

The Respectable Sin of Contempt Part 2

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[0 : 0 0] Are we on? All right. Well, let's open up in prayer as we prepare to hear God's word for us this morning. Our God and Father, we thank you that you are a God who speaks the truth to us, and oftentimes it is a truth that we do not want to hear. It's a truth that can rock us down to our very core, to our very foundations, because it challenges the way that we have conducted our lives, the patterns of thinking, speaking, and behaving, which we have highly prized and thought of as normal. But Lord God, you alone know what we were made for, and you alone have communicated to us who we are, how we are to live, and how we are to live in honor of your dearly loved son, Jesus Christ.

And so, God, this morning as we encounter your word, as we pay attention to the God who has saved us, the God who has redeemed us, Lord God, may we take your words with great seriousness.

Give us eyes to see, ears to hear, hearts to understand. Lord, we need this. We need the help of your spirit, and we pray that his help may become apparent to us. His presence may be obvious to us today. Amen. Well, last week, I opened up a bit of a can of worms, opened up the subject of contempt.

That was part one, and today is part two. And I let you guys know at the start of last week's sermon that it was going to be the closest I've come in a few years to a fire and brimstone sermon. And if you're thinking, okay, all right, I felt on the hot seat last week, but that's over, moving on. Well, no, actually today the burner gets turned up even more. It gets turned up even more because we are going to continue and even elevate our attack on this most respectable of sins, the sin of contempt. So let's first review a little bit of what we covered so far. And if you come out of this review feeling like, maybe I don't know if I've got a good handle on contempt, I missed last week's sermon, then you'll definitely want to get on our website or on our Facebook page and either watch or listen to last week's sermon. But I'll go into a lot more detail about what exactly contempt is. We asked first, what is contempt? And we found a couple of helpful definitions. So one researcher speaks of contempt as an emotion. He says, contempt is the feeling of dislike for and superiority, usually morally, over another person, group of people, and or their actions. The basic notion of contempt is, I'm better than you and you are lesser than me. And then another scientist speaks of contempt as not simply an emotion, but an ingrained pattern of living, a whole way of life. He says, contempt is our habit of treating people who disagree with us, not just as wrong or misguided in their views, but as worthless. They're worthless. Once we understand this, we realize that when we open our Bibles, we discover that God speaks endlessly of contempt in the Bible, far more than we do. As I remarked last week, it's remarkable how few sermons are on this subject. It's remarkable in counseling literature, how few counselors and researchers ever want to even touch this subject. For whatever reason, we don't like to look at this. We want to pretend this isn't a problem. And that's why I think it's this most respectable of sins, because we want to act like it's okay. And we want to just turn a blind eye to it. But as we look at the Bible, God does not turn a blind eye to the sin. He has always been very, very, very clear about it. And as we looked for the targets of contempt, we found scripture after scripture that spoke of our contempt for one another, contempt for our inferiors, contempt for our superiors, and then contempt even for God himself. And if you thought that last week's sermon was chock full of scripture, just know, I left an enormous amount of material on the cutting room floor. So just be glad that the sermon wasn't an hour and a half long. We examine not only the targets of contempt, but the tactics of contempt. Its tactics can be physical with violence. Its tactics can be verbal with words that cut and harm. Its tactics can be nonverbal. Postures, tones of voice, facial expressions, body language. Here's something I think is helpful to keep in mind about contempt.

[5 : 21] In some cultures, contempt is very overt. It's considered okay to just be very overt in the way you show contempt to people. I think in a lot of Christian circles, we tend to be much more covert.

We kind of, contempt shows up in these sneaky, slippery ways. Because contempt is so easily disguised. Contempt can look just like other behaviors. So let me give you a couple of examples. If I cut you with a knife, am I showing you contempt? Well, this is an extreme example, but if I'm a doctor, hopefully not. I mean, I'm hoping my dermatologist isn't cutting pieces off me because he just, he got into the field because that's what he loves to do, you know, just cut pieces off of people. But no, he's doing it to help me, right? But someone like Cain, who murdered his brother Abel, someone might do that out of contempt because they look at another person and say, I view you as scarcely human. I view you as less than me. You're just basically an animal and I can do with you what I want. Likewise, words can be used. And even the same words can be used for play or be used as a verbal tactic for contempt. As an example, I was living in, I used to live in Indiana in the States for a number of years. And there's this funny thing in Midwestern, the Midwestern states that there's this phrase, you jerk. And it can mean two different things. One is a playful jab.

Someone pulls a trick on you or fools you in some way, and they're a good friend. And you're kind of, you know, taken aback, a little bit irritated, but you love each other. And they're like, you jerk. And, but you'd say with a smile on your face and, you know, it's, it's understood that I don't mean that at all. We're just having fun. The other was a hard, you know, the other is this cold put down, you jerk. That's all you are. That's all you'll ever be. I've discovered since moving here that not everybody knows the playful version of the phrase around here. I found that out the hard way.

[7 : 34] So I, I've now kind of been very, very careful about that. But the idea is that these exact same words, the verbal content is exactly the same. And yet one can mean we're friends.

And the other can mean you're less than me. Such are the verbal tactics of contempt. And then the nonverbal tactics. I once had a friend who's, she, her husband, he loved telling the absolute corniest dad jokes you've ever heard in your life.

He would tell them with this little smile on his face. He absolutely loved it. And every time that there was a group of us together and he would tell one of these jokes with this grin on his face and she would just smile and just roll her eyes and we would all be laughing.

And we understood, hey, she loves him. Like, so it's kind of this rolling her eyes, just this playfulness, right? She means nothing by it other than, oh brother. But there are many marriages in which a wife, when her husband speaks, just rolls her eyes to communicate, your words are not worth listening to. Why are you even opening your mouth?

What a painful and awful thing contempt can be and how sneaky we can be in pretending that we are not showing it. And then other people suffer the effects of it. And we're like, what's your problem?

[8 : 59] I only said this. I only did that. What's your deal? We have a God who deeply cares for those who are treated with contempt.

We have a God who will set things right in the end. That is something that we are going to see very clearly this morning that God cares. And this is very important to him. And he will set things right in the end. Consider the words of Isaiah chapter 25. So if you have one of the Blue Bibles or Usher's handout, it'll be on page 586. Let's just turn there. And I'm going to read to you this. It's not a long chapter, but Isaiah chapter 25. And watch what the Lord does for those who elevate themselves in pride and look with contempt on others. And look what he does for those who are a subject of reproach, who are on the receiving end of contempt. Isaiah chapter 25.

Oh, Lord, you are my God. I will exalt you. I will praise your name for you have done wonderful things, plans formed of old, faithful and sure. For you have made the city a heap, the fortified city a ruin. The foreigner's palace is a city no more. It will never be rebuilt. Therefore, strong peoples will glorify you. Cities of ruthless nations will fear you. For you have been a stronghold to the poor, a stronghold to the needy in his distress, a shelter from the storm and a shade from the heat. For the breath of the ruthless is like a storm against a wall, like heat in a dry place.

You subdue the noise of the foreigners as heat by the shade of a cloud. So the song of the ruthless is put down. On this mountain, the Lord of hosts will make for all peoples a feast of rich food, a feast of well-aged wine, of rich food full of marrow, of aged wine, well refined. And he will swallow up on this mountain the covering that is cast over all peoples, the veil that is spread over all nations. He will swallow up death forever. And the Lord God will wipe away tears from all faces and the

reproach of his people. He will take away from all the earth where the Lord has spoken. It will be said on that day, behold, this is our God. We have waited for him that he might save us. This is the Lord. We have waited for him. Let us be glad and rejoice in his salvation. For the hand of the Lord will rest on this mountain. And Moab shall be trampled down in his place as straw is trampled down in a dunghill.

[12 : 14] And he will spread out his hands in the midst of it as a swimmer spreads his hands out to swim. But the Lord will lay low his pompous pride together with the skill of his hands. And the high fortifications of his walls he will bring down, lay low, and cast to the ground to the dust. This is the word of the Lord.

This chapter, Isaiah chapter 25, shows and paints for us a picture of the end of contempt. That God will deal with contempt fully and finally. As we consider how God deals with contempt, we want to answer four questions. So here are the four questions we're going to tackle one at a time.

First, what are our purposes for showing contempt? So we talked last time about how it manifests itself and the targets. But now we're going to drill down to our hearts. What are our purposes for showing contempt? What's going on in here that the Lord needs to address? Second, what does our contempt then say about us? What does our contempt say about us? Then third, given all that, how will God respond to our contempt? How will God respond to our contempt? And finally, how does God urge us to respond to contempt? How does God urge us to respond to contempt? So let's start with that first question. What are our purposes for showing contempt? What are our purposes for showing contempt? Let's consider four purposes that we may have behind our contempt. Often it's a mix and match of these four, and maybe there's more besides.

But scripture speaks of these. The first purpose for our contempt is simply this, boasting. It is boasting. Something the apostle Paul repeatedly brings up over and over and over. It's a huge problem in the churches that he's writing to. Contempt is all about elevating yourself, finding a way to elevate yourself at the expense of someone else. One of the best ways to lift yourself up is to push yourself up off another person. Push them down so you can elevate yourself. Think about it like finding a ladder ladder on which you can compare yourself to another person. I'm higher up the ladder than they are.

Yeah, okay, I feel better. Oh yeah, I'm better. I'm feeling good about myself now. This is a whole self-esteem boost here because they're down there and I'm up here. In Galatians chapter 6, the apostle Paul, he writes against Jewish people who are professing Christ, but they're using the Jewish right of circumcision as a ladder of comparison. They elevate themselves and they hold uncircumcised Gentiles who've joined the church, they hold them in contempt. And so Paul warns in Galatians chapter 6, even those who are circumcised do not themselves keep the law. So he's pointing out like, look, this is not a good faith situation. They're not even keeping the law, okay? But they desire to have you circumcised that they may boast in your flesh. They want to boast. They want to elevate themselves.

[15 : 35] And they don't want to be associated with you if you're uncircumcised because that's somebody really low. In the book of James, it is wealth, it is social status that become the ladder to glory in the churches that James is writing to. James warns strongly against the contempt that is found in such a church. In chapter 3, he says, but if you have bitter jealousy and selfish ambition in your hearts, do not boast and be false to the truth. This is not wisdom that comes down from above, but is earthly, unspiritual, demonic. For where jealousy and selfish ambition exist, there will be disorder and every vile practice. Psalm 62, King David talks about the pain of experiencing contempt. And in this case, the contempt is that people want power and authority and they want it at his expense. They want to elevate themselves by gaining power, authority. And they use clever tactics to try to pull David down the ladder so they can elevate themselves. And here he grieves. How long will all of you attack a man to batter him like a leaning wall, a tottering fence? They only plan to thrust him down from his high position.

They take pleasure in falsehood. They bless with their mouths, but inwardly they curse. Sneaky. We're always looking for opportunities to elevate ourselves, whether it's tribal boundaries, whether it's moral purity, whether it's wealth and status, whether it's power and authority, whatever, we can find almost anything and turn it into a ladder that we can elevate ourselves and push others down. Wherever we are looking to elevate ourselves, there we will feel and practice contempt for others until it becomes second nature. So the first purpose for our contempt is in fact boasting.

And that plays into some of the others because there's a second purpose of contempt and that is protection. Believe it or not, protecting. Protecting yourself or others like your family members or others you associate yourself with. And this is kind of the two of them mixed together because this is actually the flip side of boasting. In this case, you're afraid of being knocked down the ladder. You fear that. And in this case, contempt is saying, okay, I need to keep my distance from you, push you away and knock you down a peg perhaps. I don't want to associate with you because you're going to drag me down the ladder. If I can just keep my distance and then shove you down, then that keeps me safe.

It is a way to protect yourself from shame. It's a way to protect yourself from that feeling of insecurity that you carry around with you, the feeling of inadequacy. One researcher explains, feeling contempt asserts power or status. Therefore, those who are uncertain about their status may be more likely to manifest contempt to assert their superiority over others. Another psychologist says, when contempt becomes a common reaction, it could hide deep insecurity, acting as a defense mechanism to protect a fragile ego. At its worst, those who feel contempt, they may not only put another person down, they may even withdraw from that person, flee from them out of fear that, oh no, if I'm associated with this person, now I get pulled down. In Psalm 31, David experiences that. He sees how he has become a pariah. His neighbors and his former friends are now treating him in this way. He says, because of all my adversaries, I have become a reproach, especially to my neighbors and an object of dread to my acquaintances. Those who see me in the street flee from me. They literally run away.

[20 : 01] This is the second purpose for our contempt. It is protection. Trying to protect ourselves and those we love. And so we show contempt for others. The third purpose of contempt, gossip. Gossip. Contempt is at its most respectable and most enjoyable when you get to share it. And you get to share it with other people. So I'll tell you what. Here's a little bit of a life hack that I hope you don't follow. You know what the fastest way to make friends is? If you're like, I don't have any friends and I want friends and I want friends as fast as possible. You know what the fastest way to make friends is? Find someone you both have contempt for and share your contempt. Yeah, yeah, yeah. That person, oh my, oh my goodness. Oh my goodness. Those, that political party, oh yeah, yeah, yeah, yeah.

You know, it was the fastest way to form a good friendship, at least until the object of contempt disappears. And then you realize, oh wait, we're not actually real friends anyway. Contempt is at its most effective when you get to elevate yourself by sharing a story of another person's lowness. In Proverbs 26 verse 22, we are warned that such gossip, you know, it doesn't, it feels bad when you get gossiped about, but when you're doing the gossip, you know what it feels like? It feels amazing. The words of a whisperer are like delicious morsels. They go down into the inner parts of the body. That's what Proverbs says. Contempt feels like when we gossip.

Oh, it feels good. Delicious. But at its heart, at the heart of that gossip is contempt. And contempt leads, as we saw in James chapter three, it leads inevitably to a culture of conflict. In verse 20, we are told, for lack of wood, the fire goes out and where there is no whisperer, quarreling ceases. Oh, it turns out that we stop feeding the fire of contempt. When we stop gossiping about other people so that we can share our contempt for them, all of a sudden quarreling goes away. All of a sudden, conflict sort of disappears from our churches. Huh, who thought so? Who thought that would happen?

A third purpose for our contempt is gossip. And then there's a fourth and final purpose of contempt, just plain old vengeance. Plain old vengeance. An opportunity to punish another person whom you view as less than human. Last week, we saw how Cain's murder of Abel was this incredibly high expression of contempt. It just got worse as you continue reading in Genesis chapter four, because Cain's descendant Lamech took it to the next level. He wrote a poem, a fine little poem celebrating his own act of contempt. Lamech said to his wives, Ada and Zillah, hear my voice. You wives of Lamech, listen to what I say. I have killed a man for wounding me, a young man for striking me. If Cain's revenge is sevenfold, then Lamech's is seventy-sevenfold. What a nice guy. Here's a man who is boasting. It is contempt for somebody who harmed him and how he got to exercise vengeance. So a fourth purpose for our contempt is vengeance. Boasting, protection, gossip, vengeance.

[23 : 46] These are things that can be in our heart when we show contempt. Perhaps there are more purposes than even these, but are these not enough to call us out that this is a deep and

grievous evil?

There's a terrible significance to contempt. The second question we are tackling today is what does our contempt say about us? What does our contempt say about us? It says at least two things about us.

First, our contempt says that we want to be judges. We want to be judges. This is a deep desire of our hearts. The book of James calls us out on this. In James chapter 2, he describes a situation in which we saw last week in which the church is welcoming and honoring wealthy people while showing disdain for those who are poor and have nothing to offer. James then says, he explains why this contempt is so significant. He asks, Have you not then made distinctions among yourselves and become judges with evil thoughts? When we show contempt, we are wanting to be judges. We are wanting to stand in judgment over other people, to look down at them and declare a verdict. Unworthy. We do not merely want to make judgments about what is right and wrong about what is good and bad, about what is wise and foolish. Every human being has to do that.

In that sense, we all have to make judgments all the time. Do I cross the road as a bus is coming at me? I am going to make a judgment. It is not a good idea. Am I going to make a judgment about something another person is doing, whether it is right or wrong? Well, I hope so. But this is different. Here, we're wanting the position of being a judge. We are wanting to elevate ourselves into the judge's seat and condemn other people. We want that honor. We want that status. Because being the judge lets you boast over others. And by the way, it protects you from their judgment. I'm the judge in this situation.

[26 : 16] You're not. My view of you is what matters. Yours, it's not even worth considering. Being the judge protects you from their judgment, lets you boast over others, gives you opportunity for gossip, and gives you a little chance for vengeance. This is the sort of judgment Jesus warns against when he says, judge not that you be not judged. It is a desire for a one-way judgment in which I get to point out the speck in your eye. Always poking my finger into your eye over all the little specks I'm seeing in there. And nobody gets to point out the log in my eye. Let's not talk about that.

That's not what we're here for. Our contempt says that we want to be judges. Second, our contempt says that we want to play God. We want to play God. Because after all, is it not God who judges the hearts of men? Earlier in the service, Chris read Romans chapter 14. And there, Paul is mediating a dispute between those in the Roman church who were eating meat and those whose conscience bothered them to eat meat, right? So lest a war break out in the church over veganism, Paul warns against contempt, right? He says, why do you pass judgment on your brother? Or you, why do you despise your brother?

For we will all stand before the judgment seat of God. For it is written, as I live, says the Lord, every knee shall bow to me and every tongue shall confess to God. So then each of us will give an account of himself to God. We give an account of ourselves to God. And yet when I show contempt, I'm saying, you give an account of yourself to me. And I find you lacking.

Is it any wonder that the first sin in Genesis chapter 3 brought shame into the world? The serpent promised the man and the woman that if, oh, if you eat this fruit that's been forbidden you by God, you're going to begin to see, you're going to begin to evaluate, you're going to begin to judge the way that God does. Seeing and knowing and judging good and evil the way he does, you get to take his place. That's what he means when he says, for God knows that when you eat of it, your eyes, the organ of judgment, your eyes will be opened and you will be like God, knowing good and evil. Our contempt not only says that we want to be judges, it says that we want to play God. What then is God to do with such wickedness? How will God respond to our contempt?

God has two responses. We will look at both at length because the Bible is very, very, very clear on this. First, in his justice, God responds with retribution, with retribution. An eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth. The punishment must fit the crime. In 1 Samuel chapter 2, one of the Lord's prophets confronts the high priest Eli. Eli's sons are evil and corrupt, abusing their position of power.

[30 : 06] And the prophet tells Eli this, Why then do you scorn my sacrifices and my offerings that I commanded for my dwelling, and honor your sons above me by fattening yourselves on the choicest parts of every offering of my people Israel? Therefore, the Lord, the God of Israel declares, I promised that your house and the house of your father should go in and out before me forever.

But now the Lord declares, far be it from me. For those who honor me, I will honor, and those who despise me shall be lightly esteemed.

Behold, the days are coming when I will cut off your strength and the strength of your father's house so that there will not be an old man in your house. Those who honor me, I will honor.

Those who despise me shall be lightly esteemed, to put it mildly. Malachi chapter 2, to the priests of his day, the prophet Malachi says, You have turned aside from the way. You have caused many to stumble by your instruction.

You have corrupted the covenant of Levi, says the Lord of hosts. And so I make you despised and abased before all the people inasmuch as you do not keep my ways, but show partiality in your instruction.

[31 : 36] Zephaniah chapter 2, the Lord is speaking to the nations of Moab and Ammon, and he delivers this judgment to them. I have heard the taunts of Moab and the revilings of the Ammonites, how they have taunted my people and made boasts against their territory.

Therefore, as I live, declares the Lord of hosts, the God of Israel, Moab shall become like Sodom and the Ammonites like Gomorrah, a land possessed by nettles and salt pits and a waste forever. The remnants of my people shall plunder them, and the survivors of my nation shall possess them. This shall be their lot in return for their pride, because they taunted and boasted against the people of the Lord of hosts.

The Lord will be awesome against them, for he will famish all the gods of the earth, and to him shall bow down, each in its place, all the lands of the nations.

You see, there is coming an end to contempt, because the one who alone can show contempt is the Lord.

[32 : 48] The reason it's wrong for us is because we're not God, because God actually is above us. He actually is great. He actually can.

He actually does look down, because, of course, he's God. That's the point. And so among us, as we look at one another, we do not have that privilege.

We do not have that place. We cannot look with contempt on one another. The Lord will not let contempt rule the day forever. He will come and make things right.

But if you are enduring the agony of others' contempt for you, this promise is a comfort for you.

The Lord sees your pain. The Lord knows, and the Lord will deal with it. He will deal with the one who is drowning you in contempt.

[33 : 50] The Lord promises a future in which every knee should bow in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord. Many of those confessions will be through weeping and gnashing of teeth.

For Jesus himself issues a threat against those who speak words of contempt for others. So lest you think, oh, that's just an Old Testament thing. Oh, no. Oh, no.

The Bible is very consistent on this. From beginning to end. Matthew chapter 5. Here is Jesus speaking. You have heard that it was said to those of old, you shall not murder, and whoever murders will be liable to judgment.

But I say to you that everyone who is angry with his brother will be liable to judgment. Whoever insults his brother, and it's an expression of contempt he has in mind here, whoever insults his brother will be liable to the council, and whoever says, you fool, will be liable to the hell of fire.

The hell of fire. The ultimate, eternal place of contempt. The place where those who love contempt are sent to receive, to receive for themselves exactly what they love forever.

[35 : 09] If you love contempt, you will live in contempt forever. In Daniel chapter 12, we are told of the resurrection from the dead.

We are warned. Many of those who sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake, some to everlasting life, and some to shame and everlasting contempt.

In the final verse of the book of Isaiah, we are told of the eternal destiny of those who hold God in contempt. Their worms shall not die, their fire shall not be quenched, and they shall be an aberrance to all flesh.

Why does God tell us these terrible realities? He tells us these not only to reassure those who have suffered, not only to tell us he is going to make things right in the end.

Those who hold others in contempt will not be able to do so forever. God also issues these warnings to protect you and me. We need to be protected, to turn away from this sin.

[36 : 21] God wants to guard us from ever thinking that it is okay to harbor contempt in our hearts as a respectable sin, to let it linger, to let it become a habit and a way of life and something we think is right and good and delightful.

One of the most frightening warnings in Scripture is issued to us as Christians, is issued to us to protect us from turning and holding Christ Jesus in contempt.

Because we have in Jesus Christ the Son of God, the full and final revelation of who God is. And so we are held responsible for this final revelation, this final reality, the full image and glory of God. In Hebrews chapter 10, we are warned, if we go on sinning deliberately after receiving the knowledge of the truth, there no longer remains a sacrifice for sins, but a fearful expectation of judgment and a fury of fire that will consume the adversaries.

Anyone who has set aside the law of Moses dies without mercy on the evidence of two or three witnesses. How much worse punishment do you think will be deserved by the one who has trampled underfoot the Son of God and has profaned the blood of the covenant by which he was sanctified and has outraged the Spirit of grace?

[37 : 54] For we know him who said, vengeance is mine, I will repay. And again, the Lord will judge his people. It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God.

God responds to contempt with retribution. And these words in Hebrews chapter 10, they're given to us because these words are how he saves us.

These words are how God warns us away, do not go down that path. These words are how he preserves us and keeps his saints faithful to him forever. We know that because in verse 39, a little farther down, the author encourages us, we are not of those who shrink back and are destroyed, but of those who have faith and preserve their souls.

God tells us the truth. He tells us what contempt deserves. He tells us the fate of those who will never repent and turn away from contempt in order to save us, in order to pull us back from our way of living.

And so we have hope because if all God wanted, if his heart for us were retribution, he would not be saying these words.

[39 : 22] He would simply be showing retribution and none of us would even be here because we ought to have been summoned to judgment for our contempt long ago, but we're still here. We're still walking and breathing.

We're still eating and drinking. We're still laughing and dancing. We're still going out and enjoying the world around us. Why are we still here? Because God responds with patience. Because God responds with patience.

Sometimes we make this mistake of thinking that because life seems to be going well and good, that therefore God is completely okay with my sin. He thinks it's no big deal because he's treating it like it's no big deal.

No, that's not what's going on. What's going on is our contempt is awful and God is showing unbelievable patience, kindness, because his heart for us is good.

You must know his heart. You will not believe the heart of God for you is good until you know what he is being incredibly patient and gracious to you for.

[40 : 26] The character of God, you know, it's kind of funny. His character shines through, oddly enough, at the beginning of King Saul's ministry at the time when King Saul was at his best when he was Israel's first king.

In 1 Samuel 10, verse 27, Saul has been anointed king and he's mocked and treated with contempt by a few people. Some worthless fellows said, how can this man save us?

And they despised him and brought him no present, but he held his peace. Rather than lashing out and exercising his fury and destroying them as some of the people around him wanted him to do, he held his peace.

He chose not to respond all at once to their contempt. Instead, he left room for peace. And so, the Lord has done the same for you and for me.

I don't have the scripture up on the screen, but I want to read this from Romans chapter 2. In Romans chapter 2, verses 3, beginning of verse 3, Paul writes, Do you suppose, do you suppose, O man, you who judge those who practice such things and yet do them yourself, that you will escape the judgment of God?

[41 : 45] Or do you presume on the riches of his kindness and forbearance and patience, not knowing that God's kindness is meant to lead you to repentance?

But because of your hard and impenitent heart, you are storing up wrath for yourself on the day of wrath when God's righteous judgment will be revealed.

It is the heart of God to first show kindness, forbearance, patience, to give opportunity after opportunity after opportunity to turn from your contempt, to turn from our sins, to turn away, to give us opportunity to mature and to grow and to set aside these things.

Give us opportunity to put all of our faith and all of our trust and all of our confidence in his son Jesus Christ to be forgiven of our sins. That is the heart of God. That is how he wants to relate.

But in the end, if we will not turn, his justice will not ever permit him to allow contempt to linger in his kingdom. When he establishes his kingdom on the earth, contempt can never be a part of it.

[43 : 00] Contempt for him or contempt for one another do not belong in the kingdom of God. God has left room for us to consider our ways to examine and explore our feelings and our attitudes of contempt.

He has given us this opportunity to stop and ask questions. What is going on in me that I am showing contempt? How is contempt showing up in my life? Consider, here's a wonderful example of this.

Consider how King David dealt with his own contempt. In Psalm 139, this is so interesting because if you've been, if you've read through the Psalms well enough, this often becomes one of people's favorites because this is the Psalm which David meditates.

Oh Lord, you have searched me and known me. You know when I sit down and when I rise up, you discern my thoughts. You hem me in behind and before you lay your hand upon me.

And just this deep comfort he draws from a God who surrounds him, who knows him, and is with him wherever he goes. And many people kind of stop reading about two-thirds of the way through the Psalm when David sort of wakes up from this reverie.

[44 : 08] And all of a sudden, a flood of rage enters him. And here is what, here's the part that we don't read. Oh, that you would slay the wicked, O God. O men of blood, depart from me.

They speak against you with malicious intent. Your enemies take your name in vain. Do I not hate those who hate you, O Lord? And do I not loathe those who rise up against you?

I hate them with complete hatred. I count them my enemies. He is saying, look at all the people around me who are showing contempt for you, Lord. Look at them.

Deal with them. I hate them. And then suddenly, he pauses. And all of a sudden, he starts reflecting on what he has just said. And what he says next is reminiscent of how he began the Psalm, of how the Lord searches and knows him.

And here's what David then says next after a pause for reflection. Search me, O God. and know my heart.

[45 : 10] Try me and know my thoughts and see if there be any grievous way in me and lead me in the way everlasting.

God responds with patience to our contempt because what David is all of a sudden realizing is I am in danger of becoming exactly what these people are.

look at what just came out of me. Search me, O God. Lord, I've been so consumed with the contempt that I see in other people.

Ironically, I see their contempt and I start having contempt for them. But first, search me, O God. Know my heart. See if there be any grievous way in me.

It's actually a wonderful, beautiful thing when people actually pray to God's Spirit. Lord, you do the searching. All the stuff in my heart is so messy, so tangled, so complicated. I can't ever get to the bottom of it no matter how hard I try.

[46 : 08] And I've worn myself out with the toil of trying to get, Lord, you search me. Send your Spirit to search me, to know me, to help me uncover what you need me to know about what's happening in here.

See if there be any grievous way in me. If you do that, will the Lord respond with contempt for you? When you humble yourself before Him, will the Lord hold you in contempt?

No. That is not His heart. That is not His way. In Psalm 51, David says, the sacrifices of God are a broken spirit, a broken and contrite heart.

O God, you will not despise. That is a promise. For a broken and contrite heart, the Lord promises, I won't despise you.

I will not hold you in contempt. Will God respond to contempt with retribution? Yes, if He must. But He is a God merciful and gracious, slow to anger, and abounding in steadfast love and faithfulness. [47 : 26] God responds with patience. So in this moment of opportunity, fourth and finally, how does God urge us to respond to contempt?

How does God urge us to respond to this to contempt now while we have opportunity? Because this opportunity does not last forever. The whole point of patience is there is a limit.

First, while you have opportunity, grieve and repent. Grieve and repent. That is what we just read in Psalm 51. A broken and contrite heart, O God, you will not despise.

Speak to Him the words of the tax collector in Luke chapter 18. God, be merciful to me, a sinner.

Tell Him all the specific ways that contempt has been showing up in your life.

Tell Him about the tactics you've been using. Tell Him about the targets of your contempt. Tell Him what you know of the purposes of your heart in showing contempt. Ask Him to do the work of searching and examining you further.

[48 : 41] Grieve for your sin. Do not merely grieve for the consequences of your contempt. That is not true repentance. To grieve and to be like, oh, I'm sorry for how this made my life hard.

No. Grieve the terrible offense against a holy God. Grieve as David does in Psalm 51. For I know my transgressions and my sin is ever before me.

Against you and you only have I sinned and done what is evil in your sight so that you may be justified in your words and blameless and blameless in your judgment.

To repent means to grieve for your sin for what it is against God. And it means to turn away. To say to the Lord, I have had more than enough of contempt in my own heart.

To begin replacing contempt with compassion for others. To begin replacing those cruel words with the kind and gracious words that build others up.

[49 : 47] Because as we're told in James chapter 3, the wisdom from above, here's God's wisdom. It's first pure, then peaceable, gentle, open to reason, full of mercy and good fruits, impartial and sincere, and a harvest of righteousness is sown in peace by those who make peace.

Grieve and repent of your contempt. Now, if you have suffered contempt from others, the Lord encourages you to speak to him about that too, about what you have suffered.

In this case, you are to grieve and lament. Grieve and lament. Many of the psalms that I've quoted over the last two sermons model how you can speak to God about the contempt that you have suffered.

Many of us have shown contempt and suffered contempt. Psalm 123, which we read last week, that's a good start. Read it. You can pray through it by repeating that psalm to God, paraphrase it, use your own words as you speak to him.

with your own life situation in mind. Because the Lord is a safe place, the Lord is a refuge for your tears. He sees and he hears and his heart is with you.

[51 : 19] Lament is not complaining about God with defiance. Lament is complaining to God with faith. and he promises that he hears such a prayer.

He does not look down on it as just stop bothering me with your little problems. Instead, we read in Psalm 102, he regards the prayer of the destitute and does not despise their prayer.

Your problems are not little problems to God. They matter. Grieve and lament the contempt you have suffered. Then, ask for mercy.

Ask for mercy for the contempt you have suffered. It is not wrong to ask for an end to it. Consider these prayers from Psalm 119. Take away from me scorn and contempt, for I have kept your testimonies.

Turn away the reproach that I dread, for your rules are good. No need to try to be holier than God and say, oh, I shouldn't ask for a relief from this.

[52 : 28] That's selfish. Ah, God says you can. You can ask. And by the way, it is a prayer that he will answer. It may not be in the time you would like, but there is coming a day when there will be an end to contempt.

The Lord does not command you to suffer contempt needlessly either. Jesus even warns that, you know, some people simply should not be given the deep and important and vulnerable things of your heart.

You know, you don't have to open up about deep and important things to everybody. Matthew chapter 7, he says, do not give dogs what is holy. Do not throw your pearls before pigs, lest they trample them underfoot and turn to attack you.

When others treated Jesus with contempt, he was prudent with his words. He exercised great care. And he trusted the Lord to deliver him from contempt.

Instead of responding to contempt with contempt, he asked for mercy and God his Father answered him. Because in Acts chapter 4, those who showed him contempt were then were told, this Jesus is the stone that was rejected by you, the builders, which has become the cornerstone.

[53 : 48] He is seated at the right hand of the throne of God. He is crowned with glory and honor and contempt no more has a hold on him. And so God urges us to respond to contempt by praising and honoring the Lord who will bring an end to contempt.

We praise the Lord. We elevate him, not ourselves. In a culture that is all about clever ways to elevate yourselves and feel better about yourselves and post nice Instagram posts making yourself look really good.

We show up here week after week because we need to for just a moment elevate the Lord. Elevate him.

We began this sermon with Isaiah chapter 25 and there in verse 1 Isaiah celebrates that the Lord has promised the end of contempt and he responds to this by saying, Oh Lord, you are my God. I will exalt you. I will praise your name for you have done wonderful things. Plans formed of old, faithful and sure.

[54 : 59] And what are the plans of the Lord for those who have wept tears of pain? What are the plans of the Lord for those who have suffered contempt and reproach?

Verse 8, He will swallow up death forever and the Lord God will wipe away tears from all faces and the reproach of his people he will take away from all the earth for the Lord has spoken.

It will be said on that day, Behold, this is our God. We have waited for him that he might save us.

This is the Lord.

We have waited for him. Let us be glad and rejoice in his salvation. Our God, our Father, we thank you that you have promised an end to contempt.

that you will deal with it. Lord, we turn to you saying, have mercy on us.

[56 : 10] For some of us, we long for that end to contempt. Just give us a bit of a sneak preview of that, a down payment of that promise now. Give us relief.

For those of us who have, and this is true of all of us, Lord, we have shown contempt for others. We have felt it in our hearts. We have made it a way of life. Lord, thank you for your patience.

Thank you for giving us opportunity. Search our hearts, God. Deliver us from the power of the sin in our lives. Let us be known as people who do not show contempt. That whatever sin in the world, whatever foolishness we see in the world and in other people, that when we call it out, we do so not out of contempt, but of a desperate plea for their souls.

Lord God Almighty, make us a people who look like Jesus Christ in every way that a human being can possibly be. We want to be yours and put our trust in you.

Amen.