

# Falling In Love with The body of Christ

## Rev. Dr. Kim Engelmann

### West Valley Presbyterian Church

If you talk to my husband Tim, he will tell you that I am an avid bargain hunter. I love rummage sales, estate sales, garage sales, used clothing places...pick of the litter in San Mateo is one of my favorite places because it's a used clothing and furniture store – its actually where I got the white chair in my office for those of you who have visited me in there – for so much less than I could have purchased it in the store – and not only that but all the money goes to help poor little homeless animals. I love Pick of the Litter.

Anyway, if I do go to a regular store I look for a particular kind of sale...I call it an AS IS Sale... In many stores, you can find certain merchandise where you can get a great deal. The tip-off is that there is a little tag attached to the products in this section, and that tag always has the same two words on it: **AS IS**.

#### **What does AS IS mean when you see it on the sale rack?**

Someone said it...when you see the tag AS IS...what do you know? You know, beyond a shadow of a doubt, that these are somehow damaged goods. If you look hard enough you are going to find a flaw.

You're going to find a stain that will not come out, a zipper that won't zip, a button that won't butt. They don't tell you where the flaw is exactly...you have to look... But when you see that TAG...AS IS...we know something is wrong.

So when you find it—and you will find it—they are basically saying don't come whining to us about it.

You won't get any refunds or exchanges or sympathy.

**Don't expect perfection. Not here!** You have received fair warning! If you want this item, there's only one way to obtain it. **You must take it As Is.**

I was thinking about this with regard to the church and this little book we are reading. There's a lot in this little book about being non-judgemental, and loving the church. This week we learned about taking our family to church, and how important it was to fall in love with the church, and that our family and others will follow our example and catch our love for the church...if we continue to refrain from judgment of others.

And I was thinking about how quickly I can judge people, and especially people who call themselves Christians...because if Christians mess up they are hypocrites...if the world messes up...well they are the world

And I got to thinking...

What if under our names, on our nametags, we wrote our names on them...and then we all had the words under there **AS IS**...

(nametags in pews...take one...pass it down...write your name...and then add the words...AS IS courageous...) And I thought...you know if we all had that on there...

It might make us a little more gracious to one another. It might help us to forgive, to love one another, to bear with each other...to see that none of us has "it altogether"

"Kim Engelmann...AS IS" You would see that and you would know right away that Perfection is not here...that I have struggles, and pain, and weakness and all kinds of things I need help with...I need the church, and I need (as Todd said last week) your prayer support and your love and your fellowship and your friendship.

How many times have I coined the phrase from Walt Gerber, my mentor and pastor colleague/friend at Menlo Park...

We are a hospital for sinners. Let's say together, "**We are a hospital for sinners.**"

And we love this hospital the church because it brings healing but

**We come AS IS** seeking that healing, restoration, forgiveness, strength and help...

So if that is the case...and we are an imperfect people

Why then would we *ever expect* that the church would be a perfect or close to a perfect place, when it is filled with imperfect people...AS IS people... here seeking God?

Doesn't make sense! It isn't logical...

Why would we even engage in judging one another..."seeing the speck in our brothers or sisters eye and failing to notice the plank in our own?"...when we've already acknowledged that imperfection lives here.

"No one is righteous. No not one!" says the scripture.

People say to me all the time...two just this past week

I am not worthy to be a Christian or be a part of this church. I don't have my act together.

Well guess what? No you aren't worthy, and you may not have your act together, whatever that means.... But Jesus has this inexplicable love for AS IS People.

Look at these stuffies.

Look at Chris' stuffy. (slide for kids sermon)

They are loved AS IS by the children who find them precious. And in the same way we are loved by God, and invited to come to church, be vulnerable, share our weaknesses together, and together rely on his strength..not ours

*Please don't misunderstand me. It isn't that we aren't all growing more into the image of Christ everyday. I am not saying we are stagnated in sin...but I am saying in this life we aren't ever going to reach perfection. God just loves AS IS people.*

*He died for an AS IS church. His grace, not our perfection, is what we rely on.*

And if he loved the church that much, in its AS IS state, then so can I.

Charles Knuckles read, "While we were yet sinners, Christ died for us." While were imperfect... AS IS people...Christ died for us.

So what the book tells us to do today is to love this church of AS IS people, refrain from judgement, and bring your family ...to this AS IS place...because God works through this AS IS place...in power and might....to make himself known, and change lives, and bring healing and hope.

**God is a master at using imperfect things and imperfect people to bring about his perfect will.**

And his perfect will is that the church help people to know the love of Jesus. Grandparent and parents who are here...*thank you* for bringing your family to church...your children and your grandchildren.

You have no idea what an impact this will make in your child's later life, especially if you bring them on a consistent basis. The church has power to communicate Jesus' love in a way that no other institution or organization can...and that power of Jesus' love, changes lives.

*One grandmother who goes here told me this past week, that she was walking with her grandson, and they had just come from this church, and the little guy looks up at her and said, "Grandma, why do they just love me at church SO much?" Do you see what gets communicated in a deep way? God's love in Jesus Christ through the AS IS people of God .*

***God's strength is made perfect in our weakness. His light shines through all the holes of our imperfection.***

And I have something to add to chapter of this little book. It is a challenge. When people come here as a family, or bring friends, or come alone... it is up to us who have been here for a long time, to talk to parents and to the children and to the teenagers. To make that connection... especially with the kids...I don't think my kids willingly would have come to church with me for their entire growing up years if it hadn't been for dear saints in the pews who came and took them under their wing...

I want you to know that

Dean Latter always talked to my daughter Julie after worship, and greeted her with a smile when she came in. She looked so forward to seeing Dean every Sunday when she was here.

And sometimes I don't think she would have darkened the door on Sundays (who wants to hear your Mom talk at you again, right?) with me, except that she was looking forward to seeing you, Dean. How important your prayers were for her, how important your smile and affirmation and willingness to talk to her.

I also remember my son Jonathan, at five years old, hating Sunday School at another church. I had no idea what to do with him, until an usher saw me trying to convince him that SS wasn't that bad (Jonathan preferred the sermon in big church) and he took my son under his wing, gave him an usher badge and said to me (I had to get up and preach) don't worry...I've got him, AND then said to my son..."*you can be my special assistant. You can take the offering. I want you to help me count the money afterward. And you can share a donut with me while we do it.*" Jonathan's eyes got as big as saucers and he walked away...from that time on he ushered and did two services in a row.

You see, if you are older and have been here for awhile, can you befriend a younger person like that. It made all the difference for my son.

Jonathan is grown up now – he is at U of Michigan - but his little usher badge is still prominently displayed on his desk in his room. It's what kept him in church, it's what made him look forward to

coming...because someone took an interest in him. Someone took him under his wing.

So folks, we need to encourage everyone to bring their families to church. But, when they get here let's take some interest. Let's make an effort to talk to people we don't usually talk to. Let's reach out to the teenager, the child, the person we don't know.

Let's find a way to make those life changing connections, across age and stage, and take initiative to foster relationships in the name of Jesus.

We are an AS IS people...yes.

But we belong to a great God, who has put his Holy Spirit inside of us.

It's him, shining through our AS IS nature, that makes the church a place filled with the love of Jesus of transformed lives.

*Sometimes I think, what if church was a place where every time I came in that front door I felt so loved that I couldn't wait to get here?*

*What if church was a place where I knew I belonged because everyone was honest about their AS IS status...and no one tried to hide behind masks of perfection?*

*What if the church was a place where every week I knew I could come and there would be a community of people who would take an authentic interest in me, take the time to talk to me, and remind me that God loved me by spending time with me?*

*What if no matter what I looked like, where I came from, no matter what I had done, or how badly I felt, what if I always knew that church was where I needed to be because I knew that when I walked in those doors...AS IS... I would be accepted, loved and received as if I were Jesus himself walking in.*

Charles Knuckles, director of the mens recovery program at Cititeam is with us this morning to share with you his AS IS story.

We see Charles every Service Worship Sunday when we go and make the barbbque and feed the homeless and residents there. Charles thanks so much for being willing to share with us today. I hope that as you listen to him you will be inspired to recognize the power inherent in loving and receiving one another AS IS...