

*Like Father, Like Son*

Our family rented a house for a few years in Odenton, a few blocks from where we live now. The house had a yard with a lot of trees and plenty of leaves to rake up in the fall. The house backed up to the Mormon church and had a gate in the back that opened up on the church property.

Every fall we had to get rid of truck loads of leaves. One year a neighbor told us about an easier solution. They said, "There's a guy down the block who collects the leaves for a mulch pile. Just take your leaves, out your back gate, along the back edge the church property and put them on his pile." Which is exactly what we did.

What the neighbor didn't tell us was there was a elderly gentleman who lived adjacent to that mulch pile who hated the thought of it being there. To him it was a smelly eyesore. And he was incensed that neighbors, including us, put their leaves there.

Later in the same day we had dumped our leaves one of my children said, "Dad come here and look at this." Lo and behold there was the elderly man with a wheelbarrow dumping a pile of leaves at our back gate. He was getting back at us! Then he yelled at us about the mulch pile.

You know what my first thought was? "Why that so and so." My first reaction was, I can't believe it.

The mulch pile isn't even on his property. It's on his neighbors property and he's acting like a little kid dumping leaves at my gate. Why, I ought to take a pile of leaves and dump them on his front porch.

Fortunately my wife had a more spiritually mature approach. Sandy baked him a plate of cookies and took them to his door. When he saw it was her he figured he was in for a fight, but instead he got a plate of warm cookies and an apology for the mulch pile.

He was totally disarmed. He didn't know what to say. Unfortunately, shortly after that we moved back to Severn and our old neighborhood before we could build a real relationship with the man. But I'll tell you this, from the time of the cookies on, he always had a smile for us when he saw us.

Responding in love to those who do something uncomfortable to us isn't a natural

reaction. It's a supernatural reaction. It isn't easy. It's hard. But it's what Jesus calls "discipleship."

Two weeks ago we began to look in depth at Jesus extended sermon in Luke chapter 6. **Turn Luke 6 pg 998**

What we saw was that Jesus had lots of followers. Some were more serious than others. It's a lot like today where some people call themselves Christians but prefer to stay on the fringes of the crowd, anonymous and not connected. They may loosely be called "disciples" because the NT word for "disciple" *mathetes* means "learner."

What Jesus is doing in this sermon is challenging his followers to real discipleship. He was challenging them to get serious.

Dr. Ralph Wilson put it this way:

If you are looking for a nice, comfortable religion that doesn't call for too many demands on your life, makes you feel better when you're down, and will reserve luxury suites for you in heaven when you die, then you probably shouldn't try to be one of Jesus' disciples. He is demanding. He has the crazy notion that his followers should serve others rather than themselves. He expects them to show integrity when no one is looking. And he expects them to love. Not just people who only occasionally have a bad day. But enemies. Jesus expects you to love your enemies. Don't follow him unless you're ready to experience some discomfort.

This is definitely not one of Jesus' lighter sermons. This is one of the toughest. This is a sermon that strips away all our facades, pulls off our masks, and exposes us for what we really are. We love to call ourselves disciples but here's the acid test.

As we pick up in verse 7 the first principle I want us to see is this:

*I. It Is Easier To Obey and Let the Feelings Follow Than to Wait for Feelings to Lead Us to Obedience*

### **Read vs 27-30**

The world says, "Love your friends. Be loyal to your friends. Look out for your friends." Why? Friends will look out for you. Loving your friends is just smart. Loving your wife or your husband is just smart. As the Apostle Paul observes,

"Husbands ought to love their wives as their own bodies. He who loves his wife loves himself" (Ephesians 5:28). Loving your wife is a no-brainer unless you're self-destructive. Loving your friends and your spouse can be just enlightened self-interest.

But it's altogether another thing to love an enemy, someone who has your disgrace or destruction as a goal.

But Jesus says that we are not to just force a smile and mind our own business when we are hated and mistreated. We are to actively try to do good towards our attackers. He says we're to love them.

The verb Jesus used to command love is the verb *agapao*. This is actually a rare word in Koine Greek, the Greek that the NT was written in. It was developed almost exclusively in Christian literature to refer to the kind of love that doesn't serve itself, but extends itself for the sake of another. The other Greek words for love are *eros*, erotic love, *philos*, love for family, brotherly love, and *stergos*, natural affection. *Agape* love is really a different category of love.

It's an action verb instead of a "feeling" verb. It's the verb that is usually used of God's love. Listen to some of these references and see if you notice the stress on action:

John 3:16 *"For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life."*

Galatians 2:20 *"...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 gave Himself for me."*

1John 4:10 *This is love: not that we loved God, but that he loved us and sent his Son as an atoning sacrifice for our sins.*

God didn't sacrifice His Son on a cross for us because He had feelings of love for us. God is repulsed by our sin. But He chose to love us. And He loved us by sending Christ to die for us.

Jesus uses four very strong action words in Luke 6:

"Love your enemies" "Do good to those who hate you." "Speak well or bless those who curse." "Pray for, intercede for, those who mistreat you."

None of these are passive. They don't just take care of themselves. They are active verbs describing deliberate action that we're supposed to take.

Every one of Jesus commands here go against every thing that's in us. They go against our pride. They go against our sense of self-preservation.

Now let me ask you, if some one hates you and curses you how likely is it going to be that your going to feel like doing good for them? What's the chance that you're going to feel like being a blessing to them? The chance is slim to none isn't it?

We don't feel like helping those who are hurting us. We don't feel like serving those who are attacking us. So if we wait until we feel like obeying Jesus when people are taking advantage of us it isn't going to happen.

See, it's easier to do your way into feeling than it is to feel your way into doing.

What I've found time and time again in life is when I simply do what God has commanded me to do for no other reason than He deserves my obedience, my feelings start to change.

So think about it. Who are your enemies? I'm not asking who you hate? I'm asking who hates you, or despises you? Often they are the people close to us who have been hurt. A spouse or former spouse. A parent. A son or daughter. A co-worker at the job. An enemy of God who takes it out on you. Someone whose wrong you've exposed and now is out to get you. Who are your enemies?

You may have a short list. You may have a long list but begin to go down that list and ask yourself what can I actively do to seek their good? That is the way Jesus is training his disciples to think.

Bob Dieffenbaugh explains: The list of practices which Jesus laid down here is suggestive, not all inclusive. Matthew, for example, gives us additional matters to consider in the sermon on the mount. Jesus did not intend for this list of required responses to be considered complete, but rather suggestive. These are but examples of the way in which a more general principle is lived out:  
Do not return evil for evil, but overcome evil with good.

How do we love our enemy? Obviously this isn't a matter of just thinking nice thoughts. We need Jesus to do a heart change within us, to put the kind of heart

within us toward our enemies that was in God who sent Jesus to redeem and forgive a world full of despicable people. God-haters, vulgar, foul-mouthed, unfaithful to spouses, lying, cheating, stealing, selfish. The list goes on, and on, and describes us at our worst. Somehow God loved the people of Israel who thumbed their noses at him again and again. He didn't quit. They were unfaithful and were punished, but then God is at it again seeking to bless them. He doesn't give up. He has a heart of love toward the loveless. That is what we need to love our own enemies.

So how do you do it? We don't wait for emotions of love that aren't going to come. Rather we start with actions of love, and emotions may follow later. We start doing what Jesus taught right here.

You know, Ephesians 5:25 commands: *Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her* Here's a command from God to love. Sometimes as the years go by and the pressures of life mount husbands and wives don't feel love any more. in fact they come in for counseling and say, "We're just not in love any more. There's nothing there."

That's a tough place to be in a marriage. But a biblical counselor would show them they are commanded to love. Even if they feel like their spouse is their enemy they're commanded to love.

Obviously that kind of love isn't a feeling, it's an action. An action that seeks the good of the other person. When we commit ourselves to that type of action the feelings can come back again.

1) *It's Easier To Do Your Way Into Feeling Than It Is To Feel Your Way Into Doing.*

Second principle: This will only happen if we make a commitment to begin to  
2) *Treat Others as God Has Treated Us*

There are four levels of attitude and action that Jesus lays out here for us. They're kind of like stepping stones that lead us into seeing others as God sees them.

The first level is what is often called the "Golden Rule." *Do unto others as you would have them do unto you.* **Read vs 31**

Now Jesus moves from love of enemies and the radical way we are to exercise that, to a principal that can be applied generally.

Historians tell us that this was a principle that was stated negatively by many before Jesus. The great Rabbi Hillel, for example, taught, "What is hateful to you, do not do to your neighbor: that is the whole Torah, while the rest is the commentary thereof."

That way of thinking is really just a wise way to keep out of trouble with your neighbor. When Jesus turns this to a positive, it's radical. It states for us clearly how we are to exercise love. We are to treat people the way we would like to be treated. Not the way they deserve to be treated, but the way we would like to be treated. There is still the strong current of radical love of the Father. If Jesus had treated us as we deserve, we'd all be doomed. But he has shown us grace, and now expects his disciples to dispense that same grace and graciousness to the world in his name.

The second level is this: *Do good unto others when they have done evil against you.*

### **Read 32-33**

Now Jesus gives several examples to illustrate the difference between a selfish, prudent way of dealing, and his own radical love -- looking out for the other person's best interests. Any body can love people who love them. Any body can do good to people who treats them right. Even "sinners", who may be shrewd but relatively moral people, care about their friends. It's good business. "What goes around, comes around," "good karma." But that isn't Jesus' point. He tells us to show kindness, especially when we won't be beneficiaries of it later. We are not only to give love for love, and good for good, we are to love our enemies, and to return good for evil.

Unselfish, serving love -- agape love -- is what he is illustrating here. Self-love seeks repayment -- the sooner the better. Agape love doesn't seek repayment.

Level three: *Do good to others, without looking to other people for your reward.*

If we're to do good to those who have done evil against us, we are also to do good to men who will do evil against us. Men do good things for others, expecting them to do for them in return (reciprocation). The true disciple not only is to disregard what their enemy has done against them, but is also to act kindly toward others, knowing that they may not reciprocate. They may do evil to us when we have done good to them.

Sinners look to men for their reward, and they look for their rewards to come quickly. Christ's followers are to look to God for their reward, and that may not come until eternity. This means that men disciples live by faith in order to love their enemy, faith that God sees, that God rewards, and that blessings will come later on.

Things can look pretty bleak here but there will be a day when we'll be repaid in full. In the Father's Kingdom Jesus' disciples will have the status of children of the King. There will be a payday, someday. But we are not to seek it now, in this life. The eyes of faith are trained to look beyond the seen, to the unseen. "For what is seen is temporary, but what is unseen is eternal" (2 Corinthians 4:18).

See how Jesus is taking us step by step up?

*Do unto others as you would have them do unto you.*

*Do good unto others when they have done evil against you.*

*Do good to others, without looking to other people for your reward.*

The highest plane of all: *Do unto others as God has done unto you.* **Read 36** *We're to See Others as God Sees Us.*

You know, it's entirely possible for a person with no knowledge of God at all to learn to do good things; not only because he has to, but because he chooses to. He can be honest, conscientious, diligent, kind, loving, self-controlled, chaste, courteous, self-sacrificing. He can look out for the welfare of other people because he sees these things as virtues.

People can live outwardly moral lives by the sheer power of their will. There are some atheists who live cleaner lives than some of us who profess to be Christians.

But there's a difference in the moral standards of a society and the calling of Christ to His disciples. ...*just as you want men to do to you, you also do to them likewise* is one thing. Anybody with the will power can carry that one out. But *be merciful, just as your Father also is merciful* is a different story. Now we've stepped into the realm of grace.

First of all, only believers can legitimately call God their "father." God is the creator of all but He's only the father to those who are born into His family.

Over in the Gospel of John, chapter 3, Jesus explained it this way: *That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit. Do not marvel that I said to you, 'You must be born again.'*

We're all born into the world once in a flesh birth, a natural birth. We have physical life but not spiritual life. We're born into the world as descendents of Adam. Adam died spiritually the day he disobeyed God and ate from the fruit in the garden of Eden.

All of his descendants, including us, inherited a sin nature. We're separated from God. We're part of His creation, but not His family. That's why we need to be born again. Not of the flesh, we're already been through that birth. Our moms would really be in trouble if we had to go through that one again!

We need a spiritual birth into God's family. That's why Jesus said, 'You must be born again.' It's the only way to be forgiven and have eternal life.

That's why Jesus went on in John 3 to give one of the best known but least understood verses in all of the Bible. John 3:16: *For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life.*

The new birth, the spiritual birth, can't be produced by the flesh. It doesn't come about by our effort. God becomes our father only when we trust His Son for our forgiveness.

See, then there's a new standard of conduct for us that towers far above every other standard, even the Law of Moses given in the OT. God's law said *you shall love your neighbor as yourself...* The law of grace is found in John 13. Jesus said, *A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another; as I have loved you.*

He says here in Luke 6 *...be merciful, just as your Father also is merciful.*

See people the way God sees them and treat them the way God has treated you.

How has God treated His children? He's forgiven our offences, He's made us part of his family, and He's merciful to us. He loves us with an everlasting love. There's no limit to his mercy.

How can we love, bless, pray for, and give to our enemies? We have to see others as God sees us.

- 1) *It Is Easier To Do Your Way Into Feeling Than It Is To Feel Your Way Into Doing.*
- 2) *See Others as God Sees Us*

Then principle number 3 from our passage for today: *We Can Love Our Enemy When We Trust That God Will Reward the Faithful*

**Read vs 37 - 38**

What is the motivating factor for us to live this way? It is clearly stated: *"your reward will be great."* When do we get this reward?

Well, for one thing, when we participate in any act of aggressive love in obedience to God we receive joy, love, peace and satisfaction right now. There will be other rewards in eternity, but we receive these blessings right away.

God the Father sees the love and goodness and giving from the heart of his true disciples as all done to his glory. As children of God we derive joy from resembling our heavenly Father--like Father, like son.

Jesus added, *"and you will be sons of the Most High. For He is kind to the unthankful and evil."* People begin to see the sons of God resemble their Father as they extend love, expecting nothing in return. Our greatest reward is a relationship with our heavenly Father. Therefore, be like him by being merciful, just as our Father is merciful, with compassion, acts of love and deeds of kindness.

Then the Lord warns his disciples: *"Judge not, and you shall not be judged."* Jesus commanded them to not pass judgment by being the judge, jury and hangman. We're commanded to be discerning facts but we can't know what is in someone else's heart.

Have you ever listened to gossip about someone and formed opinions based on appearances. Then when you finally sat down with the person in question, it was like God rebuked you because you realized you had acted like a judge and had totally missed the mark.

Jesus encouraged his disciples, **Read vs 38**

W.M. Hendriksen writes: The underlying symbolism is that of the Near East grain market. Anyone who had had anything to do with the sale of grains knows that a bushel loosely filled contains far less produce than one in which the grain has been pressed down, shaken together, and added to until it runs over the edge of the container. The promise of God here is that the person who gives generously will also receive back generously.

God wants us to have that kind of life. By our standard of measure it will be measured to us by God who sees all. As Christians, when we look at each other, do we see Jesus? Is our standard of mercy like our Father's?

Jesus encouraged his followers to have the same heart as their heavenly Father, a heart that is generous towards his sons and equally generous towards his enemies.

Why? The issue for humanity, whether sons or enemies, is eternity. God desires that all people come to him through his Son Jesus Christ. He wants his enemies to see his Son in the loving, good, generous lives of his sons and daughters. Our church theme for this year is "Each one reach one in 2001." Oh, how we need to pray that people around each one of us will be drawn to come to Jesus as their Savior and receive the gift of eternal life.