

Being a Neighbor

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[0 : 00] This message was recorded at Vision Baptist Church in Alfred, Georgia. It is our prayer that you will be blessed by the preaching of God's Word. So we continue in Matthew chapter number 5. Last week we talked about vows and vengeance.

And we said that in my little goofy block illustration, we said that because we are people that are complete in Christ, we don't have to go about lying to other people to try to take away from them to make our set complete.

Nor do when something is taken from us, do we have to go after them seeking vengeance because we are complete people. We are not lacking. We are not people that need to take by stealing and lying.

We are not people that need to seek vengeance and get it back. So a question like that with vengeance, we saw that we should forgive them or disrespect them. When you get hit with the right hand, that back hand of disrespect, it says that we should turn our cheek to them because they disrespect us so we can still forgive them because we are giving vengeance over to the court system.

An eye for an eye, a tooth for a tooth. That is not in our hands. We are not God. He has put that power into somebody else's hand and we let it go. We forgive them. We are disrespected. And when we know that we are in the right, when they sue you to take your coat, you not only give your coat, but you give them your cloak as well.

[1 : 11] Even when you know you are right, you can forgive and let go. When you feel like you are taken advantage of and they compel you, they force you to go with them a mile, you say, I will just go with you two miles. Even though I do not have to, I am going to be a person that is loving here.

And then we forgive and we have to let go of stuff. When somebody asks to take some to borrow, we just say, just take it, give it away, if it is a matter of contention. And so, questions like this, when we consider personal abuse, and then we also look at the response of self-sacrifice, this would lead us to a broader question, which is about hatred and love.

This thing is growing. It is like a crescendo here in the fact that you have not seen anything yet. He is not going to say, not only is this what you ought to do, but it says that you ought to love your enemies.

And then he ends it with, be perfect. Can you think of any greater crescendo here? Is this how we ought to forgive, and how we ought to be people who are going to make vows? And then he says, love your enemies. And then he ends it with, be perfect.

And we see that. We see the power of love. From Shakespeare all the way to Disney, everybody knows how powerful love is, and how intriguing love is. Olaf the snowman, standing in front of a fireplace, says that love is worth dying for, that some people are worth melting for.

[2 : 26] He had this person that he was willing to melt away for, even though it was summertime, because there was love there. And people know we're interested in that. Any story that has to do with this powerful force of love, intrigues us, because we know it's the only thing that's ever motivated anything good from us.

Brother John shared it plainly in the offering devotion. Guilt does not make any real change that makes it real different, that it's a motivation of a person, is that we love the Lamb, and that love motivates incredible action towards us.

So these Pharisees are trying to bring down the level so they can jump over it. Kind of like when you're jumping over a high jump or something, and they keep bringing it down, and it appears to be high, but they keep trying to bring it down to a place where they can jump over it.

And then they accuse Jesus of being somebody that brings it down even farther there, because he hangs out with sinners and publicans, and they say that he's just morally adrift, and that he isn't there, he's against Moses.

And he says, no, I want to show you what I'm doing. I am taking the bar and putting it back where it goes. I'm raising it higher than you ever imagined. You say love your neighbor, I say love your neighbor and love your enemies.

[3 : 32] And he sets it high, and he says, be perfect. It's an incredible thing that we see. They keep trying to knock it down, and we see the difference between us and God. The makeup of us, the DNA of us, and the DNA of God.

And this is as a paternity test where it says, you do not act like your father. You do not look like your father because, Pharisee, you're not of your father. That you have created a religion that mimics me, but you have set the bar too low, and I'm bringing it back up to remind you that if you're not found in me, you've not received forgiveness of sins, that you'll never meet this internal demand upon us.

So from the text, we see three things. First of all, I want us to look at how this exemplifies the love of the father, but it doesn't tell us to earn it. That we are people that exemplify the love of our God, but we're not people that have earned it.

Also, I want to extend our borders to our enemies, and make them our neighbors. So when you think about it, Zach and Whitney live two doors down from me. How many of you would consider them my neighbors?

Two doors down. Not speaking biblically, spiritually, but two doors down. Would that be your neighbor? Would five doors down be your neighbor? Same subdivision. If we live in Cumming, are we all neighbors? At a certain point, you would draw the line and say, nope, you're not my neighbor anymore.

[4 : 47] You know, if I came to your neighborhood and knocked on the door and say, hey, we're neighbors, can I borrow two eggs? And they would say, where do you live? I live about seven miles down the road in a different subdivision. They would say, you know, we're not really neighbors.

You need to go get eggs from your other neighbors. All right? And that's something to really do. My wife was carrying a measuring cup of oil yesterday up the hill from Zach and Whitney's house. He's always doing something wonderful like that.

And so, she's making brownies, praise the Lord. And so, but we have a definition of what our neighbor is. And so, we're saying, your enemy just moved in next door. You have just taken your enemy and brought them and set up their house.

And you're now saying, enemy, you're my neighbor. And then everybody around you. It's a geographical anomaly. Everybody now lives within your neighborhood and they become your neighbor. So, extend our borders.

And lastly, we embrace our obligations to our enemies. We find out what it is we're supposed to do to our neighbors and we embrace that and we live it out. So, as I said here, we'll start with how we exemplify the love of our Father and we don't earn it.

[5 : 49] Verses 45 and 47 says, you are the, then that ye may be the children of your Father which is in heaven for he maketh the sun to rise on the evil and on the good and sineth rain on the just and on the unjust.

And when you study the Bible when you're reading, of course, the scripture, you get to a verse like that and it says, you'll be the children of God. You've got to wonder, does this contradict all that I know? And that's usually what you zone in on because you need to understand that because if you misunderstand that the rest of it's going to fall apart.

If you think Jesus is setting a standard that we can reach and say, if you do this and you're the children of God, then you're going to miss it. We have to surpass the righteousness of the Pharisees. So, he's not saying, you have a hard law and I want to override it and make it a more difficult law.

He says, I want to tell you what the truth is. You have heard it said, but I have said. Leviticus 19, 18 tells us this, thou shalt not avenge nor bear any grudge against the children of thy people, but thou shalt love the neighbor as thyself.

I am the Lord. So, like last week, they had a problem with context. They also had a problem with emphasis. Once again, we see a problem with emphasis. He says, you said love our neighbor.

[6 : 53] You didn't say love everybody. You said love our neighbor, which means that we get to hate our enemy. Who interprets the Bible like that? How do you get that? But it's that heart, that heart that's trying to earn something.

It's that self-righteous heart that can twist and manipulate the Bible and does it all the time here. And they want to redefine what a neighbor is. We are told the loved unlovable. Jesus said something much different.

We are told that we should love the lovable. Jesus says something much different when He tells us that we should love our neighbor and our enemies. And we will not live perfectly, but because of this, we can live powerfully.

So listen closely here. He is not just saying, I have an impossible standard of righteousness. And you will never meet it on your own. So trust my righteousness. That's not just what He's saying.

He's not just saying, you'll never meet it. Remember the Pharisees are supposed to come to Him and say, there's no way I could ever do that. There's no way I could do that on my own. And He will say, exactly. You were never made to do it on your own.

[7 : 47] You were made to come to Me. I gave the law to let you know that you don't measure up so that you would come and you would rely upon Me. You would be My hope and stay. And we would say, I need you. I need you. Lord, I need you.

And that's not just it. I was at Legoland yesterday with my nephews and my kids. And they had this ride where you're told to pedal. And somebody with a microphone says, pedal, pedal, pedal, pedal, pedal. Pedal, pedal, pedal, pedal.

Pedal faster. And I was thinking that my pedaling isn't doing anything. That this thing is going up and it's coming down. But it doesn't need me to pedal. They're just getting me to pedal because they think we look goofy.

And it makes us feel like we're having a better time. So I just stopped pedaling. And you know what I found out? I still went up and I still went down and I didn't have to pedal. So as all those other dads are sweating away and pedaling like crazy, I was just laying back and just watching.

I'm like, I'm going to let the ride do its job. Well, Jesus here isn't just saying, just stop pedaling because you're not making a difference. I'm going to do it all. He says something even greater than that where He says to them here, He says, if you will come to Me and trust in Me and receive the power of the Kingdom, then you will be able to live this way, not perfectly, but powerfully and your life will be the light of the world that proves that you are the children of God.

[9 : 03] He says that if you'll come to Me and recognize you can't do it, I will give you an incredible power to do what you never thought was possible. I mean, I will give you the power to do more than fly.

I will give you the power to love your enemy. So it isn't just let go of the will and say I don't care what happens. No, it is that He is now going to come inside of you and through the Spirit live out what would have never been possible before.

And He's questioning these people and saying, do you say you don't love like this? And are you saying you really don't have the power to love like this? And if so, then you need to recognize that you have never just had Him as your all in all.

So He's not making a new law that makes it more difficult, but He's explaining to them what He's always asked them to do. And this relationship was started when we realized that we were spiritually bankrupt.

Matthew 5, 3, Blessed are the poor in spirit for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. This has been my absolute favorite sermon in Matthew 5, Sermon on the Mount, passage, very short passage at the beginning of 5 that starts everything off and He says that only when you come broken does this happen.

[10 : 08] And that's who He's talking to here. He's talking to the disciples which are broken people that can now live this out by the power of God. They don't live perfectly but we live in power. But then He also has those Pharisees over there.

That's why in Mark 2, 17 He talks about those that are whole don't need a physician but those of us that know that we're broken and sick come in and He brings healing to us. That we are in need because we are spiritually sick of sin.

That we're not mistakers. Mistakers never run to God. They just run away from God. As long as it's just a mistake, we don't need God. And that's what most people in life are. They're mistakers.

They never see themselves as sin. Yeah, I'm not perfect but it was just a mistake. But if you only see things as a mistake and you never see the sin then you'll never be where you need to be standing in front of God there.

There's a woman caught in sin. You know the story they bring her. They throw him in front of Jesus and they're looking at Him and they're saying what are you going to do? Are you going to compromise? Are you going to say to this woman that what she did is fine?

[11 : 05] We know it's wrong. You said it was wrong. What are you going to do? And He never tells her you know what? I'm going to lower the standard here. He tells her that she is a sinner and that He can forgive and He tells her to sin no more and to go.

He never lowers his bar and He says you're a sinner but He says I offer forgiveness then He looks at those guys and He says but if you want to stone her those of you without sin throw the first stone. That woman as Jesus would kneel down and look her in the eye she knew she wasn't a mistaker.

She knew that she didn't make a mistake. She knew that she had sinned against the Holy God that only His forgiveness would make him whole. We see the same story in the prodigal son. The prodigal doesn't show up to his dad and say hey dad you know I made some mistakes I didn't invest wisely I kind of thought it would be good to invest in the bar scene and that didn't work out and I made some other investments so I made some mistakes can you make it?

He didn't do that. He came. He rehearsed it in his head and he said I'm going to tell my father I don't even deserve to be a servant and what does the father say? Quick. He doesn't let him do his speech.

He says quick get the ring that says he's my son and get the robe because he he came to his father in that broken heart and all of us in here are believers we came to him. Maybe we're on our face in front of him maybe we're the prodigal that came home maybe you're a young child but you came to him and said I'm not a mistaker I am a sinner and I come to you with a broken heart and we were spiritually bankrupt and we're told in the Bible that we're all sinners in Romans 3 23 every one of you in here was a sinner in need of a savior and the sooner you embrace your sinfulness the sooner you and I are candidates for God's grace the sooner you and I embrace our sinfulness the sooner we have an opportunity to meet our savior the sooner we see our mind our misdeeds of sin the sooner we are and the closer we are to knowing what it feels to be like to be forgiven and so we come to him and say we need you we need you I love this quote I'm not sure where it comes from but it says in the shadow of my hurt forgiveness feels like a decision to reward the enemy but in the shadow of the cross forgiveness is merely a gift from one undeserving soul to another so when we have these enemies out there in life and we look at the shadow of the hurt that they have caused us we say if I forgive them then I'm giving them something they don't deserve but as broken people as contrived people who know that we weren't mistakers or that we were sinners we come to them and we look in the shadow of the cross and we say hey

[13 : 38] I didn't deserve the forgiveness I was given and so I'm going to give you the forgiveness that you don't deserve as well and that's how we are imitators of God's love you are a child of God and you should act that way Luke chapter number 6 here is a parallel passage to what's going on the same story and another gospel account but we told in verse 45 that you may be the children of your father which is in heaven verse 36 says be ye therefore merciful as your father also is merciful so we're being told that he is our father let me give you some examples of why I can show you here that he's not saying this is a condition in which you will earn your love but he's saying you are and you can exemplify it in 516 he told us to let our light shine before the world we'll see our good works and glorify God Jesus is speaking to the disciples here and when people see our good works they're going to glorify God why would people glorify God when they see our works it's because it's the father our father that is enabling us to do that it is his light that is shining through us and that's how he's speaking to his children in the basis of the golden rule that we know it says do it says but if then being evil know how to give good gifts unto your children how much more shall your father which is in heaven give good gifts good things to them that should ask therefore all things whatsoever you would that men should do to you do you even so to them for this is the law and the prophets is that therefore you are able to make these people your neighbors that were your enemies therefore because the reason is you have already been forgiven by your father

I read a story on a Polynesian island that there were these huts and that they would hang these objects around the huts and somebody that was visiting there they said what are all these objects hanging around your huts they said every time that we have been done wrong by another tribe we hang these here and they are reminders to us that we will seek revenge and we do not take them down until we have got revenge on the other tribe can I remind you in here that we do not hang things out because our father doesn't hang things out and that our tribe does not do that that is not the custom of our tribe we aren't people that hang these objects out as reminders of the revenge that we are going to get upon people because we are the children of God for no other reason there is nothing else that is powerful enough to make you want to forgive these people and then he says in 7, 16 and 17 later in Matthew and Matthew is going to say that a good tree bears good fruit that a tree doesn't become what it is because of the fruit that it grows you know that it is that it doesn't say oh that tree is now a cherry tree now that it has cherries on it you say oh obviously that tree was a cherry tree even if I never recognized it before and we have become that good tree which can produce this fruit of love and so God compares his love to that of the Pharisees the Pharisees he says for he maketh his son that riseth on the evil and on the good and sendeth rain on the just and the unjust

God says that he will send rain on the good and on the evil God is an equal opportunity blesser the way that he just shows his love to rebel people if you were to line up the people of the world from those that are the wealthiest down to the poorest you would find here that God's blessing seems to have no correspondence on their holiness that he blesses those people and the greatest blessing any of us have that our sins are not imparted to us that God is good to mankind every time anybody takes a breath God is being good to us and one of the reasons that the prosperity gospel is so erroneous is because blessings are not always they're not indicative of God's approval upon somebody's life Asaph had a real hard time with this in Psalm I believe in 70 there or 73 he said I see how God seems to be blessing the wicked and I just can't stand it because they seem to have something that I need but they're going to get those blessings that God the sun rises on the just and unjust and God gives his blessings and he's drawing men to him so before we Christians lose sleep over this we must remember that blessings are undeserved and we are most blessed of all rebels that we are God's greatest scandal that he would ever bless people like you and I who are his rebels and God loves those who love him like God loves those who love him and he loves these Pharisees and he loves him who don't love him as well for if we love them which love you what reward have you do not even the publicans the same

God is merciful but the Pharisees are mercenaries the Pharisees says if you're good to me I'll be good to you but God says you'll be my enemy and I'll still come to earth and die for you and that's what he is teaching us here to be merciful as our father is and that was Jonah's big dilemma we're going through that in our connect class that Jonah said God I know how you feel towards those people but I don't want to feel that way towards those people and I don't want to be an instrument of your grace towards them and he had compassion on a plant but he didn't have compassion on people so Jesus tells you here what the greatest motivation ought to be is to be like your heavenly father not loving your enemies as proof that the power of the kingdom has entered your life not as a payment for you but not as a payment to get into the kingdom but as evidence that he has brought you into it so how do we make these enemies now our neighbor what an incredible example we find in the great commission of two aspects of how the enemy should become our neighbor there are at Kinesa conference here at the church Pastor Raymond stood here and he said that he had a man that they sent to Iran out of the church from their church and I believe from Lebanon and he went over to Iran and the man came back after serving

I believe only six months and he came back in a wheelchair and he was beaten there in that country and as he was in a wheelchair and he came back and the church rejoiced together that he was able to suffer the persecution of Christ the man said in his testimony he says if the man who beat me comes to Christ it would be worth everything that I put forth in that country and that man that beat him is now a believer and he says he's so thankful how does a person feel that way how does people go into an enemy country let them send them back in a wheelchair and how does a group of people in a church rejoice about that is because the power of the spirit inside of our lives to redefine who a neighbor is so in our great commission Matthew 28 18 and 20 as it's seen we're told to teach all nations and then observe all things whatsoever commanded so first of all we're told to reach the whole world as an expression of love and also we're told to observe all things after they become believers a way of living and that's what we are being taught right here is a way of living because we are believers and Pharisees they restricted this definition of what it meant they overlooked in Leviticus 19 it said love your neighbor but in verse number 34 it says but the stranger that dwelleth with you shall be unto you as one born among you and thou shalt love him as thyself for ye were strangers in the land of Egypt and I am the Lord your God they would just pick and choose what they wanted

[20 : 47] Genesis chapter number 15 they're told that they're going to destroy Canaan that they're going to come out they're going to be separate than these people that they're going to destroy the Canaan people but what they forget is that God had been merciful for them for 400 years that God had decided that this was an enemy and that he was going to wipe these people out so that it did not continue in that and that was not a decision that they get to make and sometimes we make the same decisions as well when it comes to separation we say that we know we're supposed to be called out we're supposed to be separate in this world but it does not give us a right to be hateful or to make these people our enemies Jesus addresses this parable in Luke chapter number 10 when they had asked who is it that is my neighbor so you know the story the holy and the pious priest and the Levite didn't see him as a neighbor they despised the good Samaritan they didn't treat him as a neighbor in 1035 Luke it says and on the morrow when he departed he took out two pence and gave them to the host and said to them take care of him and whatsoever thou spendest more when I come

I will repay thee so the good Samaritan comes and he picks up this guy and he takes him to an end and he says this is what I have take care of his needs and if there's more needed put it on my account when I come back by I will pay for it and so the religious people today didn't take care of him the Levites the one that were born into it but it was the good Samaritan who decided that he would be the neighbor and as I said at the beginning I think you and I have a far too narrow view of who it is so you came in here today and you say I'm off the hook I don't really have any enemies when you're as small as I am you try to not have any enemies as well and so I think I don't have any enemies and you came in here and say well this is great and I would imagine a crowd this large that there's a few people in here and you hear the word enemy and you attach a name to it maybe you didn't make them your enemy but they have decided that you are their enemy and nevertheless it's the same way and you're having a hard time loving them and a few people are like that but I think every one of us in here struggle with saying these are my people and those aren't my people these are the ones

I'm responsible for these are the ones I care for and those are people that are outside the camp those are people that are in that third category that are away from me that we don't have to be as concerned about look at this here it says in Deuteronomy 22 verse 2 powerful verse here it says and if thy brother be not nigh unto thee or if thou not know him then thou shalt bring it into thine house and shall be with thee until the brother seek after it and thou shalt restore it to him look what it says it says if the brother is not near to you and if you don't even know him you're going down the road and there's an ox there and you say I recognize this ox it belongs to Paul Bunyan it's blue I don't really know Paul that well but I see his ox is out of the gate but I don't know him so I don't really have a responsibility he says if you don't know him that well or if you don't know him at all you help him you take the ox and you put it in your fence and since you don't know who the ox belongs to you take care of it until the person shows up and says hey that's my ox that's mine it's blue it should be obvious that it's not yours there and that's what he tells us and I think we have this awkward distance in life as well

I'm going to keep on this point here for a second because I wanted to get rid of today inside of this room and I wanted to be gone inside this community I call it the awkward distance one of the ways to illustrate it you go to a gas station like racetrack where Santiago works and you open up the door and as you have the door and you're holding it you see somebody and they're like kind of like far away maybe they're 20 feet away and you think if I stand here this could be kind of awkward because I'm standing here for a really long time if they were a little bit closer you might hold the door for them if they're farther away you would know you could let go of the door but you're just kind of there and you don't know what to do then sometimes you think they're farther away than they are then you walk in and the door shuts and they're standing right there and you're thinking man I'm a chump I should have held that door for them so if they're at the gas pump do you hold the door for them no if they're standing five feet away do you hold the door for them of course but what do you do when people are 10 feet away and 15 feet away and you make that decision that's the awkward distance you're in here some of you are family and so when somebody's in need you take care of them and so it makes sense some of you are in the same life stage you have the same kids the same age you go to the same class if they're in need they help you but there's other people in here that are about 15 feet away if they're in need of something or if they have a prayer request you say you know what they're kind of on the line they're not really my people they're those other people inside of the church they're not my neighbor and I don't really know who they are and the Bible is telling us that we draw those people close to us that anybody you see that has a need that you are able to meet you should say you're my neighbor and I care for you and I want to help and it should always start inside of this community inside of the church when we get rid of that awkward distance

I have a lot of awkward scenarios probably more than most maybe a little less than David the Boy but other than that I have a lot of awkward moments and all those things run through my head I think do I go inside and get my slurpee or do I stand at this door a little bit longer as that person comes and sometimes you're standing there and they go back to their car and you're thinking what am I doing I gotta go and so that awkward distance that's there in life so we get rid of it Exodus 23, 4 and 5 says if thou meet thine enemy's ox or his ass is going astray thou shalt surely bring it back to him so not only if you don't know him or you know him but you don't know him that well but if your enemy's ox is out there you go and get it and you bring it into the fence and you take care of it and so we're not talking about a nation against nation in war we're talking we're not talking about criminal justice process we're talking about a day to day routine of human relationship Job said when his friends are accusing him of sinfulness he says if I rejoice at the destruction of him that hated me then I would agree with you that I know what sin I've been involved in

[26 : 50] Job knew that rejoicing at the destruction of your enemy was sin David knows it as well in Psalm 73 O Lord my God if I had done this if there would be iniquity in my hands it's wrong to be evil towards those that are good to you and it's even wrong to be evil towards those that are evil to you and David knew that there in the scripture and Exodus we're told that we're supposed to do that Job knew that but do you know that do you know that when something comes upon your enemy and you rejoice in your heart that that is sin that we want the best for people and that's a hard thing to swallow many times all times and so how do we embrace this obligation to our enemies and to our neighbors verses 47 and 628 and Luke 620 it says bless them that curse you and pray for them which despitefully use you and so we have an obligation here to bless them what is one of the ways that it says we bless them in verse 47 it says and if you salute your brother and only what do you more than others do not even the publicans so it seemed weird to me

I took some time on this I'm thinking how important is a greeting it says that a publican would greet a friend somebody they love and say hey I'm happy to see you but as children of God an enemy can come into the room and with a sincere heart we can say I'm happy to see you now the way we greet one another the way we view somebody you go to work tomorrow and you look at one cubicle or different things how many of you work in a cubicle would you raise your hand alright I'm going to stop saying that alright and so wherever you go in a big field or wherever you're at here and you know we joke and say preachers only know three occupations doctors lawyers and I don't know or firemen I guess it's the ones we always use wherever your workplace looks like and you go place to place and you see people and you greet them you need to be aware of those that you greet and the way you care about them I'm not talking about the way you say hello I'm talking about the way you feel towards people when they enter a room it ought to change because you are seeing everybody now as neighbor that person that everybody works hard to avoid that takes their lunch break at a different time so that they're not by the person who hogs the microwave or whatever that everybody avoids that's what's going on there and it happens all the time people make decisions based on who's going to be there you know I would go to that but so and so is there and I don't really like to be around them get that out of your head get that out of your heart change the way that you greet people and you care about them speak good of those who speak evil of you we're told here

William Hendrickson says all around Jesus were walls and fences he came for the very purpose of bursting those burials so that love pure warm divine infinite love would be able to flow straight down from the heart of God hence from his own marvelous heart into the hearts of men his love overleaved all the boundaries of race and nationality and party and age and sex and when he said I tell you love your enemy he must have startled his audience for he was saying something that probably never before had been said so succinctly positively and forcefully people don't understand that back then they didn't understand it and now people don't understand the person who says I love everyone I care for everyone that I am not going to keep people at a distance from me because what God has done in my heart does not allow me to build a barrier between anybody and this world and so then he says go about meeting practical needs verse 44 but I say unto you love your enemies bless them that curse you do good to them that hate you and pray for them which despitefully use you and persecute you even unbelievers can help someone they love is what he says there the publicans will take care of their own but we're called to a higher standard if your enemy hungers or thirst we should help them

Proverbs 25 Abraham and Lot you know they're in a fight we forget that about them but Abraham and Lot have a point of contention Abraham goes to Lot and he says Lot you take the best property and I'll take what is left David in the cave with Saul Saul comes in there he's back there Saul is standing there he could get he could get revenge Saul has decided that David is his enemy David has decided that Saul is his neighbor and he defines him differently and he cuts off that rope the bottom part of his robe and he holds it up and he said I could have killed you but I didn't because I'm showing love and grace and concern for you and then we're told to give our cloak away and to look out for people's best there as we've looked at before somebody smites you on the cheek somebody takes your coat give them your cloak love this story Dirk Williams he was an Anabaptist and he was condemned to death in 1567 but he got loose from the prison that he was in and he was running for his life and it was really cold but this lake hadn't completely frozen over him and as he's running across the lake he's getting pretty far away from the lone soldier who's chasing after him but as he gets pretty far away he hears a cry and he listens to it and that one soldier that was coming after him had fallen into the lake and so Dirk Williams comes back there and he helps the guy out of it and he gets him to a warm fire and he takes care of him that enemy who can do that who can know a love like that even the publican can love people that are good to him even a publican even an unbeliever can love somebody who's going to get something in return but only a child of God knows how to love those that hate them evil for evil they say is criminal if you return evil for evil it's criminal if you do good for good it's human but good for evil is the vine it takes the work of God in our lives then we're told to pray for them bless them that curse you and pray for them which despitely use you because prayer for your enemies is one of the deepest forms of love because it means that you have to really want something good to happen to them we can lie one to another but it's awful difficult to pray to God

Jesus on the cross says Father forgive them Stephen underneath the stone says it David at the death of his enemies said that he says in 35-14 of Psalms he says when a man can weep over he weeps over his enemies as he would weep over the death of his mother David understood a love that he should have for all people and David would not mock his maker and that's why we're told it happens that somebody we dislike an enemy falls into something and we rejoice we are mocking the maker of it and we're saying that the maker messed up on that person and we're making mock of them so Jesus is calling us not just to do good things for our enemy like greeting them and helping supply their needs he's also wanting us to want their best and express those wants and prayers but the enemy nowhere even when the enemy is not around we should pray for their salvation isn't it interesting that prayer is a parallel here of love love is shown outwardly that's how we should show it in 1 Corinthians we see there the verb over and over in 13 that love is an action but prayer is that internal part that goes on and so have you become a neighbor as in Luke chapter number 10 look with me what it says in Luke chapter number 10 verse number 36 and the question

[33 : 56] I'd ask you as we started out here today is that have you become the neighbor the wording scene here is important to us we look back at the story Jesus asked which man treated him as a neighbor Luke 10 36 for now of these three thinkest thou was neighbor unto him that fell among the thieves he didn't say which one of these persons considered the guy on the side of the road his neighbor he says which one of those three became a neighbor to the man on the road isn't that amazing he turns the table if you're a neighbor then everybody in your path will receive neighborly love I'm not asking you to go find new neighbors I'm asking every one of you to come in here and be a neighbor we basically have an object oriented type of love you know you sort of love people on the basis of how you view them if you're a neighbor and your heart is filled with love any object that gets in your path is going to receive love we objectify people and we say you're my neighbor you're not my neighbor you deserve my help you don't deserve my help but the good Samaritan was a neighbor and when he ran into somebody he helped them so the change can happen right here and in this place today love in sense is simply seeking the highest good and you seek to serve their needs there so praying takes it deep into the heart so maybe you think

I'm doing good to my people I don't like because I leave them alone that's not what we're called to do we're called to love them our enemies and those people that are awkwardly off in the distance and to draw them near but then let's go even deeper do you really desire their best there's some people in here and I know your story you've been really hurt by people over the last few years when you pray for them that's where the healing is going to go deep into your heart and where it belongs where you say I really want their best I don't rejoice when they mess up or they prove to everybody that they're as dumb as I thought they were or they show somebody else how hateful they are as they were hateful to me but when it goes into your heart and you can do that as a child of God you can love like that because that's how our father loves as well so I have a series of questions as we close here today so do you need to express or receive this love this morning unbeliever what is your reaction to all this if you're in here today and you're not a child of God what's your reaction to it if you don't love like this it says you're a sinner and if you're a sinner you need a savior you have fallen short so the message that Jesus is giving to this crowd there it says this should prove to you once and for all that you haven't arrived and that you need a savior and of course he is the one that offers himself as a savior so the Pharisees and unbelievers listening said

I could never love like that there's nothing in me to love like that and he says I know but if I was inside of you if the Holy Spirit if the work of God was inside of you you could love if you had ever seen yourself as broken and as contrite you would be able to love like that and they never have because they were mistakers and mistakers can't forgive sinners and he says that so that's the unbelievers in here to believe there was another group on the hillside there that day as he's speaking and they had already believed in him and they committed their lives to him but sometimes even for those of us who have been forgiven for our lack of love those of us who have been given the power of love we fail to love so for us this becomes an exhortation to live up to what is now potentially a reality I can't forgive that person child of God yes you can I can't love that person as God would love them child of God you most certainly can he did something in your life many times people wonder why is it some drastic change it would be nice when somebody became a Christian they changed colors or a light went off in their head can we see that a child of God we can live radically different than the world and the world needs to see it and if you don't love like that you need a savior if you receive the forgiveness for a lack of love and Christ lives in your heart and you have forgiveness you have his love shed abroad in Romans 5:5 but you're not letting that love out you're bottling it up and you need to make a new commitment to love the way he says you are to love so what are some of the ways that a Christian can actively shine and rain upon a neighbor those who have always loved and those that have become our enemy and today in your seat at an altar on your way home wherever you want to go you need to recognize that you need to be a neighbor and that you need to love your enemies and you need to love those people that you do not know and that you don't feel closely to your neighbor is anybody who needs you and that's it will you be a neighbor to them this week right now live a life in a neighborly fashion the words of Mr. Roger the great theologian he said will you be my neighbor can I tell you that this world needs some neighbors they need somebody to notice them those of you that have enemies in here that people have hurt you find forgiveness today and start praying for them ask God to give you the words when you pray and love those people and want the best for them and those of you in here that live in such a small circle and you say

I take care of my four and no more would you open up your eyes to what God just showed us here in his word and say that everybody in this room is now your responsibility and everybody outside of this room becomes your responsibility because whatever road you're walking down if you see somebody that needs your help and you can meet their need then you are their neighbor people don't have neighbors that's what my neighbor said yesterday she said you know nobody's really talked to us it was a cold winter but I'm excited to see that everybody's coming out and everybody's being so nice to us now that's not just how people live in their homes that's how people live everywhere somebody you're going to bump into tomorrow needs you to be a neighbor they need you to pay attention to them they need you to see them because nobody else has seen them and they need the love of God that's shed abroad in your heart to shine upon them in such a way that they want to understand who your heavenly father is this message was recorded at Vision Baptist Church in Alfredo, Georgia for more information log on to www.visionbaptist.com where you can find our service times location contact information and more audio and video recordings in Google onet and access to evaluate and onet and introduce to

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