

Love for Our Enemies! Luke 6:27-36

I received an email following last week's message. It struck a chord that I wanted to share with you all, keeping it anonymous.

Hello Troy. Thank-you for your sermon today. I feel the Holy Spirit convicting me of a need for a heart change. I must do a better job of loving others and that includes the lost. I find myself wanting to only be around and fraternize with other believers that share my opinions and interests. Almost like a country club. I become comfortable with those I know and love, and they love me. Well, on the way home from church I felt the prodding of the Lord (we have family over all day today). I have been just moody about dealing with family, which can be difficult and exhausting, as we all know. But I immediately asked the Lord to forgive me and to change my heart to love others as he does. It's amazing what a quick but genuine prayer for help can do. So, thank you for your sermon.... it was the catalyst I needed to hear. I'm a work in progress, but it helps to be reminded.

This is what an open heart looks like. Simply being open to the Holy Spirits whispers in your ear.

Let's look at today's passage:

Luke 6:27-36, "But to you who are listening I say: Love your enemies, do good to those who hate you, 28 bless those who curse you, pray for those who mistreat you. 29 If someone slaps you on one cheek, turn to them the other also. If someone takes your coat, do not withhold your shirt from them. 30 Give to everyone who asks you, and if anyone takes what belongs to you, do not demand it back. 31 Do to others as you would have them do to you. 32 "If you love those who love you, what credit is that to you? Even sinners love those who love them. 33 And if you do good to those who are good to you, what credit is that to you? Even sinners do that. 34 And if you lend to those from whom you expect repayment, what credit is that to you? Even sinners lend to sinners, expecting to be repaid in full. 35 But love your enemies, do good to them, and lend to them without expecting to get anything back. Then your reward will be great, and you will be children of the Most High, because he is kind to the ungrateful and wicked. 36 Be merciful, just as your Father is merciful."

The writers of the New International Commentary, in commenting on this passage, say this:

"They must wish and pray for blessings on those who curse and insult them."

"The test for real love is that it should be unselfish-self interest must play no part in it."

"To be acceptable by God we must love our enemies and prove it by doing good to them."

As we explore the meaning of this passage, this command, we will ask a few questions. The first is this:

I. Who is your enemy?

Those listening to Jesus at that time would say tax collectors were their enemy. The Romans were their enemy. The Gentiles were their enemy. Even the Samaritans were their enemy.

So, who is our enemy? Can someone tell me one of our enemies? _____

II. What does loving them mean?

To love your enemy means that we choose to act with active goodwill, kindness, and compassion toward those who oppose or mistreat us.

1. No matter how you feel.
2. It's active: you seek to do good for them.

No sitting back. It's not avoiding them so you can do nothing.

3. Pray for their well-being.

This includes salvation.

4. Do not hold onto grudges.
5. See them as humans.

In the genocides of the 20th century the first tactic was to de-humanize the other side. They were called cockroaches.

III. What it doesn't mean:

1. It does not mean we tolerate abuse.

We see throughout Acts that the disciples left areas that persecuted them. Sometimes even in a basket over the wall. Jesus even told His disciples to shake the dust off their feet when not accepted in a city.

2. It does not mean we approve of sin.

Ephesians 4:15, "Instead, speaking the truth in love, we will grow to become in every respect the mature body of him who is the head, that is, Christ."

A matter of fact, if we love someone, we will not only speak truth, but we will point in that direction. We know that sin will destroy anyone who holds onto it. True love will speak the truth to someone on the road to destruction, but it must always be in love, out of compassion not proclamations.

You know the difference between compassion and proclamation, right? Compassion is that longing to see someone prosper and do well. Proclamation is the judgmental declaration that someone is bound for hell. Which approach do you think will influence someone toward Jesus? To often we reduce the salvation of God as fire insurance rather than kingdom life, which is truly what it is. It's the Good News, not the Liberty Biberty insurance company.

IV. Why did Jesus teach this?

1. It mirrors God's character.

God is love and we know that God loves the world, the whole world, so much that He gave His son. God is love! Period!

We know that God is full of grace, not willing that any should perish because He loves all. And if God loves everyone, who are we to only divvy out love to those we judge as worthy?

Every person has been made in God's image and that gives them great value.

2. It breaks the cycle of retaliation.

We are all children of God. How do you parents react to hearing your children fighting among themselves? You demand they stop. Don't you think God wants His children to stop fighting and to get along...in love?

3. It holds a higher standard of righteousness.

Jesus calls us to be better than the world. Do you remember what He said in our passage?

Luke 6:32, "If you love those who love you, what credit is that to you? Even sinners love those who love them."

We, Christ followers, are called to be different, to be set apart, to.... love!

V. What happens when we love our enemies?

Let me tell you the story of Mosab Hassan Yousef. When he was living in Israel, he found himself in a Bible study going through the book of Matthew. You see, he was raised in Islam but had already rejected the violent branch of Islam, but was still struggling with how Christianity related with his Islamic roots.

Then he came to this passage:

Matthew 5:43-48, "You have heard that it was said, 'Love your neighbor and hate your enemy.' 44 But I tell you, love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you, 45 that you may be children of your Father in heaven. He causes his sun to rise on the evil and the good, and sends rain on the righteous and the unrighteous. 46 If you love those who love you, what reward will you get? Are not even the tax collectors doing that? 47 And if you greet only your own people, what are you doing more than others? Do not even pagans do that? 48 Be perfect, therefore, as your heavenly Father is perfect."

This passage rocked Mosab's life. Oh, I failed to mention who Mosab really is. He is the son of Sheikh Hassan Yousef, co-founder of Hamas.

Mosab was born in the West Bank and was first arrested for throwing rocks at Israeli defense force members when he was 10 years old. He was arrested as an adult in 1996 and spent a year in jail. By this time, he had become disillusioned with how Islam was used to spark hatred. So, when he was released in 1997 he became a spy for the Shin Bet, Israeli intelligence.

He prevented many suicide bombings and even an attempt on the life of Shimon Peres, Foreign Minister and future President of Israel in 2001.

In 1999 a British Missionary introduced Mosab to Christianity. Sometime in the next year he embraced Jesus and was baptized in 2005.

In 2010 he was given political asylum in The United States.

Mosab's journey to Jesus wasn't instantaneous. It took years for him to process and then trust the Bible replacing the Quran. But it was Jesus' message of love for one's enemy that set Christianity apart from Islam. It was the message of the Gospel.

So, what happens when we love our enemies?

How can we love our enemies without loving one another?