

**Series: Give Up!**

**Sermon: Give Up the Need To Always Be Right!**

**Proverbs 17; verses shown** (NIV For real this time!)

1

Better a dry crust with peace and quiet  
than a house full of feasting, with strife.

12

Better to meet a bear robbed of her cubs  
than a fool bent on folly.

14

Starting a quarrel is like breaching a dam;  
so drop the matter before a dispute breaks out.

15

Acquitting the guilty and condemning the innocent—  
the Lord detests them both.

17

A friend loves at all times,  
and a brother is born for a time of adversity.

19

Whoever loves a quarrel loves sin;  
whoever builds a high gate invites destruction.

22

A cheerful heart is good medicine,  
but a crushed spirit dries up the bones.

28

Even fools are thought wise if they keep silent,  
and discerning if they hold their tongues.

### **Sermon**

I loved my grandpa benny. Still do, but he's been gone for 34 years now. World War II vet. Don't take no bull from anybody kinda guy. Taught me everything I know about fishing and poker, how to spit, and that boys don't need indoor plumbing, we have the great outdoors, and that was by the second grade. And as a kid, you don't know the good and the bad about folk, to you they just are who they are. In the years since, however, I've learned a few other stories about grandpa that illustrate a few of his quirks. He was out road hunting with a buddy. Totally illegal by the way, and I'm going to guess alcohol was somehow involved. But they were driving around, looking for a deer to shoot from their vehicle. And somehow, accidentally, the friend's gun went off. In the car, its loud. And the bullet went through the roof of the car. They get back home, the other guy is still apologizing. Grandpa says its no big deal. Don't worry about it. They get out of the car, guns still in hand, and grandpa walks the guy to where the friend has his car parked, and grandpa says, "hold on". And he opens the door to the other guys car, points the rifle inside, and blows a hole in the guys floorboards. Now we're even.

Grandpa was the kind of guy who would not be made a fool. There have been times where other family members had to show up with guns to bail grandpa out of a mess where he shot his mouth off too much, or got himself into some sort of pickle. He was the kind of guy at a four way stop, another true story, that if he had the right of way, he was going to take it. Even if he could have avoided an accident, if he was in the right, he would

allow the cars to wack each other. Does that make sense? Like, have you ever been going along and someone pulls in front of you and you have to slow down, even though you had the right of way? Grandpa wouldn't slow down. These might be cute little family stories, quirks about a man, but they also had a much more dark side. I was in the car for this one. Grandpa and grandma in the front seat - grandpa driving - because women can't drive apparently at least in their relationship. Going from Amarillo, Texas to New Mexico. And grandpa and grandma were bickering about directions. Grandma thought this way, grandpa thought that way. And grandpa said, "Fine, we'll go your way." Pealed out and took the car in the direction that grandma thought they should go. And soon enough the road took a different turn, it wasn't heading to New Mexico, and we found out that grandpa was right and grandma was wrong, in this one case. So did grandpa turn the car around and go the right way? No. You wanted to go this way, we'll go this way. And for an hour, this is not an exaggeration, we all went in the opposite direction not only to prove that he was right. But I think, to also prove that she was wrong. And after an hour, we turned around, backtracked that hour, and then went the right way. I was seven, and I remember this. I tell these stories, not only to illustrate sermons, but to also remind myself that these tendencies are in my genes, there's a little bit of this within me, and maybe a little bit in you as well. In this case, we have a desperate need to be right.

Someday, I'll get up to heaven and see all my family and friends who beat me to the pearly gates, and they're going to be mad at me. Stop using us in sermons! You're not perfect either. "Yeah, I know. But I was right, wasn't I?"

Proverbs gives us many life lessons, and in chapter 17, we catch a few about how to stay out of arguments, how to stay out of conflict, how to stay out of trouble. They are good lessons, many of which I still need to learn. Better a dry crust of bread with peace and quiet than a house full of feasting, with strife. Starting a quarrel is like breaching a dam; so drop the matter before a dispute breaks out.

It's what we do, right? If someone criticizes us, we think real fast and real hard about something to criticize them about, don't we. We have a need to be right, and we have a need for them to be wrong. We love our righteousness. In chapters 5-7 of Matthew's gospel, we find a block of Jesus' teaching commonly referred to as the Sermon on the Mount. Within that "sermon," Jesus communicates the true meaning of righteousness in accordance with God's Word. He makes a distinction between – what we might refer to as – the letter of the law and the spirit of the law. The sermon opens with beatitudes, pronouncements about those who are blessed. Among those who are blessed Jesus names those who hunger and thirst for righteousness. Jesus promises; that is a yearning that will be fulfilled. He proclaims, "Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they will be filled." But, Jesus redefines the meaning (and the practice) of righteousness. He does so by making use of a repeating pattern. Zeroing in on a variety of scenarios, Jesus challenges his audience: "You have heard that it was said" – and then he summarizes a traditional teaching. But Jesus doesn't stop there. He continues, "But I say to you" and what Jesus offers goes far deeper than what is fair, what is expected, what others will notice and Righteousness, my friends, isn't about being right; it's about doing right. Righteousness isn't about demanding ones rights. Righteousness takes the spotlight off of us (what we know and what we're entitled to) and makes the "other" the priority. Righteousness means showing the same kind of grace and mercy to others that God shows us. Jesus reminds his listeners that "your father in heaven... makes his sun rise on the evil and on the good." Religion is no tit for tat; no quid pro quo. Religion, when properly lived out, seeks to emulate the undeserved, unmerited grace and mercy of God. Religion isn't merely about knowing or saying the right things. Following Jesus is about righteousness in our relationships with God and others... a righteousness that doesn't get caught up in legalism; but is governed by love. It's true for religion, its true for our relationships, it's true in our child rearing, it's true in our marriages, it's true - if we always have to be right, then we are pharisees that have a hard time loving - and accepting, others.

So, this morning, I want you to Give up! Give up to need to always being right! There might be more than one right way to load the dishwasher. There may be more than one right way as to what a family should look like. I

did a wedding last week, and they used the ol' First Corinthians passage: Love keeps no record of wrongs. Love does not insist on its own way. I also used the Romans passage: Outdo one another in showing love. Choose kindness over rightness any day of the week.

This is what I need to learn: Enjoy who you are, what you believe. And accept the fact that there are those around you who will not agree with you on all things. That's OK. Practice tolerance, love and acceptance. Grace is another word for it. It's better to be kind than right. I don't want to go in the wrong direction just to prove that I'm going in the wrong direction. Better to meet a bear robbed of her cubs than a fool bent on folly. Am I always right? No. But that's alright. And the family of God said, AMEN.