

Ice breaker: Go into small groups and try to mix the teams up. Question: Someone in your extended family always wants to give you gifts, but you've told them not to give you them because it's usually food and when you open the packaging you find that it's expired. One day you find that this family member sends you more gifts in the form of food and find that it is again expired. What is your response?

Matthew 5: 38-48

Jesus here at the sermon on the mount continues to tell people about what the old law says and then about what He says. And what Jesus had to say continues to show us what the law in it's fullest meant for those who received it.

Verses 38-42 regarding retaliation:

- ⤴ Firstly, we know that the law of retaliation was given to them in Exodus 21:22-25 and Deut 19:15-21
  - Exodus tells us that if someone hurts another person and it leaves a serious injury then you are to do to that person the exact same injury
  - Deut tells us that to convict someone you need at least two or three witnesses; furthermore, if a witness is trying to convict someone by lying and is found out by the judge then they are to be treated the sentence that they tried to convict the other person of
  - The purpose of these laws were to define what justice was and to try and stop others from committing the same offence (in the case of lying before the judges)
- ⤴ So what went wrong?
  - The Jews likely took this principle to justify personal revenge
  - Exodus and Deut tell us that it is the judge who declares what the punishment is and not individual people
  - They ignored Lev 19:18 telling them how vengeance is forbidden
- ⤴ What does Jesus tell us is the fuller meaning of this law?
  - We, in our personal response, should not resist an evil person; that is why Jesus tells us to turn the other cheek, to give both our tunic and our cloak, to go two miles instead of just the one, to give to the one who asks and to not turn away from the one that wants to borrow
  - This is dying to self
- ⤴ Romans 12:14-21
  - Especially verse 21 where it tells us, "Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good."
  - We are to leave justice to God as verse 19 tells us
  - Our own personal response should be that of winning them over
  - Proverbs 25:21-22 tells us: when they are hungry we feed them and when they are thirsty we give them something to drink
  - Our response should show so much good that we shame them to repentance. Verse 22: "In doing this, you will heap burning coals on his head, and the LORD will reward you."

Verse 43-48 regarding loving your enemies:

- ⤴ Leviticus 19:17-18 commands us to love our neighbours because of who God is
  - Our neighbours includes our enemies and those who persecute you (verse 44)
- ⤴ So what went wrong again?
  - The Pharisees narrowed how much love they needed to show and who they needed to show love to. They did not love others "as themselves" and they excluded loving their enemies
- ⤴ So what does loving your enemies look like?
  - Verse 44 is clear that we should pray for our enemies
  - Romans 12:14 tells us we should bless those who persecute you
  - Leviticus 19:17 tells us to rebuke your neighbour when necessary
- ⤴ Why do we love our neighbours?
  - Because of the common grace that God shows to everyone
    - "He causes his sun to rise on the evil and the good, and sends rain on the righteous and the unrighteous."
  - Because God commands us to be perfect just as He is perfect (verse 48)

- Because it is evidence of our salvation to be called sons of God or else we are no different than the pagans or tax collectors who also show love to each other (verses 45-47)

As a Christian, what can I do now that I know these facts?

- ⤴ Trust that God is a just God and he will carry out His judgement in His time so that we don't have to
- ⤴ Learn to live lives that reflect an attitude of non-retaliation, but instead to show them kindness and gentleness that we may shame them to repentance
  - For example, I work with kids at Toronto City Mission, and kids being kids will always want things done their way. On a few occasions I was told that they hated me because how I didn't do the things they wanted to do. In my response, I told them that I still very much liked them. They responded with a "hmmp" but you can definitely tell that an attitude of non-retaliation works much better than retaliating with a child on who was right
  - Likewise, I think it's very easy to show other people love in the words that we choose to use to them. Next time if someone has wronged you and they are arguing to you about it, simply say something nice about them instead or something that they did that you really liked.
- ⤴ Furthermore, we can pray for our enemies just as verse 44 tell us; we can give them encouraging words, and perform good deeds for them (Luke 10:30-37)

And if you do not call yourself a Christian, Jesus leaves us with a great challenge in verse 48, "Be perfect, therefore, as your heavenly Father is perfect."

- ⤴ To everyone, this is impossible with our own efforts, but it is through the empowering of Christ that we can even begin to live lives closer to the standard that Jesus has told us here in the sermon on the mount. It is only through Christ's death and resurrection that we can begin to do good to those who are around us
- ⤴ And why did Christ need to die? It is because scripture is very clear that only those who are perfect may enter into the presence of God, but we are not; we have sinned just as Romans 3:23 tells us we know from Romans 6:23, that the only reward for sin is death. Christ paid that death for us, and as Romans 5:8 tell us, "But God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us."
- ⤴ Christ died so that He could take the sins of the whole world away and to give us our only hope of entering into the presence of God
- ⤴ Romans 10:9-13 tells us, "That if you confess with your mouth, "Jesus is Lord," and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved. For it is with your heart that you believe and are justified, and it is with your mouth that you confess and are saved. As the Scripture says, "Anyone who trusts in him will never be put to shame." For there is no difference between Jew and Gentile—the same Lord is Lord of all and richly blesses all who call on him, for, "Everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved."