



DID GOD REALLY SAY...LOVE YOUR ENEMIES?

LUKE 6:27-36

PASTOR COLIN RIEKE ~ AUGUST 10, 2014

²⁷ “But I tell you who hear me: Love your enemies, do good to those who hate you, ²⁸ bless those who curse you, pray for those who mistreat you. ²⁹ If someone strikes you on one cheek, turn to him the other also. If someone takes your cloak, do not stop him from taking your tunic. ³⁰ Give to everyone who asks you, and if anyone takes what belongs to you, do not demand it back. ³¹ Do to others as you would have them do to you. ³² “If you love those who love you, what credit is that to you? Even ‘sinners’ love those who love them. ³³ And if you do good to those who are good to you, what credit is that to you? Even ‘sinners’ do that. ³⁴ And if you lend to those from whom you expect repayment, what credit is that to you? Even ‘sinners’ lend to ‘sinners,’ expecting to be repaid in full. ³⁵ But love your enemies, do good to them, and lend to them without expecting to get anything back. Then your reward will be great, and you will be sons of the Most High, because he is kind to the ungrateful and wicked. ³⁶ Be merciful, just as your Father is merciful.



Grace, mercy and peace are yours through our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ,

One of the great kings of ancient Israel was a man by the name of King David. He did not become king by the usual method. He was not born into a royal family. But he was chosen by God when he was just a young boy tending sheep. But even after David had oil poured over his head, symbolizing he was to be the next king of Israel, it would be many years before he actually ascended the throne. During that time he certainly kept busy. Not only did he slay the giant Goliath with only a slingshot, he also spent time in King Saul's court as a musician. But Saul knew about David's claim to the throne and on several occasions tried to kill him.

David took to hiding in mountain caves away from Saul and his army. And God protected David during this time. The Bible records for us one incident in these mountain caves. David and his men were hiding in the far back of the cave when suddenly King Saul wandered into the cave in order to relieve himself. David's men saw this as a sign from God that he was delivering King Saul into future king David's hand. But David refused to kill Saul, even in his vulnerable position. So instead he cut off a corner of Saul's robe, to show what he could have done. Once Saul had left the cave and had wandered a decent distance, David shouted out from the cave to Saul asking why he was trying to kill David. We hear how Saul was at the time ashamed of his actions and even invited David to join him. But David knew Saul's mood would not last, and declined to go with Saul. But you see how David showed love to even his enemy Saul when he could have done far worse.

This is just one example of many in the Bible which talks about the question at hand this morning. DID GOD REALLY SAY TO LOVE YOUR ENEMIES? It's a question that is important for us as believers to answer, not only so that we might share with others, but also for how we treat those who are our enemies. The answer that we find in Scripture is very clear, our motivation and application of this

answer takes a little more practice. We see that GOD REALLY DID SAY TO LOVE YOUR ENEMIES. Our motivation and its application can be summarized as

1. The golden rule with
2. The silver lining

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Just about every one of us grows up learning about the golden rule. The golden rule is “Do to others as you would have them do to you.” This is something that parents teach their children growing up. It’s something teachers teach their students. It’s the idea that if everyone treated others how they want to be treated, then the world would be a much better place to live. That’s the summary and purpose of the golden rule. You can debate whether Jesus was the first one to advocate for the golden rule, but nevertheless he applied it in his teaching. But his reason for living the golden rule is far different than just making the world a better place, it’s a reminder of who we are.

Jesus brings this up with his first words he speaks in our gospel for this morning. **“But I tell you who hear me:”** Jesus is not just talking to everyone here, but to those who are hearing him, those who are following him, those who are his disciples. **“Love your enemies, do good to those who hate you, bless those who curse you, pray for those who mistreat you.”** Last week, we talked a little about God’s will for marriage. His will is that husband and wife love each other like they love themselves. That love they show one another is a special love, it’s an undeserved love. It’s that special word for love that God himself displays to us – agape love.

That same agape love is mentioned by Jesus here also. Show undeserved love not only to your neighbors. Show undeserved love to your enemies also. This love is not looking for reciprocal feelings from the other person, you just do it because it is the golden rule, it’s the way that you would like to be treated by your enemy. That isn’t to say your enemy will treat you that way, but it’s a way to display undeserved love. It is this undeserved love that leads Jesus to explain about turning the other cheek, giving up the tunic, letting someone take something from you without asking.

But showing your enemy undeserved love doesn’t always mean that we must lie down and take it. In fact, sometimes we can display love for our enemy by standing up and confronting them. But this confrontation must not be made because *you* are feeling slighted, but because it is in your enemies best interest. We go back to the golden rule, **“Do to others as you would have them do to you.”** Think about what that means, think about how you would want others to treat you. You would probably like others to tell you when your zipper is down on your pants. You would probably like others to tell you that hot sauce is superhot before you douse your meal with it. You would probably like it if someone stopped you from making the biggest mistake of your life. But if at all possible, you wouldn’t want to be embarrassed.

You see, showing love to your enemy is looking out for their best interests, just like in all of those previous scenarios. It is love enough not only to care for them, but to gently prevent them from making the biggest mistake of their lives. Showing love to your enemy can look just like Jesus said, “turning the other cheek” “giving someone your tunic” “lending without expecting back,” but that isn’t the only way to show love to your neighbor.

And yet, even in our showing love to our neighbors and enemies, it can be so easy to turn the focus inward. And when the proper motivation is not there, we are no better than the unbeliever. Let's face it, even when we do have the right motivation, we don't live up to this expectation of God. It's hard enough for us to love those who are like us – personality-wise, skin color, background, and it's even more difficult to love those who are not like us. Which is why the hardest petition to pray in the Lord's prayer is "Forgive us our sins as we forgive those who sin against us." This is unnatural and impossible for us to do.

This is what separates us from God. When we cannot love our enemies, we reveal ourselves as enemies of God. The Bible says, "**the sinful nature is hostile to God**" wanting nothing to do with him. Anyone who is hostile to God has no chance of making it to heaven. The huge problem mankind faced is that once we turned our backs on God, there was no going back, at least on our part, we couldn't turn ourselves toward him, we couldn't choose to believe him. Which is what made it imperative for God to be the one to save us. For God to be the one to turn us around, for God to be the one to place that desire in our hearts to believe, for God to display his undeserved love to us, his enemies through his son Jesus Christ. This is so far beyond the golden rule, this is God's platinum rule.

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What God did for sinners was a one-time action on his part with the perfect life, innocent death, and resurrection of his son Jesus. It was never meant to be just the example we follow, because we could never follow it. It is Jesus' life of perfect love which replaced our lives of imperfect love. So now when God looks at you, he no longer sees imperfect people, he sees perfect, holy, and loving people – because Jesus was perfect, holy and loving.

So when GOD REALLY DID SAY LOVE YOUR ENEMIES, it is something he sees as something done – not only by Jesus for us, but believers for unbelievers. It is something natural we do, it is something natural which flows from a heart of faith in Christ. We don't love our enemies to please God, we love our enemies because we please God. This is what leads to the silver lining. Jesus says when we do these things, "**Your reward will be great, and you will be sons of the Most High.**"

Normally when we think of reward, we think of something we do to earn the reward – you find the lost dog, you get a reward, you do your chores, you get your allowance, you catch the bad guy, you get a reward. But that's not the type of reward that Jesus is talking about here, as if by our actions of loving our enemies we are rewarded with heaven. We have already been rewarded with heaven by the work of Jesus, nothing we do can change that. In a way it's like getting tenured at your job. You have your job as long as you want it. This takes off all the pressure of performance, and in many cases can allow people to work effectively and in ways that they couldn't before.

As Christians we have tenure in heaven, it's our reward, it's our journey's end. Because we have heaven waiting for us, we can live without pressure. We can serve without the pressure of wondering if we've done enough, we can share the gospel with people without being afraid of screwing up. We can love our enemies unconditionally without wondering if they will love us back. This is the silver lining of being a Christian. We aren't Christians because we love our enemies, we love our enemies because we are Christians.

Loving our neighbors, loving our enemies is not about us it's about them, and seeing them in heaven. That's why loving our enemies will take on different forms. Look at how the apostle Paul dealt with it in his life. On his second missionary journey in the town of Philippi he allowed himself to be beaten and chained before using his right as a Roman citizen for a trial – and look what happened – a jailer and his family came to faith. In Jerusalem, before Paul was about to be flogged after a riot of people surrounded him, he spoke up – which gave him an opportunity to defend the gospel. This is what makes Christian's different, it's because we are “**sons and daughters of the Most High.**”

The golden rule with the silver lining that Jesus gives is far different than anything you will hear elsewhere. The golden rule has been used to try and make the world a better place. And there's nothing wrong with making the world a better place, but is this love? The love God is talking about is undeserved love. The love we are to show to our enemies, in our minds is undeserved. But the same goes for God's love to us, he didn't have to do it, it was undeserved. As Christians we don't display undeserved love to others to get God's undeserved love. We show undeserved love to our enemies because of God's undeserved love to us. This is the motivation and application of the golden rule with the silver lining. Amen.