**Series: #Life Together**

VBC

Pastor John Johnson

Ephesians 4:1-2

February 9-10, 2013

**“Putting Up With One Another”**

A favorite film—the romantic comedy—*As Good as It Gets*

-the story of a quirky novelist, played by Jack Nicholson, who meets a waitress, a single mom played by Helen Hunt

-two characters who endure a long, laborious, and challenging relationship

-he is kind and generous—as well as *agoraphobic, obsessive-compulsive, and terminally offensive*

-just when he begins to get it right—he turns rude and disgusting—alienating everyone within earshot

-meanwhile, Helen Hunt is trying to bear up with all of his behaviors—the only waitress who will wait on him

-at times wanting to love Nicholson, and at other times—determined to kill him

It captures something of the church—filled with its own *abnormal* cast of characters—

*“…a mixed bag of humanity—broken, hobbled, sexually abused and spiritually abused, emotionally unstable, passive and passive aggressive, neurotic men and women. Men at fifty who have failed a dozen times and know that they will never amount to anything. Women who have been ignored and scorned and abused in a marriage in which they have been faithful. People living with children and spouses deep in addictions. Lepers and blind and deaf and dumb sinners—fresh converts excited to be in on this new life. Spirited young people, energetic and eager to be guided into a life of love and compassion, mission and evangelism. A few seasoned saints who know how to pray and listen and endure. And a considerable number of people who pretty much just show up”—Practice Resurrection*

*-it will take a godly community to nurture us back to health*

-a society committed to “depravity management” (Ortberg)

-as CS Lewis put it—“by ourselves, we are not large enough”

-it will take a community committed to the mutuality demands—love, receive, encourage, provoke one another, and this one found in Ephesians 4—*read 4:1-3*

-accepting, bearing with, putting up with—is the next needful “one another”

-critical in a church like Ephesus—that was a multicultural, multigenerational church where people tended to rub one another wrong—annoy, frustrate— just like today

1. WHAT DOES IT MEAN TO BEAR WITH ONE ANOTHER?
   1. What it DOESN’T MEAN
      1. to bear with one another is not the same thing as forgiving one another—for this implies a wrong has been committed against someone

-an injury or hurt—an act that has crossed a line—betraying or lying or taking from another

* + 1. to bear with is not the same thing as putting up with another’s heresy

-with a different Jesus, a different gospel, a different authority

*-these are things we do not make room for*

* + 1. nor is bearing with another to be confused with enablement—indulging irresponsible behavior, inappropriate humor, unhealthy competiveness

-to bear up is not to ignore accountability—it is not about coddling sinful behavior, acts that violate biblical mandates

* 1. What it DOES MEAN
     1. to bear with is to make room for people *to be who they are*

-with all their personality quirks, their irritating habits, their short comings

-people do have them—a certain laugh, a certain slurping, an inability to disengage from their IPhones when in a person to person conversation

Illustration—I was reading a blog post—“7 Stupid Habits of Highly Annoying People”—among them—

1. Obsessive Social Media Updating
2. Honking Immediately at the Start of a Green light
3. Leaving long, instructive Voicemail Greetings
4. Setting the car alarm to hyper-sensitive (I hope those subwoofers destroy your hearing rendering you one step closer to complete biological failure)
5. Not getting out of the way—“king of habits”—the self-unaware people who clog lanes, aisles (like they’re the only ones on this planet!)

This sermon may inspire some to write 7 Habits of Highly Annoying Villagers—God says—make room for them!

* + 1. to bear with is putting up with personal preferences that might bother (stupid jokes; loving cats; following the Raiders)

-Paul asked the Corinthians to put up with some of his annoying truth—2 Corinthians 11

illustration-one of the challenges of having a son with Aspergers is giving room for him to think the way he thinks

-those on this autistic scale think differently, process differently—sees the world in black and white

-miss social queues, misread faces

-the one another required is “bear with” –which goes both ways

* + 1. it is adjusting to self-appointed experts, bossy volunteers, incompetent leaders, and self-absorbed friends

-giving space for immaturity to develop into maturity—much like parents do with their kids

-young preachers who preach bad sermons—as well as older ones still learning

-the word is used of Jesus bearing with the slowness of His disciples—Matthew 17

* + 1. bearing with is living with an understanding of behaviors rooted in a painful past—to forbear is to understand the trajectory of one’s life—the issues one has had to overcome—lack of confidence, need to prove oneself
    2. to bear with is to flex with differences
       1. differences with how another dresses, eats, plays, talks
       2. how one thinks politically
       3. accepting worship differences

-style of music/ volume of the mikes/ coffee in the sanctuary/hands in the air/off key singing

* + - 1. living with someone else’s interpretation of Scripture on matters that are not so theologically important

-young earth/old earth; premill/amill; 1st blessing/2nd blessing; elder rule/congregational rule; immersion/sprinkle

-God tells us in Romans 14 not to argue about doubtful issues…but rather pursue what promotes peace and what builds up one another—verses 1-19

* + - 1. bearing with different cultural differences

-some cultures focus on tasks—others on relationships

-some are more about the individual—some are more about the community

-some handle conflict directly—some far more indirectly

-some are punctual—others are late

-but how can we do this? What will it require?

1. HOW CAN WE BEAR WITH ONE ANOTHER?

-The context gives several accompanying helps—

1. It will REQUIRE HUMILITY
   1. to bear with requires the setting aside of any exalted view of self, any assumptions we have it right

-humility slows us down, guards us from imposing our wills—insisting things be done our way

-it yields to let people be who they are

* 1. a humble heart acknowledges that others have put up with me—and still do

-put up with foolish decisions I have made, stupid things I have said, petty concerns that have occupied my small mind

illustration—this week I was in California teaching—and staying in a home with a dog—a boxer—the type that smell, slobber, and never stop moving

-I bear up—because—anyone who comes to our home must put up with Sherlock

* 1. humility also acknowledges that God bears up with us daily

-it would stagger our imaginations to think about what God puts up with each day

-seriously challenged imaginations, puny sized faith

-moodiness, obnoxiousness, sour attitudes, pettiness

(there he goes again)

-Jesus seems to have given His disciples lots of room—as well as me

1. It will REQUIRE GENTLENESS

-to bear with others requires a certain extension of kindness, a tempered spirit

-grace in the place of abrasiveness

-stooping to bear with the weaker—strength under control

-“Now we who are strong have an obligation to bear the weaknesses of those without strength, and not to please ourselves”—Romans 15:1

1. It will REQUIRE PATIENCE

-patience increases our capacity to absorb irritants

-enables us to suck up nuisances, the ordinary fallout of working together

-endurance, “long temper” in contrast to short temper

-long fuse and short memory

-suffering through one’s lesser gifts—ILLUSTRATION—Linda, Lents

1. It will REQUIRE LOVE

-which is more than mere politeness

-to bear in love means that we are not holding to a certain disdain

-or a condescending attitude, an underlying disapproval

-to bear is to look at annoying people with imaginative love

-see them for who they are—my brother/sister in Christ

1. WHY SHOULD WE BEAR WITH ONE ANOTHER?
   1. We have the ABILITY

-He has given us the capacity to bear with others—this is what chapter 1-3 teaches us

-this is why Paul begins 4:1 with “therefore”

-He has blessed with every spiritual blessing—1:3

-we have been bought, redeemed, adopted, given an inheritance, *lavished with grace*—1:5-12

-united with Christ’s death and resurrection so that we can live resurrected lives—*above our natural inclinations*—2:5

-we are saved by grace—reconciled us into one new humanity in which the walls of hostility have been broken—2:14

-brought into a family, a community radically different from any other in the world

-all of which leads Paul to conclude at the end of chapter 3—

“Now to Him who is able to do whatever we ask or think—more than we ask or think—far more abundantly than we can ask or imagine—according to the power working within”

-we have this resident HS power at work in the church that enables us to bear with bulletins at the end of the service, getting the wrong drink at the cafe!

-we no longer have to be the impatient, irritated, angry, edgy, intolerant, touchy, irked, unbearable, overbearing faultfinder we once were—*we have been saved from this*

* 1. We have a CALLING

-to a purpose far bigger than our biases, our annoyances

-we have been called to live out the gospel—embody a counterculture

-be an alternative community where people are united in love

-where the world sees the body of Christ and find it compelling

CONCLUSION

-in that big frame—hymn selections or one’s dress or one’s view of church polity doesn’t matter that much

-they aren’t worth fighting or dying for

-when we let small things get in the way—and we refuse to put up or bear with others

-when differences in style, music, choice of movies, political parties, personalities inhibit our spiritual mandate to bear with others

-how can our message of the gospel ever get off the ground?

-who would be convinced?

THE MAIN THING IS TO KEEP THE MAIN THING THE MAIN THING—AND THAT IS THE MAIN THING!

Some questions—

1. What is bothering you that no longer need to bother you?

2. What is this verse addressing in your life right now that is saying—put it aside (besides putting up with this sermon)?

3. What is it that the heat of love is more than able to evaporate?