

ONE LESS, ONE MORE

A Sermon Delivered by

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text>Ephesians 4:1-6

One less preacher of hate. One less disciple of bigotry. One less self-anointed high priest of scapegoating, who maligns a group of people in order to feel better about himself. One less congregation that applauds the hatred and bigotry of their leader; one less scripture-toting soldier of righteousness who insists it is his duty to maim, wreck and kill in the name of God.

One less bomb. One less gun. One less gang. One less derivative excuse of macho self-imposed inferiority that takes from others because it has so little to give. One less pressure point from peer pressure. One less poser of entitlement, stealing lunch money, thieving peace to stir the pot.

One less curse. One less No. One less excuse for failing, cheating, and cutting corners. One less idolator worshipping at the alter of mediocrity. One less whine, complaint, or cynicism lobbed from the lobby of the nay-sayers, the do-nothings, the avoiders of risk, the surfers of the safe, the jaded and jealous who can't play a note but apparently know best how to conduct the orchestra. One less leader in the shadows. One less pretender in the cobwebbed corners of hallways, consuming sour grapes while professing to lead those who refuse to be led, to be taught, to be discipled, turning the milk of mercy into curdled cream. One less spin of the ticket wheel of self-pity.

One more preacher of faith, hope and love. One more disciple with a vision for all God's children, yellow-red-black-and white; one more singer singing praises to the One God who has broken down the dividing wall of hostility and made us one; one more congregation that embraces difference, weaves a community of faith that celebrates the goodness in everyone. One more church, synagogue, mosque and temple that repairs the world, heals the world, redeems the world, wages peace as fiercely as a government wages war. One more dreamer. One more peacemaker. One more selfless Christian who prepares the way of the Lord. One more 'amen' from the people of God who worship in adoration the Crucified and Risen Christ.

One more blessing. One more Yes. One more act of devotion, lighting a candle in the night; one more offer of an hour or a day to solve a problem and shape a church of care. One more faithful person in the pew. One more standing up. One more singing in the choir. One more raising a voice for love, for justice, for Christ-like tender mercies. One more hand on the plough, one more shoulder to the wheel, one more to row, row, row the boat gently down the stream so all God's people can make safe passage. One more commitment to excellence, covenant of love, declaration of emancipation. One more in worship. One more in service. One more to wave the banner of faith, hope and love.

One less commercial. One less infomercial. One less pop up window. One less billboard, bumper sticker or mass market mailer. One less campaign to sell my soul for a mess of porridge. One less hour spent on the trivial in order to dramatize the mundane that keeps us quagmired in the muck of the insipid and trifling details of a life lived without purpose or thought. One less hour spent cheaply discussing the day's events scrolling along the bottom of our TV sets.

One more conversation. One more dialogue into the depths of our souls. One more prayer. One more scripture text carved into the molecular fabric of my brain, stenciled along the gate to my soul, inscribed onto my very heart. One more moment to ponder the noble, the beautiful, the true and pure, the right, the lovely, the honorable. One more minute to measure the height, breadth, and depth of God's love in Christ. One more word of thanks, offered as a ball of light, handed off to the cashier, the cop, the custodian, the teacher, the nurse, the mechanic, the person on my right and on my left. One more Kyrie Eleision--Lord Have Mercy--sung to my Redeemer as I wait in line, wait in traffic, wait for news bad or good, wait online or in the waiting room, one more "Lord have mercy, Christ have mercy."

One less tyrant. One less abusive parent. One less neglected child. One less cold and calculated, mean-spirited, backhanded compliment. One less passive-aggressive, subterranean pretext for character assassination. One less second guess. One less Monday quarterback. One less reactive knee jerk. One less bitter cup to drink, bitter pill to swallow, or bitter retribution.

One more loving mother. One more loving father. One more protective, kind and selfless parent. One more wonderful childhood. One more honest politician. One more honest citizen. One more perfumed compliment sincerely offered. One more person willing to risk and lead despite the second-guessers. One more proactive person, anticipating good things, hoping good things, working for good things. One more cup overflowed by joy. One more peace like a river. One more mighty stream overflowing with justice.

One less demand. One more offer to serve. One less demand. One more blessing. One less demand. One more bridge built. One less bridge burnt. One more hand clasped. One less fist clinched. One more mouth opened in praise. One less tongue unbridled. One more child blessed in our midst. One more elder honored and blessed. One more sanctuary of peace and refuge. One less auditorium of religious entertainment. One more seed sown and watered. One more kindness planted in peace. One more church Christ-centered. One less divisive gesture. One more healing hug. One more church filled with light and love. One more time with music over our heads, a cloud of witnesses urging us on, the Lord high and lifted up and calling us into the future.

One less hungry. One less poor. One more fed. One more sheltered. One more wound healed. One less AIDS case. One more embrace of the lost and the sick. One less illiterate. One more educated. One less cynic. One more hopeful.

One kingdom. One Lord. One Faith. One Baptism. One God, Father and Mother of us all. One more call to the disenfranchised. One more call to repentance and belief. One more visit by the Good Shepherd. One more plea to find our peace in him. One God. One you.

You are the one. You can make a difference. You are just one. But one act of devotion, one act of faith, hope and love can change a life, change a world, transform a community, revive a church. You can be more and you can be less. Yes, I said you can be less. So be less: less offensive, less paranoid, less quick to condemn, less prone to criticize, less determined to your own way, less desirous of power or control, less fearful and afraid. You can be more. So be more: more kind, more patient, more trusting, more quick to believe the good in others, more prone to praise and affirmation, more willing to share, more courageous and brave to walk into the light of the day and withstand the onslaught of night; more full of faith, full of hope, full of love. More Christ-like.

One more day of rest. One more Sunday to hear God's call. One more time to say Yes, to faith, hope and love. One more day to hear the call...and obey.

One less prattle of gossip, one more prayer. One less curse, one more blessing. One less tag of self pity, one more badge of selfless love. One less complaint, one more effort toward a solution. One less denial of God, one more act of faith. One less denunciation of the church, one more affirmation of the sheep of God's pasture. One less day to resist the prodding of God's Spirit, one more day to say 'here am I, Lord.' One more moment in which to give your life to Christ. One more moment to become part of this household of faith. One more day, one more life, lived in the company of Christ.

One less, One more. Amen. +