

My Enemy?!

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[0 : 00] All right, well this morning as we come to the Word of God, we are continuing on with Jesus' sermon in the Gospel of Luke.

Warning or woe. And the overall message of Jesus is that the great reversal is coming. For those who are Jesus' disciples and believe in Him, we are blessed.

And all the troubles and sorrows that we face now will give way to joy, satisfaction, and even reward in the kingdom of God.

But for those who decide to ignore Jesus and instead pursue the pleasures and offerings of this world, all they cherish will be lost. They will be left comfortless, longing, and mourning.

Well, Jesus now continues on with specific teaching for His followers about what to do when people mistreat us. These words not only instruct us, but they also expose us and convict us.

[1 : 26] They demonstrate for us what true righteousness looks like. And we're going to wade slowly through these words, this whole section, and reflect for several weeks on it deeply.

And my hope and prayer is that we would come away from these next number of sermons different people, changed by the powerful words of Christ. Let's begin with verse 27.

Jesus says, Already we should stop and reflect. Why does Jesus say it this way?

To you who are listening. I don't think He's just addressing the whole crowd here. He seems to be calling everybody to listen, But at the same time, knowing full well that some are truly listening.

Some will truly hear His words and take them to heart, while others will not. We also notice the word but there. Jesus just finished saying, Woe to you.

[2 : 31] Woe to you. Giving these warnings. And we talked last Sunday about how He was addressing those who were not truly His followers in the crowd with those warnings. Telling them how things would end up for them if they didn't believe in Him and follow Him.

But here there's the pivot. But to you who are listening, I say. So Jesus is turning back to address those who have faith in Him. Those who really desire to follow Him and learn from Him.

Are you listening to what Jesus has said? These things He's about to say here, do you long to hear them? Do you value them?

Will you take them seriously? Will you do what Jesus says? Or are you just in the crowd? Just in the congregation?

Hearing but not really listening. But to you who are listening, I say. Love your enemies.

[3 : 38] Do good to those who hate you. Bless those who curse you. Pray for those who mistreat you.

Jesus gives four imperatives. Four commands. Love my enemy. And they are all parallel to one another. The first one on its own is enough to make us go, what?

Love? My enemy? Even those two words in the same sentence feel strange. Never mind that the one that we're to love is the enemy.

That word enemy, that goes with hatred, doesn't it? And the word love, that goes with family. That goes with friends. That goes with wife and husband and children, doesn't it?

Love your enemies, says Jesus. Jesus is famous for these words.

[4 : 48] No other religion in the world up till this moment in history has ever taught or suggested this as a way to live for its followers. I just did a little bit of Googling online and there's a few ancient Greek philosophers apparently and a few ancient Buddhists who express the idea that hatred should be repaid with justice.

Or indifference rather than revenge. But no one before Jesus ever went so far as this.

He commands us to love our enemies. Not just to ignore them, but to love them. The only other times this was even nearly expressed in history that we know of was by the same God who Jesus is

the son of.

Back in the Old Testament book of Exodus, God said this to Moses. If you come across your enemy's ox or donkey wandering off, be sure to return it.

If you see the donkey of someone who hates you fallen down under its load, do not leave it there. Be sure you help them with it. We also read this one statement in the book of Proverbs compiled by King Solomon a little later on.

[6 : 14] If your enemy is hungry, give him food to eat. If he is thirsty, give him water to drink. So when Jesus says, love your enemies, it's not the first time God has said something like this.

But it is the most direct, the most clear, the most explicit imperative along these lines. Jesus commands us to respond to mistreatment.

Not with revenge. Not with insult. Not with hating them back. Not with the silent treatment.

But with kindness. Goodness. And even care. For that person. With love. This is one of the amazing distinctives of our God and of our Savior.

Jesus goes on to flesh out what he means by this using the other three parallel imperatives. You can see them on the screen there. This is kind of going back to what we've been talking about in Proverbs.

[7 : 26] There's this thing that they love back in the ancient Hebrew times called parallelism.

Where they make these statements and they kind of often come in couplets. And they're virtually synonymous, each line.

Sometimes there's a contrast. But in this case it's that they're synonyms. There's a parallel. Well, it's essentially saying the same thing in each line but in a slightly different way.

And we might see this one as one statement at the top. With three parallel statements that further explain the first statement. Or probably more accurately we might see this as two couplets.

The first having to do with the more general theme of how we treat our enemies. And the second more specifically about how we talk to God. About our enemies.

And the way that this form of parallelism works. Each of these statements kind of overlaps in meaning. But also has some of its own distinct nuance to it.

[8 : 31] I think the idea of a... I'm trying to think of what your... Left and a right speakers in a stereo. Is a helpful analogy. We're intended to hear both of them at the same time.

The sound mixes and combines. We hear it at the same time. But if we close our eyes. We could get the sensation that one of the voices we hear is coming from the left. One's coming from the right.

One's coming from the middle. And it's all based on how that audio is mixed. In the right and the left channels. This is what makes surround sound feel so immersive. If you've ever experienced that.

You can kind of close your eyes in the middle of a movie. And maybe you hear the police siren go... And it sounds like it's going past you. Panning from the back to the front. It's really the same sound in all the different channels.

But the way that it's mixed. The way that it... The details. The nuance. Creates that fuller picture.

That sound picture that we hear. So think of these parallel statements in that way.

[9 : 31] It's like 4.0 surround sound. Jesus is not commanding us to do four totally different things.

To four different types of people. Rather he's commanding us to respond to all varieties of mistreatment.

With a full multifaceted loving kindness. Notice the parallel synonyms for enemies. Love your enemies.

Those who hate you. Those who curse you. Those who mistreat you. These are all synonyms. Essentially describing the same kind of relationship that we might have with someone.

But each gives some detail. Each gives some nuance. Enemies just speaks of the general relationship. They're not a friend. They're not for us. They're against us.

Those who hate you. Speaks of what's going on in their heart. And in their attitude towards us.

Those who curse you. Describes how they speak about you.

[10 : 34] Or to you with their words. And those who mistreat you. Describes how they act. How they behave. What they might do to you. Each of these nuances makes up the whole.

We are to respond in these ways. To those who do any or all of these things to us. In a similar fashion.

We notice the imperatives. The parallels there. Love. And do good to. Are virtually synonymous. To love someone.

Is to do good to them. It's to care for them. It's to seek their well-being. In the second couplet. Blessing a person. And praying.

For someone. Are the same thing. We bless a person by praying. And asking God. To do good for them. May the Lord. Give you strength.

[11 : 30] And both. In this second couplet. Are examples of how. We may do. Good to our enemies. Or love our enemies. Kind of another way.

To make all of this. Relationship with the poetry. Clear. You could pick any one of these imperatives. And it's obvious that. We're to do that. Towards any.

On the other side of the list. Any of these forms of mistreatment. So pick love. For example. We're to love our enemies. Those who hate us. Those who curse us. Those who mistreat us. Or pick bless.

We're to bless. Not just those who curse us. But bless our enemies. Bless those who hate us. Bless those who mistreat us. We're to do all of these things.

To all who treat us. In any of these ways. And. This is especially helpful. To have these parallel statements.

[12 : 26] Because probably one of our first questions. At the first statement. Was how am I supposed to love. My enemy. What does that even mean?

What does that look like? How do I do it? Well the next statements. Tell us. Something of what that looks like. It looks like doing good. To those who hate you.

It looks like. Praying for them. Blessing them. Rather than cursing them. Love is not just a feeling. It's an action. Of goodness.

Towards people. Well at this point. We're probably starting to wonder. Okay. Who is my enemy? Who am I supposed to be doing these things to?

There's two initial answers. We often give to this question. Some of us at first might say. Well I don't have any enemies. And by the grace of God.

[13 : 22] Some people at some times in their lives. Have peace. In all the relationships around them. And if that's you today. Praise be to God. That's a wonderful thing.

To have happen. And a place to be in your relationships. And it can. And it does happen. The second answer that might come to mind is. To that question of who is my enemy.

Our minds might go straight to major conflicts. Wars. Wars. Attacks. Battles. We maybe think to define enemy in that way.

But I'm not sure that that's mainly what Jesus has in mind here. Certainly these things could apply. In those situations. But let's notice how we got to talking about enemies.

In the first place. Just look back up the page a little bit. To verse 22. Jesus said. Blessed are you when people hate you. When they exclude you. And insult you.

[14 : 23] And reject your name as evil. Because of the son of man. He just finished reminding his disciples. That they're blessed. When people treat them in these ways.

Because of the son of man. And so the immediate context. For these instructions about loving enemies. Has to do with the mistreatment. That we may face. Because of Jesus.

Because of our faith in him. And because of our commitment. To living according to his ways. The apostle Peter. I think was listening well that day.

This is what he wrote. In his. Letter. To the churches. He said. Dear friends. Do not be surprised at the fiery ordeal. That has come on you.

To test you. As though something strange. Were happening to you. But rejoice. In as much as you participate. In the sufferings of Christ. So that you may be overjoyed.

[15 : 19] When his glory. Is revealed. If you are insulted. Because of the name of Christ. You are blessed. For the spirit of glory.

And of God. Rests on you. If you suffer. It should not be as a murderer. Or thief. Or any other kind of criminal.

Or even as a meddler. However. If you suffer as a Christian. Do not be ashamed. But praise God. That you bear that name.

So Peter acknowledges. The kind of suffering. That we may face. Because of our connection to Jesus. Mistreatment. Because we. Believe in him. Follow him.

But it's also helpful. Because Peter. Reminds us. That we might suffer hatred. We might suffer insult. We might have. Injury. Because we've been cruel to others.

[16:17] Because of how we've treated them. Even simply. Because we've been a meddler. Or a troublemaker. In other words. Our own ungodly behavior.

Can make. Enemies. For us. It can provoke hatred. Cursing. Insult. And of course. In those cases. We're the ones.

At least partly. That are at fault. And there's much more to do. Than just. Love our enemies. I mean. We. We ought to. Humble ourselves. Before them. We ought to confess. The wrongs.

That we've done to them. We ought to seek their forgiveness. For what we did. These words of Jesus. Back in his sermon. In Luke. Seem to be about.

Loving our enemies. Meaning those. Who treat us poorly. Because of our connection. To Jesus. Or loving. Those who mistreat us. For no good reason. For no fault of our own.

[17:12] These words. Are for cases. Where it seems. Where we are truly. The victims. Of others. Sinful attitudes. And behaviors. And so.

Let me circle back. To that question. And maybe. With that. A little bit of extra focus. It's easier to answer. Who is your. Enemy. Who has.

Hated you. For no good reason. Who has. Mistreated you. For no fault of your own. Who has. Cursed you. Or spoken. Unkind. Or hurtful words. To you. Unprovoked. It could be a family member.

It could be a friend. It could be. A co-worker. A supervisor. A teammate.

[18:14] A neighbor. Maybe it's somebody in the community. Maybe it's somebody who you sought help. For. Some service. Or.

Or care. A contractor. A care provider. A store clerk even. Could even be someone. In this. Room. Who is your enemy. Who has been. An enemy. To you. And. And. And. This is not to be. To be spiritualized. To refer to the devil.

Jesus is not talking about our enemy. The devil. With these words. We're not to love the devil. And bless him. And seek his good. This is talking about people. Who has been an enemy.

To you. Who has hurt you. Who has been unkind. And rude. Without cause.

[19:08] Or reason. Who has mistreated you. In any of these ways. Big. Or small. Whether hating. Excluding. Cursing. Insulting.

Jesus says to you. Love. That person. Do good to them. Bless them. Pray for them.

And this is where our hearts. Will probably feel tangled up in knots. With a mix of emotions. As we think of the things. That they did. Or said. We may feel inside.

Every desire. To do the very opposite. Of love. To them. To hate them. To pay them back.

To get even. To insult them. To put them in their place. And let them know. How we really think and feel. About the things they did or said. We might even be tempted to pray.

[20:15] That God would do ill. To them. Jesus says. No. Don't do any. Of those things. In response.

Instead. I tell you. Love them. Do good to them. Bless them. Pray for them.

And this is usually not. An easy thing to do. This is usually hard. Because we struggle. With our thoughts. All the reasons.

They do not deserve. To be treated kindly. Come to mind. After what they've done to us. And yet. There are no. Ifs.

There are no. Excepts. To these statements. Love. Your enemies. Do good to those. Who hate you. Bless.

[21:14] Those who curse you. Pray. For those who mistreat you. Maybe there's someone. In your mind right now. And you don't even know. Where to start.

With loving that person. If that's the case. I would encourage. You to simply start. At the bottom of this list. With praying for that person.

Something we can do. Anytime. Anywhere. In private. And it's praying. For them.

Not against them. It means to pray. And ask God. For their benefit. Not. God. Please. Repay them for what they did to me. Make their life miserable.

That might be the honest feeling. That we have in our heart. But to pray like that. Is actually cursing them. Praying and asking God.

[22 : 14] To do harm. Or ill. Or to bring trouble. Or trial. On a person. Is what cursing is. In the Bible.

People. And Jesus is here. Explicitly telling us. To do the very opposite. Do not curse. Those who curse you. Rather. Bless them.

Pray for God. To do good to them. Now. I know that sometimes. We as Christians. Mean well. We look at how God. Has used trials.

And difficulties. In our lives. To build our character. To draw us close. To help bring us. To our senses. At times. And so we've sometimes. Prayed for God.

To bring trials. And difficulties. In the lives of others. So that they will come. To their senses. So that they will change. So that they will grow. And I understand that prayer. And I've prayed like that.

[23 : 09] Myself. In the past. But sometimes. Maybe our framework. Maybe our framework. Is just too small. Our view of God. Is too small.

That God can only change people. By bringing disaster. Calamity. And hardship. And so we pray for God. To bring that. But you know.

As I was reflecting on this. This past week. I'm convicted. We may long. For God. To bring the good result. But should we be praying.

For God. To afflict. To punish. To bring trouble. Or harm. Is that the only way. God can answer. Our good longings. For others. I think we should be very careful. After. Spending time with these words. I think we should be very careful.

[24 : 03] About how we pray. For those who mistreat us. Father. Convict them of their sins. Yes. Do whatever it takes.

To get their attention. To save them. Turn them from evil. Yes. Prune them. Maybe.

If we're praying that. With the right heart. Discipline them. Maybe. If we're praying it. With the right heart. But Father.

Bring them low. Make them miserable. Take away something good. That they have. Bring them into hardship. Make them fail. The more I linger over these words of Jesus.

I think Jesus would not have us ask. For those kinds of things. In the lives of others. The only exception I can think of. Is if maybe they're using their good position.

[25 : 01] Of power or wealth. To do harm to others. I might still pray. That they be stripped of that ability. To abuse others. By being removed from that position. Or losing the means.

To exploit. In case there's any doubt about this. Just listen to this. Word from Paul. In his letter to the church at Rome. He says virtually the same thing there.

He says bless those who persecute you. Bless. And do not curse. And again. In the Bible. Cursing is not primarily uttering profanity.

Or swearing. It's praying for God. To do harm. To do ill. To bring trouble or trial. To a person. To punish a person. And now I know there are examples of cursing.

In the Bible. In the Psalms even. By men like King David. But Jesus forbids it. For his disciples. We are to respond with prayers for good.

[26 : 04] Only. Jesus set the example for us. When he was brutally and wrongfully killed. On the cross. Think of that moment.

If there was anyone who could have rightfully prayed. For God. To punish. His enemies. It was Jesus. In that moment. And yet Jesus did the very thing.

That he's commanding. Here. He prayed. Father. Forgive them. Don't treat them.

As they deserve. They were at the foot of the cross. Doing the.

All of these things. To him. The very same things. They were hating him. They were mocking him. They were insulting him. They were rejecting his name.

[27 : 09] The name above. Every name. As evil. And he saw them. And heard them. Doing these things. To him. As they killed him.

And he loved them. As they did it. Father. Forgive them. This is the love of God.

God. This is why God. And his son. Are truly worthy. Of our worship. He is a God. Who loves. His. Enemies. At the end of all of this section.

Of Jesus sermon. This is actually what it's about. You've heard that saying. Like father. Like son. Children often imitate their fathers.

And that's what Jesus is calling us to do. Along with him. As children of our heavenly father. Look down to verse 35.

[28 : 10] He finishes this section in this way. He says. But love your enemies. Do good to them. Lend to them without expecting to get anything back. Then your reward will be great.

And you will be children. Of the most high. Because he. Is kind. To the ungrateful. And the wicked. Be merciful. Just. As your father. Is merciful. God has been like this.

To us. Paul actually states this explicitly. In Romans and Colossians. We were. His. Enemies. If you're a Christian today.

Do you know. That at one time. You were. God's enemy. This is where we all start. This is what our sins have. Done to our relationship with God.

[29 : 12] And yet. While we were in that status. Of relationship with God. He first loved us. He sent his son Jesus. To save us. To die for us. The ultimate act of love.

And kindness. And mercy. Towards enemies. Towards people who didn't deserve it. And so here. We as followers of Jesus.

Are being called by him. To treat our enemies. As he has treated us. Love them. Do good to them. Bless them. Pray for them. Forgive them. For them. It's one of the most powerful. Testimonies. To Jesus.

And his work in our lives. That we can share. It's not an intellectual. Argument. For the existence of God. It's not an example. Of Old Testament prophecy. Being fulfilled.

[30 : 07] It's the power. Of the risen Christ's. Spirit. Living in us. Such that when we are mistreated. We do not retaliate. We do not give in.

To rising anger. Instead. We do the very opposite. We love that person. We seek their good. We deal kindly with them.

Returning blessing. For insult. I don't know about you. But that's compelling to me. I want to be. Like our father.

In that way. Let's pray and ask. For the Lord's help with this. Father in heaven.

You know all the people. That have come to mind. In these. Past moments. People with whom. We've had struggles. Some for a short time. Some for years.

[31 : 05] People who have. Hurt us. And we pray and ask. For your spirit's power. To respond like this. To them. From now on.

From today on. Do that work. In our hearts. We thank you. That you have. Treated us that way. With such mercy.

We love you. And we just commit ourselves. And our relationships. With these people to you. In Jesus name. Amen.