

Love As God Loves

2.19.17

Matthew 5:38-48 New Living Translation (NLT)

38 "You have heard the law that says the punishment must match the injury: 'An eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth.' 39 But I say, do not resist an evil person! If someone slaps you on the right cheek, offer the other cheek also. 40 If you are sued in court and your shirt is taken from you, give your coat, too. 41 If a soldier demands that you carry his gear for a mile, carry it two miles. 42 Give to those who ask, and don't turn away from those who want to borrow.

43 "You have heard the law that says, 'Love your neighbor' and hate your enemy. 44 But I say, love your enemies! Pray for those who persecute you! 45 In that way, you will be acting as true children of your Father in heaven. For he gives his sunlight to both the evil and the good, and he sends rain on the just and the unjust alike. 46 If you love only those who love you, what reward is there for that? Even corrupt tax collectors do that much. 47 If you are kind only to your friends, how are you different from anyone else? Even pagans do that. 48 But you are to be perfect, even as your Father in heaven is perfect.

Leader: The Word of God for the People of God.

**People: Thanks be to God.**

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Opening story

Come and See. Come and follow.

Be Salty. Be bright. Be the presence of Christ wherever you go. Be a disciple who brings out the best in others.

Live differently because you follow the Spirit of the law.

Live in such a way that you invite others to be disciples of Jesus Christ for the transformation of the world. Amen.

As we conclude this series called "*The Great Invitation*," we've considered why we said YES to Jesus and what difference that makes; we've been challenged to share our faith stories with others as well as invite someone to worship with us.

For the past few weeks, we have journeyed with Jesus: Baptism, calling of His disciples, to His teachings about being His followers - Children of God - Kingdom people.

Last week, we were challenged by Jesus' teachings.

This morning, in our text we find Jesus continuing the same line of thought.

Jesus: You have heard it said, “An eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth.” Anyone who loses an eye can gouge out the eye of the one who caused them to lose their eye. And if someone knocks out one of your teeth, you can knock out one of their teeth. And if someone kills one of your animals, you have every right to kill one of their animals. But Jesus said, I say to you, *“do not resist anyone who is evil. Do not fight back. Do not seek revenge. If someone asks you for something, give it to them. If someone asks for a shirt, give your coat. If someone slaps you on the cheek, turn your other cheek. If someone asks you to walk a mile for them, walk two.”*

If someone cuts you off on the road, let them. If someone yells at you, just listen. If someone talks about you behind your back, don't criticize them. If someone hurts you, don't fight back.

Jesus did not come to Abolish the Law. but rather, to Fulfill the Law.

He taught the Disciples to live by the Spirit (intent) of the Law. His desire was that our attitudes were right, not just our actions.

As Christ's followers, we are to live holy lives. Righteous lives. Lives pointing others to the True Light.

Augsburger suggests that “The disciple is to live by the higher law of love... and reflect the love of Christ” in everything. Jesus demonstrated this on the cross,”where He expressed deepest love to His enemies and extended forgiveness to all.” (Communicator's Commentary, Matthew, © 1982 Word, Inc; Myron Augsburger, NT Vol 1; ch. 2 “The Message of the King”; pp. 59 -107)

The Apostle Paul emphasizes the same conduct in Romans 12:

19 Dear friends, never take revenge. Leave that to the righteous anger of God. For the Scriptures say, “I will take revenge; I will pay them back,” says the Lord. 20 Instead, “If your enemies are hungry, feed them. If they are thirsty, give them something to drink. In doing this, you will heap burning coals of shame on their heads.” 21 Don't let evil conquer you, but conquer evil by doing good. (Romans 12:19-21 - NLT)

Scripture summary - Matthew 5.38-48, part II

Jesus said, You have heard it said, “Love your neighbor” and hate your enemy. But I say to you, *“love your enemy, do good to those who hurt you. Pray for those who persecute you. Love and do no harm.”*

Afterall, what good is it to love those who love you back? Even the wicked treat each other with kindness.

But, so that we may be called Children of God, let us love those who mistreat us.

For God gives good gifts to all people. The rain falls on the just and the unjust. God has no favorites.

Augsburger: Loving our enemies “... is the extension of Christ's love - agape love - a love which is an act of the will more than of the heart.” It is “not primarily something you feel, but something you do, opening your life in the spirit of Christ even to your enemy.” (Communicator's Commentary, Matthew, © 1982 Word, Inc; Myron Augsburger, NT Vol 1; ch. 2 “The Message of the King”; pp. 59 -107)

Jesus calls us to love as our Heavenly Father loves. His love is for ALL people. Good, bad, ugly. The sun shines on ALL people. Everyone experiences the blessings of rain. God has no favorites. God doesn't show partiality. God's love is perfect, open to all. (Communicator's Commentary, Matthew, © 1982 Word, Inc; Myron Augsburger, NT Vol 1; ch. 2 "The Message of the King"; pp. 59 -107)

How do we react when someone causes harm to us, or someone we love?

Can we truly forgive the one who has offended us?

What about random acts of violence?

In what ways can we live as Christian disciples in the midst of horrible tragedies that claim innocent lives?

Dawn Chesser: It is not easy being a disciple of Jesus. Sometimes, It would be easier, and perhaps even more satisfying, at times, to live by the saying, "*An eye for an eye, a tooth for a tooth.*"

This saying was actually OT law "Eye for an eye, tooth for a tooth" and so, Retaliation "was part of life." "God's intent of this law was actually to limit vengeance." (Communicator's Commentary, Matthew, © 1982 Word, Inc; Myron Augsburger, NT Vol 1; ch. 2 "The Message of the King"; pp. 59 -107)

Punishment to fit the crime. Or as Taylor Burton Edwards would call it: "*proportionally limited revenge.*" "***I don't get mad... I get even!***"

Chesser: Even when there are times when I wish to seek vengeance, I believe, that there is a better way. It is the only way.

*"for me, Jesus is ...my Savior... the Messiah... the Son of the Living God. And so,... I believe ... that the really difficult teachings like this one give us a portrait of the very heart of God."*

*"The good news of Jesus Christ is that his way comes from the very heart of the God ... the God who loves the unlovable, and who makes the sun rise on both the righteous and the unrighteous, and who sends the rain to fall on the just and the unjust alike.*

*"I am not saying that predators should not be brought to justice. But I am saying that becoming fixated on anger and pain and a desire for retribution is not a path to healing for victims. It is not a way to finding a peace that is lasting.*

*"Jesus Christ IS the way and the truth and the light... the only way for me."* (Dr. Dawn Chesser, Discipleship Ministries)

Jason Byassee, puts it this way:

"We are called here to love as God loves. This cannot be done out of our own resources... The Sermon here and elsewhere is a *portrait of the very heart of God*, one who loves the unlovable, comes among us in Christ, suffers our worst, and rises to forgive us. Turn the cheek, give the cloak, go another mile, lend, love the enemy—because that is how God loves. If you want to follow this God, made flesh in Jesus, you will live this life in which you find yourself loving this way before you know what you are doing." ("Theological Perspective" on the Gospel reading for the Seventh Sunday after Epiphany in *Feasting on the Word: Preaching the Revised Common Lectionary. Feasting on the Word – Year A, Volume 1: Advent through Transfiguration*. Philadelphia: Westminster John Knox Press, 2011, 382. Jason Byassee)

As a church, the body of believers, we face a greater challenge. How do we love as God loves in this world of hatred, terrorism, fear, war? "The church needs to awaken to its responsibility to be peacemakers, to help the world find deliverance from living by a balance of terror." (Communicator's Commentary, Matthew, © 1982 Word, Inc; Myron Augsburger, NT Vol 1; ch. 2 "The Message of the King"; pp. 59 -107)

During the past couple months we have been challenged to share our faith story and to invite someone to worship.

The key to sharing our faith is being able to talk in your own words about why Jesus speaks good news for you personally.

*Why have you said "YES" Jesus? why do you follow him? Where do you personally hear good news in this passage? What about this news is good? How is it life-changing for you?* (Dawn Chesser)

The Story of Forgiving Love

*LOVE as GOD LOVES*

What higher calling is there?

Jesus lays it all out for all to see. Here's what it means - what it looks like - to follow Him. to be HIS Disciple.

Kingdom people LIVE DIFFERENTLY. They LIVE HOLY LIVES. They rejoice when they are persecuted. They bring out the best in others.

They live by the Spirit of the Law.

They treat ALL people with unconditional love and respect.

They Turn the Cheek. Walk the extra mile. Give freely. Love the enemy.

IN short, They love as God loves.

LORD, Teach us to Truly Love as You love. Amen.