy, hookers and unholy kisses. Then he returns with a depraved plan to work as an employee and get his father’s stuff, but he doesn’t want to be his son. He refuses with a bad heart. The Father sees him from a great distance, runs to him out in the road, and before the son can say a word, the Father grabs him, embraces him, and kisses him. He does not say, “Listen boy, now we’re gonna lay down the law.” He grabs his son and kisses him over, and over, and over again.

There’s one Greek word for kiss and another for super-duper kiss. And the word used in Jesus’ story is super-duper kiss – passionate kisses. The Father covers the boy with passionate kisses. And it’s at that point, the boy crumbles – he repents. He longs to be a son, a son of his Father – the passionate kisser. *“It’s his **kindness** that leads us to repentance.”*

But you see...

The Father heals the boy of immoral love with passionate holy kisses.
He heals the boy, not by building a fence around the boy’s heart,
but by creating in him a new heart.
He heals the boy, not with law, but the Gospel of Grace.

Legislation can restrain some evil actions, but law is utterly powerless to transform an evil heart into a good heart. For that, you need the holy kiss. In fact, if you look at the history of humanity, I think it’s very safe to say that no force, including all the lawyers, courts and laws of all nations and religions in all societies has done as much to heal humanity of sexual infidelity as Jesus and his kissing disciples.

It’s as if all people were made for intimacy (You know, without it, infants will die, little children will grow insane.) It’s as if each of us was made for intimacy, for intimate communion, legitimate holy communion, and without it, we’re like starving people who will eat poison, if for only a moment, it will fill our empty guts.

Joe Dallas, the founder of Genesis Counseling (which helps men dealing with sexual sins) writes this:

Intimacy . . . is the water . . . our need for it turns into a craving that will drive us to do almost anything to get it. We may even drink sea water, or gutter water, if our thirst is intense enough and we don’t think there’s another way to satisfy it . . .

There's a song by Steve and Annie Chapman that says,

Daddy, you're the man in your little girl's dreams; you are the one she longs to please. There's a place in her heart that can only be filled with her daddy's love. But if you don't give her the love she desires, she'll try someone else, but they won't satisfy her . . . Don't send her away to another man's door. Nobody else can do what you do. She just needs her daddy's love.

Get the point? Fathers, if you want to help your kids develop a godly sex life, don't give them less kisses; give them holy kisses, and lots of them. And fathers, if you do have a child that struggles sexually, I'm not saying it's your fault. Our Father in heaven has children that struggle sexually, and the problem is that they don't trust his kiss.

You know, He creates us with a kiss. In the beginning, the Father bent down, took some *adamos*—clay, and breathed into it, like a kiss, (the ancients believed a kiss conveyed spirit, that is breath). He breathed into the clay and Adam became a *nephash*, (a living soul). In John 20, the resurrected Christ appears to his disciples, breathes on them, like a kiss, saying, "Receive the Holy Spirit." It is how we are made, in his image.

So, kisses can be dangerous but far more dangerous is not believing and receiving your Father's kiss. You have a Father and you have a Mother – she's called the church. She is the Lord's Bride, his Body, and his temple. And the Lord may just use her to give you a kiss.

And so, turn to your neighbor and pucker up. Just look and hold the pucker.

Kind of strange, huh? Even gross.

Spirit—breath, nourishment, life passes in and out of the interior of that person through those lips.

Pucker up; look at them. Good.

Those lips are packed with nerve endings; they're tender, sensitive, and vulnerable. And that hole in the middle leads down into that person's chest, right next to their heart. Kisses make you vulnerable. Some of you have been terribly abused by unholy kisses. They make you never want to risk kissing ever again.

Well, you're not the only one who's been betrayed with a kiss. Remember Jesus? See, that's what amazes me most about the kissing commandment. Jesus was betrayed with a kiss, and then we're all commanded to kiss. Paul felt betrayed by the Corinthians. They hurt Paul. Then Paul commands everyone to kiss. To be betrayed by your enemies hurts, but . . . to be betrayed by a friend, well, that hurts like hell. And Jesus said, "*Greater love has no man than this, that he lay down his life for his 'friend.'*"

Judas kissed Jesus (and the Bible uses the word for "super-duper kiss"). Judas kissed Jesus and Jesus called him "friend." It would've hurt so much less if he had called him a piece of crap, enemy being, but He called him friend. I mean He received Judas' kiss. I mean, Jesus drank the kiss in, so the betrayal hurt to the core of his being.

Kisses:

1. Make us vulnerable

A kiss makes us vulnerable.

Who is it that can hurt us most? The ones I kiss the most, my wife, my kids, my mom, my family, that is, my church. If you do church like Jesus, church will hurt. You will give your heart and someone will hurt it. If you keep on giving your heart, it's called forgiveness, and you'll look an awful lot like Jesus. But you'll be tempted to stop and wrap your heart in arrogance and legislation.

C.S. Lewis wrote,

To love at all is to be vulnerable. Love anything and your heart will certainly be wrung and possibly broken. If you want to make sure of keeping it intact, you must give your heart to no one . . . lock it up safe in the coffin of your selfishness, in that casket, it will change. The only place outside of heaven where you can be safe from all the dangers and perturbations of love is hell.

You know, in working with all those abuse victims, it seemed to me, that a common denominator in their abusers was that none of those abusers ever believed or received their Father's kiss – (the holy kiss), and so they wrapped their hearts in hell. And that puts a person in a hellish dilemma, both longing for kisses, and absolutely terrified of real kisses. For, once you hide your heart in hell, you desperately yearn for kisses, but real kisses burn. See? If I'm trying to be intimidating and you kiss me, your kiss burns my facade.

[Images of all kinds of kisses are interspersed amongst the next few sentences]

If I'm trying to be selfish and you kiss me, your kiss hurts my selfishness.

If I'm trying to be arrogant, and you give me a kiss, the kiss burns my pride.

If I'm trying to be mad at Susan, and she kisses me, the kiss messes up my anger.

If I'm trying to be your enemy and you feed me, give me something to drink and shower me with kindness, it's like you're heaping burning coals on my head.

Good kisses judge us and burn away evil.

In his novel, *The Brothers of Karamazov*, through one of the characters, Dostoyevsky tells the myth of the grand inquisition. But the grand inquisitor, in Seville, Spain, has Jesus arrested and

imprisoned. He tells Jesus that he has joined those who are “correcting his work,” those who are ridding the world of the terrible burden of having to choose the good in freedom, those who will tell the masses whom to marry and whom not to marry, when to have children, or when not to have children. In other words, they will legislate and regulate every kiss. He sentences Jesus to death. The grand inquisitor then falls silent, waiting for Jesus to answer.

Dostoyevsky writes,

The old man longs for him to say something, however painful and terrifying. But instead, he (Jesus) suddenly goes over to the old man and kisses him gently on his old, bloodless lips. And that is his only answer.

You see, the kiss glows in his heart. It burns him. It is judgment.

Kisses:

1. Make us vulnerable
2. Judge us

When George Wishart was being executed in 1546 for preaching the gospel, against the dictates of the Roman Catholic church, it's recorded that his executioner hesitated and at that, Wishart bent over, saying, “Here is a token that I forgive you.” And then he kissed him. I bet that kiss burned. The holy kiss is Judgment. When we resist it, it burns. And when we surrender to it, nothing is as sweet. Kisses make us vulnerable. Kisses judge us.

Kisses:

1. Make us vulnerable
2. Judge us
3. Romance us

Kisses romance us.

Six years ago, I preached on this topic and a woman sent me an email in response. In it, she described a dream, which she said, that God had clearly given her, five years earlier. She had gone to sleep condemning herself, but she dreamed this dream and recorded it in her journal upon awakening. In the dream, she was walking down a highway covered in “sorrow and apathy.” Then she sees a group of men milling about. She hopes they'd notice her. She writes,

My heart resigns itself to being overlooked. And then I see one of them look at me. . . He will not look away . . . I go to him. He holds me in his arms and I feel his lips on mine. It is a kiss that takes nothing from me. He gives everything in it, and in that moment I know down to the core of my being that I am deeply wanted—beyond imagination. And in that kiss I know purity and passion as one. There is no impurity in true passion, for he is

passion. I am held. I am beautiful. I am deeply loved. And in his embrace I know that I am worthy of all his love because he wants me, and that, in itself, makes me worthy.

His kiss floods me with warm sunshine and deep peace. I am finally able to rest, to breathe in knowing that this man will never reject me. He knows all my wounds and broken, dirty places and he still believes that I am beautiful, that I am worthy. He still sees me as perfection. He loves my white skin and my dark hair. He gives me gifts . . . He loves me, but I do not love him – or do I? (If I do it is deep down inside me.) I leave him there by the road. His dark eyes watch me leave. But he is not angry. He is longing with his whole heart for me to change my mind and choose him. He is patience incarnate. He has a grim steady look in his eyes and in his demeanor that promises he will wait forever if necessary and at the end of forever, he will still love me as much then as in the very beginning. I know that I will always be a great beauty to him and he will always want me. There is nothing in heaven or hell that will change that.

She shared how that kiss had haunted her, judged her, romanced her for five years as “she ran from the Lord.” And then she wrote, “Thank you for reminding me of the holy kiss.

You see, the holy kiss was sweet and it burned. It romanced.

Kisses judge us, kisses romance us, and kisses change us.

Kisses:

1. Make us vulnerable
2. Judge us
3. Romance us
4. Change us

You know when you were a kid, and mad at your mom, and your Father made you kiss your mother? And you didn't want to kiss your mother because the kiss would hurt, but you kissed your mother anyway . . . the Kiss changed you just a little, didn't it? It was like a sacrament.

According to one study, husbands who kiss their wives every morning live five years longer than those who don't. They also have fewer accidents, suffer much less illness, and earn 20-30% more than the non-kissers.

Kisses:

1. Make us vulnerable
2. Judge us
3. Romance us
4. Change us
5. Create us

Kisses change us, and kisses create us. Benjamin West is considered by some to have been the greatest painter in the history of North America.

Two hundred years ago, as a small boy, his mother charged him with watching his little sister while she was out. Instead, he pulled out a set of paints that he had gotten from some Indians. And this was a big deal back then because their family was Quaker and they weren't even supposed to paint. Well, he proceeded to make a terrible mess. She came back early, surprised Benjamin, and discovered the mess. He braced himself for her judgment; she looked at him – looked at the painting, picked it up and said, "What a beautiful painting of your sister." Then she gave him a kiss on the cheek. Benjamin West used to say, "It was that kiss that made me a painter."

Kisses change us, kisses create us, and holy kisses bring us home.

Kisses:

1. Make us vulnerable
2. Judge us
3. Romance us
4. Change us
5. Create us
6. Bring us home

Two years ago, I told you one of my favorite stories about Joe Bayly and his son, Tim. So I won't retell it, but if I wanted to retell it, this is what I'd say:

Tim rebelled against his pastor dad, and broke Joe's heart. He left home and joined a commune. Joe tried everything and couldn't get through to Tim. One night, around eleven p.m., he got a call, (They lived in Illinois) "This is the police. Your son was arrested for a DUI. We have him here in the town jail." Joe got out of bed and drove a half hour in the bitter cold to that town. But when he got there, they told him, "We don't have a Tim Bayly here." Joe thought perhaps he had heard wrong, so he drove to the next town, and then the next, and the next, and the next. Finally, around four a.m., he decided to drive to that old house in downtown Chicago, where Tim had been sleeping. The door wasn't locked. He stepped over bodies looking for his boy. Then, in the faint light of the darkened room, he saw him asleep in a sleeping bag, strewn across an old mattress.

Quietly, he walked over to the mattress and stood over his boy. Then, moved with compassion, he bent down, quietly kissed him on the cheek, turned around and went home. In the months that followed, Tim started visiting his parents. Then he started going to church, then he re-committed his life to Christ, and then he announced he was going into the ministry.

One day, years later, on a walk, Joe turned to Tim and asked,

"Tim, what brought you back?"

Tim looked at his dad and said,

"Don't you know? Dad, remember that night years ago when you got a call that I was in jail? Dad, that was my friend. It was a prank. When you came to the house, I only acted asleep. Dad, I was wide-awake. I knew you'd driven all night in the cold and I wondered what you would do to me, and all you did was bend

down and kiss me gently on the cheek. Dad, it was the kiss that brought me back.”

It's the Father's kisses that make him vulnerable to his children, for it's his children that break his heart and nail it to a cross. And yet, the Prodigal Father won't stop kissing his children. So the Prodigal Father runs to the Prodigal son out on the road, showers him with kisses, and brings us all home . . . brings us home and makes all things new with a kiss.

I don't remember teaching this to my children, but when they were little and they'd get an "owie" (a wound), they'd come running to me and beg me to kiss it. They'd be screaming their heads off, and as soon as I'd kiss it, they'd smile, run along, and keep playing. And I remember thinking, "How bizarre." It was like the kiss made everything new.

Kisses:

1. Make us vulnerable
2. Judge us
3. Romance us
4. Change us
5. Create us
6. Bring us home
7. Make everything new

But the wound was still there.

The pain was still there.

Yet, the kiss told them everything would be okay.

If I panicked and didn't kiss the wound, they'd panic and go berserk. But the kiss told them everything would be okay. They didn't know how or why, but the kiss was my judgment and they trusted it: "I know it hurts, but I love you and everything is gonna be okay."

My dad used to kiss me all the time, but when I got older and more independent and tried to impress my friends, I started hating those kisses. They were uncool.

"Dad, I'm in seventh grade, in front of the junior high."

Dad would be, "Hey sweetie!" He'd kiss. I'd go, "Dad, come on!"

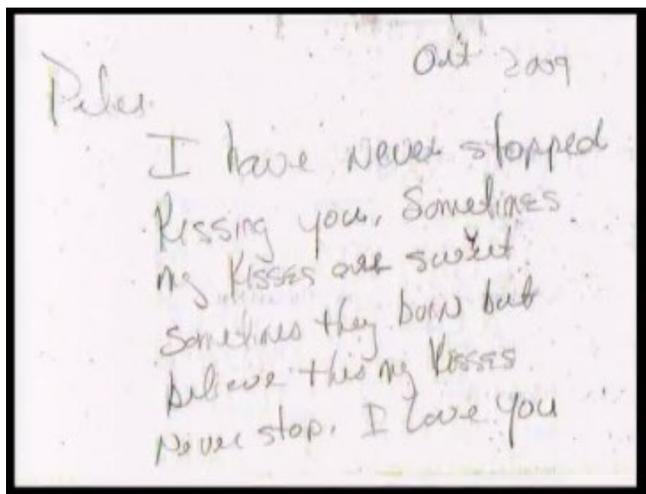
Eight and a half years ago, my dad died. Six years ago, I preached on the holy kiss at my church. Four and a half years ago, people I had dearly loved removed me from that church. If it would've been the sixteenth century, I suspect I'd have been burned at the stake by the very people I loved. At the time, I wanted to hide my heart and never love again, and yet God seemed to have other plans. So, many of us started this new thing we called, The Sanctuary.

That first year or two was the hardest time of my life. I really didn't understand (and still don't really understand) how or why God let all that pain happen, but four years ago, one night in our

service down at Central Presbyterian, as I was preparing to preach, I felt this puff of air, and looked to see who was puffing on me. No one was there.

The next week, I quoted the Song of Solomon in my sermon and learned that a literal translation of the text means, “*The Lord puffs in his Garden.*” Over the next several months, it kept happening: puffing in my hair, on my face, on my lips, my hands, even my notes (I remember seeing my notes move). I ran out of scientific explanations and I remember thinking, “God, thanks for this, whatever it is . . . but I want to know why this happened and how it’s going to get fixed. And if you’re doing miracles, how about something more obvious that would silence my critics?”

Thanks for the puffing, but what the hell are you doing?” Sometimes it was strong; sometimes weak; sometimes others felt it too. When I didn’t feel it, I’d worry (I’d messed up somehow . . .) We moved into our current building and one particular Sunday night in October, it was nuts; the puffing thing was just crazy—all over my body, and I just couldn’t help but smile! I looked over at Susan and she was writing furiously. She has this gift and I knew the Lord had just told her something. She handed this paper to me.



It read, October 2009, “Peter, I have never stopped kissing you. Sometimes my kisses are sweet. Sometimes they burn. But, believe this, my kisses never stop, I love you.”

You know, the enemy tells us that this life is all about convincing the Lord to kiss us. But the Christian faith is all about coming to believe that He *has* kissed us and won’t stop kissing us. It wasn’t long after that October night that I stopped feeling the puffing. But I know I must not stop believing in the kisses. And you know what helps me believe in the holy kisses? It’s when one of you gives me a kiss and says, “I love you.”

Last week, we spoke on worship. In Greek, the word is “*proskuneo.*” Philologists believe that the word literally means to “kiss toward,” “to kiss the lord,”

[Image of a woman kissing the feet of Christ]

And where is the Lord? He is in his Body, his Sanctuary, his temple. And what is his temple? Those stinky people sitting next to you. When you kiss them, you kiss Jesus. Wow! If we really believed that, that might heal us of all sexually immoral kissing and make all our kisses holy. So what am I saying? What’s the practical application point?

I Corinthians 16:20b *"Greet one another with a holy kiss."*

Yikes! That's dangerous! Where are we going to get the holy mojo to do that?

Communion

Well, as Paul puts it in I Corinthians 11, *"I received from the Lord what I also (paradidomai) 'handed over' to you. That on the night Jesus was (paradidomai) 'handed over' (and remember, he was handed over with a kiss, by all of us and yet, He didn't stop kissing.) he took bread and broke it saying this is my body given to you. Take and eat. And in the same manner, he took the cup saying this is the new covenant in my blood. Drink of it, all of you."*

Talk about vulnerable!

Talk about judgment, forgiveness, romance, redemption and an entire new creation!

He's asking you to come to his table and plant his broken body and shed blood. He's asking you to plant his wounded flesh right on your kisser and then digest it in your heart. This is the holy kiss. "If you want to know if He loves you so, it's in his kiss. That's where it is." He runs to you. Run to him and receive his kisses. And worship. In Jesus' name, worship.

Benediction

Clip from *Princess Bride*

[The scene opens on a dark night with horse riding out a hall. Peter Falk, the grandfather is reading to his grandson.]

Grandfather: *They rode to freedom. And as dawn arose*

[An image of pink clouds above a mountainous valley]

Grandfather: *Wesley and Buttercup knew they were safe. A wave of love swept over them.*

[The scene changes to show Wesley reaching for the Princess Buttercup to kiss.]

Grandfather: *And as they reached out to each other. . .*

[The scene changes abruptly, just as they are about to kiss. The grandfather pauses.]

Grandson: *What? . . . What?*

Grandfather: *Nah, it's kissing again. You don't want to hear that.* (He waves dismissively.)

Grandson: *Well, I don't mind so much.*

Grandfather: *Okay. Since the invention of the kiss, there have been five kisses that were rated the most passionate, the most pure. This one left them all behind.*

[The scene changes to Wesley and Buttercup kissing, and then back to the grandfather in his grandson's room.]

Grandfather: *The end.* (He closes the book and they smile at each other. He then raises his pointer finger) *Now, I think you ought to go to sleep.*

Grandson: *Okay.* (The grandson lies down and the grandfather stands to leave, picking up his hat and putting it on.)

Grandfather: *Okay.* (He starts putting on his coat) *Okay. Okay.* (He takes off his reading glasses and starts patting his pockets.) *Alright.* (He looks around, waves and turns to the door.) *So long.*

Grandson: *Grandpa?*

[The grandfather turns to look at his grandson.]

Grandson: *Maybe you could come over and read it again to me tomorrow.*

[The grandfather's eyes smile]

Grandfather: *As you wish.*

So, what do you wish?

What does the Grandfather wish? Why is he telling that story? Why is God the Father is telling you the story of your life, and telling the story of Jesus' life, the great Bridegroom? I think He's bound and determined to turn you into a great kisser because He'd like to receive your kisses. And he wants you to be at home in his kingdom. And his kingdom is all about kissing. It's a time of kisses. And if He were to kiss you right now, in this feeble body in which you live, it would just melt you to the core. So He's telling you a story. It's story time and, well, that's what He wants, a kiss.

You see? It's good news. And so, in Jesus' name, believe the gospel.

Disclaimer: This document is a draft and has not been edited by the author. Therefore, there may be discrepancies. Some discrepancies may be minor; some may have to do with theology. When in doubt, please refer to the audio version of the sermon on this website and don't be shy about informing us of errors.