

## **Love For Enemies!** ~ *Could there be any better topic for Independence Day*

Luke 6: 27-36 NLT

*<sup>27</sup> But to you who are willing to listen, I say, love your enemies! Do good to those who hate you. <sup>28</sup> Bless those who curse you. Pray for those who hurt you. <sup>29</sup> If someone slaps you on one cheek, offer the other cheek also. If someone demands your coat, offer your shirt also. <sup>30</sup> Give to anyone who asks; and when things are taken away from you, don't try to get them back.*

*<sup>31</sup> Do to others as you would like them to do to you.*

*<sup>32</sup> "If you love only those who love you, why should you get credit for that? Even sinners love those who love them! <sup>33</sup> And if you do good only to those who do good to you, why should you get credit? Even sinners do that much! <sup>34</sup> And if you lend money only to those who can repay you, why should you get credit? Even sinners will lend to other sinners for a full return.*

*<sup>35</sup> "Love your enemies! Do good to them. Lend to them without expecting to be repaid. Then your reward from heaven will be very great, and you will truly be acting as children of the Most-High, for he is kind to those who are unthankful and wicked. <sup>36</sup> You must be compassionate, just as your Father is compassionate."*

This weekend we celebrate our independence. What does that really mean? Does it mean we can simply live life however we wish to? That we can do and/or act however we want, even if it offends and destroys others?

As a nation, we celebrate our independence because of the sacrifice many people who lived prior to us made. It was originally about our nation's independence from those who were trying to rule over this land from far away. Today, that nation is one of our allies. Right now, we need all the allies we have in an effort to keep peace in this world. A peace that is so desperately needed.

By now, years, even decades have passed, and mankind is still trying to figure out what kind of world we want to live in. Many nations with a variety of government structures, make it difficult to navigate what to do to obtain peace. However, our founding Fathers gave to us a structure, we call it "**The Constitution**," which was to provide "**Liberty**" and "**Freedom**" for all, which we celebrate even today. All of this was built upon- **God's LOVE** and wisdom, departed to our forefathers many years ago.

As we read this passage, one could ask a simple question, concerning, who He tells us to love and why: The answer found here: "**Our ENEMIES.**" Why? **Because only genuine love can tear down the walls of anger and destruction our humanity seems to thrive on.** I can almost hear some saying, "**You have got to be kidding me. What was Jesus thinking when He asked us to do this?**" You see, many struggle loving their families and friends, let alone their enemies.

Then, not only does the Lord ask us to love our enemies, He challenges us to go beyond just offering love, and put love into action, which is seen by our enemies in how we treat them.

•Imagine what would have happened, if while during any of our world conflicts, those involved had shown LOVE for their enemies, as the Lord directs? Would it have change anything?

•Imagine what might have happened, if we had been ***slow to anger, quick to love***, as we engaged those who persecuted us? I would dare say, many things would be totally different. However, I realize, as do many, that this would take a great deal more strength than any one of us has on our own.

Besides loving our enemies, Paul adds: ***“If your enemy is hungry, feed him, if he is thirsty, give him something to drink...”*** (Romans 12:20) This goes far beyond being cordial to them or giving them the basic amenities. This demonstrates God’s love for them by meeting the very basic needs we all have. This speaks volumes to those who need to discover peace.

**Illustration:**

*I found an article which suggested what all of us are able to give the people around us. Things that would be easily received. The best gifts we can give. It reads:*

*The best gifts to give . . .*

- To your friend - loyalty*
- To your enemy - forgiveness*
- To your boss - service*
- To a child - a good example*
- To your parents - gratitude and devotion*
- To your mate - love and faithfulness*
- To all men and women - charity*
- And to your God - your life!*

*This poses a question: **What have you given to those in your life?***

As we study, and grow in Christ, God is constantly reminding us of the forgiveness and grace God has shown us, therefore, He reminds us that we are to show grace and forgiveness to others as well. As we do, He also tells us,

***“Do not judge, and you will not be judged. Do not condemn, and you will not be condemned. Forgive, and you will be forgiven.”*** LUK 6:37 And, the greatest promise of God is simply this,

***“For I will forgive their wickedness and will remember their sins no more.”*** HEB 8:12 The assumption here is simple, that we ask for forgiveness and received it and we should offer this to others.

We are loved by a God, who is willing to forgive us, as we forgive others, and thus forget or remember our sins no more. There is no record of our wrong doing in His heart or mind. Because He chooses to remove them, and forget them forever...

Let’s take a brief look at what we are told about Loving our Enemies in Matthew...

***First - Four directives...***

***“<sup>27</sup> But to you who are willing to listen, I say, love your enemies! Do good to those who hate you. <sup>28</sup> Bless those who curse you. Pray for those who hurt you.”***

Luke starts out with four very easy things to understand. I am calling them Directives, for those who love and follow Him.

- 1) *Love your enemies*
- 2) *Do good to those who hate you*
- 3) *Bless those who curse you*
- 4) *Pray for those who hurt you*

***I don't know what you think, but I think this is powerful advice for children of God.*** In the first two verses of this passage, we discover what some might call, "***The Resolution Solution.***" We are directed to be kind to those who do injury to us. ***Not easy!*** Then, not only to be kind, but we are told to do good unto them. So, as we do this, we must pray that God will help us bear no malice, nor seek revenge, for what others have said or done to us.

When they speak ill of us, or curse us, we are to actually bless them and pray for them, to the best of our ability. To speak well of them, wish them well, and especially pray for their souls. To be an intercessory in prayer, for their souls. Remember them often and regularly. Thank goodness for the power and grace of God, which will enable us to follow His word and live by His standards.

We know what we should do, and that our Father in heaven has forgiven us, and showered us with His mercy, which covers our mistakes and lives, so, now we are told to offer this to others.

***Illustration:*** *Did you know?*

*Russet potatoes are one of America's favorite varieties of potatoes. They were developed by Luther Burbank in 1872. He noticed a potato plant with an unusual bud. He watched the bud until it dropped. When he opened it, he found 23 seeds. He selected two that seemed better than the rest, and from these two seeds have come all Russet potatoes.*

Most of us believe that there is one seed, the gospel, which produces converts to Christianity. (I Peter 1:23). However, there is a tiny denomination called "***Two Seeds in the Spirit Predestinarian Baptists.***" (*Say that quickly five times*)

They believe in a form of dualism; ***that God planted good seed in Eden, but Satan planted bad seed.*** Therefore, every baby born, is born with one or the other seed, and thus, each baby is predestined to either heaven or hell, without a choice. However, even they acknowledge, that all Christians come from one seed. That seed being of Jesus Christ!

The ability to follow these directives, comes from having the seed of Christ planted deep within our hearts. It is up to each of us, to allow that seed to take root, to cultivate it, so that it will grow and bring forth a bounty of harvest in our lives. If mankind had sought after this seed, many of our wars and struggles, would have been avoided.

***Second - Turn, accept and give...***

*"<sup>29</sup> If someone slaps you on one cheek, offer the other cheek also. If someone demands your coat, offer your shirt also. <sup>30</sup> Give to anyone who asks; and when things are taken away from you, don't try to get them back. <sup>31</sup> Do to others as you would like them to do to you."* (vv.29-31)

We are asked here, to do something which seem almost opposite of our human nature. I don't know about you, but I find these words difficult to understand in my humanness.

If someone takes a swing at you, you are to stop, turn your face and let them swing at the other side? If they take your coat, let them have your hat as well? If they steal something which is yours, don't ask for it back. Do to them, as you would want them to do to you.

When I first read this passage years ago, ***I was uncertain*** of what the Lord was speaking of. This seemed like a man who is a whimp, a weakling, a person without a spine, and someone who simply allows the world to run over him. I remember seeing people who stood up for themselves, right? Then it clicked... When I was young, I didn't realize it, but the believers I was around, stood up for themselves to demonstrate generosity in their forgiveness! Grace in their giving.

Not just to forgive someone for the wrong things they have done, but it dealt with an attitude toward those who may have done an injustice toward them. We all tell people, ***"Oh, I have forgiven them."*** When in reality, we are only trying to ignore what they have done. That is not the same thing.

Our Lord seeks to help us understand that real forgiveness comes from a heart that is forgiving. A heart which is sold out to Jesus. A heart which has the ability to offer a generous portion of forgiveness with sincerity, despite any injustice. That comes from God, not us alone. The true temperament of the child of God, is found in forgiveness, just as Christ forgave us, and thus ***there is no revenge***, sought for toward those who did ill toward us.

As a person in this world, this is difficult for us to understand. Why? As most of us were growing up, we were taught to fight back for the good and right things, my things. Now the Lord tell us to let Him take care of that, as we lavish our God given love upon others. Leave justice to God, who will in His own way, deal with every sinner, or evil, which seems to be getting ahead.

***Do we remember the Lord's prayer?***

*"Forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors..."* (Matt 6:12)

***Do we remember the wisdom of God Word reminds us in Proverbs,***

*"The way of the guilty is devious, but the conduct of the innocent is upright."* (Proverbs 21: 8)

We are to focus on what ***WE*** are doing, how ***WE*** are acting and reacting, and let the Lord deal with what they are doing. That almost seem against human nature? ***Generosity in our forgiveness....*** That is the key. Praise Gods, I ran across a simple fact which will impact us all...

***"God grades on the cross, not the curve."***

**Philip Yancey writes: (please listen to what he says,)**

*"Not to forgive, imprisons me in the past, and locks out all potential for change. I thus yield control to another, my enemy, and doom myself to suffer the consequences of the wrong."*

*I once heard an immigrant rabbi make an astonishing statement. "Before coming to America, I had to forgive Adolf Hitler," he said. "I did not want to bring Hitler inside me to my new country." We forgive not merely to fulfill some higher law of morality; we do it for ourselves."*

Lewis Smedes, points out, **"The first and often the only person to be healed by forgiveness is the person who does the forgiveness."** Generosity in our forgiveness heals our own souls. Turn, accept and then give!

### **Thirdly - Sons of the Most High!**

*"If you love those who love you, what credit is that to you? Even 'sinners' love those who love them. And if you do good to those who are good to you, what credit is that to you? Even 'sinners' do that. 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. 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. Be merciful, just as your Father is merciful."* LUK 6:32

I want and need God's mercy, how about you? Why, I am but a human being, and I do silly things at times in my life. Our Lord tells us clearly, **love those who are difficult to love, do good to those who don't deserve the goodness, even lend money or things, to those who you know may never pay them back.** Why? **Because God is kind to the ungrateful and the wicked.** It does not say that God embraced them, or did as they did, or lived as they lived. **It says, Our God loves them, and has mercy upon them,** often, while they are unaware of the evil and wickedness, they live in.

The world we live in right now, is filled with people who are lost, hurting, seeking, wanting and needing. The world is self-centered, selfish, egotistic, demanding, uncaring, consumed by wicked, and oblivious to what or who God is.

People sue each other, at the drop of a hat, people take what is not theirs, with little thought, saying to themselves, **"If I don't get caught, its o.k."** People use others to obtain what they want, selfishly, without even a slightest thought of the consequences. The first and foremost goal of most people, is defined by, **"What do I get out of it?"** That my friends, is a worldly thought, not a Godly thought.

The concept being placed before us today, is that, **Christian character is totally unlike what the world understands.** Sadly, that concept is foreign to many within the church.

- Love without expecting to get loved in return...
- Do good, even when you expect they will never do good unto you.
- Lend, even to people who may never intend to repay you.
- Love, even your enemies, as you demonstrate mercy, just as the Lord gave us mercy and Grace! **These are the Sons of the Most-High!**

A reward is awaiting in heaven for these sons, and it will be great!

Why do I say this? Because, by the love we offer to others, we are planting seeds, of which, many will take root one day, and those souls will discover the grace of God as well.

**Illustration:**

*At a recent church luncheon buffet line, there was a sign next to the apples that read:  
"Apples--take one per person. Remember, God is watching"*

*A little further down the line next to the cookies, someone had scrawled with a crayon:  
"Cookies--take all you want. God is watching the apples."*

The truth is, God is watching all of His children, everything we do, every word we say, every action we take. Not to condemn any of us, rather, because His grace offers us love and forgiveness. He watches us to guide, direct, teach and help us understand, the fullness of His grace, His mercy, His LOVE!

To see if we have caught it yet... If we understand how to relate to others, as He is trying to relate to us.

**•The four directives are very clear...**

- 1) Love your enemies
- 2) Do good to those who hate you
- 3) Bless those who curse you
- 4) Pray for those who mistreat you

•Turn, accept and give.... Sons of the Most High

Perhaps we can have even better Fourth of July Celebration in the future, as we practice what is found in this passage...

***Close in Prayer***