

Sermon on the Mount – A Christian’s Righteousness: Love Your Enemies

Throughout the beatitudes and the first 5 antitheses, Christ has been teaching about true Christian character and how we relate to God and how we relate to others. In this study, we will discuss the last of the six antitheses that Christ teaches in the Sermon on the Mount. Many would call this antithesis the pinnacle or climax of the Sermon on the Mount where Christ teaches that we are to “love our enemies”. This teaching is essentially a calling for His followers to be different from the unbeliever not only in righteousness, but also in action.

Read Matt 5:21-48

Love Your Enemies (v.43 – 48)

1. **What does the Old Testament teach in regards to how God’s people are to relate to their neighbour (Lev. 19:17-18, 33-34; Ex. 23:4-5, Deut. 22:1-4; Prov. 25:21-22)?**
 - Lev. 19:17-18, 33-34
 - o You shall love your neighbor as yourself, rebuke your neighbour
 - o No vengeance / grudge
 - o [The sojourner was not a Jew, but a resident alien in the land](#)
 - Ex. 23:4-5, Deut. 22:1-4
 - o These two passages parallel each other with the first referring to an enemy and the second referring to a brother. In both cases, the required action is consistent
 - o A practical display of love towards your enemy or brother, by going beyond what is required of you
 - o Practical display of love your neighbor as yourself
 - o There is one law for both brother and enemy
 - Prov. 25:21-22
 - o To do good to your enemy so that they may come to repentance

2. **According to the teaching of Christ in verse 44, who is your neighbour (Matt. 5:43-44; Lk. 10:25-37)**
 - Matt. 5:43-44
 - o Your neighbour includes your enemies, those who persecute you, those who abuse you
 - Lk. 10:25-37 (Parable of the Good Samaritan)
 - o [The Samaritans are racially mixed of partly Jewish and partly Gentile ancestry](#)
 - o [The Jews viewed the Samaritans as being an unclean people](#)
 - o [It would be unthinkable that a Samaritan would help a Jew or vice versa](#)
 - [Jn. 4:9 – “The Samaritan woman said to him, “How is it that you, a Jew, ask for a drink from me, a woman of Samaria?” \(For Jews have no dealings with Samaritans.\)”](#)
 - o From the parable, we can see that the Samaritan shows compassion and cares for his neighbour the Jew, or enemy
 - o Anyone that you may cross paths with

3. **The Pharisees and scribes at the time were teaching that “You should love your neighbour and hate your enemy” (v.43). How did they distort or misinterpret this teaching? (Lev. 19:1-2, 9-10, 17-18)**
 - Narrowed the standard of love (removed “as yourself”)
 - o “as yourself” is crucial as it puts the standard of love at its highest point
 - Narrowed the object in which love was to be shown
 - o Explicitly excludes enemies as neighbours
 - o Lev. 19:2
 - The Pharisees looked only at the immediate context of the passage and points out that Lev. 19 is addressed to the Israelites.
 - The Pharisees would look at a neighbour as one who is of their own people, a fellow Jew, a brother.
 - Added to the law by instructing others that they should hate their enemies
 - o Since the command in Lev. 19:18 is to only “love my neighbour”, then it is implied, permitted, or even commanded to “hate my enemy”. This rationalization is easy to believe for those who want to believe and confirm their own racial prejudices.
 - o The ignored verse 9 and 10 where there were to leave the gleanings of their fields “for the poor and for the sojourner”.
 - o [Some may argue that there are many passages in Scripture that may have encouraged people hate their enemies](#)
 - [The Imprecatory Psalms](#)
 - [Psalms that invoked judgment, punishment, and curses upon certain people](#)

- Primarily contained within Psalm 69 and 109, but can be found in many other Psalms
- Psalm 69 is the second most quoted Psalm in the New Testament
- Psalm 69 is a lament of David amidst his suffering and persecution because He is standing with God.
- Verses 22-28 is cry for help. That God would pour out His judgment against these people.
- These Psalms are judicial and never something individual or personal. There is always concern for the glory and honour of God and not for “self”

4. According to the following passages, what are some practical ways in which we can love our neighbours? Can you think of anyone that you need to be a neighbour to and have you been doing these things for your enemies? (Matt. 5:44, Lk. 6:27-28; Lk. 10:25-37; Rom. 12:14; Lev. 19:17)

- Matt. 5:44, Lk. 6:27-28
 - Pray for your enemies, do good to them (good deeds), bless them
- Lk. 10:25-37
 - Show compassion, care for them, extended whatever more was required to continue caring for them
- Rom. 12:14
 - Bless those who persecute you, do not curse
- Lev. 19:17
 - Reason frankly (rebuke) with them, for the good of the person
 - We are not only to not take revenge, but we are to correct and restore

5. Why are we to love our neighbours/enemies? (Matt. 5:44-48, Lk. 6:35; Rom. 5:6-8; Eph. 5:1-2)

- Matt. 5:44-48, Lk. 6:35
 - So that we may be able to identify ourselves as His children, by doing what He does
 - By exhibiting a love like the love of the Father
 - Divine love is indiscriminate and is love that is equally shown to everyone
 - “For he makes his sun rise on the evil and on the good, and sends rain on the just and on the unjust”
 - This is God’s common grace for everyone, not saving grace (enabling sinners to repent, believe, and be saved)
 - Common grace is shown to all mankind, believers and unbelievers, expressed by God through His creation
 - There are rewards
- Rom. 5:6-8
 - The ultimate example of God’s love for us sinners
 - That while we were still sinners, enemies of God, Christ died for us so that we may be reconciled with the Father
 - We are no better than anyone else and we were all undeserving of God’s grace
- Eph. 5:1-2
 - We are called to be imitators of God’s and walk in love as Christ did

6. In verse 47, Christ challenges us with a question, asking “What more are you doing than others?” Reflect on the following passages and discuss how and what Christians are to be doing more than others? (Matt. 5:44-48; Matt. 5:38-42)

- Matt. 5:44-48
 - If we love only those who love us, we are no better than the swindler
 - If we greet only our brothers, we are no better than the unbeliever
 - It is not enough for Christians to resemble non-Christians, but we are to be **MORE** than that
 - Our righteousness is to exceed that of the Pharisees
 - Our love is to exceed that of the unbeliever
 - Our love in fact is to be perfect, as our heavenly Father is perfect
- Matt. 5:38-42
 - From our study last week concerning non-retaliation, there is a general sense that the Christian should deny himself and his own rights, but to go above and beyond what is required of him
 - He is to deny himself and look to the needs and interests of others
 - In these injuries and injustices, the unbeliever may be able to not retaliate and hit back. He may merely ignore it, or grin and bear it.
 - The believer however needs to deny himself and take up his cross
 - He needs to do this things gladly and willingly

- **What makes us different from the unbeliever?**
- **What makes us different from the unbelieving philanthropist or humanitarian?**

“Love your enemies”(v44). It is a fairly simple phrase to say, but quite the opposite to be able to live it out as Christ has challenged us to do today. Not only are we to “not resist the one who is evil” (v39), but we have been called to go beyond that and act in a positive way towards our enemies by praying for them, by blessing them, and by caring for them. Throughout the six antitheses, our Lord has been teaching us how we ought to be different from the world around us with respect to how we relate to others. We are to avoid anger and lust, keep our fidelity in marriage, be honest in our speech, not seek vengeance or retaliate, and actively love our enemies. Does your life exemplify any of these attributes of Christian character and can you be identified as someone who is an imitator of Christ?

Throughout this coming week reflect on the question “what more are you doing than others?” What is special about you that sets you apart from the unbeliever that does good works?

Pray that God would change your heart to love your enemies and to have a heart that longs after the desires of God.