

Title: Will you be my neighbor?

Text: Matthew 5:43-48

Matthew 5

43 Ye have heard that it hath been said, Thou shalt love thy neighbour, and hate thine enemy.

44 But I say unto you, Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you, and persecute you;

45 ***That ye may be the children of your Father which is in heaven:*** for he maketh his sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sendeth rain on the just and on the unjust.

46 For if ye love them which love you, what reward have ye? do not even the publicans the same?

47 And if ye salute your brethren only, what do ye more than others? do not even the publicans so?

48 ***Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect.***

Luke 6

26 Woe unto you, when all men shall speak well of you! for so did their fathers to the false prophets.

27 But I say unto you which hear, Love your enemies, **do good to them which hate you**,

28 **Bless them that curse you**, and **pray for them which despitefully use you**.

29 And unto him that smiteth thee on the one cheek offer also the other; and him that taketh away thy cloak forbid not to take thy coat also.

30 Give to every man that asketh of thee; and of him that taketh away thy goods ask them not again.

31 And as ye would that men should do to you, do ye also to them likewise.

32 For if ye love them which love you, what thank have ye? for sinners also love those that love them.

33 And if ye do good to them which do good to you, what thank have ye? for sinners also do even the same.

34 And if ye lend to them of whom ye hope to receive, what thank have ye? for sinners also lend to sinners, to receive as much again.

35 But love ye your enemies, and do good, and lend, hoping for nothing again; and your reward shall be great, and ***ye shall be the children of the Highest:*** for he is kind unto the unthankful and to the evil.

36 ***Be ye therefore merciful, as your Father also is merciful.***

Introduction

Where we ended last week. We are people able and commanded to FORGIVE

1. Vengeance does not belong to us. We yield it over to God. They may mean yielding it over to a civil system.
 - a. Justice is decided by the court.
 - b. Forgiveness is a matter of the heart and is a sentence the court can't give.
 2. Forgive when you feel disrespected: **but whosoever shall smite thee on thy right cheek, turn to him the other also.**
 3. When you know you are in the right: **And if any man will sue thee at the law, and take away thy coat, let him have thy cloak also.**
 4. Forgive when you are being taken advantage: **And whosoever shall compel thee to go a mile, go with him twain.**
 5. Forgive and be willing to let go of your stuff: **Give to him that asketh thee, and from him that would borrow of thee turn not thou away.**
- Consideration of personal abuse and of the response of self-sacrifice leads naturally to the broader question of **hatred and love.**
 - You haven't seen anything yet! The crescendo. LOVE YOUR ENEMIES! BE PERFECT!
 - Shakespeare to Disney, most powerful factor in the world. Love is an incredible force.
 - Series of examples clarifying what Jesus means by 'fulfilling the law' v.17
 - They are trying to detect moral compromise in Jesus' teaching, rather he comes to do the law. Like when they throw the woman at his feet.
 - the only way they had ever fulfilled the law was by knocking the bar down to their level
 - Jesus resets the law to its most difficult notch, then insists his followers will clear the bar!
 - Jesus wants them to see the glaring difference in DNA between them and God - paternity test
- I. **Exemplifying the Love of the father, not earning it.**
 - II. **Extend our borders so that our enemies become our neighbors.**
 - III. **Embracing Obligation to our Enemies, our new neighbors.**

I. Exemplifying the Love of the father, not earning it. v.45-47

A. Is this a hard law being overwritten by an even more difficult law?

1. We have to surpass the righteousness of the Pharisees.
 - a) They took **Leviticus 19:18** with the emphasis we have to love the lovable.
Thou shalt not avenge, nor bear any grudge against the children of thy people, but thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself: I am the Lord.
 - (1) They have changed the Scripture to match their hearts.
 - (2) They redefine what it means to be a neighbor.
 - b) We are told to love the unloveable.
 - (1) Jesus said something much different. **v.44**
 - (2) We are to love our neighbors AND our enemies.
2. We will not live **perfectly** but **powerfully!**
 - a) He is not just saying “I have an impossible standard of righteousness you will never meet on your own, so trust my righteousness”.
 - b) He is saying “If you will come to me, and trust in me, and receive the power of the kingdom, then you WILL be able to live this way (not perfectly, but powerfully), and your life will be the light of the world that proves you are the children of God”
 - c) So the fruit we produce, like loving our enemies, is not produced in our own strength

B. This relationship was started when we realized we were spiritual bankrupt.

1. **Matthew 5:3** - first sermon in series / my favorite / Broken **Blessed are the poor in spirit: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.**
2. It is not those who are healthy who need a physician, but those who are sick.
Mark 2:17 **When Jesus heard it, he saith unto them, They that are whole have no need of the physician, but they that are sick: I came not to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance.**
 - a) “Mistakers” never run to God. They run away. As long as it’s just a mistake, I don’t need God.
 - b) Examples
 - (1) Women caught in sin. Jesus did not say her circumstances caused her to make a mistake. He said she is a sinner and deserves to die.
 - (2) Prodigal son. Son does not say he got caught up and made some poor choices. Father says “quick” get a robe and ring (sonship). Doesn’t make him grovel.
 - c) We are sinners in need of a Savior. **Romans 3:23**
 - (1) The sooner you and I embrace our sinfulness, the sooner you and I are candidates for God’s grace.
 - (2) The sooner you and I embrace our sinfulness, the sooner we have an opportunity to meet our Savior.
 - (3) The sooner we see our misdeeds as sin, the sooner we are, the closer we are, to knowing what it feels like to be forgiven.

3. We abide no fruit, without Him. **John 15:5** I am the vine, ye are the branches: He that abideth in me, and I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit: for without me ye can do nothing.

In the shadow of my hurt, forgiveness feel like a decision to reward my enemy. **But in the shadow of the cross**, forgiveness is merely a gift from one undeserving soul to another.

C. First receivers then imitators of God's love.

1. You are a child of God and should act the way your Father acts. **5:45, Luke 6:36**

5:45 That ye may be the children of your Father which is in heaven: for he maketh his sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sendeth rain on the just and on the unjust. **6:36 Be ye therefore merciful, as your Father also is merciful.**

- a) Let your light shine. **5:16**

Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven.

(1) Jesus speaks to the disciples and calls God their Father.

(2) When people see our good works they glorify the Father.

(a) Why? Because our Father is in us helping us and enabling us to do the good works

(b) The light that they let shine IS the light of their Father's love within them.

- b) Basis of the Golden rule. **7:11-12**

If ye then, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children, how much more shall your **Father which is in heaven give good things** to them that ask him? **THEREFORE** all things whatsoever ye would that men should do to you, do ye even so to them: for this is the law and the prophets.

(1) Jesus is loving toward us **THEREFORE** we should love others.

(2) Jesus makes our love for others the result or fruit of God's fatherly love for us, not the payment we make to become his children.

(3) Polynesian who had around their huts special articles hanging all around the roof of the hut as reminders of their hut. They would stay there until there was revenge. - We do not hang things because our Father does not. That is not the custom of this tribe!

- c) Good Trees Bearing Good Fruit **7:16-17**

Ye shall know them by their fruits. Do men gather grapes of thorns, or figs of thistles Even so every good tree bringeth forth good fruit; but a corrupt tree bringeth forth evil fruit.

(1) Jesus is saying is that you cannot produce the fruit of love in order to become a good tree.

(2) You have to become a good tree in order to produce the fruit of love.

2. How does God love compared to the Pharisees.

For he maketh his sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sendeth rain on the just and on the unjust.

a) God sends sun and rains on the good and the evil. **v.45b**

(1) God is an equal opportunity blesser - scandalously extravagant in blessings to rebels

(2) If we line the whole world up in order of perceived blessings, no correspondence to holiness.

(3) One reason why prosperity gospel so erroneous - blessings no sure sign of God's approval

(4) why would God bless unrepentant rebels? no explanation outside of his nature - **Micah 7:18**

Who is a God like unto thee, that pardoneth iniquity, and passeth by the transgression of the remnant of his heritage? he retaineth not his anger for ever, because he delighteth in mercy.

(5) Before we Christians lose sleep over this, let us remember that all blessings undeserved

(6) We are the most blessed of all rebels! we are the greatest of God's blessing scandals!

b) God loves those who love him, like the Pharisees. He loves those who do not love Him, unlike the Pharisees. **v. 46**

For if ye love them which love you, what reward have ye? do not even the publicans the same?

c) God is merciful, the Pharisees are mercenaries.

(1) **Luke 6:36** Be merciful. **Be ye therefore merciful, as your Father also is merciful.**

(2) Jonah was taught about being gracious. He wanted to be something different than His God was. He knew God was gracious. **Jonah 4:2**

I knew that thou art a gracious God, and merciful, slow to anger, and of great kindness, and repentest thee of the evil

(a) Jonah has compassion on a plant.

(b) God teaches Jonah about grace.

Transition: Jesus tells you that your great motivation ought to be a desire to be like your heavenly Father. Loving our enemies is a proof that the power of the kingdom has entered your life, not a payment for you to present to enter the Kingdom

II. Extent our borders so that our enemies become our neighbors.

A. The GREAT COMMISSION helps us understand this command.

1. Illustration: [The story of Raymond in Iran.](#)
2. One of the last things he said **Matthew 28:18-20**
18 And Jesus came and spake unto them, saying, All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth. **19** Go ye therefore, and **teach all nations**, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost: **20** Teaching them to **observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you:** and, lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world.
 - a) Told to reach the world. Greatest expression of love.
 - b) Told to observe all things. A way to live as we go about this mission.

B. Pharisees restricted the definition of neighbor.

1. They chose to misunderstand.
 - a) They overlook **Leviticus 19:34** about how to love the stranger.
But the stranger that dwelleth with you shall be unto you as one born among you, and thou shalt love him as thyself; for ye were strangers in the land of Egypt: I am the Lord your God.
 - b) They mixed up teaching about separation. **Genesis 15**
 - (1) God told them to destroy Canaan.
 - (2) He had been merciful for 400 years.
 - (3) God not use decide the enemies.
 - (4) We must beware the Pharisees' temptation, the temptation to try and find approval from the word of God for our own lovelessness.
2. Jesus addresses this in the parable of the Good Samaritan. **Luke 10**
 - a) The holy pious priest and Levite didn't see him as a neighbor and a despised and hated Samaritan did.
 - b) Treats him as a neighbor. **10:35**
And on the morrow when he departed, he took out two pence, and gave them to the host, and said unto him, Take care of him; and whatsoever thou spendest more, when I come again, I will repay thee.

C. Who have you decided is your neighbor?

1. [Are the Elrods our neighbors? Two doors down.](#)
2. I think you guys have a narrow view of your enemies and maybe an even narrower view of who your neighbors are.
3. Help those who are not "near unto you" **Deut 22:2**
And if thy brother be not nigh unto thee, or if thou know him not, then thou shalt bring it unto thine own house, and it shall be with thee until thy brother seek after it, and thou shalt restore it to him again
 - a) [Get rid of the "awkward distance" illustration.](#)
 - b) Get rid of that 3rd category. Not Neighbor, Not Enemy.. just there.
4. Help your enemy in the same manner. **Exodus 23:4,5**

If thou meet **thine enemy's** ox or his ass going astray, thou shalt surely bring it back to him again. 5If thou see the ass of him that hateth thee lying under his burden, and wouldest forbear to help him, thou shalt surely help with him.

- a) Now we're not talking about nation against nation in war. We're not talking about a criminal justice process. We're talking about the day to day routine of human relationships.
- b) **Job 31:29, 30** Job knew it was sin to rejoice when you enemy has a failure. **If I rejoiced at the destruction of him that hated me**
- c) **Psalms 7:3** David knew how to treat an enemy.
O LORD my God, if I have done this; if there be iniquity in my hands;
 - (1) It's wrong to be evil towards those that are good to you.
 - (2) It's even wrong to be evil towards those that are evil to you

III. Embracing Obligation to our Enemies, our new neighbors.

A. What is our obligations to our neighbors.

1. Bless them. **v. 47, 6:28**

28 Bless them that curse you, and pray for them which despitefully use you.

a) We should greet others. **v.47**

And if ye salute your brethren only, what do ye more than others? do not even the publicans so?

- (1) Be genuinely excited about the presence of someone who has not treated you so well.
- (2) People make decisions all the time based upon who will be there.
- b) Speak good of those who speak evil of you. **Luke 6:28**
- c) "All around Jesus were walls and fences. He came for the very purpose of bursting those barriers so that love - pure, warm, divine, infinite love - would be able to flow straight down from the heart of God. Hence from His own marvelous heart, into the hearts of men, His love overleaped all the boundaries of race and nationality and party and age and sex. When He said, 'I tell you love your enemies,' He must have startled His audience, for He was saying something that probably never before had been said so succinctly, positively, and forcefully." **William Hendrickson**

2. Meeting their practical needs. **v. 44, 5:28**

44 But I say unto you, Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you, and persecute you;

- a) Even unbelievers can help someone they love.
 - (1) That takes no inner divine strength.
 - (2)
- b) Called to a higher standard.
 - (1) If they hunger or thirst help them. **Proverbs 25: 21**
 - (2) Abram in fight with Lot gives him the best land. **Gen 13:8**
 - (3) David in cave with Saul. **Cuts his robe. 1 Samuel 24**
 - (4) Give your cloak away. Look out for their best.

29 And unto him that smiteth thee on the one cheek offer also the other; and him that taketh away thy cloak forbid not to take thy coat also. **30** Give to every man that asketh of thee; and of him that taketh away thy goods ask them not again.

31 And as ye would that men should do to you, do ye also to them likewise
(5) Dirk Williams / Anabaptist / Condemned to Death / 1567. Love soldier chasing him / frozen lake

(6) Evil for Evil - Criminal. Good for Good human. Good for Evil is divine.

3. Pray for them. **v. 44, 5:28**

Bless them that curse you, and pray for them which despitefully use you.

a) Prayer for your enemies is one of the deepest forms of love, because it means that you have to really want that something good happen to them.

(1) Jesus on the cross.

(2) Stephen under the stones.

(3) David at the death of his enemies. **35:14**

(a) When a man can weep over his enemy like he weeps over his mother in calamity, he has learned a dimension of love that is far beyond the human level

(b) David would not mock his Maker. **Proverbs 17:5**

b) Jesus is calling us not just to do good things for our enemy, like greeting them and helping supply their needs; he is also calling us to WANT their best, and to express those wants in prayers when the enemy is nowhere around.

c) Pray for their salvation. **Romans 10:1**

d) Interesting that 'pray for' is set up in parallel to 'love' - this shows inward desire to bless

e) It also demonstrates that there is no surer way to care for someone than to pray for them

B. Have you become a neighbor? Luke 10

a) Look back at the story Jesus asked which man treated him as a neighbor?
v. 36

b) Jesus turned the tables. If you're a neighbor, then anybody in your path is going to get your neighborly love.

c) We basically are object oriented in our love, aren't we? You know, you sort of love people on the basis of the kind of object they are.

d) If you're a neighbor and your heart is filled with love, any object that gets in your path is going to receive that love.

e) Love is sense is simply seeking their highest good and seeks to serve their needs.

f) Love is an act of service to one in need, not necessarily in emotion.

(1) John 13 He tells disciples to love like He did as he washed their feet.

(2) 1 Cor 13 - all 15 expressions of love appear in verb form.

Charity suffereth long, and is kind; charity envieth not; charity vaunteth not itself, is not puffed up, Doth not behave itself unseemly, seeketh not her own, is not easily provoked, thinketh no evil; Rejoiceth not in iniquity,

but rejoiceth in the truth; Beareth all things, believeth all things, hopeth all things, endureth all things. Charity never faileth

C. Do you need to express or receive love this morning?

1. **Unbeliever. What is your reaction?** If you don't love like this, you're a sinner, and if you're a sinner, you need a Savior. We have all fallen short. So the message that Jesus is to the crowd gathered there and here is, "This should prove to you, once and for all, that you haven't arrived, and that you need a Savior." And of course, He is the one who offers Himself as that Savior.
2. **Believer.** There was another group on the hillside when He preached this, and that was His disciples. They had already believed in Him, committed their lives to Him. But sometimes, even for those of us who have been forgiven for our lack of love, those of us who have been given the power to love, fail to love. So for us, this becomes an exhortation to live up to what is now potentially a reality.
3. **If you don't love like that, you need a Savior.** If you've received the forgiveness for a lack of love, and Christ lives in your heart, and you have forgiveness, and you have His love shed abroad as Romans 5:5 says, but you're not letting that love out, you're bottling it up, then you need to make a new commitment to love the way He says you're to love.
4. **What are some ways that a Christian can actively shine and rain upon his neighbors, those you have always loved and those who were your enemies when you walked in?**

Who's your neighbor? Your neighbor is anybody who needs you. That's it. Will you be a neighbor to them this week. Right now to live life in a neighborly fashion.