

Love Your Enemies

Luke 6:27–36 (ESV)

INTRODUCTION: There are some aspects of the Christian faith that are deemed acceptable, even preferable in a civilized society.

- Honor your father and mother - no matter what religion, no matter what holy book you read, you will find some form of teaching to honor your parents.
- Some forms of the Golden Rule can be found in Judaism, Hinduism, and Islam.
- Commands to help the poor are common in almost all religions.

Yet some teachings set Christianity apart from all other religions.

- The exclusivity and divine nature of Christ.
- The concept that salvation can come by grace through faith alone.
- Then, the one before us today. The command to LOVE our Enemies.

This is one of those commands that we struggle with as Americans. I mean, it's fine for you to love your enemies, but the people on my enemy list got there for good reason.

Nevertheless, at times our Lord Jesus Christ points His nail-scarred hand toward the person you most dislike, distrust, and disapprove of and says "Go love that one".

CONTEXT: We said a couple of weeks ago that **Adam was the first King**, given dominion over the entire planet. But he subjugated that kingdom to Satan by trusting the word of the serpent over the word of God.

God promised that He would send a **SEED**, a male descendant of Adam, who would crush Satan's head. In doing so, he would reclaim and restore all that Adam had lost.

The drama of the OT continues as mankind awaits that coming Seed, that King, that Messiah. **Until it happened**, the anticipation of the ages was met with a baby's cry in that little town of Bethlehem.

Christ came as the King of all Kings - through His **death and resurrection**, he bought back what Adam lost and made redemption possible for Adam's race.

Then He called his disciples together and said, **Matthew 28:18–20 (ESV)**

¹⁸ And Jesus came and said to them, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. ¹⁹ Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, ²⁰ teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age."

So Jesus has been given legal and divine authority over every single realm of existence. And each individual in those realms is to be taught to obey Him.

Remember, there are **four realms of existence** addressed in the Bible.

- The Self
- The Family
- The Church
- The State

Jesus is LORD over all four. But He relates to each realm differently. Each realm has a vested responsibility.

- There are some things the state can do that the church can't - capital punishment, for example, is placed in the hands of the state...the **power of the sword**.
- There are things the family can do, but the church can't - corporal punishment of children is vested in the family...the **Parent is given the rod**.
- There are things the church can do that the state can't - administer the means of grace, the **church is given the keys**.
- Self exists within the context of all three realms.

As you look at a text of scripture, you must recognize who is being addressed. Here in the sermon on the Mount, Jesus is addressing the individual, the self.

HOW ARE JESUS'S INDIVIDUAL FOLLOWERS TO DEAL WITH PERSONAL OFFENCES?

- He is not speaking to the national defense.
- He is not speaking to the personal defense of your family or church.

But rather, the Sermon on the Mount is a KINGDOM STRATEGY for responding to PERSONAL OFFENCES.

As a strategy, it is expected to "WORK" in some sense. So this is not just something we do, but there is a **TACTIC to the TRUTH**. If you follow the Lord's directive here, you will advance the agenda of the Kingdom FURTHER AND FASTER than if you don't. With that in mind, let's look at our text:

TEXT: Luke 6:27-36 (ESV)

²⁷ "But I say to you who hear, Love your enemies,

The first thing we recognize is that...

1. Christians Have Categories.

In order to love our enemies, we must have a category called, “enemy”. There must be some people out there that you look at and say, “There goes one of my enemies”.

Immediately, we are subconsciously uncomfortable as Christians in a western culture. ***It's called a category.*** You see, Jesus is suggesting that a category exists. A category that could be considered negative. Thus a negative category exists into which we must place some people.

That's difficult for us because it doesn't sound like our common perception of Jesus.

The truth is that many of us have accepted some anemic version of Jesus given to us by cowardly preachers and have failed to read the Bible for ourselves. If you know how to read, but fail to do so, for practical purposes, you are illiterate. Read what the Bible actually says.

Over the last 30 years or so, the American church has been plagued with a type of preaching that **Christian Smith** calls “**Moralistic Therapeutic Deism.**” In other words, a preacher will cherry-pick verses that echo the self-help message of the secular book he or she really prefers to read.. and will present it to you as the whole counsel of God.

That, combined with practical illiteracy, means - we have no idea how we are to behave in the ordinary challenges of life. You see, our leaders have taught us to zero in on verses like the one we will study in a few weeks that says, “**Don't judge.**” But we fail to interpret that verse in light of the context. You see, before Jesus said don't judge, he told us to identify some people as our enemies. That requires some judgment or discernment, you see? Or else we have no idea who Jesus is telling us to love.

Biblical Categories We Must Be Familiar with:

1. **Enemy** - These tend to self-identify by opposing what you champion or opposing you in general.
2. **Family** - This may be used in the physical or spiritual sense. These are people considered your fathers, mothers, brothers, sisters, sons, and daughters.
3. **Ally** - This is someone who is not necessarily in your tribe, but they have the same goals as your tribe.
4. **Co-Beligerant** - This is someone who is far removed from your tribe. Perhaps they even have purposes that are at odds with your tribe. But on an important issue they are willing to assist you. A negative example would be the Pharisees and Herodians working together to eliminate Jesus.
5. **Traitor** - This is someone who poses as a brother, but has the intentions of the enemy.

You must have a working knowledge of those categories in order to make progress in the expansion of the Kingdom of Christ.

So, Christians have categories, including the category of enemy.

2. Christians Have Enemies

Throughout the Bible, the Biblical writers assume that you who follow Jesus will have enemies.

- We are repeatedly told that certain people are **enemies** of the Gospel - **Philippians 3:18 (NASB95)** ¹⁸ For many walk, of whom I often told you, and now tell you even weeping, that they are enemies of the cross of Christ,
- **Romans 11:28** Paul said of unbelieving Jews, (NASB95) ²⁸ From the standpoint of the gospel they are enemies for your sake...
- To the magician Bar-Jesus Paul said, **Acts 13:10 (NASB95)** ¹⁰ and said, “You who are full of all deceit and fraud, you son of the devil, you enemy of all righteousness...”
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- We are told that in the last days, ³⁶ a man’s enemies will be the members of his household. **Matthew 10:35–36 (NASB95)**

Consider the fact that our Lord, who was perfect in every way, the very essence of holiness - had a plethora of enemies, to such a degree that they ultimately crucified Him. If that is true of Jesus Christ, God in the flesh, how much more will they persecute you and me who are far from perfect, yet preaching his words?

2 Timothy 3:12 (ESV)

¹² Indeed, all who desire to live a godly life in Christ Jesus will be persecuted.

So, earthly enemies are assumed, not because we declare them to be enemies, but rather because they set themselves up against the Kingdom of Christ.

BUT - This is the key to obeying Jesus’ command:

- a. **Who is the battle ultimately against?** Satan and demons...Satan and his demons are our ultimate foe. He is the one we want destroyed.

Ephesians 6:12 (ESV) ¹² “For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the cosmic powers over this present darkness, against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly places.”

That will effect how we people. Your spouse is NOT your ultimate enemy. Your boss is NOT your ultimate enemy. Your ex-spouse is NOT your ultimate enemy.

2. **What the battle is for** - The enslaved hearts and minds of people. Now, this is why you must not confuse who the ultimate enemy is. You see, if you begin to view another person as your enemy, you are neglecting the possibility that the person might repent.

ILLUSTRATION: Like Saul of Tarsus, he positioned himself as the enemy of the Church but then met Jesus. That could happen to a person who treats you like an enemy. How would you feel if it did? Perhaps you have misidentified the enemy if you aren't too happy about God forgiving them of their sins.

ILLUSTRATION: *The preacher's Sunday sermon was "Love Your Enemies." He asked how many of you are willing to forgive all their enemies. About half held up their hands. He then repeated his question. Now, about 80 percent held up their hands. He then repeated his question. All responded except one elderly lady, Mrs. Jones. The Pastor asked, "Mrs. Jones, are you not willing to forgive your enemies?" To which she replied, "I don't have any." "Mrs. Jones, that is very unusual. How old are you?" , the pastor asked." Ninety-three," she replied. "Mrs. Jones, please come down and tell the congregation how a person cannot have an enemy in the world." The little sweetheart of a lady tottered down the aisle and said, "It's rather easy, I just outlived them."*

Unless you outlive them, you WILL have enemies if you follow Jesus.

Christians have Categories; Christians have Enemies

3. Christians have a Plan

In other words, we know what to do. Our Lord has told us exactly how we are to treat our earthly enemies. We don't have to guess or worry. We don't even have to pray about it... King Jesus has told us.

27b. "do good to those who hate you, ²⁸ bless those who curse you, pray for those who abuse you. ²⁹ To one who strikes you on the cheek, offer the other also,"

ILLUSTRATION: Assuming you are right-handed...to smite someone on their right cheek, you must backhand them, which was the classical way someone in the Jewish community would insult someone. What Jesus is saying here is, if someone insults you, let them. He is not saying never to defend yourself. He is certainly not saying don't defend the helpless. He is saying, don't return insult for insult.

29. "and from one who takes away your cloak do not withhold your tunic either. ³⁰ Give to everyone who begs from you, and from one who takes away your goods do not demand them back. ³¹ And as you wish that others would do to you, do so to them."

So Jesus says if someone makes themselves out to be your enemy or an enemy of what you stand for, here are some very practical ways you are to respond.

Notice, Jesus isn't commanding you to **feel** any particular way toward your enemies. Love, in this case, as in most cases in the NT, is more of a **verb than a noun**. It carries with it the idea of what you DO to them or for them. We see that carried out in the remainder of the verse.

5 Things We are Called to Do Toward our Enemies:

1. **Do Good to Them** - look for ways to be good to your enemy. Be intentional about it. Be creative about it.
2. **Bless Them** - Take the initiative and speak well to them and about them.
3. **Pray For Them** - Go to the Lord on their behalf.
4. **Don't Retaliate Against Them** - Vengeance belongs to the Lord.
5. **Show Them Generosity** - Christianity is NOT transactional. We don't give in order to get. We give because we have gotten...even to our enemies.

If this is how we love our enemies, how are we to love our friends? At least this much, right?

Christians have Categories, Christians have Enemies, and Christians have a Plan...

4. Christians have a motive.

a. It Benefits Us

³² "If you love those who love you, what benefit is that to you? For even sinners love those who love them. ³³ And if you do good to those who do good to you, what benefit is that to you? For even sinners do the same. ³⁴ And if you lend to those from whom you expect to receive, what credit is that to you? Even sinners lend to sinners, to get back the same amount. ³⁵ But love your enemies, and do good, and lend, expecting nothing in return, and your reward will be great."

So, there is a guarantee from God that if you bless your enemies, God will bless you. It doesn't say when or how, but you can count on it. You will be blessed incredibly. In fact, I would say some of God's greatest blessings are reserved for those who obey this principle.

Why? Because tactically, it is the life force of the Gospel. Forgiven people, forgive people. Forgiveness experienced results in forgiveness expressed. This is what we are all about.

It bewilders the lost world, it irritates the devil, it inspires the church, and it lends credibility to the message.

Jesus says - you obey me in this area, and I have your back. It benefits us...

b. It is becoming to us.

^{35b} "and you will be sons of the Most High, for he is kind to the ungrateful and the evil. ³⁶ Be merciful, even as your Father is merciful."

ILLUSTRATION: Where I'm from, people see me and say, "I don't know which one you are, but you must be one of those Terrys." We look a certain way. We are all relatively tall men. We must all have blue eyes and specific facial features.

When you do good to an enemy, people say, “I don’t know which one you are, but you must be one of those Christians.”

Why? That’s what Christians do. We act like our Father. He is good to everybody. He causes rain to fall on the just and unjust. He even saves His enemies and adopts them as children.

What ridiculous grace! Oh, the riches of the treasure of God’s love.

CONCLUSION/INVITATION:

ILLUSTRATION: A man came to a Christian counselor and said, “I want to divorce my wife.” “Why is that asked the counselor”. “Well, she hasn’t been unfaithful; I just don’t feel anything for her.” The counselor said, “But the Bible commands you to love your wife as Christ loved the church.” You don’t understand,” said the husband, “I don’t want to be around her.” “Well,” said the counselor, “build a house next door because the Bible says love your neighbor; that way, she will be your next-door neighbor.” “Listen,” said the husband, “I can’t stand her.” “Oh?” replied the counselor, “She’s your enemy, and the Bible says, love your enemies.” The following week, that man found a new counselor.

I’ve done ministry around the world...the streets of Cuba, Tegu Honduras, Guatemala, Albania, and Israel. One of the things I have found is that **God has a habit of not destroying His enemies but redeeming them.**

BTW, you were His enemy once. Aren’t you glad He chose to love you?

D.L. Moody who was the Billy Graham of his day, once said, “The one thing that is keeping revival from coming to the Church, more people being saved and God really working in His people is the sin of an unforgiving spirit.”

If our FUTURE as a congregation, and as a kingdom outpost is to be bright... it will not be because of our large buildings, it will be because we are people of grace in a community that needs it.