

Righteous Love

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Preacher: Andrew Price

[0 : 0 0] well I thought I'd start this morning with a line from a song and I want to see if you can guess the name of the artist who sung the song now I was going to sing it myself but for your sake here we go yeah thank you you just wanted me to stop doing that didn't you yeah Tina Turner and she sings what's love got to do with it and she tries to sing the song that it's nothing you know it's a second-hand emotion although I think the subtext is that she knows love has something to do with it and certainly as we come to the Bible reading today love has everything to do with it in fact love is what lies below the surface of all these topics that Jesus has been talking about all these laws that he's been discussing including today's but first let me summarize where we're at so far particularly if you've missed a few weeks or you're visiting us today so we're at point one on the outline Jesus is sitting on a mountainside he's teaching his disciples what it means to live as part of God's kingdom part of God's family and it means being different to the world or standing out as different and so if your Bible's there you can flick back to chapter 5 verse 14 for example he says that we're to be like light that cannot be hidden or a city on a hill that stands out it cannot be hidden we're to be like salt that is distinct that has a distinctive flavor why are we to stand out as different well he says in verse number 16 or sentence number 16 there he says in the same way let your light shine before others why well so that they may see your good deeds and glorify your father in heaven see what he's saying we are to live such good lives that people will see and be drawn to our way of life and ultimately drawn to God to praise him in fact our lives are to be so good that they are to be even better than the Pharisees who were the religious teachers of the day and so Jesus says in verse number 20 of chapter 5 he says unless your righteousness that is your right living unless it surpasses or is greater than the Pharisees and teachers of the law you will certainly not enter the kingdom of heaven now as I've said before this would have been shocking news to the disciples who are listening on that mountainside as I said before it'd be like saying if you want to play soccer in our hall then you have to be better than Harry Kuehl it's ridiculous that's how the disciples would have first heard it who could be better than the Pharisees they seem to obey every law of God they looked very good or very righteous but of course looks can be deceiving can't they you see they obeyed the letter of God's law sure but they did not obey the spirit or the heart behind the law so for example one of the 10 commandments is do not murder they would obey the letter of the law and not murder anyone physically but they wouldn't obey the heart of the law they'd still think murderous thoughts about people they still say murderous things they'd still hate and that's all unloving as well and so while they kept the letter of the law they disobeyed the heart behind the law I was at someone's house when their five-year-old son was fighting with his sister and so the parent sent him to his room but the boy sat right on the edge of his room on the carpet where the carpet in the doorway meets the floorboards of the hallway he sat right on the edge stuck his head out and yelled at his sister down the doorway picked up a gun a dart gun and started firing dart bullets down and his sister the parent called out I said go to your room and the boy responded I'm in my room see look at the

line you see he obeyed the letter of the law didn't he he was in his room technically but he missed the heart of the law all together the parent then stormed down the hallway to show him exactly what go to your room meant but you see that's being a Pharisee doing what the letter of the law says rather than the heart of the law it's it means that you're not really truly loving God or loving others you're trying to get away with doing the minimum amount instead of the maximum and if we believe in Jesus though then God has forgiven us and he's given us new hearts new hearts that will love God and will love others so much so that we will want to try and obey not just the letter of the law but the heart of the law as well in fact God promised to give us new hearts and to help us in this I showed you this verse on the next slide a couple of weeks ago but as I'm summarizing let me remind you again so on the next slide it says from Ezekiel in the Old Testament I will sprinkle clean water on you and you'll be clean I will cleanse you from all your impurities and from all your idols I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit in you do you see that a new heart a new spirit in you I will remove from you your heart of stone and give you a heart of flesh and I will put my spirit in you and move you to follow my decrees and to be careful to keep my laws you see when we believe in Jesus this is what

God does he washes us clean which is what baptism represents now the water doesn't actually wash our sins away as I said only God can do that and when we believe in Jesus and along with this cleansing comes God's spirit and a new heart that seeks to love God and love others so much so that we want to truly obey God's law to the full both the letter and the heart so when God says do not murder God's spirit will move in our new hearts not to murder physically or mentally or verbally because that's the loving thing to do and as we come to the last two laws that Jesus mentions in this section today loving with our new hearts also means foregoing going without our rights in order to love sacrificially so we're at point two in verse 38 Jesus says you have heard that it was said eye for an eye and tooth for a tooth that's the old testament law that he's just quoted we actually saw it in our first reading I don't know if you remember that and this law was there to ensure that there was justice because justice is a good thing and we need justice we live in a fallen world where people are bad and do bad things if everyone was good we wouldn't need law courts or police or a justice system but because people are not good we need those things and we need laws that ensure justice in fact we want justice when Brett Cowan was convicted of the murder of Daniel Morecambe earlier this month there was a sense of satisfaction in the community justice that were people wanted had finally come in fact the headline is that line from one of the newspapers it read Morecambe verdict pure justice you see we want justice because we know it's right and in the old testament verse 38 is one of those laws that ensured there would be that justice that we know is right and long for it meant people were punished for their crimes but punished fairly eye for eye tooth for tooth you know not eye for head but eye for eye tooth for tooth fairly as sometimes in the old testament it wasn't a literal sometimes money was paid to the victim instead a compensation which is more helpful for them I mean think about it if a victim is attacked and lost their eye taking their attacker's eye might give them a sense of satisfaction but it's not going to help them all that much in life is it and so money was sometimes paid instead but in the old testament this law was for serious crimes it was not meant to be used for everyday situations where we are wronged but the pharisees you see that's what they used it for so imagine for a moment you're leaving this building this morning on you're on your way out the doors and someone steps on your foot the pharisee would say hey you stepped on my foot and the law says hand for hand foot for foot so put out your foot you see they take that law and then misuse it not because they were interested in justice but because they wanted to get that person back you see the pharisee misuses this law to get revenge or imagine that two little girls who just so happen to have the same names as our two daughters and Megan and Caitlin Megan takes a toy or a special scarf from her sister Caitlin and so Caitlin says fine I'll take one of yours and now Caitlin she's obeying the letter of the law isn't she toy for toy scarf for scarf but is she really doing it because she wants justice or because she wants to get her own back and of course what do you think will happen next Caitlin will do something back and then Megan will do something back and then it's on for young and old and the situation gets worse Jesus is saying to his disciples you see to us you ought to be different when you're wronged don't fight for your rights as the world does in these sorts of situations instead let it go let it go

through to the keeper have a look at verse 39 a sentence number 39 in your bibles jesus says but i tell you do not resist an evil person you see what he says not only are we to avoid revenge but jesus goes further and says don't even resist don't even oppose an evil person now immediately we think of all sorts of extreme examples like what if a robber breaks into my house at night and he's about to shoot my family and does this mean i should say go for it shoot anyone you like start with him is this what not resisting means of course not jesus is not talking about extreme situations like that which are life-threatening or or going to cause severe injury though in rare cases it might include that in rare cases rather jesus is talking much more about everyday situations where we are wronged personally and to show us what he means he gives us four examples and none of which are life-threatening you'll notice but they are challenging because they're not things we'd normally or naturally do have a look at verse 39 again the rest of verse 39 to 42 he says so if anyone slaps you on the right cheek turn to them the other cheek also and if anyone wants to sue you and take your shirt hand over your coat as well if anyone forces you to go one mile go with them two miles give to the one who asks you and do not turn away from the one who wants to borrow from you now someone's slapping someone across the cheek here refers to an insult and it's a backhanded kind of slap you see and most people are right-handed and so to slap someone with your right hand on the right cheek the only way you can do is kind of with a backhand i was thinking of um getting you to turn to the person next to you and just to show you but that's probably not going to be helpful but just imagine for a moment that the person next to you did whack you across the cheek what's your first instinct be to do after you got over the indignation slap them back wouldn't it for most people that would be their first reaction see most of us have this inbuilt sense of justice that wants to fight for our rights and get back at the people who wrong us but jesus is saying just let it go it's not worth it let it go through the keeper someone insults you don't get them back it don't oppose an evil person instead love them even if it costs you in fact turn the other cheek and be willing for it to cost you again and again in other words show sacrificial love even to an evil person in situations like this now of course some situations really are serious and for those we need to make use of the justice system we have but there are many many more situations where we can actually turn the other cheek and show love for example a person cuts you off on the road and now do you honk the horn or curse under your breath or speed up to let them know you really annoyed me or do we think well they're obviously stressed and in a rush perhaps they've got a bad temper so i better not add more stress or anger to the situation especially because they have to go home at the end of the day and i don't want their family to suffer their stress or anger too now which is more loving to do or take jesus's next example in verse number 40 if someone sues you for your shirt jesus says let them take your coat as well now in the old testament the the old testament law said no one no one could take your coat that was the one thing no one could take that way people would always have something to keep them warm but jesus is saying even give up that right and instead show sacrificial love to the others who have wronged you imagine for a moment then you go out for coffee with a work

colleague or a friend and the person at the till short changes you 10 bucks 10 dollars now if they gave you an extra 10 dollars our instinct would be to say oh well their mistake oh yes ripper i'll keep that but if they short change us 10 dollars then our instinct is to go back we have a right to the correct amount of change we want our 10 dollars yet jesus is saying the loving thing to do is actually the opposite go back if they give us too much change and if they rip us off then don't insist on your right to have the correct change let it go and i tell you what it will make you stand out to your work colleague who's with you as different you see we are just supposed to stand out as different so that people might notice and become curious about why we live the way we live and they may even then ask questions and hear about jesus who influences the way we live who died for us and who offers them forgiveness and life eternal i'll take jesus third example in verse 41 during roman times the roman law not the old testament law this time but the roman law gave a soldier the right to pluck you from the crowd and demand that you carry something for him so for example when jesus was carrying his cross he was so badly beaten they couldn't keep carrying the cross and so the roman soldiers plucked a person from the crowd does anyone remember who that was simon of syring yeah so they plucked him and made him carry the cross that was that roman law in practice you see but the roman law said they could only do it for one mile that was what they had to do but jesus is saying don't insist on your right of one mile instead love sacrificially and go two miles instead or take jesus's fourth example in verse 42 of giving to those who ask and again we kind of think well hang on a second if we keep giving to everyone who asked we'll have no money left what about my family well jesus again is not saying we need to go to the extremes like that and in fact if we think like this then we've missed the point altogether see these are just examples of how we are to forego our rights in order to love others and we need to use our wisdom to know how and when to do this but we also need to stop looking for ways to avoid loving others and start looking for ways to love others even if it costs us love is the key and love seeks the good of the other person not our own good so we need to ask ourselves what is the most loving thing to do for them that's what we need to ask ourselves i've had several people knock at the door over the years who have asked for money to buy food or to pay for rent but i don't give them money why well because i don't know if they'll spend it on food or rent or drugs or alcohol instead and that would be easier to just give them money and say yep see you later but it wouldn't be the most loving thing to do no the most loving thing to do is to give them a lift to the shops or to the post office help them with their shopping pay for their shopping or pay for their rent and then give them a lift back that's the most loving thing to do but i tell you what it's more costly it takes time and effort and it can be frustrating but particularly if they've interrupted something like a birthday party one day it happened but love does what is best for them not for you you see and it makes you stand out that's different in fact for one man i helped he was so happy he swore he'd come to church i'm yet to see him but that's up to god now i'm not trying to blow my own trumpet rather i'm trying to show you that love shapes how we act towards others so that we might stand out as different and sometimes not always but sometimes that may even lead people to god

[17 : 46] and that's what jesus is trying to show us in these examples loving others is more important than our own rights love shapes it ought to shape how we act and that means forgoing our rights and doing what is best for them even if they have wronged us even if it costs us after all that's what jesus did didn't he on the slide is a verse from 1 peter chapter 2 it says if you suffer for doing good and endure it this is commendable before god to this you were called because christ suffered for you leaving you an example that you should follow in his steps he committed no sin and no deceit was found in his mouth when they hurled their insults at him he did not retaliate when he suffered he made no threats instead he entrusted himself to god who judges justly notice that jesus entrusted himself to god who will judge all people and bring about justice for all things even in the little things you see we aren't to worry about making sure that everyone gets what they deserve god will worry about that on judgment day and he will use the justice systems in our day as well rather our job is to follow jesus's example who did not retaliate but trusted god he did not oppose evil people but went to the cross willingly for us for our good and there he paid the costly price for our sin so that if we believe we can be part of god's family and have eternal life now why did jesus do all that for us because he loves us and so it's no accident that jesus finishes this section by quoting the law about love in verse 43.3 this point will be much briefer he says in verse 43 you've heard that it was said love your neighbor and hate your enemy now this law comes from the old testament and it's on the next slide thanks young but you'll notice there's a difference between this old testament law and what jesus quotes here and there's some words missing isn't there the missing part is hate your enemies that part is missing and that's because the old testament law actually didn't say it in fact a few verses later in leuiticus on the next slide it actually says to love foreigners or aliens people who are different in the land to love them as yourself it says because they were foreigners in egypt or on the next slide from exodus 23 it says if you come across your enemy's ox or donkey wandering off be sure to take it back to him help your enemy in other words love your enemy see the old testament said to love your enemies too and so while jesus quotes the old testament law about loving your neighbor the hate bit actually came from the pharisees they said love your neighbor but hate your enemy and what the pharisees would do is obey the letter of the law again they would say well the law says love your neighbor so i'm going to love the guy next door my literal neighbor and my fellow jew but the person down the road i can hate him and when it came to foreigners like the romans who had invaded their country or the samaritans who were living in their country well they hated them all the more but jesus says your neighbor is not limited to the person next door in fact when the pharisees came to jesus and said who is my neighbor jesus told the story of the good samaritan do you remember that story do you remember the story of the good samaritan the jews hated the samaritans but the samaritan turned out to be the hero of the story he was the one who helped the poor guy he came across and jesus's point with that story is that we are to love whoever we come across our neighbor is whoever we come across we are to love them even if they are our enemy why well because that's what god does see verse 44 in your bibles he says but i tell you love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you so that you may be children of your

father in heaven he causes his son to rise on the evil and the good and he sends rain on the righteous and the unrighteous i'm not sure who sophie looks like at the moment when it's more like andrew or emma but i'm often told that my son looks like me poor kid but you expect your children to reflect some sort of family likeness don't you because they're family it ought to be the same for us as christians we are god's children and so we are to reflect the likeness of our heavenly father who loves both good and bad who sends rain on both good and bad and so we are to love both good and bad people we are to be like our heavenly father you see who forgives and loves even us who rejected him who wronged him because if we love just those who are easy to love then we are doing what the world does we are no different to them we're not standing out as different you see see verse number 46 sentence number 46 says if you love those who love you what reward will you get are not even the tax collectors doing that and if you greet only your own people what are you doing more than others how are you different how are you standing out do not even pagans do that rather be perfect therefore as your heavenly father is perfect you see we are to be different to the world we are to stand out by loving like god loves and he loves even his enemies we're to live such loving lives that people will see us and be drawn to our way of life and drawn to god we're to follow jesus example i like this next man on the next slide june gone kim i'm not sure i'm pronouncing his right name right uh some of you will have heard of june he died in 2009 but during the korean war in the early 1950s a squad of communists attacked his village they killed his father and his wife and left him for dead when he came to he actually managed to flee to the mountains with his daughter who had escaped during the fighting but june was a christian and it was this verse love your enemies that drove him by god's spirit that drove him back to the village and then on to find those who attacked him and as i understand it june found those communists who attacked the village and he asked to speak with their leader and the leader just so happened to be the one who had killed his wife and june said i forgive you i want to tell you about jesus true story and as it goes that leader was so amazed so touched at what june did loving him and forgiving him that he listened he heard about jesus and he and a number of others not all of them but a number of others became christians through this man and june became one of the most influential christian leaders in south korea here is a man you see who reflected his heavenly father's likeness here is a man who loved even his enemies like god who loved us and and we had to do the same we had to annoy those who annoy us on the sorry we had to annoy those who annoy we had to love those who annoy us gee all comes undone doesn't it we had to love those who annoy us whether it's on the road or at work or in the shops or on the street or even those extended family members who frustrate us we all have them we had to love them and even those who persecute us because of our faith and especially those fellow christians who may have hurt us in the past we'd love them we had to forego our rights and love sacrificially we had to love even our enemies we had to love like god who loved us what's love got to do got to do with it everything

let's pray hey heavenly father we do thank you that you have loved us so much that you gave your only son jesus to die for us to take the punishment we deserve for ignoring you and rejecting you our father we pray that you would help us to believe and follow jesus and his example of love our father we ask these things in jesus name amen so you you you you you you you