

Session 4

May 5, 2019

“LOVE YOUR ENEMIES”

Luke 6:27-36

Jesus told the crowd, “You have heard that it was said, ‘An eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth...’” and “You have heard that it was said, ‘Love your neighbor and hate your enemy...’” Those selfish sentiments are still firmly entrenched in our culture. Even in ministry, I’ve been told, “Be careful who you hitch your wagon to.” Common sense tells us to maintain a healthy suspicion of others; to keep people at arm’s length; to watch your back; and to look out for number one. Yet Christ calls us to take the gospel to the nations! How in the world can we take the gospel to those we know hate us? And to those that we (quite frankly) can’t stand? In our text, Jesus reminds us that *human* nature must be overcome by the *regenerate* nature.

Love is a spiritual discipline (vv. 27-28). The very idea that loving your enemies is a *spiritual discipline* is revealed by Jesus’ address to those “who listen.” How often did Jesus end a parable or difficult saying with “He who has ears to hear, let him hear?” (for example, see Matt. 11:15; Mark 4:9; Mark 4:23). The same insinuation is found here. There were many voices even in that day. The religious leaders so prominent then were no doubt the ones who taught that spiritual purity meant total disassociation with those who disagreed with them. It’s certainly easy (and natural) to love those who already love us. Everybody does that! (see section 3 below). But those who listen to Jesus hearken to a different voice. Such treatment of others is not natural...but supernatural. The distinction between the spiritual and natural is evident with the four positive imperatives (commands) that follow: *love* (v. 27), *do good* (v. 27) *bless* (v. 28) *pray for* (v. 28), all which stand in direct opposition to the negative people they address: *enemies* (v. 27), *those who hate* (vs. 27), *those who curse* (v. 28), and *those who mistreat* you (v. 28).

Love is a physical discipline (vv. 29-31). While the previous verses dealt with spiritual attitudes, the next verses deal with physical reactions. Love is not only a noun but a verb. It is something that needs to be expressed. When Jesus said that others would know the disciples because of their love (John 13:35), He didn’t mean simply their charitable *attitudes* toward each other, but their loving *actions* toward each other. He gives concrete examples: the first, is the offer of submission when one is attacked. The second is the offer of provisions when one is robbed. The third is the offer of selfless generosity when one is asked. The last is the offer of gifting to one who borrows. While the examples given are meant to be illustrations, the principles are clear. Followers of Christ are meant to be selfless in their service to others; even to those who would attack us or take advantage of us. This remarkable love can be demonstrated only by those who have experienced it (see Rom. 5:8).

Love is a distinguishing discipline (vv. 32-36). While there are many characteristics that set Christ-followers apart from the world, love for one another is the only one specifically highlighted by Jesus (John 13:35). It is *the* distinguishing mark of the believer. The reason for this is simple: *agape* love, that unconditional, sacrificial love that Jesus exemplified and demanded of His followers is only available through a relationship with Him. In verses 32-34, Jesus describes what natural people do. What sets believers apart is their selflessness. What’s more, believers who express this kind of love, genuinely expecting nothing in return, will indeed

receive reward. And part of that reward is being recognized as children of the Most High...the very one who embodies love (John 4:8) and demonstrated it to us (Rom. 5:8).