

2-20-22

Sermon- Hard to Love ALL the Time

Scripture- Luke 6:27-38, CTW- PS 37:1-11

Hymns- 766, 44, 467

Theme- We have to remember that we love only because Jesus first loved us. And as followers of Jesus Christ, we are to respond to others in the same way God has responded to us. We have to change the story, re-write history, shock people. JESUS IS LOVE!

## **I. Introduction:**

**A. One of the most difficult commandments of Jesus is to “love our enemies”** If you are like me, you will find that most of the time it is impossible to do.

We have all heard someone glibly saying, “we should all love our enemies”. I am not talking about a recent falling out with someone, or the ability to deal with an awkward person.

I am talking about those who are **really mean** and are **really out to get us**. How can we say we love them?

If we are not careful, “showing love toward an enemy somehow encourages, strengthens or empowers them into hurting us more. We have all been tested in that regard.

Jesus is saying that when are being treated so harshly, and unfairly, we are being tested, and it is a horrible experience.

We are directed to “love our enemies”, because somehow that is where true victory lies whether we understand it or not.

This is really a difficult topic, because it goes against our human nature...natural instincts!

However we are told not to worry because Jesus tells us in **John 16:33**, that “In the world we will have tribulation: but to be of good cheer; because he has overcome the world”.

Jesus managed to overcome a world that hates their enemies; but it is our world, and surely then it’s a natural thing to do ... to “love those who love us, and despise those who hate us” ... .. but

then Jesus tells us, "we are not of this world" because we are in him.

And when I hear things like this, I worry ... because I have no trouble at all loving my family, my wife, my loved ones, and those whose company I enjoy. **Well, ok not all the time**, but at the end of the day we still love each other, and pull ourselves together against our problems, encouraging one another, and getting on with life.

But there are those whom we don't want to love, but it is about them that Jesus says, "I want you to treat your enemies the exact same way, and love them just the same ... even though, they may not love you back."

**B. It not natural is it?** ... There is a very funny scene in the movie "Smoky and the Bandit" where a weary truck driver pulls up at a road side café, and the waitress had just served him, when three tough looking, leather jacketed bikers come in, and start giving him a hard time.

They verbally abuse him, one grabbed the hamburger and chips off his plate, and the third picked up his coffee and began to drink it and spill it over him.

I ask you, how would you respond to that? I have to tell you that even though I am giving a sermon about loving our enemies, I still love what happened next.

This truck driver simply and calmly stood up, paid his money and went on his way.

Then one of the bikers said to the waitress who had witnessed the whole scene, "Wow, that guy wasn't much of a man, was he?"

The waitress replied, "yeah, he is not much of a driver either ... he just ran over three motorcycles on his way out of the parking lot!"

**II. Jesus said, "love your enemies, do good, and lend expecting nothing in return. If you do, you will have a great reward."**

**A. That great reward has nothing to do with full pockets, big houses, or even self-esteem.** It does have to do with who we become, for there is much grace and transformation needed for us to live out the radical faith Jesus demands.

There is no greater reward than to be living and acting the way Jesus does. Jesus knows full well that the story will never change, that we will never love our enemies, without the amazing grace that transforms us and makes us different than we are.

What changes us and allows us to love is God's grace; a grace that is much, much greater than our sin.

**In loving our enemies, we are taking the way of the cross and are brought into fellowship with Jesus Christ.** And when we do this, we find ourselves being transformed. We begin to see other people the way God sees people. And we begin to love others **the same way God loves others.**

**B. It should never be about Revenge.**

The scene from the movie is a scene of revenge. ... It's a scene of justice, or Karma and I suppose we all like stories like that because when someone does something bad to us, our first natural and instinctive reaction is to get them back.

However, Jesus turns all this on its head and tells us in verse 27 to "Love your enemies, do good to them which hate us. Bless them that curse us and pray for them who despitefully use us".

In today's passage, Jesus lays out some foundational truths of Christianity, and one of the foundational truths that we must get right is this **"love our enemies"**.

**C. So how are we to respond to our enemies?** Jesus shares with us many responses, but today we will focus on the idea that **we must:**

**"Retain love in our hearts, despite those who hate us".**

Now, I do not think for one second that this was any more popular with the Jews than it is with us today.

I am sure it was worse because the religious leaders of the day were constantly quoting from the Old Testament, and one of the

old commandments was to “love your neighbor and hate, (yes hate), your enemy”, which still goes down well today.

But Jesus contradicts this in his Sermon on the Mount and says that, “If we love those who love us, what credit is that to us? Because even ‘sinners’ love those who love them”.

### **III. So, What About Hatred and Revenge?**

**A. When Jesus calls us to love those who hate us, he is calling for us to do something that’s totally contrary to our human nature.** Our human nature as I said wants revenge!

Our human nature tells us that when someone messes with us; we’re going to get them back because ... if we get back at them, they will know next time not to mess with us again; and besides ... revenge is sweet ... it just somehow makes us feel better. ...

But guess what; hatred and revenge especially if it is drawn out over time, is a horrible thing that literally, destroys us from within.

#### **B. The physical effects of hatred and revenge:**

Hatred, and the need for revenge, can hurt us physically inside as we all know. Scientific studies have been done to show the damage hatred and the accompanying anger does for someone.

At the very least, it raises our breathing rate; it causes our blood pressure to rise, putting a strain on our hearts. ... And repeated bouts of anger trigger headaches and leads us into abusive behavior toward others, if we allow it. ...

And anger can also cause a break down in our immune systems, lowering our defenses, and cause us to be susceptible to various things in the air.

A case in point was a teacher I spoke to, who recently left school in a rage and in tears after a confrontation by some very ungrateful pupils.

She couldn’t get it out of her mind, obsessed on it all weekend and returned on Monday morning, she now had a cold, and felt terrible.

Anger and hatred do work together and truly weaken us physically, if only we understood that. God wants us to learn from this.

### **C. The emotional effects of hatred and revenge:**

Nursing anger and hatred can also destroy us emotionally because it wears us out, it skews our judgement ... which in turn confuses the issues and causes us to make bad decisions.

Hatred and revenge is also the vital ingredient in fueling any embarrassing outbursts that we may have, as the anger gets a grip: outbursts which in turn may lead to guilt, shame and even depression through powerlessness.

And when we are in that state, we are not the most enjoyable of people to be around.

We have all been there. This is normal human life as we know it, and it is a result of hating those who hate us and keeping that hatred in our hearts. But God wants us to know that He has the answer for us.

### **D. The spiritual effects of hatred and revenge:**

God tell us that there are spiritual effects of anger, and the need for revenge, because we are told throughout the Bible that the essence of God is ... love, "God is love and we are his children".

And if we are harboring any hatred and anger in our hearts, causing physical and emotional outbursts, "where then is there love"?

And if there is no love inwardly, then we are not demonstrating love outwardly. We will be demonstrating something else, something we would rather not, something that is contrary to God's command of loving each other.

In other words, there will be a disconnection from God, because we are not truly loving him either. And, and if we are not loving him whom we cannot see, then we are certainly not loving those whom we can see.

### **E. What happens if we have evil in our hearts?**

Look at **Psalm 66 verse 18**, which says, **“If we have evil in our hearts, then God will not hear us”**. Is it no wonder then that God does not answer our prayers?

Wow, this is strong stuff and it can explain why many people feel disconnected from God not because they are not trying hard enough to please or contact God through their prayers and good deeds, **but because they are harboring “things in their hearts”, that ought not to be there.**

These are the things of hatred and injustice and revenge. Some of those things that we are harboring maybe justly deserved, in fact, most of them can be justly deserved; because bad things happen to good people, and it is a shame.

We do feel for them, but the only cure as far as Jesus is concerned for such injustice is to swap or replace that anger with love.

**F. When Anger commands our thoughts, the good things have trouble surviving.**

Have you ever noticed that when we're angry at someone it can be **all-consuming**?

It doesn't matter what's going on around us, our thoughts are upon the person or persons who have wronged us.

We become trapped in that hatred: our own self-created hatred. It makes it hard to function properly as a person and even more so as a child of God.

We must remember, we are not of this world; because Jesus overcame the world and it is Him whom we are here to worship today.

**IV. So, in conclusion, where do we go from here?**

**A. We all must endeavor to really love our enemies as Jesus said even though we do not understand how, or even why it works.**

Now I am not saying for one second to surrender to our enemies, or back down to them, or even appease them.

I am saying, stand firm against them to pursue what is right **but we must keep ourselves right**, by keeping that love and peace first and foremost in our hearts regardless.

**B. Fueling the fires of anger and desire for revenge will only destroy us and help the cause of Satan!**

Yes it's very difficult, and yes we have failed many times like most people, but at least we now know that harboring anger is not a solution, otherwise Jesus would not have commanded us to love our enemies as a basic fundamental principle.

There is so much more to loving your enemies than this.

Remember **verse 27**, "do good to those who hate us", or **verse 28**, to "bless them that curse us", or even "pray for them who abuse us".

**Verse 29** goes on to tell us to "**give to everyone who asks of us, and if anyone takes what belongs to us, we are not to demand it back**".

Wow, we Christians have our work cut out for us, don't we?!

We must remember how these verses can set us free in Christ!

Amen? Do you want to be free? Let us pray...