



Do You Love Your Neighbor?

Matthew 5:43-47

ANNOUNCEMENTS

- marriage night cancelled
- YTH Services

BIBLE PASSAGE

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, bless those who curse you, do good to those who hate you, and pray for those who spitefully use you and persecute you,**

⁴⁵ that you may be sons of your Father 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 have you? Do not even the tax collectors do the same?**

⁴⁷ And if you greet your brethren only, what do you do more *than others*? Do not even the tax collectors do so?

The New King James Version (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 1982), Mt 5:43–47.

ILLUSTRATION

The late Dr. H.A. Ironside, a bible teacher from many years ago, recounts a story when he once was in Ganado, Arizona, at a Presbyterian Mission Hospital there, he met a poor Navajo woman who had been nursed back to health through the consecrated work of a Christian doctor and the Navajo nurses. She had been cast out by her own people when they thought she was going to die, and was found after three or four days of exposure.

After nine weeks in the hospital she recovered enough to begin to wonder about the unexpected care she had received. She said to one of the nurses, "I can't understand it. Why did the doctor do all that for me? He is a white man, and I am an Indian. I never heard of anything like this before."

The Navajo nurse, a Christian, said to her, "You know, it is the love of Christ that made him do that." She said, "Who is this Christ? Tell me more about him." The nurse called a missionary to explain the gospel. The staff began to pray. Several weeks passed. Then a day came when she was asked, "Can't you trust this Savior, turn from the idols you have worshiped, and trust him as the Son of the living God?" As the Navajo woman pondered her answer, the door opened and the doctor stepped in. The face of the old woman lit up. She said, "**If Jesus is anything like the doctor, I can trust Him forever.**" She came to the Lord Jesus Christ and accepted him as her Savior.

INTRODUCTION / CONTEXT

What was it that reached that Navajo woman? Love. Not man's love. But **God's love** displayed in a man. As believers, this is the love that we are to display as well towards an ungodly and rebellious world. This is our responsibility as sons and daughters of our Father in Heaven, so that many may come to faith in His Son, Jesus Christ, just as that Navajo woman did.

This morning, Jesus will get to the heart of the matter on the most important topics of the Christian life: Love.

Jesus will remind us that we are to love not only those who love us or who are easy to love, but also those who mistreat us, those who are according the world's standards, "unlovable".

It is safe to say that love is the most important and fundamental characteristic of our lives as follower of Jesus.

These verses carry the core of Christian ethics (morals) up to anchor it in the character of God, for they teach that the Christian is to love others, not as a man loves his friends, but as God loves. - James Boice

To provide some context...

Our passage today is found within what is commonly referred to as The Sermon on the Mount.

The Sermon on the Mount has been noted as one the most famous sermons that Jesus has ever given.

This is the first of 5 biblical discourses/sermons that Jesus gives within Matthew's gospel account.

We do not know the exact location where Jesus gave this sermon, but we do know that it would have been given near the Sea of Galilee.

- Northern Israel. Mount of Beatitudes.

At this point, Jesus' earthly ministry was at it's beginning stages. Jesus had recently been baptized by John the baptist, endured temptation from Satan in the wilderness for 40 days and 40 nights, He called His first disciples to follow Him, and then started preaching the gospel of the kingdom.

In fact, look with me at the end of ch. 4.

Jesus was going throughout all Galilee, teaching in their synagogues and proclaiming the gospel of the kingdom, and healing every kind of disease and every kind of sickness among the people. 24 The news about Him spread throughout all Syria; and they brought to Him all who were ill, those suffering with various diseases and pains, demoniacs, epileptics, paralytics; and He healed them. 25 Large crowds followed Him from Galilee and the Decapolis and Jerusalem and Judea and from beyond the Jordan.

[New American Standard Bible: 1995 Update](#) (La Habra, CA: The Lockman Foundation, 1995), Mt 4:23–25.

What did Jesus do next?

When Jesus saw the crowds, He went up on the mountain; and after He sat down, **His disciples came to Him. 2 He opened His mouth and began to**

teach them, saying,

New American Standard Bible: 1995 Update (La Habra, CA: The Lockman Foundation, 1995), Mt 5:1–2.

What do we see here?

What Jesus was about to teach in the following discourse was directed towards those who committed themselves to following Him. This sermon was given for those who desire to live as disciples of Jesus in a sinful world. It describes the kind of life they are to live.

Although Jesus was directing His teaching towards His disciples, He also preached to a mixed gathering of people. His disciples, those who were unsure about Jesus, maybe even those who were primarily interested in Jesus' miracles. (That may describe this congregation today).

But it is important for us in understanding the context to remember that Jesus is addressing an audience largely comprised of Jewish listeners awaiting their Messiah all while living under the oppression of the Roman Empire.

To the Jewish listeners living under the Old Covenant and Pharisaic, cold, legalistic teachings of their religious leaders, the scribes and the Pharisees, Jesus' teaching would have been revolutionary.

Within this sermon, Jesus brings forth the correct understanding and teaching of God's word laid out under the old covenant.

He does this by correcting the understanding of true righteousness.

What is righteousness?

"Righteousness" = The quality, state, and characteristic of being in the right. (Lexham Bible Dictionary)

"The condition acceptable to God"

How does one become righteous before God?

You see the Religious leaders of Jesus' day taught that one could produce righteousness in their life on their own, this was done they believed by keeping God's law and ordinances. This led naturally to one focusing on their outward behavior over their inward condition.

Jesus rather teaches us that true righteousness, the kind that makes one acceptable to God and produces the right kind of living for God, comes not from man's efforts, but from God. This is what Jesus is getting at in this sermon, the person who has recognized their own spiritual bankruptcy and utter inability to get right with God based on their own

performance, can receive the true righteousness of God by faith, which will produce right living before God.

The Sermon on the Mount does not encourage righteousness in man apart from Christ; it condemns him for falling short of God's righteousness, and it drives him in desperation to the cross... The Sermon on the Mount calls for a pure righteousness that flows from a regenerated heart. - James Montgomery Boice

- This sermon's purpose is not Jesus telling his followers how to live to achieve righteousness, or right standing before God.
- But rather, how to live in light of receiving right standing before God.

The Sermon on the Mount cannot be grasped and applied fully to those who have not been fully grasped by the life of Christ. In order to grasp and apply, one must be possessed by a new life in Christ.

- Here, we come face to face with the reality of our need for the life of Jesus.
- It's pointless to read this and try in our own effort without the help of the Holy Spirit, to put these things into practice.
- In fact, as we read, we should come to painful realization that without Jesus, it's impossible for us to live out these principles put forth by Him.

For the remainder of our time, in light of everything just mentioned, as we approach this teaching on love we must realize that in order to love properly and truly as disciples of Christ, we must first have a heart that is purely devoted to Him and surrendered to the power of the Holy Spirit.

This is what the world desperately needs. True Christians. Not ones who primarily focused on behavior modification or superficiality. But those who are completely given over to the possession of the Holy Spirit and His transformative work within us.

LOVE. What is it?

WHAT IS LOVE?

Briefly, let's discuss what love is. A single word in our English language that is used often to describe our affections towards someone or something.

"I love pizza", "I love that movie", "I love my wife".

But how does God define love?

This is not exhaustive, for I would refer you to Pastor Josh's recent Mid-week studies on the topic.

It is noteworthy for us to consider the different types of "love" used in the greek language.

- Eros= Sexual, erotic love
 - The bible never uses this word. Why?
- Storge= Familial love.
 - Love of a parent to their child, vice versa.
 - The bible also does not use this word, but it could have.
- Philia= Strong affection
 - "philanthropy" = Love for mankind
 - Philadelphia = City of brotherly love
 - This is the highest type of love that mankind is capable of in himself
- Agape= Divine, Self-sacrificial love.
 - This word is rarely used in grk writings.
 - Used in the NT to describe God's love for mankind.
 - This love is not an emotional love, not something you feel, but something that acts.
 - "This love is an unchanging love. It loves even when the object of the love is hateful or unlovely. You might say that it is love for no reason at all, or love even when there are ample reasons to discourage it. It is godlike love." - James Montgomery Boice
 - In short, this type of love is not natural to us.

Yet, this is the word that God uses here in this passage to describe the type of love we are to have towards others.

So then, how do we love like this?

First, it is important for us to better understand God's agape love.

Let me ask you, **How did God display or demonstrate His love to us?**

BY THE CROSS!

“For God so loved the world, that He gave His ^conly begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish, but have eternal life.

New American Standard Bible: 1995 Update (La Habra, CA: The Lockman Foundation, 1995), Jn 3:16.

“I have been crucified with Christ; and it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and the *life* which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself up for me.

New American Standard Bible: 1995 Update (La Habra, CA: The Lockman Foundation, 1995), Ga 2:20.

This is real love—not that we loved God, but that he loved us and sent his Son as a sacrifice to take away our sins.

Tyndale House Publishers, *Holy Bible: New Living Translation* (Carol Stream, IL: Tyndale House Publishers, 2015), 1 Jn 4:10.

ILL: A good way to illustrate this type of love would be in the situation of a life guard and a drowning person.

Now, most people would not be willing to die for an upright person, though someone *might perhaps* be willing to die for a person who is especially good.

⁸ **But God showed his great love for us by sending Christ to die for us while we were still sinners.**

Tyndale House Publishers, *Holy Bible: New Living Translation* (Carol Stream, IL: Tyndale House Publishers, 2015), Ro 5:7–8.

This is true, biblical, God-like love. This is the type of love God showed us.

This is the type of love that God commands us to love others with.

For those of us who have come to the knowledge of God's great love towards us, displayed in the cross of His Son Jesus, we must humbly and honestly admit that this love is impossible for us to live out on our own effort.

In a moment we will learn more about this and how we achieve this love in our lives.

But first, let's briefly look more into what Jesus is teaching here.

THE GREATEST COMMANDMENT

⁴³ “You have heard that it was said, ‘*You shall love your neighbor and hate your enemy.*’

The New King James Version (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 1982), Mt 5:43.

- Jesus once again brings up the teaching they would have known. He quotes a well-known commandment in the OT. From Leviticus 19:18

‘You shall not take vengeance, nor bear any grudge against the sons of your people, but you shall love your neighbor as yourself; I am the Lord.

New American Standard Bible: 1995 Update (La Habra, CA: The Lockman Foundation, 1995), Le 19:18.

- This commandment is pretty straightforward, yet, the scribes and pharisees of Jesus' day had added something to it. They taught that a Jew was equally obligated to hate their enemy.
- They taught and believed that their "neighbor" was specifically their fellow Jew.
 - JEW & GENTILE
- With this understanding, they believed that they had no obligation to love those who did not associate with them.
- You may recall the Parable of the good Samaritan.

²⁵ And a lawyer stood up and put Him to the test, saying, “Teacher, what shall I do to inherit eternal life?” ²⁶ And He said to him, “What is written in the Law? How does it read to you?” ²⁷ And he answered, “You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your strength, and with all your mind; and your neighbor as yourself.” ²⁸ And He said to him, “You have answered correctly; do this and you will live.” ²⁹ But wishing to justify himself, he said to Jesus, **“And who is my neighbor?”**

³⁰ Jesus replied and said, “A man was going down from Jerusalem to Jericho, and fell among robbers, and they stripped him and beat him, and went away leaving him half dead. ³¹ And by chance a priest was going down on that road, and when he saw him, he passed by on the other side. ³² Likewise a Levite also, when he came to the place and saw him, passed by on the other side. ³³ But a Samaritan, who was on a journey, came upon him; and when he saw him, he felt compassion, ³⁴ and came to him and bandaged up his wounds, pouring oil and wine on *them*; and he put him on his own beast, and brought him to an inn and took care of him. ³⁵ On the next day he took out two denarii and gave them to the innkeeper and said, ‘Take care of him; and whatever more you spend, when I return I will repay you.’

³⁶ Which of these three do you think proved to be a neighbor to the man who fell into the robbers' *hands*?" ³⁷ And he said, "The one who showed mercy toward him." Then Jesus said to him, "Go and do the same."

- However, Jesus corrects this incorrect teaching.

Q: Who is your neighbor?

Answer: Our neighbor is anyone in our proximity with whom we can share God's love.

Jesus is teaching them that their neighbor is not just those who they associate with as their fellow Jews, but all people whom they are able to share God's love with.

Even including those who mistreat us.

LOVE YOUR ENEMIES

⁴⁴ But I say to you, love your enemies, bless those who curse you, do good to those who hate you, and pray for those who spitefully use you and persecute you, ⁴⁵ that you may be sons of your Father in heaven;
The New King James Version (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 1982), Mt 5:44–45.

This is a characteristic of the Christian that sets us apart from those in the world!

The world would say, ignore and disregard those who mistreat you. Have nothing to do with them. In fact, you can treat them how they are treating you.

Lets get honest for a moment. Isn't this easy for us to do? Isn't it natural to want to mistreat others in the same way or more when they mistreat us?

But this is not the way of a Christ follower. We are to love them, even if they hate us.

Bless those who persecute you; bless and do not curse.
New American Standard Bible: 1995 Update (La Habra, CA: The Lockman Foundation, 1995), Ro 12:14.

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.
 Tyndale House Publishers, *Holy Bible: New Living Translation* (Carol Stream, IL: Tyndale House Publishers, 2015), Ro 12:19–21.

In making the choice to love instead of repaying evil for evil, we are displaying God's love towards those who hate and reject Him.

Jesus understood we will have enemies, yet we are to respond to them in love, trusting that God will protect our cause and destroy our enemies in the best way possible, by transforming them into our friends. - David Guzik

What is the result of loving others the way God loves us?

so that you may prove yourselves to be sons of your Father who is in heaven; v. 45

Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works and glorify your Father in heaven.

The New King James Version (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 1982), Mt 5:16.

Jesus explains further what it looks like to extend God's love to others.

EXTENDING GOD'S LOVE TO THOSE WHOM HE LOVES

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 have you? Do not even the tax collectors do the same?⁴⁷ And if you greet your brethren only, what do you do more *than others*? Do not even the tax collectors do so?

V. 45-47

What is the point Jesus is making? Simple. That we are to extend God's love to all people, because His love extends to all people. Even those reject Him and live their lives in wickedness and evil.

The Lord is good to all, and His mercies are over all His works.
New American Standard Bible: 1995 Update (La Habra, CA: The Lockman Foundation, 1995), Ps 145:9.

This is what bible scholars refer to as God's common grace.

Yes, God will one day separate those who have been covered by the blood of His Son, Jesus, and those who are in a state of rejection of Jesus, remaining dead in their sins.

But right now, His love is seen in our world. Even those who are evil and choose to reject Christ, experience God's love and goodness each day when the sun rises and the rain comes.

This is all to show that God's grace and mercy is available to all who will surrender their lives to Him in faith and repentance.

This is why Jesus tells us, His followers that we are not to limit showing God's love to certain people. But must be willing to love all we come in contact with.

We have talked thus far about what God's love is, the divine, self-sacrificial love that is rooted in the character of God that loves even the "unlovely" or "unlovable".

It is important to also understand what God's love isn't.

WHAT GOD'S LOVE ISN'T

- Love is not the same as liking

What does it mean to like someone? It means to have a certain emotional feeling toward them.

But the reality is that we cannot entirely control our feelings. **True or false**, it is not always possible to like everybody. True!

However, it is always required that we choose to love. Remember, love is not a feeling, but rather a willful choice to act in kindness and goodness towards another.

It is not always possible to like someone, but it is always possible to love them. Because, love is a choice. You can make the choice to do that which is good towards another person.

- Love is not affirming sin.

Love does not condone sinful acts as being morally acceptable to God. Nor does love leave a person stuck in their sin.

God did not send His own Son to die on the cross so that a person could remain in bondage to their sin. An understanding of God's love will draw a person to repentance. Not to remain unchanged and enslaved to sin.

EX: God loved the Scribes and the Pharisees, but did not condone their deeds. (Matt. 23)

One of the most loving things you can do for another person is tell them the truth of the gospel, even if it is not received humbly.

HOW THEN DO WE LIVE OUT THE LOVE OF GOD?

Understanding that God's love towards His creation is not based on anything within us, but rather in spite of us, we too can learn how to love as our Lord loves us.

Loving your neighbor you see, is not based off of who they are or what they do. Our love towards others should be detached from those things and from yourself.

To truly love as God loves, means to deny yourself and therefore submit to the Holy Spirit to govern your thoughts, actions, words and entire being.

We must all admit that it is much easier to love those who treat us well, yet much more difficult to love those who hate us. Impossible, in fact.

Let's make this practical:

- "Bless those who curse you"
 - Do you reply to bitter words with kind words?
- "Do good to those who hate you"
 - Do you act in goodwill towards those who act with malicious intent towards you?
- "Pray for those who spitefully use you and persecute you"
 - When we are cruelly persecuted by another person, do we respond by praying for them?
 - Do you ask God to have mercy and pity on them?
 - Do you ask God to open their eyes to the light of the glory of the gospel?

God is not asking you to change the whole world, but to change those in your world.

Who has God put in your life right now, that He is asking you to love?

A coworker who regularly mocks Christ?

A family member who is extremely difficult to get along with or live with?

Or even the strangers that we encounter daily in our lives?

Make the willful choice to love as Christ loved us, all who you come in contact with.

MEDIA

RICHARD WURMBRAND - TORTURED FOR CHRIST

APPLICATION

Let us remind ourselves of our great example, Jesus.

The One who while being maligned, tortured, cursed, nailed to the cross, condemned by His enemies who rejected Him, looked upon them and said, "**FATHER, FORGIVE THEM FOR THEY KNOW NOT WHAT THEY DO.**"

Here at the cross, we learn how to love our neighbor.

END OF SERVICE

STACK CHAIRS

- 8 High leave in stacks
- Leave two middle sections

