

Sermon on the Mount Part 13
“Love Your Neighbor”
Matthew 5:43-48

I. OT teaching on loving your neighbor (Verse 43)

- Leviticus 19:18 was the primary teaching for loving your neighbor
 - Leviticus 19:18- KJV “Thou shalt not avenge, nor bear any grudge, against the children of your people, but thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself: I am the Lord.
 - In reference to this law the nation of Israel made two fatal mistakes in their interpretation.
 - First they taught that their neighbor only applied to their immediate community, religion, and nation.
 - Second they taught that if we are to love our neighbor then conversely we are to “hate” our enemies.

II. Jesus gives four verbal commands in response to hating our enemy. (Verse 44)

- **Command One: Love your enemies.**
 - When Christ said to love your enemies He could have chose one of four words He chose the word “Agape”.
 - Agape- It is a sacrificial love, that is, a love that cares, gives, and works for another person's good—no matter how the person may respond or treat you. Agape love seeks to put others first even at our own expense.
 - The following scripture is a great reference to Agape type love. Romans 12:20 KJV - Therefore if thine enemy hunger, feed him; if he thirst, give him drink: for in so doing thou shalt heap coals of fire on his head.
 - Although this goes against our very nature we must remember that this is the very nature of God towards us.
 - I John 4:10 “Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us, and sent His son to be the propitiation for our sins”.
- **Command Two: Bless them that curse you**
 - In order to put this into practice we must literally move our mouths and use words in order to “bless” someone.
 - Literally what Christ is saying to do is to speak softly to the person who curses us.
 - Pro 15:1 KJV - A soft answer turneth away wrath: but grievous words stir up anger.
 - 1Pe 3:9 KJV - Not rendering evil for evil, or railing for railing: but contrariwise blessing; knowing that ye are thereunto called, that ye should inherit a blessing.
- **Command Three: Do good to them that hate you**
 - **Hatred** (or **hate**) is an intense feeling of dislike. It may occur in a wide variety of contexts, from hatred of inanimate objects or animals, to hatred of oneself or other people, entire groups of people, people in general, existence, or everything.
 - Jesus is simply saying when someone hates you go beyond mere words in order to serve them
 - In order to “do good” for someone who hates you it will require effort and action on your part.
 - Rom 12:20 KJV - Therefore if thine enemy hunger, feed him; if he thirst, give him drink: for in so doing thou shalt heap coals of fire on his head.
 - If we really want to be the hands and feet of Jesus then we will “do good” to those who hate us.
- **Command Four: Pray for them that despitefully use and persecute you**
 - Literally when we pray for an enemy we are entering into an intimate time with the Father on behalf of the person who is our enemy.
 - When we do this we are humbling ourselves and coming before God in an intercessory role on behalf of our enemy.
 - If the individual is not saved we are asking and pleading for the salvation of the person.
 - If they are a believer we are asking for the Holy Spirit to move in such a way as to open the eyes of the enemy to their folly.
 - This is real work and it is not for the weak at heart.

III. The risk involved in living life by these principles (Verse 46-47)

- The very real risk is that you open yourselves up to even being hurt again and again.
 - Why would we do this? The answer is 2 fold.
 - Because that is what God, Jesus, and the Holy Spirit has done for us over and over again.
 - Because if we don't we are no different than the pagans, gentiles, and non-believers!

IV. Be perfect as your Father in Heaven is perfect. (Verse 48)

- This is one of those versus that once again has been misused and abused over the years to teach that a person has the ability to live above sin and not to sin.
- The word “be perfect” is the Greek word “teleios” which means to be fully developed, mature, or complete.
- As we love our enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to those who hate you, and pray for them that despitefully use and persecute you, you will be complete as your Father in Heaven is complete.