

"Retaliation"

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[0 : 00] The prophet Isaiah records the Lord's declaration.

I will lead the blind by ways they have not known. Along unfamiliar paths I will guide them. I will turn the darkness into light before them and make the rough places smooth.

These are the things I will do. I will not forsake them. Two great truths I trust every follower of Christ has experienced in this world.

We are mostly blind as we travel through this world and we are well led as we travel through this world.

Are we not mostly blind as we travel through this world? What do we know of the path that lies ahead of us, around the corner and beyond our vision?

[1 : 08] What have we understood of the significance of our path that lies behind us? What do we really know of how the immediate steps before us will unfold?

These are things all veiled from our sight and understanding. Ah, but are we not well led?

There is an almighty hand at the wheel of prophets. The one who guides us knows the end from the beginning. He ordains our destinations and he sustains us in every step along the way.

So yes, we have a sober truth. We're largely blind. But with it, we have a great consolation. So we gather this morning confessing our blindness, but rejoicing in that one who guides us all of our days in grace until that grace fades into glory.

So let's stand, if you're able, and exalt our great God and guide in heartfelt praise in the great hymn, O Worship the King.

[2 : 24] Have His power and His love
Are should and repender
The ancient of days
For in on its splendor
Blandered and with praise
O tell of His might
O sing of His praise
Whose woe is the light
Whose candle He's made

His chariots of rock
The deep thunder hounds for
Dark is His path
On the wings of the storm
The earth with its storm
Of wonders untold
Almighty Thy power
Hath mounted a whole
Established with fast
By a changeless decree
The crowned path cast
Like a match of the sea
O'er God Oh, yeah.

My bountiful care, what tongue can recite. It breathes in the air, it shines in the light.

It streams from the hills, it descends to the plain. It's sweet, it extends in the deep.

Measureless high, and the low, angels delight, to worship the above.

[5 : 23] The whole earth creation, the people now praise. With true adoration, so lost in thy grace.

Immortal, invisible, God only wise, in thy life, in thy death shall come, in thy eyes.

Most blessed, most glorious creation of days. Almighty, almighty, victory, may we pray.

On resting, on hasty, and silent as fire, nor wanting, nor wasting, thou rulest in mine.

thy justice, thy mountains, thy soaring above, thy clouds, which are mountains, of goodness and love.

[6 : 43] of goodness and love. To all life, thou givest, to both great and small. In all life, thou liveest, the true life of all.

We blossom and flourish, as leaves on the tree, and wither and perish, but not change at thee.

Great Father of glory, pure Father of life, Thine angels adore thee, all daily their shine.

All praise ye will render, O help us to see, tis only the splendor of thine, high and near.

O praise ye will render, O help us to see, tis only the splendor of life, high and near.

Please be seated. Do not be slothful in zeal, be fervent in spirit, serve the Lord.

[8 : 39] Rejoice in hope, be patient in tribulation, be constant in prayer. Contribute to the needs of the saints, and seek to show hospitality.

Bless those who persecute you, bless and do not curse them. Rejoice with those who rejoice, weep with those who weep.

Live in harmony with one another. Do not be haughty, but associate with the lowly. Never be wise in your own sight. Repay no one evil for evil, but give thought to do what is honorable in the sight of all.

If possible, so far as it depends on you, live peaceably with all. Beloved, never avenge yourselves, but leave it to the wrath of God, for it is written, vengeance is mine, I will repay, says the Lord.

To the contrary, if your enemy is hungry, feed him. If he is thirsty, give him something to drink. For by so doing, you will heap burning coals on his head.

[9 : 51] Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good. This is the word of the Lord.

Amen. O Lord, we are humbled by the example of Jesus, who loved the sinner and the evildoer, who was oppressed and afflicted, yet did not open his mouth, who did not seek fame or popularity, but associated with those of low repute.

We consider his example in the commands you give us in this passage, and we are humbled by how short we fall. We confess that we have followed after the pattern of the world and have repaid evil for evil.

We have not sought the good of our enemies, but have, in ways explicit and implicit, cursed them, whether criticizing them to their face, or grumbling behind their backs, or maligning them online.

We have failed to show the world the example of Jesus, who blessed those who persecuted him.

Moreover, Lord, we have failed to follow your example of associating with the lowly.

We confess that we are drawn to those with social connections, power, money, and education. We resist those who seem to have nothing to offer us, who seem to lack connections and influence.

[11 : 28] We overlook them in our neighborhoods, our offices, and the pews of our church. O Lord, we are grieved by how short we fall of your commands.

We are truly sorry, and we humbly repent. Let us take a moment to confess our sin to God in our hearts. O Lord, we marvel at the startling, startling, countercultural example of the Jesus, who loved his enemies and those who persecuted him.

For so once were we. Thank you, Father, for relentlessly pursuing us in love, even when we sin against you again and again, and failed to model a Christlike example to the world.

We entrust ourselves fully, Lord, to the saving work of Christ on the cross, and ask for your help, day by day, to live out our calling as your ambassadors in the world.

In Jesus' name we pray, amen. Let us pray. Brothers and sisters, hear this word of assurance for all of God's covenant people, we who cast ourselves upon Christ our Savior.

[13 : 19] The prophet Micah declares, Who is a God like you, pardoning iniquity and passing over transgressions? Because you delight in steadfast love, you will cast all of our sins into the depths of the sea.

People of God, we have a forgiveness as sure as God's unchanging, steadfast covenant love, secured by the covenant blood of the Son.

Let us rejoice in that assurance. Please stand as we continue to praise God in song as you're able. I really we can tread for the peace in our actions.

Let us will name the Church. Thank you drunk a distance. Like God Shopping it so it is a spirit of God's spirit wrestling and fulfilling our sanctification starts. Before we pray throughout that seed we'll mix in hope, toía we join now on our walks.

Put our faith, hope it helps so elderlyly know that kind of peace When I surveyed the wondrous cross On which the Prince of Glory died My riches gained, I count but loss And pour contempt on all my pride See from His head, His hands His feet, sorrow and love

[15 : 20] Prove me, go down Dare such love and sorrow me O'er thorns come pour so rich a crown O the wonderful cross O the wonderful cross Binds me come and die And find that I may truly live O the wonderful cross O the wonderful cross All who gather here By grace draw near

And bless your name Where the whole realm of nature Mild That were an offering far too small Love so amazing So divine Deep let my soul My life, my all O the wonderful cross O the wonderful cross Binds me come and die And find that I may truly live

O the wonderful cross O the wonderful cross O the wonderful cross All who gather here By grace draw near And bless your name O the wonderful cross O the wonderful cross O the wonderful cross O the wonderful cross O the wonderful cross Binds me come and die And find that I may truly live O

the wonderful cross O the wonderful cross O the wonderful cross O the wonderful cross O the wonderful cross O the wonderful cross O the wonderful cross All who gather here By grace draw near And bless your name You may be seated

You may be seated Well we come to a point in our service Where we will speak a little bit About some of the family matters And things that are going on And as we do We'll be passing the offering plates If you're a visitor here We're just delighted you're here Please feel no obligation to give The ministries of the church here Are happily supported by members And regular attenders But we are particularly glad That you are visiting And if we are We'd love an opportunity To get to know you a little bit And discover something of Some of your spiritual aspirations And desires And something of your story And to that end You should find a little card In the pew stalls above you Or in front of you Where you could fill out your name

And there's also an opportunity On the back of that To indicate any ways In which we can be praying for you And of course all are welcome To fill those out Just drop them In the offering plate coming by Or in the boxes you'll find At the entrances and exits Of the church Of the church This upcoming Saturday The 26th Will be a church work day From 9 a.m. to 1 p.m.

[20 : 01] In Nehemiah You remember that book That's kind of all about The people of God getting together And doing a work project It says The people said Let us rise up and build So they strengthen their hands For the good work Well we are hoping on this work day That many hands Will kind of lighten the burden Of the work And also that a hearty breakfast Copious snacks And far famed New Haven pizza Which will be on offer for lunch Will help to strengthen the hands For that good work So we'd love to see you all As you're able to come And there'll be There'll be tasks It's really The whole family There will be tasks Tapered to the capacities Or incapacities of all and any So don't let that exclude you By any means Beck I wonder if you might come up Thank you And tell us something

About the exciting upcoming Carol service Good morning Church My name is Beck Coburn And I'm the music coordinator Here at Trinity And it's that time of year again The nights are cooler The leaves are turning And I'm already getting excited About our Christmas carol services Last week Pastor Nick announced a change To how we do our carol service At Trinity In previous years We have hosted just one service But this year We're going to be hosting Two separate carol services On Sunday December the 8th The first will be a shorter Family friendly service At 4pm This will include The much anticipated kids item The much anticipated kids item Which will be directed by Feifei Daniels this year And the kids will rehearse for this

During the normal children's ministry Time slot on Sunday morning Starting in mid-November And the second service will be A longer traditional carol service At 7pm It won't have the kids item But it will have some special vocal And instrumental items And longer Bible readings Than a homily Best of all At both services We get to sing carols together And both services will include The same carols Which will be led by a choir And an orchestra Made up of congregants From our church So I am here to invite you To get involved If you enjoy singing And would like to be a part of the choir Which is normally about 20 to 30 people Or if you play a woodwind string Or brass instrument And would like to be a part of the orchestra Here's what you need to do You can either come and speak to me At the end of the service I'll be standing up the front here Or you can fill in a comment card With your details And your email address And place it in one of the boxes On the way out Or there is information And a link to a sign up page In the Trinity newsletter That is emailed out on Fridays So check that out Let me know your keen And look forward to our carol service See you then Thank you Beck Well let's turn to the Lord In prayer Our Father how acutely we feel The road which we tread In this pilgrimage of life

Is so often a path As yet untraveled Over the portal of each new wend The inscription greets us You have not passed this way before And how prone we can be Moving through such unknown territory To anxieties and apprehensions What storms lower on the horizon What untold cloud-veiled afflictions await What grim assailants lurk shadowy in our imagination The fearful cries and alarms of fellow pilgrims Ringing in our ears Their trembling at times is contagious Is contagious But why these fears and tremblings For you Jesus

[25 : 09] Are our pilot You not only know the way you have appointed it And so consecrated it to our good Mysteries may enshroud it Sorrows may darken it Sorrows may darken it Tears may bedew it Losses may pave it But it is the path Which you Lord Have wisely and lovingly ordained And What a comfort is this A path upon which you accompany us Not simply with fellow travelers

That were a blessing Nor even with angels That were a marvel But with your very self What wonder of condescension and grace I am with you always you tell us There is a choice promise Lord may we not hold it in slight esteem

Grant us to cherish your indwelling presence By your spirit Ever mindful not to quench your spirit's promptings Or grieve your spirit's holiness By conscious sin Lord may we seek your face Early Earnestly Always And so come to know the sweetness Of heart communion with you May we forget our fear In your face Dissolve our anxieties In your assurances Drown our perils In your promises Lord Forge us through your grace and truth Into a people Calm in the face of calamity Lovers in the midst of haters Firmly rooted Amidst falling foundations

Servants among those self-centered For the lost Not against them Bearing your words Forgive them for they know not what they do O Lord would you etch upon us as your people Your likeness and your fragrance By the deep renewing work of your word and spirit And even now as we soon open your word Walk among us and trim our wigs And trim our wigs That we may burn brightly in your name We ask it Lord That you may be lifted up in our lives Just as you were upon the cross And so draw many to yourself Make your name great Father Exalt the Son Come Holy Spirit Amen Amen It's time now for the children to be dismissed To their classes You can follow them and check them in Here to your right Through grades five Please stand too as we continue in song Hear the song Amen Amen Amen Amen Amen Amen Amen Amen Amen Amen Come you weary heart now to Jesus Come you anxious soul now to see There is perfect love and comfort in your tears Rest here in his wondrous peace Oh the goodness, the goodness of Jesus Satisfied me is all that I need May it become what may

That may be There is perfect love and comfort in your tears Rest here in his wondrous peace Oh the goodness, the goodness of Jesus Come find what this world cannot offer In the world cannot offer Everything you hope has Sadness is fulfillment in your tears In my eternal life That may Jesus To make you peace If there is great power now to see In the goodness of Jesus That may be grace That may work now here in the goodness of Jesus You know what that might die all tonight These are promises are not offered.

[30 : 01] Come and find your joy here complete. Taste the living water and the thirst again.

Rest here in his wondrous peace. Oh, the goodness, the goodness of Jesus satisfying me is all that I need.

May it become one way that I rest all my days in the goodness of Jesus.

Come and find your hope now in Jesus.

He is all he said he would be. Grace is overflowing from the Savior's heart.

[31 : 13] Rest here in his wondrous peace. Oh, the goodness, the goodness of Jesus satisfying me is all that I need.

May it become one way that I rest all my days in the goodness of Jesus.

Oh, the goodness, the goodness of Jesus satisfying me is all that I need.

May it become one way that I rest all my days in the goodness of Jesus.

May it become one way that I rest all my days in the goodness of Jesus.

[32 : 35] Please be seated. Good morning, church.

Would you turn with me to Matthew chapter 5, verses 38 through 42. I believe that's page 760 in the Pew Bible if you'd like to follow along now.

Matthew chapter 5, verses 38 through 42. Let me pray, and then I'll read our text for us. Father, what a wonder it is that we here this morning can sing and meditate on the goodness of Jesus. What a privilege it is to know the one who is supremely good. Lord, our desire this morning is to know more of him.

And we know that even that desire within us comes from your Holy Spirit. God, I pray that you as we approach your word this morning, we do so with much confidence that you will continue to make good on your promises, to speak to us, your people, to draw our hearts closer to you in love, and to show us the way in which we should go that we might continue to know and experience this goodness for ourselves, and to show it forth in our life together.

[34 : 11] So help us now as we turn to your word. Bless the reading and preaching, we pray in Jesus' name. Amen. All right, Matthew 5, 38 through 42. Jesus says this, You have heard that it was said, an eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth.

But I say to you, do not resist the one who is evil. But if anyone slaps you on the right cheek, turn to him the other also. And if anyone would sue you and take your tunic, let him have your cloak as well.

And if anyone forces you to go one mile, go with him two miles. Give to the one who begs from you and do not refuse the one who would borrow from you.

Well, as we consider this passage, I want to begin by going back to the Beatitudes at the beginning of the Sermon on the Mount. In particular, I want us to recall the seventh Beatitude, I believe it is. Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called sons of God. Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called sons, sons and daughters of God.

[35 : 25] What does it look like to be a peacemaker and so to show forth our identity as God's sons and daughters? Well, that's what Jesus is going to show us in these last two paragraphs of chapter 5.

We're looking at the first paragraph today. We'll look at the second one next week. But in both, Jesus is talking about how we are to approach our enemies, those who insult us, those who wrong us.

How do we act in those most trying of our relationships such that we can be peacemakers? In verse 45, in the second paragraph of the end of chapter 5 here, Jesus says, there is a way to respond that will show forth that we are sons and daughters of our Father who is in heaven.

And we see there in verse 45 the connection back to that seventh beatitude. This is what it looks like to be a child of your heavenly Father. This is the way of peacemaking.

And what Jesus touches on here in this first paragraph in verses 38 through 42 is that natural response that arises when we're offended or wronged.

[36 : 44] If someone insults you or cheats you or wrongs you, how? How do we naturally respond in those moments? Well, we sort of want to pay them back, don't we?

You insult me, I insult you. You cheat me, I cheat you. You hurt me, I hurt you. I imagine we've all experienced those feelings and perhaps, more often than we care to admit, we've at times responded that way.

But of course, the problem is, the problem is this sort of response, it doesn't really solve the problem, does it? It just sort of makes matters worse because the circle just keeps going around and around.

And each time we sort of respond in kind, it inevitably begins to escalate, doesn't it? You insult me, so I insult you, so you insult me again, but the next insult is bigger, a little bigger, a little bigger than the last.

Until suddenly, people are saying things of one another they'd never dream of saying before that cycle started. And sadly, this can happen in even our closest relationships.

[38 : 02] Neighbors, siblings, spouses, church members, the cycles go on and on. And eventually, these relationships wither, or maybe they even die altogether.

other. But what does Jesus have to say about all this? How do we get out of this cycle and become genuine peacemakers?

How, as followers of Christ, as people of His kingdom, do we leave in our wake the aroma of peace instead of the bitter taste of revenge?

Well, the first thing we see here in our passage is that Jesus begins by sort of subtly exposing our attempts at self-justification.

First, Jesus exposes our attempts at self-justification. Our passage starts with Jesus saying, you've heard that it was said an eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth. Now, this legal principle, an eye for an eye, a tooth for a tooth, comes straight out of the Mosaic Law, doesn't it?

[39 : 15] So it would be easy for those in Jesus' day to say, see, there it is. God's telling me to be fair, to be just. If someone wrongs me, it's only fair that I balance the score, an eye for an eye.

And for first century Jews under Roman occupation, you can see how this would quickly take a revolutionary turn, right? The Romans offend us, they take from us, they wrong us.

Well, we need to fight back. We need to take up arms. We need to win back what's ours. It's only right. But what too often was the result of that in the first century?

More violence, more injury, more bloodshed. But for most of us, most of the time today, it doesn't get that far, does it?

More often, it's much more personal, more local, more closer to home. It's a relationship with a co-worker or a family member. And yet, we can still justify our responses, can't we?

[40 : 23] We might not literally say, an eye for an eye, but we sort of say, well, look, I'm just standing up for myself and my rights. Right? But in the midst of this, we have to step back and ask, well, what was the point of this Old Testament law in the first place?

What was the point of this principle of an eye for an eye, a tooth for a tooth? Well, when we consider those passages from the Old Testament in context, what we realize is that this eye for an eye principle was actually meant to do two things.

First thing, it was meant to prevent severe or excessive penalties for a crime. Right? If your neighbor damaged your fence, then you couldn't respond by burning down their fields.

Right? No, no. The punishment had to be equivalent to the wrongdoing. It had to be balanced. It had to be equal. And often, that balancing was done through compensation to the victim, not literally doing the same thing to them in return.

So what an eye for an eye meant in practice is that if your neighbor damaged your fence, then they had to pay for your fence to be repaired. An eye for an eye. But, second, this principle was meant to prevent people not just from exacting excessive penalties, but it was meant to prevent people from taking justice into their own hands.

[42 : 06] This principle of an eye for an eye nearly always comes in the context of the Old Testament law describing the legal system of judges and courts and how you handle these things in public through the appropriate channels.

In other words, this principle was meant to guide the courts and the judges in how to rectify wrongs. It was never meant to give individuals permission to exact personal revenge on their enemies.

Just the opposite. It was meant to say, here's the fair standard for the courts to right the wrongs. It was meant to take redressing wrongs, it was meant to take that desire out of the realm of personal revenge and place it into the realm of justice and fairness.

So the point is, we can't go to this Old Testament principle, an eye for an eye, and find there any justification for our desire for revenge. It's meant to guide our public system of justice, not to stoke the flames of our desire to get even with those who've offended or wronged us.

Okay. Well, how should we respond? Well, this takes us to our next point. Second, we see that Jesus forbids retaliation.

[43 : 32] In verse 39, Jesus says, but I say to you, do not resist the one who is evil. Okay. Now, on the surface, doesn't that sound like Jesus is saying we should just let evil people do evil things to us and to others and we shouldn't do anything about it.

Don't resist the one who is evil. But clearly, that can't be what Jesus means when we look at the context of the rest of the New Testament.

For starters, Jesus himself is often standing up against the corrupt religious authorities of his day. Likewise, in the rest of the New Testament, the apostles are willing to make appropriate appeals to justice and to the legal courts.

They're willing to advocate for their own protection and for others. Do you remember when Paul and Silas were publicly beaten and imprisoned at Philippi in the book of Acts? What happens?

Well, the next day, the magistrates send the police to go let them go, right? So the police come to Paul and Silas and they say, okay, you two, you can leave town quietly.

[44 : 45] You see, the authorities just want to pretend like nothing happened and send Paul and Silas away. But what does Paul do? In Acts 16, 37 through 39, Paul says to them, they've beaten us publicly, uncondemned, men who are Roman citizens and have thrown us into prison, and do they now throw us out secretly?

No. Let them come themselves and take us out. Then Luke goes on to say, the police reported these words to the magistrates and they were afraid when they heard that they were Roman citizens.

So they came and apologized to them and they took them out and asked them to leave the city. So here's a very clear instance where Paul is clearly resisting evil, right?

Why? Because Paul knew that if he were to simply let his mistreatment and imprisonment go unchallenged, he would be leaving the Christians in Philippi in danger, that they'd be susceptible to the same sort of treatment.

So Paul forces the magistrates to come themselves and functionally, publicly exonerate him and Silas, and in so doing, Paul provides some protection for the newly formed church.

[45 : 57] It wasn't going to be okay to just haul them off to jail. They were Roman citizens. They had appropriate rights under the law. So I think that's a good example of a New Testament practice where it's not just let evil people do evil things to you all the time.

So that's clearly, clearly Jesus isn't saying that we should just let evil people do evil things to us and to others and do nothing about it. Okay, so what is he saying?

Well, it's very interesting that one New Testament scholar has pointed out that the Greek of verse 39 could be translated, not just the way the ESV translates it, which is do not resist the evil person, right?

Do not resist the one who is evil. Do not resist the evil person. But it could also just as legitimately be translated, do not resist by evil means. The Greek there just has the word evil.

So is Jesus saying, don't resist evil people or don't resist in evil ways. Grammatically, it could be either. And I think the rest of the New Testament would seem to favor that latter reading, don't resist by evil means, that is, in revenge or retaliation.

[47 : 14] But I think even if we keep the ESV translation, which is perfectly legitimate as well, don't resist the evil person, the word resist there must have the sense of retaliate or take revenge when we look at it in the context of the rest of the paragraph.

That's certainly how the Apostle Paul understood Jesus' teaching in Romans 12, 17 through 21. We read this earlier in the service. Paul says, repay no one evil for evil, but give thought to do what is honorable in the sight of all.

If possible, so far as it depends on you, live peaceably with all. Beloved, never avenge yourselves, but leave it to the wrath of God, for it is written, vengeance is mine, I will repay, says the Lord.

To the contrary, if your enemy is hungry, feed him. If he's thirsty, give him something to drink, for by so doing, you will heap burning coals on his head. Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good.

Overcome evil with good. So what is Jesus teaching in this verse? He's not saying that we simply let evil people do evil things to us and we do nothing about it.

[48 : 33] No, he's saying that when you respond, when you find yourself in that situation, don't respond with a spirit of revenge. Don't seek to retaliate.

don't try to even the score. Now, in just a second, we'll look at some of Jesus' examples of how to respond.

But first, let me make two observations here. First, if we understand these verses rightly, then they should never be used to justify abuse or to force people to stay in situations of abuse.

Because the heart of what Jesus is saying here is that we should cast off a spirit of revenge and retaliation. But that doesn't mean that we should stay in situations of abuse or violence.

Jesus and the apostles all took appropriate means to confront and stop evil. Removing ourselves from abusive relationships, even calling the authorities when necessary, is not an act of revenge or retaliation.

[49 : 46] It can often be the greatest act of love because we're acting to stop sin and to protect the weak and vulnerable. So that's the first thing we need to be very clear about.

These verses are no justification for abuse. Second thing, I don't think these verses can be used in isolation from the rest of the New Testament to develop a Christian approach to broader ethical questions concerning war and nonviolence.

We can't just take these verses without considering the rest of the New Testament when we think about those very important questions of war, nonviolence, police force, etc.

It would be an oversimplification to just look at these in isolation from the rest. It would be an oversimplification to do what the Russian novelist Leo Tolstoy did with these verses.

He wrote in 1884, it's impossible at one and the same time to confess Christ as God, the basis of whose teaching is nonresistance to him who is evil, and consciously and calmly to work for the establishment of property, law courts, government, and military forces.

[51 : 04] Okay, what's Tolstoy saying? He's saying, you can't really be a Christian and be all about property and law courts and government and military forces. Why? Because they resist evil and return evil for evil.

He says later, Christ totally forbids the human institution of any law court. Okay, so I think Tolstoy's an example of sort of, you know, the absurdity that we can get to if we just take these verses in isolation from everything else.

Okay, so we can't just take these verses out of context. For example, if we turn to Romans 13, we see that the Apostle Paul, teaching with Christ's authority as an apostle, clearly has a place for the government's use of authority to punish evil and promote good.

Right? So we can't build an entire ethic out of one verse. However, on the other hand, we can't simply ignore these verses either.

we can't simply cast them aside and say they're unrealistic. We can't simply say, well, they only apply on the personal level and have nothing to say about public institutions.

[52 : 19] And aren't we a little more prone to take that approach? No, we have to let these verses have their place in the whole picture of how the New Testament would have us think about law courts.

and government and military forces, as Tolstoy said. Clearly, the peacemaking principles of our passage are relevant to all of life.

We can't just relegate them to a corner of life over here and then ignore them. So the challenge for Christians in every age is to discern in prayerful wisdom how they apply and how we should live them out in each new context.

And of course, as is often cited in relation to these verses, think of the example of the American Civil Rights Movement and Martin Luther King Jr., right? The creative, faithful application of these verses to a very real social issue.

Okay, so with those two things being said, let's return to the main point of what Jesus is saying in verse 39, don't retaliate. Don't take revenge when someone wrongs you.

[53 : 35] Instead, Jesus says, do this. And this brings us to the third main point of our passage. Jesus doesn't just forbid retaliation, but when we're wronged, Jesus commands bold, cycle-breaking good in response.

Bold, cycle-breaking good in response. And he gives four examples, and these four examples aren't meant to be exhaustive. Rather, they're meant to capture the spirit of peacemaking initiative that is fitting for the children of God.

First example, if someone slaps you on the right cheek, turn to him the other also. Now, this isn't talking about someone attacking or fighting another person. In Jesus' day, to slap someone on the cheek was to publicly insult them.

It was the backhanded swat that was aimed at publicly shaming someone and putting someone in their place. What do you do when someone humiliates you like this?

Swat them back? No, Jesus says. Do something even braver, even bolder than that. You don't have to cower or run away, but you don't have to strike them back either.

[54 : 55] Break the cycle and turn your other cheek. Let them know that their insult doesn't define you, and it won't change how you view yourself or even them.

Second example, if anyone would sue you and take your tunic, let them have your cloak as well. Now, a lot of people in Jesus' day would have more than one tunic.

That was sort of like our shirt and pants today, kind of your basic clothing. You'd have a few pairs of those, but most people would only have one cloak, right? That was your heavier outer garment.

That was sort of like your winter coat, as it were. So what is Jesus saying here? He's saying, don't be afraid to part with something more costly to break the cycle of insult and petty wrongs.

Bold, cycle-breaking, good. Is someone trying to shame you by suing you for your shirt? Okay. Give them your coat too.

[56 : 03] What will the judge do? What will they do in response? It just might put an end to the whole thing. Third example, if anyone forces you to go one mile, go with him two miles.

Now, the historical context is helpful here. In the first century, a Roman soldier could conscript any Jewish passerby on the road to help carry their baggage for up to one mile.

That was sort of the law that everyone had to abide by. And of course, that would not just be inconvenient and tiring, but also shaming. The Romans were the oppressors, and here you were supposed to carry their luggage.

But Jesus says, rather than grit your teeth and despise them, thinking in your mind what you'd rather do with them in their luggage, take it not just one mile, take it two.

Show them unexpected kindness. Fourth example, give to the one who begs from you, and do not refuse the one who would borrow from you.

[57 : 18] Now, at first, this example doesn't seem to fit with the rest, right? In the first three examples, it seems like there's some sort of insult or some sort of wrong taking place, an insulting slap on the cheek, an annoying lawsuit, a tiring trek with a Roman soldier's pack.

How is someone begging comparable to that? Well, it's not immediately clear, but I think the connection may be this. In each of the first three instances, Jesus calls us to do something unexpected.

Turn the other cheek. Give the cloak as well. Go the extra mile. Now, here he's telling us to give to those in need.

Don't ignore the person who has a genuine need. Treat them like a human and help them meet the need. Of course, I don't think this means you literally have to give money to everyone who asks you for money.

There may be other ways that you can give your time and money to help those in need. Oftentimes, simply giving someone money on the street isn't really the best way to help them. But even if you discern that it's not wise in the moment to give them money, you can still treat them like a fellow human being, be respectful, politely decline, maybe even engage them in conversation.

[58 : 37] Are you willing to be associated with those who have a genuine need and socially are put in a situation where they must beg or borrow?

Are you willing to enter into a relationship with them, show some solidarity with them, share your resources with them? Again, you might find what people need is relationship and community more than they need money.

Can you provide that? Are you willing to be associated with those who have little or no status in the eyes of the world? And I wonder if that might be the connecting thread among these four examples. In each instance, Jesus is describing a scenario where we face the possibility not just of being inconvenienced or being set back financially, but we face the very real possibility of being shamed, of losing face, being proverbially slapped on the cheek with a public insult, being taken to court, having to play pack mule for a Roman soldier, associating with the poor, possibly even being taken advantage of by them.

They all carry a strong undercurrent of social shame. Where do we find the strength to act with such bold, cycle-breaking good to those who wrong us, to those who might want to take advantage of us, when the deep undercurrent of shame or humiliation is so strong?

[60 : 39] It's so much easier to just strike back, protect ourselves, get even, because then we can save face, right, and spare ourselves the humiliation.

Where do we find that sort of inner strength? Where do we find this sort of inner strength that we read that Hudson Taylor had? Martin Lloyd-Jones tells the story of how Hudson Taylor, the missionary to China, was standing on a riverbank one evening, and he hailed a boat to take him across the river.

And just as the boat was drawing near, another wealthy Chinese man came up who didn't recognize Hudson Taylor as a foreigner because Taylor was kind of wearing the native dress. So when the boat came, the Chinese man struck Hudson Taylor and thrust him aside with such force that Taylor falls into the mud.

Hudson Taylor gets up, however, and says nothing. But the boatman refuses to take his fellow countrymen on and says, no, no, no, that foreigner called me and the boat is his and he has to go first. Suddenly the wealthy Chinese traveler is sort of astounded and embarrassed when he realized what he had done.

But Hudson Taylor responds by not complaining, but inviting man, but inviting this man into the boat with him and begins to tell him what it was in him.

[61 : 57] that made him behave in such a manner. Where do we get the inner resources to do something like that? Where do we get the inner strength that someone like Tom Skinner had?

As a young black man living in New York, Skinner was converted to Christ while he was the leader of the largest and most notorious teenage gang in New York City, the Harlem Lords. His conversion was so real that he left the gang the next day turning from a life of fighting and violence to preach the gospel.

And he tells a story of how several weeks after his conversion he was playing a football game in which his assignment on one play was to block the defensive end while his own halfback goes around and scores a touchdown.

So that's what he did. And as Skinner gets up from the ground and heads back to the huddle, the other boy that he had blocked jumped up in a rage, slammed him in the stomach, and as Skinner's bent over from the blow, hits him across the back, and then starts yelling racial slurs at him.

Skinner said that under normal circumstances the old Tom Skinner would have jumped up from the ground and pulverized the white boy. But instead, he got up from the ground, found himself looking the boy in the face and saying, you know, because of Jesus Christ, I love you anyway.

[63 : 28] Later, Skinner said that he even surprised himself. But he knew that what the Bible promised was true, that he was a new creature in Christ and it was no longer necessary for him to operate on the old level of tit for tat, of hate for hate, or retaliation.

And moreover, when the game was over and that opposing player had had some time to think about it, apparently he came to Skinner and said, Tom, you've done more to knock prejudice out of me by telling me that you love me than if you would have socked my jaw in.

where does the inner strength come from to live like that? Well, friends, this is where.

Whether it's Hudson Taylor or Tom Skinner or you or me, if we are in Christ, then we are a new creation.

And as Skinner said, it's no longer necessary to operate on the old level of tit for tat, hate for hate, or retaliation. Because the shame of the world, the humiliation and shame that drives so much of the world is not what rules us anymore.

[64 : 56] How? How? Because we know the one who did something even greater for us. Very interesting that the prophet Isaiah saw that when the Messiah would come, he wouldn't come in honor or glory, but he would willingly be put to shame.

In Isaiah 50, we read the words of the suffering servant. I offered my back to those who beat me, my cheeks to those who pulled out my beard, I did not hide my face from mocking and spitting. When Christ came, he emptied himself of glory and turned his cheek to those who insulted him. The one who deserved infinite glory, infinite honor, lowered himself to be mocked and condemned. Why? Well, friends, for you and me. He was put to shame on the cross so that we could know the honor that nothing in the world could take away.

As John's gospel says, to those who believed in him, he gave them the right to become children of God. What greater honor could there be?

[66 : 18] And he purchased it for you and for all who believed. So now, friends, the insults, the offenses, the shame that we might experience in this world, it just pales in comparison to the honor that we've received in Christ.

The glorious Son of God humbled himself for you, for me. In him, we're sons and daughters of God and nothing can take that away. and now secure in what he's done for us.

Yes. We can turn our cheek. We can go the extra mile. We can even give to those who ask because Christ has done all that for us and more.

We can go forth and we can actually overcome evil with good. Let's pray. Lord Jesus, oh, how easy it is to talk about these things, how much harder it is to do them.

Father, would you give us the wisdom to know in this coming week how we might overcome evil with good? Lord, many of us this morning are dealing with very complex and tricky relationships.

[67 : 53] God, would you give us wisdom to live into this vision of not responding with retaliation or revenge but as you taught us, Jesus, to overcome evil with good.

Fill us with your Spirit. Show us yourself afresh, Lord Jesus. fill us with the hope and joy and glory of who you've made us that we might go and live this way in the world.

Pray this in your mighty name. Amen. Well, friends, let's stand. As we respond to this text, we're going to sing a song about turning our eyes to Jesus so that the things of this world grow dim and He grows great and that's where the source of our strength comes from, seeing Him and His beauty and who we are in Him so that we can live in a way that pleases Him.

So let's sing this together. Turn your eyes upon Jesus look full in His wonderful face and the things of earth will grow strangely dim in the light of His glory and grace.

Jesus, He's turned your eyes to the hillsides where justice and mercy and grace and the Son of God gave His life for us and our measure that's death was erased.

