Today is our last week of our summer sermon series!

I am not sure why, but I think I saved the hardest topic for last.

Today's question is, "What does the Bible say about compromise?"

The short answer is that it doesn't say anything *directly* about compromise.

Jesus doesn't say, "Blessed are the compromisers, for they shall inherit the kingdom of heaven."

Nor does he say, "Blessed are those who don't compromise," because that's the thing about compromise, it's a mixed bag.

When the question was posed to me, I immediately thought, compromise is good.

Who wouldn't like the idea of compromise?

But I quickly found that not everyone shares my view.

I started doing research about the theology of compromise, and lots of clergy seem to think that compromise is a grave sin.

There were abundant blog posts about how God doesn't want us to compromise about anything, ever.

To compromise means that we are giving up on our values, our morals, and we aren't true Christians if we are open to compromise.

Let me tell you, my eyes were opened.

I quickly learned that compromise is a more contentious topic than I thought.

Perhaps the person who posed the question knew this, hence the request for a sermon on such a topic.

But I am grateful for the opportunity to preach about this, which is why I do these summer sermon requests, because if the issue hadn't been brought to my attention, I probably wouldn't have thought to preach a sermon on compromise.

So, despite what others may tell you about the evils of compromise and how we cannot coexist as people who compromise and also be true Christians, the truth is that in order to live in this world, we *have* to compromise sometimes.

It is a necessary part of our life together.

Anyone who has even been married, or worked with other people, or lived with other people, or anyone who has raised children, or had healthy relationships with their parents or siblings knows that we have to compromise.

Just imagine what this world would be like if we all refused to compromise.

It would be a terrible place to live.

Imagine if we were all so stubborn and so convicted by our values, our opinions, our beliefs that we never budged on our feelings or how we thought a situation should be resolved.

I imagine humanity might not actually exist anymore.

We would have annihilated each other by now, because peace is brought about by compromise.

So, compromise is necessary, but the truth is that we, as Christians, are held to a higher calling.

We live by ideals, which maybe the rest of the world doesn't value.

When the rest of the world says, "Pay someone what you can get away with," we say, "pay them a living wage."

When the rest of the world says, "look out for yourself first," we say, "look out for the most vulnerable first."

When the rest of the world says, "punish them," we say, "help them."

When the rest of the world says, "You should be afraid of them," we say, "we should try to understand them."

When the rest of the world says, "It's inefficient, it's not cost-effective, or it's not our problem," we say, "but it's the loving, caring and compassionate thing to do."

But unfortunately, not everyone, Christian or otherwise, has the same values that we do.

And we know what happens when religious people refuse to budge, it often means spilled blood and broken relationships, sometimes even broken countries.

So how do we reconcile our values with the practicalities of living in community together?

How do we compromise but not compromise on our values?

Is that even possible?

Well, I picked this passage from Paul's letter to the Romans because they were living in a similar situation.

Paul wrote this letter to early Christians who were trying to figure out how to be Christian in a world full of Jews and Gentiles who were, to say the least, hostile to the followers of this new religion.

Drawing from the teachings of Jesus himself, love is the overarching paradigm for the whole passage.

Love is the foundation for his whole message.

Paul tells us that love needs to be the key moral norm for all of God's people.

After all, Jesus said the two greatest commandments are, *"love God and love your neighbor as yourself,"* (Matthew 22:36-40).

Paul assumes that his audience knows this, and so he tells them to make their love *genuine.*

That means, don't just profess it, live it, don't just teach it, demonstrate it.

And sometimes living out love, because love is a verb not a noun, sometimes it means that we have to compromise.

Sometimes loving the other means meeting them in the middle, it means valuing peace over retribution, over vengeance, over money.

Okay, so compromise is sometimes necessary, got it.

But we can't forget that we hold ourselves to that higher standard that I mentioned and we really don't want to compromise on our values, so, the question is, when to make that call, when to compromise and when to plant our feet and not budge?

Ask yourself, what are the consequences of your compromise?

How will it affect you, how will it affect others?

If you compromise, how much will the outcome conflict with your values as a Christian?

Will your compromise foster and promote peace, okay, but at what cost?

Is a compromised deal better than no deal at all?

Paul and Jesus call us to put love above all else, so will your compromise cause you to be unloving towards someone else?

If it will, then I say, don't do it.

But if compromising forces you to sacrifice less important things, like your ego, or money, or then I say, put love above all else, and compromise.

Take the example of Jesus healing people on the sabbath.

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The religious leaders accused him of being sacrilegious.

You could say that he sacrificed his faith, that be broke the letter of the law.

But you have to ask yourself, at what cost?

Do we think he sacrificed his values?

I would say that he compromised.

He decided that healing someone was more important than adhering to the law, because he put love and caring for others, above all else.

He trusted that when he had to defend himself to God that he could justify why he made the decision that he made.

He realized that he answered not to the rabbis, but to God alone, and so do we.

Maybe that's something we should ask ourselves when we are put in such a situation, could we justify our decision to God?

Do we think our God, who we believe puts love above all else, would understand why we made a compromise that we made?

Ultimately, our job is to leave peaceably with one another.

Now, we know that peace is more than just the absence or conflict or violence, it's a deep and abiding respect of the other.

I think that we do respect each other more when we all compromise.

It's the refusal to compromise, which can often lead to dysfunction within communities, and more locally, within families.

In the worst of scenarios, it leads to cutoff, which is unhealthy for any social system.

So I say, compromise whenever the outcome of your decision means more love, more peace, and allows you to stay in relationship with the other party.

You might sacrifice your ego, but I do believe that being loving and compassionate are more important than being right.

You might sacrifice money, but you can always earn more, but you can't always heal broken relationships.

You might sacrifice your comfort, but Jesus calls us to put the needs of others before our own comfort.

You might sacrifice that sweet feeling of revenge, but Paul says, *"Do not repay anyone evil for evil"* (Romans 12:17).

And if the compromise forces you to choose one person over another, ask yourself, who has more power?

Who has more social capital?

Who has more access to financial resources?

Compromise in such a way that you are able to privilege the less powerful person, as that's what Jesus would have done, and in today's passage, Paul calls us to, *"associate with the lowly"* (Romans 12: 16).

Friends, it's not easy to be in this world but not of it.

It's not easy to be a people of faith who hold a different set of values from the ones we see promoted all around us.

It's not easy to know when to compromise and when to stand firm.

But just remember that our job is to "love the lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul and with all your strength, and to love your neighbor as yourself." (Luke 10:27)

If you keep this in the forefront of your mind, I trust that you'll have the wisdom to know when to compromise.

May the love of God be the guiding force, which goes before all the decisions we make.

Amen.