

Loving Others
Matthew 5:43-48 / Luke 6:27-28, 32-36

Introduction

This morning we will examine the sixth and final comparison that Jesus makes between the self righteous teaching of the Scribes and Pharisees and His own teaching about true righteousness which comes from the heart in harmony with the Law. Please turn in your Bibles to Matthew 5:43.

It is significant that throughout this section Jesus has not directly condemned the Scribes and Pharisees. He has only exposed the errors of their teachings by comparing them to His own in demonstration of the nature of the righteousness that exceeds that of the scribes and Pharisees which is necessary to enter the kingdom of Heaven (5:20). Jesus' purpose was not condemnation in judgment, but exposure in order to effect change. This is significant because it is very easy for us to fall into the same trap as those religious leaders and start viewing true righteousness by what we do or do not do rather than by who we are in character. Our hearts also need to be exposed so that we might also change too, and Matthew 5 certainly has done that.

In Jesus' first illustration concerning murder He exposes the selfish anger that occurs in the human heart. In His discussion of adultery Jesus exposes the unrighteous lust that commits adultery in the heart long before anything physical can take place. In Jesus' teaching on divorce He exposes not only the fact that an unbiblical divorce leads to multiplied adultery, but He also brings out the principle that God is not pleased when we do something morally questionable simply because the law allows for it. The scribes had complex rules concerning which vows must be kept and which could be broken. Jesus taught that righteous people simply do what they say they will do so that there is no difference between a vow and just giving your word. Last week we saw that contrary to the scribes teaching that revenge was required, those who are righteous leave vengeance in God's hands while seeking to be a blessing. Jesus' last illustration expands on that theme by explaining that the righteous reflects God by not only loving their neighbor, but also their enemies.

Matthew 5:43-48, *"You have heard that it was said, 'You shall love your neighbor, and hate your enemy.' But I say to you, love your enemies, and pray for those who persecute you in order that you may be sons of your Father who is in heaven; for He causes His sun to rise on the evil and the good, and send rain on the righteous and the unrighteous. For if you love those who love you, what reward have you? Do not even the taxgatherers do the same? And if you greet your brothers only, what do you do more than others? Do not even the gentiles do the same? Therefore you are to be perfect, as your heavenly Father is perfect."*

Each and everyone of the comparisons Jesus has made has shown the sinfulness of all mankind including every person here. No man can live according to what Jesus taught here on his own. This last teaching about loving you enemies is by far the greatest test demonstrating true righteousness, for only someone who has been regenerated by the Holy Spirit could possibly do this. Only someone who has the Holy Spirit within them could strive toward Jesus' call in verse 48 of being perfect even as the heavenly Father is perfect. Only those who have been convicted by the Holy Spirit of their sinfulness so that they mourn and admit their sin and then approach God poor in spirit to seek His grace and mercy could do this. Only those who are filled with the Spirit so that they hunger and thirst after righteousness and want to be transformed into the image of Christ would want to do this. It is only those people who have been changed by God to walk according to the characteristics of the Beatitudes that will actually live according to Jesus' teachings, for that standard is too high for everyone else.

If the self righteous understand the teachings of Jesus, they will be offended. Most of the Jewish leaders of that time did take offense and they eventually murdered Jesus out of their hatred. But there are the few that take to heart what Jesus says. They understand their depravity and their need to come to God poor in spirit. They confess freely that Jesus is correct in what He says and they ask Him to help them to be different. Your very reaction to the teachings of Jesus will reveal your heart, and that is why this last section is the toughest test of righteousness that Jesus gives in the sermon. It should bring about a conviction of how far each of us still lack in personal holiness and motivate you to confession of sin and humbly seeking after God's mercy and grace which is the only source of true godliness.

The Teaching of the Scribes - Matthew 5:43

In verse 43 Jesus repeats the twisted teaching of the Scribes. *"You have heard that it was said, 'You shall love your neighbor, and hate your enemy.'"* Once again we find a teaching from the rabbis that was selective in what they told the people. It is not the whole counsel of God, but only certain phrases twisted together to communicate what the human teacher wanted. The same thing still occurs today. Paul in 2 Timothy 4:3 that a time would come when people would not want to endure sound doctrine, but instead would find teachers that would tickle their ears. We live in that time.

I was talking with another pastor once who told me he had some people in his church told him that they would leave if he preached through a certain section of Scripture. Being a man of integrity, he did preach through the passages as he had previously planned and those people kept their promise and left - along with about 50% of the operating budget. There are a lot of people that do not want sound doctrine for they want to have their ears tickled. They want to hear what they want to believe and what makes them feel good about themselves. We have had them here in the past and I am sure we will have them in the future. At least the people that left that church were willing to state openly what they wanted. Most of the time such people would never come to a Bible teaching church in the first place, but if they do, they usually just stop coming.

It is my own belief that those who want their ears tickled have a symbiotic relationship with the preachers that proclaim such pleasantries and heresy. It. Both are getting what they want. The people here what they want to hear and the preacher gets their acclaim and finances. Neither get the truth. My commitment is to faithfully declare to the best of my ability what the text says in its grammatical and historical context regardless of how you or I feel about it. That is a commitment that is made to God first, and then to those that want the truth of God's word.

In this passage we find that the Scribes had once again twisted the Hebrew Scriptures. This time by both what they omitted and by what they added.

First, turn to Leviticus 19:17-18 from which comes the phrase, *"love your neighbor."* The full passage reads, *"You shall not hate your fellow countryman in your heart; you may surely reprove your neighbor, but shall not incur sin because of him. You shall not take vengeance, nor bear any grudge against the son of your people, but you shall love your neighbor as yourself, I am the Lord."* But what is missing from the teaching of the Scribes? This passage specifically says to not hate their fellow country man in their heart or take vengeance or hold a grudge against them (a good reminder of our message last week about not taking vengeance or bearing a grudge against those that personally defame your honor, or strive to control your personal possessions, or take away your personal liberty). In addition, the passage specifically states that God's command is to *"love your neighbor as yourself."*

Notice that they left out the end of the phrase, *"as yourself."* Why? Simply because it is a lot easier to love your neighbor if there is no standard by which to judge that love. God says to love your neighbor with the same consideration and intensity with which you selfishly love yourself. That is a high requirement. By omitting the last phrase the Scribes made it easier to fulfill the command to love their neighbor because they could then define that love as they desired.

Let me quickly add here that throughout the Scriptures the concept of self love is an assumed part of man's nature because every man loves himself. Paul uses this same concept in Ephesians 5:28-30 in commanding husbands to love their wives as they love themselves stating, *"He who loves his own wife loves himself; for no one ever hated his own flesh, but nourishes and cherishes it, just as Christ also does the church . . ."* Those who use this command to promote self love as necessary for healthy self-esteem have twisted the Scriptures just as badly as the Scribes and Pharisees did. You do not need to love yourself before you can love others because the simple fact is that you already do love yourself. In addition, a healthy self-esteem is one that is lowly and humble. The pride that is promoted by the self-esteem movement, in schools and by much of psychology is ungodly and unhealthy. God is opposed to the proud (1 Peter 5:5) and pride goes before destruction and leads to dishonor (Proverbs 11:2; 16:18).

The rabbis went on to define their neighbors as only their fellow Jews. One ancient saying of the Pharisees was, *"If a Jew sees a Gentile fallen into the sea, let him by no means lift him out, for it is written, 'Thou shalt not rise up against the blood of thy neighbor'; but this man is not thy neighbor."* It was this attitude that caused the Romans to charge the Jews with hatred of the human race.

They not only taught a very restricted love to their neighbors, but they left out the restrictions on hatred, vengeance and grudges and added the phrase, *"and hate their enemies."* Why? Simply because hatred, vengeance and holding grudges are what was in their own hearts toward their enemies, and they could not justify that if they taught what God actually said. Instead, they left that out and taught the opposite of hating your enemies. In a time when heresy is so widespread, there are plenty of teachers and preachers that will still do the same in order to teach what they want and tickle people's ears.

Their hatred for their enemies was the logical conclusion to their other teachings. They defined the "neighbor" in Leviticus 19 as only a fellow Jew. They believed they should hate the Gentiles because God commanded their forefathers to conquer and drive out the Canaanites and other pagan people from the Promised Land. They forgot that God commanded this because of His hatred of sin and not a hatred for people. They also justified their hatred of enemies from the imprecatory Psalms in which David prays against his enemies including such things as their table would be a snare to them, that they would fall into traps, that their eyes would grow dim and that God's burning anger would overtake them (Psalm 69:22-24) These were their arguments for hating their enemies. But that is not the right conclusion from those passages and neither is it justification for hatred of your enemies.

Even allowing that Leviticus 19:17-18 may define neighbor as fellow Jewish kinsmen, the passage does not say to hate anyone. Even more important are the other Scriptures which do define doing good to foreigners and even enemies. For example, Deuteronomy 22:1-4 speaks about helping a neighbor by doing such practical things as returning lost livestock to him or helping out if he has an injured or overloaded animal. Exodus 23:4-5 commands the very same things to be done even to *"your enemy"* and to *"the one who hates you."* Job, who scripture describes as *"blameless, upright, fearing God and turning away from evil"* (Job 1:1), would open his door and house to foreign travelers (Job 31:31-32). He would not rejoice at either the extinction of or the calamity that would befall his enemy. In fact, he would not even allow his mouth to sin by asking for his enemies life in a curse (Job 31:29-30).

We find the same attitude in David. In Psalm 7:4-5 David prayed, *"If I have rewarded evil to my friend, Or have plundered him who without cause was my adversary, Let the enemy pursue my soul and overtake it; And let him trample my life down to the ground, And lay my glory in the dust."* David regarded doing wrong to an adversary to be just as bad as doing it to a friend. David states in Psalm 35:12-14, *"They repay me evil for good, to the bereavement of my soul. But as for me, when they were sick, my clothing was sackcloth; I humbled my soul with fasting; And my prayer kept returning to my bosom. I went about as though it were my friend or brother; I bowed down mourning, as one who sorrows for a mother."* David treated his enemies with kindness and consideration as he did his friends.

Proverbs also comments on how the righteous should treat their enemies. Proverbs 17:5 *"He who rejoices at calamity will not go unpunished."* Proverbs 24:28-29 *"Do not be a witness against your*

neighbor without cause, and do not deceive with your lips. Do not say, 'Thus I shall do to him as he has done to me; I will render to the man according to his work.' Proverbs 25:21 *"If your enemy is hungry, give him food to eat; and if he is thirsty, give him water to drink."*

The Scribes and Pharisees should have understood all of these passages, but instead they added to the scripture the phrase *"and hate your enemy."*

But you say, *"what about God's command to destroy the pagan nations and David's prayer against his enemies in Psalm 69?"* I say, *"what about them?"* God is also judge and it is certainly His prerogative to bring judgment on those who disobey Him. God loved Adam, but He cursed him. God loved Moses, but He punished him. God loves Israel, but He exiled them for a time. God loves the world, but He will destroy it and condemn all those that do not come to Christ. God loves people, but sin must also be punished. Both are satisfied in Christ who took on the penalty of our sin while at the same time demonstrating the love of God.

The pagan nations were destroyed because of God's judicial condemnation of their utter wickedness. These nations were unbelievably evil even to the practice of human sacrifice including burning their own children alive as offerings to their idols. And as far as the imprecatory Psalms, examine their context and you will see that the anguish of soul was not just over the personal turmoil, but also the dishonor that these afflictors had brought upon God Himself. This is righteous indignation, not selfish anger.

The scribes and Pharisees should have known all of this, but instead they added to the law their own sinful reaction of *"hate your enemies."*

The Teaching of Jesus - Matthew 5:44-48

Starting in Matthew 5:44, Jesus restores the meaning of the law. *Love your enemies and pray for those that persecute you.* The context is the same as we examined last week. This is primarily focused on personal situations. This cannot be used to argue for pacifism. It is not talking about what occurs on a battlefield or between countries or when the law itself is broken, though even then the Christian is to pursue justice, defense and even war without malice. The enemies are your personal enemies. This command brings the nature of righteousness to its second highest operating principle (the first being to love God) and demands a response that is humanly impossible. Men without Christ may go so far as to tolerate their enemies, but they cannot love them.

The nature of this love is not emotional nor is based on human rationality. This is agape love and it is a reflection of God's love for us. God's love purposely chooses, commits itself and acts in kindness, mercy and grace. God does not choose to love on the basis of anything He might gain. There is nothing for Him to gain. God is infinite in all respects and self-sufficient. There is nothing that we can give Him or even offer except that which He already deserves. Scripture tells us that God so loved the world that he sent Jesus to die for us while we were yet sinners (John 3:16, Romans 5:8). Christ died for sinners! And it does not matter if that is someone entrapped in vile and wretched sins or someone with one of the more acceptable sins such as pride and self-righteousness. This is a love that is internally generated as opposed to human love that occurs as a response. That is why the Scriptures say that *"we love because He first loved us"* (1 John 4:19).

This agape love is the same sacrificial love that a husband is to extend to his wife. It is the love of 1 Corinthians 13 that is: *patient, kind, not jealous, does not brag, is not arrogant, does not act unbecomingly, does not take into account a wrong suffered, it does not rejoice in unrighteousness, but in truth, it bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things and endures all things.* This kind of love never fails. And this is the love we are to have toward not only our friends, but even our enemies. That is humanly impossible.

Now take note that while Jesus' directive here is to love your enemies, He does not say you must like them. God's command here is to your mind and will, not your emotions. Your emotions are to follow clear thinking and wise decisions. Emotions are not to be the basis of our obedience to God's word.

A little poem Diane found stresses the need to put the mind and will over emotions in doing good.

*If you were busy being kind,
Before you knew it, you would find
You'd soon forget to think 'twas true'
That someone was unkind to you.*

*If you were busy being glad,
And cheering people who are sad,
Although your heart might ache a bit,
You'd soon forget to notice it.*

*If you were busy being good,
And doing just the best you could,
You'd not have time to blame some man
Who's doing just the best he can.*

*If you were busy being right,
You'd find yourself too busy quite
To criticize your neighbors long
Because he's busy being wrong.*

Anonymous

This love is demonstrated in that instead of reviling your persecutors in anger, you are to pray for them. Why? Because instead of seeing them as against you, you are to see them as slaves of Satan, entrapped in their own sin and needing to be freed by the Gospel of Jesus Christ. As you learn to see things from God's perspective then even your emotions change and instead of feeling anger toward them, it will be pity. There is a compassion that extends to mercy and grace and pleads for God to save them.

Jesus' teaching in this example and in the previous one correlates to the end of the Beatitudes in which Jesus says that the one who is persecuted for the sake of righteousness would be blessed. That persecution could come in the form of personal insults, slander and physical persecution, yet you are to rejoice because that very persecution demonstrates that you are in the same group as the prophets and your reward in heaven would be great. In this passage the teaching of the Beatitudes is completed because now the righteous response to those enemies is also given - do not seek revenge, but love them and pray for them.

This was the very response put into practice by Dietrich Bonhoeffer, the pastor who suffered and eventually was killed in Nazi Germany, who said of this verse, "*This is the supreme demand. Through the medium of prayer we go to our enemy, stand by his side, and plead for him to God.*" This incredible statement again confronts us with the reality that this response is humanly impossible, for only a son of God as stated in verse 45 can have this response.

Persecution itself does not demonstrate that a person is godly. As we said a couple of months ago, a lot of persecution comes for other causes than the sake of righteousness. It is also true that some deceive themselves into believing their persecution is for righteousness sake when in fact it is not. According to this passage, the evidence of personal righteousness and therefore of being a son of God is in the personal response to that persecution in showing love and praying for those enemies. Remember that in Matthew 5:9 Jesus said the blessing of the true peacemaker is that he will be called a son of God.

Why is a person who loves his enemies and prays for his persecutors considered a son of God? Because it demonstrates the likeness of God their father. If we took all the kids and put them on one side

of the room and put their the parents on the other side, then asked someone from the outside to come in and figure out which child belonged to which set of parents, they should be able to do that fairly easily. Why? Because your children bear your image and your characteristics. In a similar way, those that are the children of God bear His image and His characteristics.

The characteristic demonstrated here is God's gracious impartiality. God gives what is good to both those that love Him and those that hate Him. He causes the sun to rise on everyone both good and bad. He causes the rain to fall on everyone both virtuous and bad. One of the errors of the health, wealth, prosperity preachers is they fail to recognize this fact about God. He is impartially good to all and gives prosperity even to the wicked. This fact perplexed the writer of Psalm 73 until he considered the final end of the wicked and then he understood God's justice. Judgment will come, but God is merciful and gracious up to that point. We Christians are to demonstrate this same attribute to our enemies. You are to love without partiality and to pray without partiality. You are to be good to both those who are your friends and those who are your enemies.

This love is much greater than what the world demonstrates to its own. Look at verses 46 & 47 and think how stinging these words were to the scribes and Pharisees. They saw themselves as better than everyone else and they had a particular scorn for the taxgatherers and gentiles. The taxgatherers were considered among the most despised, not just because they collected taxes (like we feel about IRS agents), but because they collected for the enemy - Rome. Gentiles were so despised that if a Jewish man had to travel into a Gentile nation, when he returned to Israel, he would shake the dust off his shoes before crossing the border. And here Jesus declares to the self righteous that their teaching and practice of loving those who loved them and greeting only their ethnic brothers was the same thing the taxgatherers and Gentiles did. They may think of themselves as being better, but taxgatherers and Gentiles matched them. Again we see that the nature of true righteousness surpasses what men can do on their own.

When Jesus gave the parable of the Good Samaritan in Luke 10:29-37, it was in response to a certain lawyer who was trying to justify himself before Jesus by asking, "*Who is my neighbor.*" The more narrowly defined a neighbor, the easier it would be to fulfill this law. You are familiar with the story. A Jewish man was going from Jerusalem to Jericho when he was mugged by thieves and left half dead. A priest comes along, sees the man laying on the road and he walks way around him. Then a Levite comes along, sees the man laying there, and he also passed by him. Then a Samaritan came along, and remember that Samaritans were utterly despised because they were an ethnic mixture of Jew and Gentile. Jews and Samaritans were enemies. Yet, the Samaritan sees and has compassion on this Jewish man so that he halts his journey and proceeds to help him. He binds up his wounds then takes him to an inn. He pays out of his own pocket to have the fellow cared for with a promise that if more expenses occur, he would pay for them on his return. That is the response we are to have toward our enemies.

What if it was you? What if you found your enemy in that condition? Would you help? Would you pay for his care out of your own pocket? What if it were someone that was always mean to you? What if it was some political figure that was opposed to all you believe in? What if it was some kid strung out on dope having a bizarre haircut and wearing weird clothes? What if it was some known criminal - a drug pusher, rapist, child molester? What would your reaction be?

The last verse caps the argument that what Jesus is demanding is humanly impossible. "*Therefore you are to be perfect, as your heavenly Father is perfect.*" The demand is nothing less than being a unblemished image of God's perfect moral character. Romans 8:29 tells us that we are saved for the very purpose of being conformed to the image of Jesus Christ. Humanly impossible, but possible through regeneration by the Holy Spirit.

Only a person whose self interests have given way to God's interests can live the way Jesus describes in the Sermon on the Mount. That can only happen to the person that has died to self. George Muller, that great man of faith, described it this way, "*There was a day when I died, utterly died, died to George*

Muller an his opinions, preferences, tastes and will; died to the world, its approval or censure; died to the approval or blame of even my brethren and friends; and since then I have studied only to show myself approved unto God."

The person who has the righteous that surpasses that of the Scribes and Pharisees and will be able to enter the kingdom of heaven will demonstrate what Jesus has described in this wonderful chapter. It is only the person that has died to self and lives for Christ. Paul said it this way. *"I have been crucified with Christ; and it is no longer I who lives, but Christ lives in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me, and delivered Himself up for me"* (Galatians 2:20).

Have you been crucified with Christ?

Sermon Notes: Loving Others
June 29, 2014 - Matthew 5:43-48

Introduction

Jesus has not directly _____ the scribes, but each example has exposed their self-righteous teachings

Jesus' last example expands on the theme of resisting _____ given in the fifth example

No one can live according to what Jesus teaches here on his own - you must _____ by the Spirit

The self righteous will be _____ by what Jesus teaches

The _____ will be convicted by what Jesus teaches and seek His forgiveness and desire to change

The Teaching of the Scribes - Matthew 5:43

The rabbis _____ the Scriptures until they could teach what they wanted instead of what God said

2 Timothy 4:3 - people who want their ears _____ cannot endure sound doctrine

Leviticus 19:17-18

The scribes left off the phrase "as _____" so that they could define the love required as they pleased

All people love _____ - the self-love advocated for self esteem is ungodly and unhealthy

The rabbis defined a neighbor as _____ other Jews

The scribes left out the _____ on hatred, vengeance and grudges and instead taught hatred of enemies

They believed they were supposed to _____ Gentiles due to the Conquest of Canaan & the imprecatory Psalms

The Old Testament taught _____ of strangers and kindness to enemies - Deut. 22:1-4; Exod. 23:4-5; Job 31

David did not want to do wrong to _____ (Psalm 7:4-5) and instead sought to do right (Psalm 35:12-14)

Proverbs teaches _____ treatment of enemies: Proverbs 17:5; 24:28-29; 25:21

God is loving, but He is also just and will punish evil - _____ is the bridge between God's love and justice

The Canaanite nations were destroyed because of their _____

The imprecatory Psalms reflect the righteous _____ of God being dishonored

The Teaching of Jesus - Matthew 5:44-48

The context is Matthew 5:38-42, this is about _____ enemies - not civil law or national conflicts

This is $\alpha\gamma\alpha\pi\eta$ / agape love - which centers on being rational and volitional irrespective of _____

This a godly love that is _____ generated, not normal human love which is a response (1 John 4:19)

This is a _____ love that is humanly impossible - it must be generated by the Holy Spirit within

This love sees enemies as slaves and pawns of Satan and therefore has _____ and compassion to pray for them

The _____ to persecution, not persecution itself is the true test of godliness

A person who loves even his enemies is considered a son of God because he _____ God's characteristics

God is _____ good to all - often withholding judgment until the end

Verses 46-47 - even the worst _____ can be kind and love those who love them

The parable of the Good _____: Luke 10:29-37

Verse 48 - keeping Jesus' command is humanly _____ without regeneration and help of the Holy Spirit

Only a person whose self interests have given way to _____ interests can live the way Jesus describes here

Galatians 2:20 - have you been _____ with Christ?

KIDS KORNER

Parents, you are responsible to apply God's Word to your children's lives. Here is some help. **Young Children** - draw a picture about something you hear during the sermon. Explain your picture(s) to your parents at lunch. **Older Children** - Do one or more: 1) Write down all the verses mentioned in the sermon and look them up. 2) Count how many times "love" is said. Talk with your parents about how to love those who treat you badly

THINK ABOUT IT!

Questions to consider in discussing the sermon with others. What is the context for Matthew 5:43-48? How does knowing the context help you properly interpret this passage? How is the contrast between the teaching of the scribes and the teaching of Jesus in Matthew 5:21-48? How do each of these show the need for a righteousness that is greater than that of the scribes? How do they demonstrate the necessity of having the characteristics described in the Beatitudes in order to have true righteousness? How will your reaction to Jesus' teachings demonstrate the nature of your own righteousness? Why do so many people want to be religious, yet they do not want to endure sound doctrine? Compare the teaching of the scribes in Matthew 5:43 with Leviticus 19:17-18. What did the scribes leave out? Why? What did they add? Why? Do you know of any examples of such scripture twisting in our own time? Why were the nations of Canaan destroyed? What is the nature of the imprecatory Psalms? What does the Old Testament teach about how godly people were to treat their enemies? (Consider the following passages - Exodus 23:4-5; Job 31; Psalm 7:4-5; 35:12-14; Proverbs 17:5; 24:28-29; 25:21). What is the nature of ἀγάπη / agape love? How does it differ from natural human love? How is it possible to love an enemy as Jesus is requiring? Could you love someone that was persecuting you in that way? Why or why not? What would need to change? Who is your neighbor according to the parable of the Good Samaritan in Luke 10:29-37? Why is the command in Matthew 5:48 humanly impossible? How then does Jesus expect the command to be kept? How does Galatians 2:20 explain having true righteousness?

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