

Last week we discussed **Matthew 5:39-42** – Jesus said: **“If someone strikes you on the right cheek, turn to him the other also. And if someone wants to sue you and take your tunic, let him have your cloak as well. If someone forces you to go one mile, go with him two miles. Give to the one who asks you, and do not turn away from the one who wants to borrow from you.”**

What is Jesus telling us here? Why would we act in this way?

**E. Stanley Jones** said: **“Turn to him the other also.”** It is this audacious offensive of love that forces the man to go further and thus to break down. He tries to break your head, and you, as a Christian, try to break his heart.” In turning the other cheek you wrest the offensive from him and assume moral charge of the situation.” How does this action differ from what we are taught in this world?

**Matthew 5:43-47** – **“You have heard that it was said, ‘Love your neighbor and hate your enemy. But I tell you: Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you, that you may be sons 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. If you love those who love you, what reward will you get? Are not even the tax collectors doing that? And if you greet only your brothers, what are you doing more than others? Do not even pagans do that? Be perfect, therefore, as your heavenly Father is perfect.”**

What do you think Jesus is telling us here? Why should we as Christians act in this way?

**Martin Luther King Jr.** (1929-1968) was a Baptist preacher and civil rights leader before being assassinated in 1968.

“And over the centuries, many persons have argued that this is an extremely difficult command. Many would go so far as to say that it just isn’t possible to move out into the actual practice of this glorious command.”

Why would King say that this is a difficult command to put into practice?

“The words of this text glitter in our eyes with a new urgency. Far from being the pious injunction of a utopian dreamer, this command is an absolute necessity for the survival of our civilization.” What is King saying here?

“Yes, it is love that will save our world and our civilization, love even for enemies.”

What is “our world” threatened by? Why would he say “love” will save it?

“Within the best of us, there is some evil, and within the worst of us, there is some good. When we come to see this, we take a difficult attitude toward individuals.” What is the attitude King is telling us to take towards others? Why is this difficult?

“In the final analysis, love is not this sentimental something that we talk about. It’s not merely an emotional something. Love is creative, understanding goodwill for men. It is refusal to defeat any individual. When you rise to the level of love, of its’ great beauty and power, you seek only to defeat evil systems. Individuals who happen to be caught up in that system, you love, but you seek to defeat the system...”.

What is King saying about the definition of “love”? How has the world morfed this definition?

What are some examples of people caught up in an evil system? How is “love” used as a weapon against this evil?

**Hate** - Hatred or hate is an intense negative emotional response towards certain people, things or ideas, usually related to opposition or revulsion toward something. Hatred is often associated with intense feelings of anger, contempt, and disgust. Hatred is seen as the opposite of love.

King says; “...hate distorts the personality of the hater. We usually think of what hate does for the individual hated or the individuals hated or the groups hated. But it is even more tragic, it is even more ruinous and injurious to the individual who hates. ...You can’t see straight when you hate.” Can you think of examples of individuals who hated and suffered the consequences?

**Redemption** - Redemption means the act of regaining, recovering, or freeing something or someone, often through a cost, effort, or payment. It signifies a rescue from bondage, a release from debt, or the atonement of sins, resulting in restoration and salvation.

King goes on to say about love: “It is redemptive, and this is why Jesus says love. There’s something about love that builds up and is creative. There is something about hate that tears down and is destructive. So love your enemies.”

Jesus wants us to participate in the redemption of God’s children. How is King telling us to participate in this?

**Helmut Thielicke** (1908-1986) was a German protestant theologian and rector of the University of Hamburg. After repeated interrogations by the Gestapo from the mid-1930s onwards, dismissed in 1940. In 1942 he assumed theological office in Stuttgart, from where he delivered numerous sermons and went on lecture tours, continually made difficult by the government by means of bans on travel, publication and preaching. Hoping to promote Christian democracy in postwar Germany, he proposed a plan in 1942 that led to the establishment of the first Evangelical Academy in Bad Boll in 1945.

Thielicke says; “What he (Jesus on the cross) said was: “...for they know not what they do.” And surely he could say this only if he saw in them something completely different from a sadistic, excited mob of people, a wild crowd of human beasts.”

What did Jesus see in them? And what does Jesus see in us?

“The eyes of Jesus and the eyes of a disciple not only see the pearl but also “release” it, help to bring out the sonship of God in the other person.” What is Thielicke saying here?

“That neighbor of yours who gets on your nerves – he is waiting for that look. All of them are waiting for you to discover in them what Jesus saw in them and what gave him the strength to die for them.” How can we see what Jesus sees in the people around us?

**Nikolaj Velimirovic** (1881-1956) was a Serbian Orthodox bishop and saint. An influential theological writer and a gifted orator, he was often referred to as the "new John Chrysostom".

“Bless my enemies, O Lord. Even I bless them and do not curse them.” “Enemies have driven me into your embrace more than friends have.” What is Velimirovic telling us here? How can enemies help to drive us to God and seek the Lord?

Just as God uses hardship in our lives, He can use difficult people to sharpen our faith and help us to grow closer to Him.