



LOVING THE PEOPLE YOU DON'T LIKE

Matthew 5:43-48

In our world, we have a hard time thinking of an enemy, not because we don't have them. There are people in this world that hate us because of the country we live in or the faith we profess.

But what about the people/groups near us who are hard to love? We may not call them enemies, but we don't like them- aggressive drivers, the liberals/conservatives, loud people with axes to grind, or those who just mistreat us for "God knows why."

Like the side-mirror sticker, “Objects in mirror are closer than they appear,” these people are in our space, breathing our air! But what if there is an opportunity in loving the people we don’t like? What if:

Your enemies are your opportunities to become like Christ!

For Christ-followers, this should be life’s bottom line!

Our text is the peak of Jesus’ teaching on six life areas, each introduced with, “You have heard that it was said.” Here He says,

⁴³ “You have heard that it was said, ‘You shall love your neighbor and hate your enemy.’ ⁴⁴ But I say to you, Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you, ⁴⁵ so that you may be sons of your Father who is in heaven. For he makes his sun rise on the evil and on the good and sends rain on the just and on the unjust. ⁴⁶ For if you love those who

love you, what reward do you have? Do not even the tax collectors do the same? ⁴⁷ And if you greet only your brothers,^[a] what more are you doing than others? Do not even the Gentiles do the same?

Let's focus on the word “reward” here. Jesus isn't saying this as if loving relationships weren't rewarding! Loving one another is rewarding, we are commanded to do so! But what if Jesus is saying there is a greater reward in loving our enemies? That,

Your enemies are your opportunities to become like Christ!

Which brings us to Verse 48, which sums up all said before it:

⁴⁸ You therefore must be perfect, as your heavenly Father is perfect.

This may be one of the most misunderstood verses in the NT:

1) Most translations read as if this were a

command when there is no mood of command in the entire verse (Imperative Mood).

2) The word “perfect” pictures something unattainable- why try?

1) This is not a command to do something but the result of doing the something in Verses 44-47, which is loving enemies!

2) “Perfect” here doesn’t mean absolute moral perfection but the purpose or goal of something.

Our goal as Christ followers is to be Christlike, and we look like Him when we love our enemies!

There is a reward that awaits us in loving like Christ. *Is there someone Christ is calling you to love, and by doing so, to reap an unseen reward? How will you love- praying for, doing good, speaking well of? Your reward is waiting!*