

Uprooting Prejudice — Delivery Transcript

Matthew 5:43–48 (CSB) • Wes Terry • Sunday, May 10, 2026 • *Healing The Heart*

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All right, well thanks to the team for leading us in worship. They did do a great job and thank you for singing so well and so Loud, like you believe what you're singing. If you have your Bibles, we're going to be in Matthew chapter 5. We're going to be in Matthew chapter 5, starting in verse 42. And we're going to wrap up the rest of the chapter. If you're new to Broadview, we're going through the book of Matthew, studying the life of Jesus, and spending 2026 on this great question of who was Jesus?

What did he teach and what was he about and what does that have to do with our lives today. And we're right in the thick of the biggest, most influential sermon that he ever preached called the Sermon on the Mount. And he's been looking at different moral issues and ethical issues, and today we're tackling the sixth of the six moral issues that he presents. Before we dive into the text though, everybody, if you've ever stood for anything for any length of time, you've probably Developed what we would call an enemy.

Having an enemy is not all that surprising. An enemy is just someone that opposes someone else. And if you've ever stood for anything with any kind of significance whatsoever, it's likely that you've inherited an enemy. And the biggest feats in human history have always had big enemies accompany you know, you have Winston Churchill, the great hero of world War II, at least presented by some. I think that all that's getting talked about today. But Churchill had the Nazis that he was fighting against. You have in political world, you have at least in a two-party system, you have the Democrats and the Republicans, they're always kind of fighting one another but it's not just famous people or big historical events, it's also normal people like you and me.

We have it doesn't matter how good your workplace is, eventually in your workplace there's going to be some workplace drama. And you're going to probably develop some kind of a of an enemy. If you've been a parent for Mother's Day, if you've ever had a kid and they get a certain age, they ha they take an oppositional posture toward you one of these days and you're like, where did that come from? You might not call them an enemy, but it's opposition

nonetheless. And the thing about those dynamics is one of the things that's so helpful about having an enemy is they can help expose the person that you really are.

So if you're a person who believes a certain thing, having an enemy really drives that home so that you have to defend it publicly and it exposes who you really are. And so enemies can be really helpful in that way. Yeah, you can show me a person's enemies and I wouldn't even have to see their resume because I can tell a whole lot about a person based on the people who are resisting them. And so having an enemy is not necessarily bad. I'm not saying this is the sermon against not having enemies, but the problem is what enemies can unintentionally do within your heart if you're not careful.

And it never happens, I don't think, intentionally. It certainly doesn't happen immediately, but what begins to happen with your enemies is you begin to draw these artificial lines around your love. And it starts out slowly at first. Maybe you just don't you know respond to their text messages fast or maybe scroll past them on the social medias or you know mute their profile or whatever, or maybe you just don't sit together when you go hang out anymore. And gradually they become less and less part of your circle. And then you draw that imaginary line around your circle and says, these people are in and those people aren't.

And then your enemy becomes one of those people. And as soon as they become one of those people, something happens in here that is dangerous and that Jesus is going to talk about in our passage today. We're going to call it the root of prejudice or the vice of prejudice. While your enemies are good and helpful in exposing the person that you are, it's important that you never let your enemies prejudice your love. And one of the things that Jesus is going to talk about in the Sermon on the Mount is the importance of love for a flourishing life.

If you want to have a life of flourishing love is the key, but when you allow enemies to become one of those people in your heart, it not only impacts your enemy not only are you making life miserable for your enemy, that decision to other rise them actually has an impact on your soul as well. And not a good impact, a pretty negative impact. It's not just a wall that kind of locks your enemies out. It's also somewhat of a prison that locks you in. And it when it locks you into this prison of prejudice, it begins to undermine what Jesus says gives you a life of flourishing.

And Jesus came to give us abundant life. His whole Sermon on the Mount is about what flourishing really looks like. And he's going to make an argument today that for you to truly flourish, you're going to have to live a life of love. And to do that, you're going to have to uproot. Prejudice. And so Matthew chapter five, we're going to start in verse forty two. This is if you're new to this series, he's been doing this five different times now. He's taken five moral issues and he's said something to the effect of, you have heard it said, but I say to you.

And he's taking Old Testament laws and rules and traditions, and he's saying You have wrongly interpreted what God said in the past. And so I'm saying to you, this is what God always meant. And he's trying to reveal and restore God's. Original purpose. He's done this with murder and anger. He's done this with lust and adultery. He's done this with marriage and divorce. And he's done this with oaths and resentment. And so in verse 42, he says, you have heard that it was said. I'm sorry, in verse 43, you have heard that it was said, love your neighbor and hate your enemy, but I tell you to love your enemies and to pray for those who that persecute you, so that you may be children of your Father in heaven.

For he, your father in heaven, causes his son to rise on the evil and the good. And he sends his reign on the righteous and the unrighteous. For if you love those who love you, what reward will you have? Don't even the tax collectors do the same thing. And if you greet only your brothers and sisters, what are you doing out of the ordinary? Don't even the Gentiles do the same. Be perfect, therefore, as your heavenly Father is perfect. And so like I said, Jesus does what he's done six times.

This is the sixth time of six that he says this phrase. You've heard it said. But I say to you. And it's really important you don't misunderstand what he's doing, because he's not trying to say Moses was wrong. What Moses revealed, what God revealed through Moses in the Old Testament was originally good. But their revisions of what Moses had said had taken what God revealed in the Old Testament and twisted it and undermined it. So much so that in the case that we're looking at today. They had actually said of what God said the opposite of what God was actually trying to say.

God said, love your neighbor as yourself, and they created an entirely new category. But you can hate your enemy. And the Lord never said anything like that. And we're going to look at that when we talk about the problem. But before we dive into that tendency for them to twist things, I want you to notice something that's been building beneath the surface because this sixth and final whatever you want to call it illustration not only gives you one more vice to uproot from your life. It actually tells you what should take the place of what's been uprooted.

For six weeks now, Jesus has been warning us against these culprits in the heart. Of anger and hatred and contempt and dishonesty. And he's been saying don't let resentment take root in your heart because it's going to undermine a flourishing life. He's talked about how anger is kind of it's a natural response, but in a life of a Christian it should not abide. You don't want to let anger and contempt to fester beneath the surface because it's going to undermine a flourishing life. And Jesus constantly revealed about his purpose in coming.

He came to give us life and life to the full. And Jesus knows the only way that you're going to have true life is if these sinful but very common vices get uprooted from your heart. What I think so fascinating is that all six of what he mentions, all of them are basically disordered

love. Anger is love that has been disordered. Anger, as I like to say, it's love in motion, it's love trying to defend the beloved from a threat. There can be righteous anger in defending what God loves, but most of us when we get angry are defending ourselves.

And so this idea of self-protection, self-preservation, self-exaltation, that's what drives a lot of our anger. And Jesus is saying you've diminished true love. You've taken love and you've disordered it such that your life will not flourish. The same thing is true of lust. Lust is love disordered. Instead of love becoming self-giving and sacrificial and others-oriented, love becomes consumptive and about you and about satisfying your longings. And that's a disordering or a diminishment of love as it's been given by God. And the same is true for the other six instances as well divorce and remarriage is love diminished by a broken promise.

Oaths breaking your word is love diminished by dishonesty. Resentment is love diminished by self-protection. And today we're going to look at the idea of prejudice, which is love diminished. Diminished by basically otherizing the other person by creating artificial walls around by creating conditions around love that was always meant to be unconditional. And so in all of these ways, Jesus is saying you'll never have a life of flourishing unless and until you can learn to love like God loves. True flourishing requires the perfection of your love and God who loves perfectly will perfect you but you have got to come to him on his terms if you want to experience it.

And so I hope today we can kind of summarize and kind of put a little cherry on top of everything that Jesus has been building up until this point. And so let's first look at how they disordered love in verse 43. They said, love your neighbor, but hate your enemy. Now, one half of that verse is biblical and true. It's a quotation of Leviticus 19. The problem is that Leviticus 19 nowhere ever says, but hate your enemy. In fact, you can go through the entire Old Testament, never once will you see a passage that says, but hate your enemy.

What they had done is they had taken Leviticus 19 and they created a new category for enemies wherein hate could then apply. If you read Leviticus 19 in its context, not only does it not say that, it says quite the opposite. In Leviticus 19 it says, don't harbor hatred against your brother, rebuke your neighbor directly, and you won't incur guilt because of him, but do not take revenge. Or bear grudge against your neighbor, aka against members of your own community, but love your neighbor as yourself. I am the Lord. So what they had done is they read that passage, and instead of taking Jesus up on these prohibitions against hatred, and revenge, which Jesus has just resurfaced in the Sermon on the Mount, they kind of ignored the emphasis on those heart issues and they began to obsess about the definition of neighbor.

And they said, what is a neighbor? Who is a neighbor? Because whoever is the neighbor, that's to whom these laws apply. And so they defined a neighbor as someone who is our brother, someone who is in our clan, someone who is part of our community. You can see

here members of your community. And so they did a narrow definition of neighbor such that there were other people outside of that definition. And then they inferred that because there are people who are not our neighbor, not only do we not have to love those people, we're justified in hating them.

The problem was the Bible never says that. In fact, if you read just a little bit later in the same chapter, the Lord says quite the opposite. He says it's not just the people who are in your community who are your neighbor, but even the alien and the sojourner. You should treat them as your neighbor as well. When an alien resides with you in your land, you must not oppress him. You must regard the alien who resides with you as the native-born. In other words, even though he's not your brother or in your community, I want you to treat him like he's part of your community.

Why? Because you were to love him as yourself, for you were aliens in the land of Egypt. I am the Lord your God Notice the similarities. You have the divine declaration at the end. You have this idea of loving your neighbor as yourself in both passages. Except in this passage, the neighbor is not part of your community. In this passage, your neighbor is the sojourner or the alien, the foreigner, which is the Lord's way of saying there are no lines of neighbor not neighbor. There is no world in which you are justified in hating anyone.

And as Jesus will say in the parable of the good Samaritan, even the people you think are not your neighbors are actually your neighbors. And so they had taken an ambiguity, a perceived ambiguity in the Old Testament, and used it as justification for something that God hates. They took something that God hates and they attached it to the back of something that God said. And that's what prejudice always does. We have a rich history in Christian, Jewish, whatever you want to call it, of justifying prejudice in the name of God.

I'm saying God gives us grounds for treating these people differently. Whereas if you read the scripture, nothing could be further from the truth God shows no partiality. There is no favoritism with him. And his people are to likewise show no partiality. No favoritism whatsoever. And yet we use Bible verses to say God says something not only he didn't ever say, but something he hates. And that's what Jesus is rebuking. Scripture nowhere sets a precedent for limits on our love. And if you see that in the scripture, it raises the natural question, where then did this idea of hatred come from?

And a lot of people have tried to investigate this question and to figure out why so many of the religious establishment and religious leaders were advocating what God clearly hates. And some have suggested that it was a misreading of the Psalms like Psalm 139, which says, God, I hate those people. David says, I hate those who do wicked. I hate them with righteous hatred. And some have inferred from that psalm, well, I guess I can hate the wicked too. The problem is that the Bible never prescribes hatred. It describes, it does describe David having hatred in his heart, but it never commends that or says that it's good in any way.

It just says that's what David was feeling. And here's a psalm that records it. Nowhere are we actually encouraged to hate anyone. Some would say it was the influence of a group in the first century called the Essenes, which were an apocalyptic end-times cult. They were basically believing that the Jewish Messiah would come any day. And if you wanted to be part of their tribe you had to make an oath. And the oath you would have to make as an Essene was that I will love the sons of light, but I will hate the sons of darkness.

And they were basically legalizing hatred in their very religious community. And so maybe it was the influence of that, maybe the influence of the Psalms, or maybe it's just good old-fashioned tribalism. That human beings have a tendency to do in every generation, in every region of the world, it doesn't matter. We're just prone to that kind of prejudice. Whatever the reason was, the reality had become a common assumption that God permits hatred of my enemy. And so I may love my Jewish brothers and sisters, I may love my Christian brothers and sisters, but those Roman soldiers those Gentile whoever, those people are outside the circle, and because they're outside the circle, I'm justified in my prejudice.

And Jesus is rebuking that and saying there are no lines. That true love, God's love, creates no barriers. And that's what he's going to try to invite his kingdom citizens into. And he explains that in verse 44. So he says, you've heard it said, love your neighbor, hate your enemy, but I tell you to love your enemies. I tell you to love your enemies. To pray for those who persecute you. And so Jesus paints a picture of love that has no lines. And he does so in some really compelling ways.

Just at a grammatical level, there are some things worth noting. Number one is the difference in verb tense between love your neighbor and love your enemies. The tense up here. Is well I'll just say it this way. Jesus uses a present tense verb that basically conveys the idea of love and never stop loving. He's not talking about a one-off episode. Where you show some love to your enemy, but generally you don't like them. No, he's saying, no, I want you to orient your heart such that your posture towards your enemy is a posture of love and affection.

So it's not a one-off, it's a continual love. And the other thing that's unique is the difference between singular and plural. Notice that Jesus quotes their quote, which is love your enemy, singular. Jesus uses the plural almost to widen the net. So in other words, they might say, Yeah, I may love some enemies, but there's other enemies I get to hate. And Jesus is saying, there is no category of enemies immune from this command. There is no person that is so bad that they are justified in being hated. There's no person so bad off, so ugly, so mean, so unworthy.

There is no category of enemy that is exempted from this command to love. I want you to have an attitude, a posture of love and every season and I want you to show that love literally to every single person. And that, if that sounds extreme, it is. And for the original audience

that would have heard it, they would have went, whoa. There were a lot of people in the ancient world who talked about not making things worse when it came to your enemy. Like I've been teaching tenth grade humanities at a school here in Abilene and doing so I've been rereading.

A lot of the classic great works like like Plato and Aristotle, Hesiod and Homer and all these people. And it's been really fun as an should I use the word fun? Maybe not fun. It's been really helpful because been getting to revisit. Because I got a humanities degree myself and I've been getting to revisit these great books that I read in my undergrad. But even those philosophers and those moral thinkers, as gifted as they were, they did not get as far as Jesus got. Like Homer, I'm sorry, Plato would say, you may invite your friends over for dinner.

You don't have to invite your enemies, but don't tell them they're not invited. Right. Just don't add insult to injury. In other words, don't make it worse. Or or a s like the stoic Seneca. He would he would actually say, no, you should do good to an enemy. But he always framed it in terms of self-advantage. Like you should do good to them so that you can get the high ground and strategic advantage in terms of the social hierarchy situation. None of them, not even the Egyptian, the Babylonian law codes, they all talked about not making things not making things worse, but none of them ever said what Jesus said.

Jesus is unique in saying, no, I want you to love them. Not one-off love, no, an attitude, a posture of love, and not just some enemies, but every single enemy. Jesus is unique in the picture of what he's trying to paint. And not only does he kind of paint a picture of this higher plane of love, he gives a practical application of praying for those who persecute you. Love your enemies, pray for those who persecute you. And the reason that he says that we should pray for our persecutors is because it's in the process of praying for those who persecute us that God does something in our hearts.

I don't know if you've ever tried to pray for someone who was your enemy. It feels very awkward. It feels almost forced. But if you will commit to praying for them by name, and you will commit to doing so with the sincerity of your heart, you will begin to discover something change within your heart such that those people are no longer otherized in your mind. They are no longer boiled down to the one thing they did against you. They become three-dimensional and human once again. You no longer become this perfect person who can do no wrong, and they become these avatars of wickedness that can never do anything right.

No, they become human again as you begin to pray for them. And there's really no greater way for your disposition to be changed. You can willpower yourself all that you want. You'll never feel warm towards an enemy in your own strength, which is why the Lord Jesus is saying, no, I want you to pray. And what do you pray? He doesn't say what word to pray, but I can guarantee you it's not, Lord, help them to die. Lord help them to fail. Help them to never be happy again. Again, you can misread the Old Testament Psalms.

They're called imprecatory psalms. I remember we had a guy in our church, his daughter was dating some scumbag. And he's like, I'm praying in precatory psalms and part of me was like, I'll pray with you, brother. That's the guy's a joke. But now I'm not so sure. The goal is not, you know, praying for their failure. If you really want to take Jesus as example, you should pray for their salvation. You should pray, Father, forgive them. Like Jesus taught us in the Lord's Prayer, forgive us of our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us.

The greatest act of love that you can show to your enemy is to pray for their salvation. Because that's the greatest blessing God could give any person. And so Jesus is radical here. I want you to love your enemies, and I want you to do that by praying for those who persecute you. And for the first century audience who's reading this letter. When he says pray for your persecutors, those people had a name. They were wearing armor and they were working for Caesar and they weren't just being mean. They were killing their friends and their family, their wife and children.

They were being thrown into the arena and eaten by wild animals. They were burned alive. They were beaten and tortured. And even those people Jesus says, I want you to love them. Even those people, Jesus says, no, pray for their salvation. And so if again, if it feels radical, it is radical. There is no enemy that you and I face that are somehow exempted from this rule. It doesn't matter who they are. It doesn't matter what they've done. Whether they're in your family or in your workplace or the friends you had growing up, there's a sense in which the Lord would say to you not for their sake, not because they deserve it, not even for your sake alone.

I want you to love them and I want you to pray for them, and I want your motive to be so that you can be a child of God. Which is fascinating that Jesus doesn't just paint the picture of what true love is. He gives a motive or a purpose statement for loving people in that way. A lot of the ancient philosophers in the Greco-Roman tradition would talk about flourishing, coming through oneness with God. Jesus is saying something similar. I want you to be like God. I want you to be children of God.

I want you to participate in God. But he's saying the avenue into that Communion with God is through the way you love your enemies. Because God's fundamental nature is a nature of love, unconditional love. For those who don't deserve it. And if you want to be like God and if you want your life to flourish through union with God, you have got to learn to start loving people like God does. And so it's not for them. In a way, it is for you. Because if you let your prejudice rise and justify it in your heart, it's going to begin to poison and diminish.

The life of flourishing God desires for you. And so show yourself, prove yourself to be a son or a daughter of God. This little two words here, so that you may be children of your Father in heaven. That's doing a lot of heavy lifting in the original language. It's people debate about what it is, whether it's a purpose statement or a result statement the reality is the motive is

grounded in becoming a child of God. The idea, I don't think, is that you become a Christian by loving your enemies. Jesus has been saying the opposite of that from the very beginning of the Beatitudes.

The idea is not that you do this to get a flourishing life. The idea is that you prove you possess the flourishing life by living in this way. In other words, it's public testimony, it's public evidence that something has changed within your heart. You prove that you've received the grace of God by the way you give grace to one another. You prove that you've received God's mercy and the forgiveness of your sins by the way that you show forgiveness to other people. And in this way, you prove that you have received the love of God by the way you love even your enemies.

It is a public verification that you are indeed children of God. That's why I want to use the language of prove, not to kind of become, not to earn, but to prove that God's Spirit dwells within me. That's why I love you. Even though you hate me, even though you wrong me, even though you resent me, even though you've done all manner of evil. Against me and my family, even though I would be glad if the government threw you in prison, I will not let lovelessness infect my heart in any way.

Love those who persecute you. Love your enemies. Pray for those who persecute you so that You may be children of God. Well, if that's what the ground is, then how does God love? That's where we are left, and with this we're going to be done. Matthew gives us four different attributes of the love of God, and the first couple are right here at the end of verse 45. If you raise the question, what does it mean to love like God loves, Matthew or Jesus says, God causes his son to rise on the evil and the good.

The Lord causes his he sends rain on the righteous and the unrighteous. Notice at least two things about that verse in particular. Number one, God's love is proactively applied. In other words, God's love is not reactive or conditional. He's not saying, I'm only going to show love if they give me an olive branch. I'm only going to give them love if they somehow deserve it in some way. No, God causes, meaning he proactively moves such that the sun will rise, and it will rise not only on the righteous people, but on the unrighteous people as well.

The Lord proactively causes the rain to fall, not only on the good people, but on the bad people as well. It is proactive. In this way, I think it's a relevant Mother's Day sermon because mothers are really good at proactive love. They don't wait at least good mothers don't wait until the very end and it's like obvious, you know, your child is starving, you need to feed them. No, it's even a little grunt. Like even if the dog passes gas, you're like, oh, is it is the baby hungry, you know it's like all of the sudden going just super aggressive proactivity.

That's how that's how mothers love and that's the love of God. It is proactive whether you're deserving or not whether you did something to cause my reaction or not i'm just going to

generously proactively love you anyway. And that's how God's love. It is proactive and then it is impartial in that he does it on the righteous and the unrighteous. He does it for the wicked and the good. All four poles, north, south, east, west, there is no fifth corner left undone. The love of God shows no partiality. In fact, that's one of the major themes of the scripture.

God is no respecter of persons. There is no partiality. With him. The Lord does not love in such a way where he says, only these people get my love. It's one of my pet peeves theologically that God only loves certain people. You know, God so loved the world that he gave his one and only son. Now you can talk about the mystery of why some go to heaven and some don't go to heaven, but it is never a result of God not loving them sufficiently. He loves the wicked and the righteous.

He loves the good and the bad. And he's saying, that's what I want you to have. I want you to have my love. That is not partial in any way for the people who deserve it and for those who don't deserve it. God's love is proactive and shows no partiality. And then Jesus gives these two examples. And he takes two people that would have been despised by his original audience. The first were the tax collectors, and the second were the Gentiles. He says of the tax collectors, if you love those who love you, then what reward do you have?

Don't even the tax collectors do the same. And then if you greet your brothers and sisters, only your brothers and sisters, then what are you doing out of the ordinary? Don't even the Gentiles do the same. And so both tax collectors and gentiles were persona non-grata. The tax collectors were Jewish people who had basically. They had caved to the Roman enemy. They were what do you call them, collaborators or I can't remember the I can't think of the word I'm looking for. But they were disloyal to their Jewish identity because they collaborated with Rome and they were hated as a result.

You're s you're trading your character for money. That was the idea. For other tax collectors it's like, well this is the reality and I got to make some money and so I'm just going to be a righteous tax collector. Whatever the motivations were, they were despised, which is ironic because Matthew was a tax collector and he's writing all of this. Jesus' point is saying, you think you're so holy, you think you're so much better than all of these tax collectors, but when it comes to the question of love, you're just like them.

You only love people who love you. Back. Your love is conditional. Your love is reactive. You're only going to love people if you get something out of it. And that's not how your Father in heaven loves. And that's not how Christians should love. It's not, you see this in marriage all the time. I'm only going to say I'm sorry if they say they're sorry. I'm only going to change my behavior if they change their behavior. Almost like this tit for tat, I'll cave if you cave, but until and unless there they're I'm withholding what I've got to give.

And that is so unchristian, it's not even funny. Jesus is saying, though what's the what distinguishes you from anyone everyone loves in that way. Don't even tax collectors do that? What reward do you have? You want your love to be, oh, what's the word I use? Not profit seeking. You don't want your love to be such that I'm only going to give it if I get something out of it. And then the last one is this idea of partisanship. He uses the status of the Gentiles, which were the non-Jewish pagan nations.

Remember, Matthew's audience is primarily Jewish right now, and the people listening to the Sermon on the Mount were primarily Jewish. And they hated Gentile people, sort of. They were prejudiced against the Gentiles. They thought of the Gentiles as people outside the covenant blessing. And Jesus is saying, these so-called moral outsiders that you see yourself as so much better than, there's really no difference between how they love and how you love. What distinguishes you from the Gentiles? Because the Gentiles greet other Gentiles and you only greet other Jews. You snub your nose at every Gentile that walks in the room.

What distinguishes you? What makes you so special? That is not how your heavenly father loves people. He does not love them based on partisan lines, tribal lines, racial lines. That is so far from the heart of your heavenly father. And so let your love be without prejudice. Let your love be something that extends beyond the partisan lines. And I mean partisan in a literal sense, even political partisanship that's so nasty in our culture because we're so polarized politically and rightly so there's like real issues that people feel really strongly about on either side.

And I'm not saying don't feel strongly or hold strong convictions. I'm saying don't let that diminish your love for that other person. They're created in the image of God. And God loves them with what you may think are erroneous views just as much as He loves you. And you've got to find yourself in such a place that you can hold the truth and your convictions without withholding your love. And when you do that, you will be like your father in heaven. And that's what Jesus says ought to motivate everything be perfect, Jesus says, as your heavenly Father is perfect.

Now a lot of people hear this phrase in verse 48 and they think. Perfect, man, that's not me. Must not apply. And I want to push back on that just a little bit. There are even there are preachers who preach this text. The point is it's impossible. It's impossible. That's the point. To drive you to grace. And which I say, amen. You should be driven to grace. It's not easy to be perfect as the Father in heaven is perfect. But I don't think Jesus means morally sinlessness. He doesn't use the word holy like the Pharisees were using over and over again.

Because the Pharisees boiled down sinlessness to external conformity. They said we can be holy so long as we follow the rules as we understand them and if we're going to break the rules we do it according to the concessions and the loopholes. And Jesus says that's not even

what God is after. He's not after your external conformity and your rules and regulations. He's after sincerity. He's after the removal of hypocrisy. He's after someone who is changed at the level of their heart. And that's what this word is. It's the Greek word *telios*.

And it doesn't just mean perfect. It means to be complete or to be whole. It means that there's no duplicity in you. There is no sense of divided allegiances in you. There's no sense in which you're with God on these things, but you're not with God on these others. No, there's a sense of absolute surrender. I'm all in, Lord, I'm all yours. It's not to say you'll never make a mistake again, but that you never do so with the heart of deceit. You the sins that exist in your life are sins that may happen, but as soon as they happen and it's no matter what type of sin it is, there's a sense in which you repent and you say, Father, that's not who I am, that's not who you've made me to be.

I want to be fully surrendered to you. That's perfect. But I don't even think it's perfect in the generic. I think Jesus is talking about the perfect love of God. And he's saying, your father in heaven has a type of love that is without any hypocrisy. It is sincere. It is not divided, this person and that person. Those deserve it and those don't. It is complete, it is whole, it is undivided in that way. And I want you to learn to love people like that. And I think that that is what's going to unlock flourishing.

And this is what's so cool to me about the Sermon on the Mount. This is why I think Jesus is the greatest philosopher who's ever lived. Because every Greek and Roman philosopher was trying to establish flourishing. From Plato to Aristotle to Seneca to the rest, all of them said the purpose of ethics is *eudaimonia* is the Greek word they would use. It's happiness, it's contentment, it's the best life. And from Plato to Aristotle to Seneca across the board, the smart moral thinkers, they all understood that flourishing happens through union with God.

That if you want to flourish as a human, then you want to align your life with that of the gods. And Jesus comes on the scene and says, yes, but God is not, like Plato said, just the ground of absolute truth. God is so much more than just universal truths. And to Aristotle, God is so much more than just moral virtue. God is the ground of virtue, He's the ground of morality, God is the ground of truth, absolute objective truth, but He's that and more. It's more than what Plato saw.

He's more than what Aristotle saw. It's more than what the Stoics, like Seneca, they boiled God down to order and mastering your emotions through your will and kind of living a well-ordered and structured and beautiful life. And I'm not saying those are wrong. They were so gifted in their thinking about how to get to God because that God was written on their hearts. But they didn't get all the way there. God was just truth, he was just goodness, he was just beauty, and Jesus is saying it's that and so much more.

Because God is not some impersonal force in the world, he's not Star Wars. He's a person. He's a father. He is a father who loves his creation and who has demonstrated his love by making atonement for your sins so that you can have your guilt removed. And what made Jesus so unique, even in the Sermon on the Mount, is He's saying the goal of flourishing is not striving and self-effort. It's not work really, really hard so that maybe God will cut you a break. No, it's recognizing the God who created everything created you and He loves you.

He loves you so much that he sent his son into the world to take the penalty for your sin and to demonstrate for you who he is. Jesus is the image of the invisible God. He is showing you in living color what God is really like. And Jesus is essentially saying in the Sermon on the Mount, as I live, I want you to live. As I love, I want you to love. As I surrender to God, I want you to surrender to God. As I am poor in spirit, I want you to be poor in spirit not because that's the rules and you need to do so or you'll go to hell, but because this is the way to flourishing, because this is the way to God.

It's through giving yourself away. It's through dependence on God. It's through recognizing you are weak, but his strength is made perfect in your weakness. It's through recognizing that God's love is unconditional and universal and that there's nothing in this world I could do to make him love me any less. And because of his great love for me, he made atonement for my sins so that I could be delivered from what I deserve, which is separation from God and reconciled to God by grace through faith. And that that's available to every single person because at the end of the day it's not about the haves and have-nots, it's not about those who deserve or don't deserve.

The ground is level at the foot of the cross. There's only one perfect person who's ever lived, his name is Jesus, and you're not him, and I'm not him. And the invitation is that we can receive him by grace through faith. And when you do that, when you repent and believe, the Bible talks about this spiritual dynamic of being in Christ. He is in you and you are in him and you begin to recover a life of genuine flourishing. Which means the reason you do what Jesus commands is not to not go to hell.

And the reason you do it is not because that's the rules. The reason you do it is because that's the way to flourishing. And I want to live a flourishing life. And the coolest part about it is it's not just about you. It's about all of God's people bringing flourishing in the world. It's about you and me and churches like Broadview Baptist church embracing God's design for how to love one another and then helping heal the world with God's design for that love. And that's why our church exists. That's the mission statement of our church.

We want to connect every person to new life in Jesus. And as we live that new life that Jesus has called us to live through being obedient to the Sermon on the Mount. The idea is not it's perfection is required, I'm not perfect, so I'm out. This is more of a promise than it is a hammer. This is the Lord saying, I will perfect you. I will perfect you by my perfect love so

that you can more perfectly love one another. And the way you love your spouse better than you do right now is by letting the love of God perfect and heal your heart.

And the way that you love your enemy, who you want to destroy right now, is by letting the love of God more fully perfect your heart. And the barriers and the hurdles that are keeping you from that kind of response, the invitation this morning is for you to lay those down. And for you to no longer live like the Gentiles and the tax collectors, but to press into this better way, this brilliant wisdom of Jesus Christ. And so if there's a way that we can help you respond in that way, if you've never made Jesus your personal Lord and Savior on your connect card, you can indicate that as a response.

And in the moment our ushers are going to take up the offering and you can just put that card in the offering plate. And we'd be happy to follow up with you. You may sense this morning an invitation for you to forgive someone, and if there's a sense in which that's really challenging. And messy and you want to talk to a pastor this week, you can indicate that on your connect card as well, any kind of biblical counseling or anything like that. As the Lord leads, would you respond publicly by filling up that connect card and putting it in the offering plate as it's passed?

Let's bow our heads together and respond as Cheryl plays. Father, we thank you for this word. And we thank you for the Lord Jesus Christ, who is not only in his teaching, but in his living and his dying. Displayed concretely what true love really is and how far we drift from that design in our own life. By letting our love be conditional or reactive or prejudiced. And so, Father, forgive us. Convict us. Help us to see where we've gone wrong. Help us to repent, not out of guilt, but out of joy.

And out of eagerness to live the life you've designed us to live and to enjoy it as that which is abundant and true. Father, for the friendships who are broken, the marriages that are struggling right now. Would you plant a seed of hope that if they can be forgiven, if God can love them through their brokenness, then there may be a world in which the wrongs that they've encountered can be healed as well. For the despair and the hopelessness that maybe has them ready to quit. But the power that raised Jesus Christ from the dead be the same power you used to Keep them persevering and enduring.

Not condoning, not sweeping it under the rug, but not allowing it to not allowing it to be destroyed. But with the love that you provide, enable them to believe all things. To hope all things to endure all things, to let love never fail. And I pray that for every person in every context of every relationship as we respond. And we pray it in Jesus' name. Amen.