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"The Inner Critic and Ephesians 4" The Rev. The Rev. Aaron M. G. Zimmerman (08/04/2024, The Eleventh Sunday after Pentecost)

Let us pray, Almighty God may the words of my mouth and the meditations of all our hearts be always acceptable in thy sight. O Lord our strength and our Redeemer. Amen.

The highest-reviewed album of 2024 is by a British singer-songwriter named Charlotte H. Asun.

She was born in Cambridge, England and is well known throughout the world, mostly by her name

Charlie XCX and the album is Brad. Now there are like 25 million people in this kind of

who care about that and then there's you guys. But some of you know who she is. She's having a

cultural moment and if you know younger people, the youths, they are into it. Although Charlie is

32 years old, you know. She is doing a thing which I feel like many of the female artists of her

time are doing whether it's Taylor, Olivia, Lizzo, Hayam, Brandy, whoever, which is they make music

which sounds like superficial pop. But when you listen to the lyrics they are delving deep into

the psyche and that is what Charlie is doing in Brad and in sympathy is a knife, one of the tracks

on this album. She talks about the voice in her head, that critical voice and she describes an

experience of going to a party and seeing someone who just looks better or is better put together

or whatever. All the attention is on her and the inner critic begins in her own mind comparing

herself to this other person. I don't know if you've ever done that. But she says that this voice

in her head is a wild voice quote tearing me apart and I found that so profound. I felt sort of

seen. I don't know because if you've ever tried to stop that voice in your head, it is not impossible.

The more you try to stop it, the more it comes up more and so her description of it as a wild voice,

almost like this wild animal that she can't control, unleashed. And there are many people that

experience this critical inner voice. It happens often at a young age.

I was talking to a parent
once of a child who was in elementary school, so a young child and
they had done something sort of
you know a little had gone off the rails a bit and the parent was
telling me I didn't really want
to come down very hard on this child because I know that she's already
harder on herself than I
ever could be. This inner critic, this voice has already started and
it happens to grown-ups too.
Often when there is a reversal in life, a divorce, you get fired,
there's some sort of financial
mismanagement that you maybe bring about and you need to then have the
conversation with your spouse
or maybe it's you feel like you raised your child the wrong way.
Whatever it may be,
you tend to one tends to, not you, other people. One tends to blame
oneself and this inner critic
begins going. And even if you maybe don't have a situation like that
in your life,
something that you feel like you caused, it can come up in other ways
when someone has a
a diagnosis. You'd be amazed the number of people that think it is
something that they did wrong.
It's God's punishment on them if I hadn't done this that or the other.
And again this is this
critic. Have you been watching the Olympics? A little bit. What
happens in my house when we're
seated on the couch watching these incredible athletes win medal after
medal, the announcer will
say something like and so and so has won her fourth medal and she is
12 years old and
everybody in my house is like what are we doing with our lives? What
have I done?
And I thought that's so interesting that immediately we hear something
good about someone else
and we start criticizing ourselves what a chump I am because we live
in this hyper critical
environment. The voices on TV, the voices out there in the world, and
the voices in our own
heads telling us our worthlessness, this hyper critical environment.
So no wonder then when we get
to the book of Ephesians chapter four, verse 15, which we heard today,
we think it's about criticism.
This is a verse that you may have tuned out during much of the
reading. You may not know
Ephesians four but if you have grown up in central Texas in Baptist
landia and you have you've
probably heard this phrase speaking the truth in love which many have
picked up as the Christian
permission slip to criticize others. You're allowed to give someone a

verbal smack down in the name
of Jesus because of this verse. I can speak the truth in love to you.
It's a little bit like that
phrase bless his heart. It sounds nice but really it's a knife and you
know you begin to realize
that this phrase, the reality of it when you realize it is never ever
used in the context of
giving someone a compliment. No one ever says you know I'm so sorry I
have to speak the truth
in love to you. This casserole is amazing. Is there some time in here?
What is this?
No it's always speaking the hard truth, the difficult truth. I must
tell you that you are a
schlub and you need to get your life together in love. Like this is
how it always goes. When someone
says I'm going to speak the truth in love, gird your loins. You're
about to get a finger wagging.
This phrase is misused. What I want to tell you today is criticism is
not what this passage is
about. Speaking the truth in love is not a permission slip to tell
other people how they are
terrible and need to get their act together. It's about something
completely different and I would
say much more helpful and I want to talk about that and Willis John 6
and maybe get some help.
So we first have to look at these two verses in the center of the
passage versus 14 and 15
and I always say that because there's always like two people that are
coming here for the first time
ever and they've been trained to bring their bibles and so they bring
them. Don't shame them. Be
glad. If you want to bring one it's totally fine. We even have them in
the pews. If you want to touch
them they're not just decoration. You may touch them. I will allow it.
But Ephesians 4, 14 and 15,
we must no longer be children tossed to and fro blown about by every
wind of doctrine by people's
trickery, by their craftiness and deceitful scheming. But speaking the
truth in love we must
grow up in every way into him who is the head. We must no longer be
children tossed to and fro
by every wind of doctrine, people's trickery, but speaking the truth
in love we must grow up
in every way into him who is the head into Christ. So what is this
about? The Apostle Paul,
church planter, evangelist, pastor who started many of the churches
that became the beginning of
the Christian church. He's writing to this church he started in the
Turkish city of Ephesus. You
can visit there today and this little community of people they are

listening to a bunch of podcasts
and they're following a bunch of influencers who are leading them down
the wrong path.
You know I was talking to someone recently about some other person not
connected to this church
don't try to figure out their identity but true story and this was a
person who believes some
pretty wild stuff and I asked well how do they in that well they're
listening to podcasts which
is what was happening in Ephesus these well there were some false
preachers will say the early
version of the podcast and these false preachers would come into these
Christian communities and be
like you may have heard about Jesus the son of God but we actually
have the truth about him and
let me tell you what's going on. He's actually not enough to save you
yes he died on the cross but
you have to be on your best behavior. Also Jesus he he he said some
amazing things but he wasn't
really God he was a person blessed by God for sure in touch with the
spirit but he wasn't truly
God I mean how could a person be God or they were saying the opposite
like he really is God but
he wasn't a person you couldn't be God and be a person it was more of
a hologram situation
and so all these things amounted to the same thing that Jesus isn't
enough to save you because
if he's not God he's not powerful enough to save you if he's not a
human being his death on
the cross was sort of faked and it didn't do anything and either way
you get it it gets this
point where Jesus just isn't enough to save you and now some of it has
to be up to you there's a
pie chart of salvation and how do you get there 95% is maybe something
Jesus did taught us but then
there's this little 5% the sliver that you must add and you have to do
it and that's what these
people were going around doing and this is what is known as in
seminary they call this jacked-up
theology that's a technical term and the result of jacked-up theology
is real I saw someone
tweeted this was a therapist who who practices primarily in an area
where there's still a high
degree of religiosity now this is not to knock all religious things or
church or anything but
the person said however in her context a hundred percent of her
practice in a hundred percent of
her clients is on some level dealing with unwinding some of the
jacked-up theology they were given
about their body or about their self-image or about how God feels

about them or whatever this stuff matters and so what Paul is saying is you guys are being impacted by these people these every wind of doctrine people's trickery their craftiness and deceitful scheming and it's having consequences for you and so instead of being swayed and influenced by all that stuff like a child might be he says instead I want you to speak the truth in love to each other doesn't mean criticize each other into improvement he says instead of false doctrine remind each other of what is true remind each other of the gospel remind each other that God loves you that Jesus is God that He's fully saved you it's what we do at this table every Sunday we remind you that Jesus is death and resurrection is sufficient it totally takes care of everything in the pie chart Jesus is a hundred percent that's the truth that God has saved you now you can rest in that truth that's what it means to speak the truth in love to remind people of what's actually true this is backed up by Jesus by the way in case you're concerned that I'm only talking about St. Paul today in Ephesians in John's gospel chapter 6 which we read this is post Jesus feeding 5,000 people with one foot long subway sandwich it is also after he's walked on water that's why people were like how did you get here because he walked on water they didn't know so there they are they find him in cavernium and they they say hey that was a great trick with the bread could you do that again and maybe always because I am tired of working for my food and just tell us what we need to do to get the God stuff tell us what we do and you know what sliver of the pie chart is my contribution and Jesus says here's the work of God believe in the one in whom he sent in other words rest in the fact that it is all been done by someone who is not you the one who's been sent Jesus Christ the son of God the one who is able to do all for us he's the one that rescues us saves us redeems us defeats sin death and all of it we always want to know what is our part what do we have to do and Jesus says just believe in me I'll take care of it just rest now some of you will object you'll say well Ephesians 6 may not be about criticizing people in Jesus name but I'm pretty sure it's in the Bible somewhere so I'm going to keep doing it and you'll maybe even point to the passage we saw in 2 Samuel this

story about King David where
he commits sin rapes faschiva it's an awful situation and he is blind
to his sin and the prophet
Nathan comes and tells him this parable and kind of calls him out on
his sin and David does wake up
and smell the coffee and he repents and that's what Psalm 51 is this
prayer of confession and
a giant I'm sorry if you'd point to that say see look lectures maybe
do sometimes work and I would
say it did work but the half life is short because if you continue to
read David's story
it's not all smooth sailing from here on out he continues to be a
human with a lot of problems
and a lot of sin and a lot of inner conflict and turmoil lectures may
work for the short time
but they don't really motivate us over the long haul the things that
you have been told to get
better at in your life you are probably still working on those things
criticism whether in
Jesus's name or some other system tends not to really fundamentally
change or transform people
it tends to create resentment and resistance however what Paul talks
about here is not that
speaking the truth and love is reminding people that they are loved in
their humanity
and in their reality and that God in Christ is the one who then does
the work and the power of
the Holy Spirit and this may sound like an abstraction to you but it
does seem to be the case
that when people feel loved change happens and that's what church is
about and that's what this
table is about because you will continue to hear the wild voice in
your head tearing you apart
but there is a voice outside you and is the voice of God in Christ
saying beloved and forgiven
and worthy and that's what we're here to speak the truth and love
every Sunday and every other day
to remind you that you are the one whom God has come to say let us
pray oh mighty God
in the situation in our own lives where we most need to hear it I pray
that you give us ears to hear
it that you love us I pray in Christ's name amen