

Good morning, Fellowship. Good to be with you this morning as we continue our series, *Succession*. We're digging into the book of Luke and talking about what it means to be a disciple of Jesus.

⁴⁷ Everyone who comes to Me and hears My words and acts on them, I will show you whom he is like: ⁴⁸ he is like a man building a house, who dug deep and laid a foundation on the rock; and when a flood occurred, the torrent burst against that house and could not shake it, because it had been well built. ⁴⁹ But the one who has heard and has not acted *accordingly*, is like a man who built a house on the ground without any foundation; and the torrent burst against it and immediately it collapsed, and the ruin of that house was great."

Two years ago, Erin and I considered moving over to Rockwall to have a little more space in our home and a bigger yard. We found the perfect house online – spacious, updated kitchen and bathrooms, a big backyard for our kids to play in, and in our price range. It seemed a little too good to be true.

In person, it looked like the house had been through a war and lived to tell the tale. The walls had massive cracks that I had been covered up with drywall mud and paint. It was obvious in almost every room.

And you know what that means? Foundation issues. It WAS too good to be true. Buying that house would create future headaches and thousands of dollars in repairs – all because the foundation was bad.

How and where houses are built matters. If they're not built in the right place and in the right way – the shifts in the earth bring destruction. That's true in life, as well. There are going to be shifts in your life. You can't avoid them but you can learn to navigate them well. That's why Jesus wants us to build our lives on the proper foundation – His Word and putting His Word into action. What is He referring to exactly?

Right before this, starting in Luke 6:20, Jesus preaches the Sermon on the Plain. In the sermon, Jesus tells His disciples the kind of fruit He expects to see in their lives as they follow Him.

²⁰ And turning His gaze toward His disciples, He *began* to say, "Blessed *are* you *who are* poor, for yours is the kingdom of God. ²¹ Blessed *are* you who hunger now, for you shall be satisfied. Blessed *are* you who weep now, for you shall laugh. ²² Blessed are you when men hate you, and ostracize you, and insult you, and scorn your name as evil, for the sake of the Son of Man. ²³ Be glad in that day and leap *for joy*, for behold, your reward is great in heaven. For in the same way their fathers used to treat the prophets. ²⁴ But woe to you who are rich, for you are receiving your comfort in full. ²⁵ Woe to you who are well-fed now, for you shall be hungry. Woe *to you* who laugh now, for you shall mourn and weep. ²⁶ Woe *to you* when all men speak well of you, for their fathers used to treat the false prophets in the same way.

Let's think about what's happening here. Jewish people are listening to Jesus speak. These people live in a Roman-occupied territory. They're anticipating a Messiah – one who would come and liberate them from Roman oppression. The Romans have placed government officials and soldiers around to keep the Jews in order. When Jesus speaks about blessings - that the poor have the kingdom of God, that the hungry will be satisfied, the weeping will laugh, and the persecuted will be rewarded in heaven – and on the flip side that the rich will only be comforted now, the well-fed will be hungry, the laughing will mourn, and the adored will be done away with – the people listening perk up.

I can imagine them nodding in agreement. They feel validated. They are the blessed. The Romans are the woeful. Jesus is saying, "Blessed are those who have nothing but God and His Kingdom and woe to those who have a kingdom but no god." They've been anticipating a Messiah for a long, long time – a Messiah who would bring them good news and who will start an awakening and uprising. And so, Jesus' next few words – they're hoping – will be about the start of the uprising – the beginning of their liberation.

I have told you before that our 6-year old loves basketball. He was pretty pumped when his favorite team, the Lakers, won the title last week (apologies to my fellow Mavericks fans and to Dirk and to Luka – I am trying to turn him). He's just started his 2nd season of basketball. He came home after the 1st practice to let me know some exciting news. They huddle up, the coach gives them instructions, and right before they break, they all put their hands in the middle and on 3 they yell, "Titans!" It's their battle cry. It's the pre-game speech to get them excited and get them ready to go. That's this moment for the Jewish people, Jesus has them all in a huddle – His words inspire and empower and He gathers them in and says, "Ok guys. On 3...1, 2, 3..."

Go love your enemies! Wait. What? Did He say go love your enemies?

Luke 6:27-28 and 36.

²⁷ "But I say to you who hear, love your enemies, do good to those who hate you, ²⁸ bless those who curse you, pray for those who mistreat you... ³¹ Treat others the same way you want them to treat you... ³⁶ Be merciful, just as your Father is merciful.

Wait a minute, Jesus. You just gave warnings to those in control and in power. Yes. Love them. But they oppress us. Love them. They tax us. Love them. They mistreat us. I know; love them.

Jesus flips the script on what His listeners expected. Don't repay evil for evil. Repay evil with love. These are the foundational words to build your lives on – that you – that we would be known by our love.

Here's the reality. We all have or will have enemies. Enemies are those who actively oppose or are hostile to someone or something – usually because of immoral or unethical behavior. But in our culture today, opposition – enemies are being created because of differences of opinion or belief. What we're seeing right now across our country is that the right response to an enemy –

to someone who has wronged us or who has a different opinion than us – is to hit the “de-friend” button or to cancel them – to treat them as an outcast and marginalize them.

A man who had reached his 100th birthday was being interviewed by a reporter. “What are you most proud of?” the reporter asked. “Well,” said the man, “I don’t have an enemy in the world.” “What a beautiful thought! How inspirational!” said the reporter. “Yep,” added the man, “I outlived every last one of them.”

Is that your approach to dealing with your enemies – to avoid and ignore them, hoping you outlive them? Do you engage them with hostility or hope bad things to happen to them? Jesus tells us to be different and He gives us 4 words that will act as a solid foundation our lives – 4 words that will allow us to stand strong when the raging waters of our enemies rush in.

Here’s the first two: Do good.

That’s what Jesus says in verse 27. **Do good to those who hate you. Do good to your enemies.** The word “good” means noble. Treat your enemies nobly. This isn’t about feelings – it’s tangible action – benevolent deeds that overcome evil and anger with love.

Romans 12:19-21 says it this way: ¹⁹ Do not take revenge, my dear friends, but leave room for God’s wrath, for it is written: “It is mine to avenge; I will repay,” says the Lord. ²⁰ On the contrary: “If your enemy is hungry, feed him; if he is thirsty, give him something to drink. In doing this, you will heap burning coals on his head.” ²¹ Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good.

This means we must see beyond our enemy’s treatment of us, beyond our own pain and anger, and look for the humanity in them. It means seeing them as fellow image bearers. It means promoting healing in spite of how they’ve treated you. It means taking initiative in bringing good into their life.

Do you have a boss that doesn’t like you and always on your case? Show up early, work hard, buy them a gift on boss’ day (which you missed this past week if you didn’t do that). Is there a neighbor you’ve had words with or who stole the political sign in your front yard? Invite them over for a picnic in your front yard. Take them some cookies. Offer to babysit their kids so they can go on a date night. How can you practically love an enemy this week? How can you put love into action? What can you do that might open them to the gospel or deepen their relationship with the Lord?

First two words to build your life on – Do good. The next word. Bless. Do good to your enemies. Bless your enemies.

Jesus says, “Bless those who curse you.” Doing good is about action. Blessing is about verbalization. Blessing literally translates, “good words.” Jesus wants us to speak goodness,

truth, and affirmation into our enemies – to shower them with praise and mercy. It means not speaking evil, gossiping, or slandering them. It means leaning on the Holy Spirit to respond with love instead of reacting in our flesh.

Proverbs 18:21 says, “Death and life are in the power of the tongue, and those who love it will eat its fruit.” Every time we open our mouth, life or death comes out. Fellowship, I want us to be people who speak life and blessings into those who oppose us.

My default, when an enemy verbally attacks me, is to fire right back at them. Like an old western movie, we both turn and fire until someone goes down. I’d rather take you down before you can take me down. But Jesus calls me to bless – not curse.

How can you verbally affirm the gifts, abilities, or character of someone who has wronged you? How can you speak life into someone this week – reminding them who they are in Christ?

First three words for a firm foundation – Do good. Bless. And the 4th word: Pray.

Do good. Bless. And pray.

Something happens when we start praying for our enemies. As long as your prayers aren’t, “God, I hope you get ‘em. Just take ‘em down, Lord! Lightning. Broken leg. I don’t care, just get ‘em.”

As long as those aren’t your prayers – prayer will remind you of the person’s humanity. Prayer reminds you that they, too, are broken and sinful. And then, you can pray for their good, for their heart, and their faith. You can pray for God to bless them and that they fall in love with Jesus for the first time or that they fall deeper in love with Him. What if you can’t stand the person you’re praying for? Then prayer might be the place to start. Tell the Lord how you feel. He won’t be surprised. “Lord, I need your Holy Spirit to give me supernatural love for this person because I can’t do it in my own power. Give me love I don’t have and can’t produce on my own.” Those prayers soften your heart towards people and remind us of God’s love for us.

Do you remember some of Jesus’ final words before His death and resurrection? Father – forgive them. That’s what He prayed. Forgive them – they have no clue what they’re doing and who they’re killing. Forgive them. He was praying that for the people responsible for His death and He was praying that for you and me.

Jesus is calling us to be like Him. Like Luke 6:36 says, ³⁶ Be merciful, just as your Father is merciful.

Some of you are thinking, “Richard, you don’t understand. He’s the worst boss I’ve ever had.” **Do good. Bless. Pray.** “No. Richard, you don’t understand. She stabbed me in the back.” **Do good. Bless. Pray.** “No. Richard, you don’t understand. He cheated on me.” **Do good. Bless.**

Pray. “No. Richard, you don’t understand – he’s a republican. She’s a democrat. You don’t understand – have you seen their posts on Facebook?” **Do good. Bless. Pray.**

Friends, as disciples of Jesus, we are called to pass on undeserved love to the undeserving because that’s what Jesus did for us. He demonstrated His love for us in that while we were sinners, He died for us. We should treat everyone like Jesus died for them...because He did.

And I want to say one more thing before we close. I want to tell you something that has been breaking my heart. It’s the nastiness I have seen – especially on social media – of Christians towards each other and those outside our faith. Everything has become a versus.

Mask vs. anti-mask. Vaccine vs. anti-vax. Biden vs. Trump. Faith vs. Science. Your Science vs. My Science.

Let me be clear with you. I’m not your enemy. No matter what I believe about those things. We aren’t enemies. The person sitting next to you – is not your enemy. This love we are talking about this morning is countercultural. You have an opportunity to show non-believers what we’re all about. **And if your issues are with other believers, let’s stop spending time focused on the temporary things we disagree on and instead focus on the eternal thing we agree on most – that Jesus is the way, the truth, and the life. Fellowship, we have the opportunity to be a beacon of light and love in a dark place and I hope you’ll join me in doing good, blessing others, and praying.**

We all know about the Vietnam War. Over 3,000,000 soldiers and civilians died in that war. But most of us have probably never heard the name, Bill Kimball. Bill served as a Mortarman in the war.

20 years after returning home, God gave Bill a vision for Vietnam and its people. In 1988, he started a ministry called, Vets with a Mission (VWAM). Bill desired to help rebuild an enemy country that had suffered incredible destruction. A year later, joined by other Vietnam veterans, VWAM took their first trip to lend aid to a dilapidated Polio Orphanage. They brought updated braces, fixed a therapy pool, re-supplied the orphanage with fresh water, and rebuilt a border wall for protection. Their work brought healing to children suffering in unimaginable ways. On that trip, former enemies shed tears together – they healed together – and their lives were changed forever.

To this day, VWAM continues to take Bibles and Christian literature to the country, fund church repairs, and support outreach efforts through medical care.

I love this quote about VWAM’s purpose and mission:

It is the ministry’s heart’s desire to see the people of Vietnam know that former enemies can come together in forgiveness and reconciliation to each other. The purpose and the prayer of VWAM is that the Vietnamese on both sides of the war as well as US veterans can come to the

understanding that every man, woman and child can be reconciled not only to former enemies but to God and our Savior Jesus Christ.

If Bill Kimball and other former vets can go back into the land of their enemies to give aid, pray, build, restore, and speak the gospel into the lives of their former adversaries – surely we – can go back into our homes, our neighborhoods, and workplaces to do the same. And when we do, we will stand tall on the foundation of love – a love that only comes from a relationship with Jesus Christ.