

Love Your Enemies

Recap Last Week's Message on Who is Love?

So tonight, I want to start with a little trivia... what are some famous enemies?

David vs Goliath

Spiderman vs Venom

Batman vs Joker

11 vs Demogorgon

Luke Skywalker vs Vader

Dr. Doofenschmurtz vs Perry the Platypus

Harry Potter vs Lord Voldemort

What makes these people enemies? How did they become enemies? What caused them to become enemies?

Maybe it was jealousy, maybe it was hatred, maybe it was that they didn't like how they did things. There can be many different reasons why people become enemies!

Now we may not be a superhero that is fighting against a supervillain, but we may have people we see as enemies in our own life! Think to yourself, who are the enemies in your life?

What makes them your enemies?

How did you become enemies?

Let's be real. Sometimes people in our lives can be straight up mean! They can suck. Maybe it was the one girl on the bus that would just pick on people about everyone. An older student who sure was mean. She picks on everyone on the bus. Maybe it gets so bad that she even makes others cry.

There are some people like this girl that are just plain mean.

So, the question is with all the mean people that we meet at school, at the mall, or even on the bus, is it really possible to love those who are mean to us?

- A friend who started an untrue rumor about you that caused you a lot of pain.
- A teenager who was drunk driving and killed a friend of yours.

- A terrorist group who threatened an attack on US soil because of their hatred for us.
- A fan of a rival school who is screaming horrible things about your team and school during a game.
- The person who beat you in a contest that you had worked really hard to win.
- Your ex-boyfriend or girlfriend who dumped you to date your good friend (the ex? The friend?)
- A girl who cheated her way to a 100 on an exam that was scored on a curve, causing you a D

Which person(s) would be the most difficult for you to love? Why? Jesus actually addressed this head on! He even talked about this specific subject. Now sometimes things that Jesus says, are tough. We don't like them. They are hard to hear. This verse may be one of the hardest verses for us to follow.

Matthew 5:43-48 (NIV)

43 "You have heard that it was said, 'Love your neighbor and hate your enemy.' 44 But I tell you, love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you, 45 that you may be children of your Father in heaven. He causes his sun to rise on the evil and the good and sends rain on the righteous and the unrighteous. 46 If you love those who love you, what reward will you get? Are not even the tax collectors doing that? 47 And if you greet only your own people, what are you doing more than others? Do not even pagans do that? 48 Be perfect, therefore, as your heavenly Father is perfect.

Let's break this verse down and see what Jesus is really saying to us about loving our enemies!

Jesus actually starts with a pretty bold statement: **43 "You have heard that it was said, 'Love your neighbor and hate your enemy. 44 But I tell you, love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you**

What is crazy is back in the Old Testament people were actually teaching that it was good to love your neighbor and also good to hate your enemy!

Jesus is stepping up and saying: Listen this is what you have been taught but it's not right! It's not on point. We have to correct our way of thinking;

we have to correct our heart.

“You have heard” is a world standard. It’s what everyone is accepting and doing.

Jesus is setting the stage saying basically “I am doing something new. The time has come for a new way of living.” Jesus is calling his followers to live this life that is very different from what they have been taught and what they are accustomed to.

Some of you have been taught to do things a certain way, you grew up in a house that had a certain way of thinking or a certain way of doing things. Now those things may have worked for a time, but they aren’t right.

Just because you have done something for so long doesn’t make it right.

Jesus changes our mindsets, traditions and way of thinking.

Loving your enemies isn’t the easy thing to do, but it’s the right thing to do!

Romans 5:6-8 (NIV)

⁶ You see, at just the right time, when we were still powerless, Christ died for the ungodly. ⁷ Very rarely will anyone die for a righteous person, though for a good person someone might possibly dare to die. ⁸ But God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us.

The Bible says that when Jesus died for us we were not good people. We were sinners. In fact, verse 10 of this chapter says he died for us "while we were enemies".

So, if this is how Jesus treated us, shouldn't that be how we treat others too?

Now let me walk you through a few things tonight that have to do with enemies!

Those who are different are not necessarily your enemies.

Many Jews believed the law required to love God, family, and your own people and hate foreigners such as Samaritans.

Jesus taught and lived to love those who are different from you. This includes those of another race, who go to a rival school or root for a rival team.

Racism is hatred no matter what type it is.

You will have enemies no matter how much you try.

You will never be able to make everyone happy. You will develop enemies on some level. It is important to deal correctly and righteously with your enemies.

Some people who try to be more holy than Jesus assert that we should have no enemies.

But Jesus' words acknowledge what you can expect from enemies: persecution, unjust application of the law, violence, humiliation and defensiveness. Jesus even says that if you are following his way, you will probably make some enemies

Another way of saying it is this: You will create enemies simply by loving your enemies. Love always has enemies.

You do what you are called to do, and not worry about other people. **You work on you, let God work on them.**

You cannot love enemies into being your friend.

"Love is the only force capable of transforming an enemy into friend." - Martin Luther King Jr.

Love is capable of this, but it does not always happen. You cannot control another person. The point is your right relationship with others and with God. Love them. Hopefully God will change their heart as well as your own, but this is not guaranteed.

Do not get even through revenge or forgiveness.

Revenge shows a lack of faith in God's wisdom and justice.

Forgiving someone to frustrate them is self-serving.

How to love your enemies

Here's a few ways you can show love for those people in your life that you really don't get along with:

Pray for them.

I'm not talking about "please give that person what they have coming to them" prayers. But I also don't mean that you need to spend an hour each night asking God to pour blessings upon them. There's a way to pray both for justice and for the hearts of those committing injustices.

If you have hate in your heart for somebody, maybe it starts with "God, I hate that person, and I don't want to." **As C.S. Lewis has said, "[Prayer] doesn't change God—it changes me."**

Praying for your enemy opens you up to the work of the Holy Spirit in your heart

Forgive them.

When relatives of the victims in the South Carolina church shooting offered forgiveness to the young man who murdered their loved ones, could anyone doubt that they were seeking to take Jesus' words and example seriously?

Loving your enemy does not mean you have to add them to your Christmas list, or make them your best friend. It doesn't mean you excuse their actions. It means you forgive them, with the knowledge that God is both merciful and just.

Jesus faced grave injustice with sacrifice. Through prayer and forgiveness in our hearts, let us go forth to conquer injustice in our time by the courage not to demand retribution, but rather to repay injury with blessing and hate with love.