

Refuge City Church — April 28, 2024
“Issues of Life: Love Your Neighbor” (Matthew 5:43-48)

Matthew 5:43-47, “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, so that you may be sons of your Father who is in heaven. For he makes his sun rise on the evil and on the good, and sends rain on the just and on the unjust. For if you love those who love you, what reward do you have? Do not even the tax collectors do the same? And if you greet only your brothers, what more are you doing than others? Do not even the Gentiles do the same?”

- Here Jesus now expounds on how our non-retaliation, peaceful acceptance of insult and impositions is something we are called to do as those representing the love and grace of our Heavenly Father.
- Jesus reiterates the misconstrued teaching that if we can find it in ourselves to love those closest to us, then we can be justified in our hatred of those who do us wrong. **[Leviticus 19:18, “...you shall love your neighbor as yourself.”]**
- We can not be indifferent to those who do us wrong.
 - We can’t just simply ignore them, and then claim, “Well, at least I don’t hate them”... that’s not enough.
 - We are to love **[agapeo]** them with a divine love that can only come from God, who is love **[1 John 4:8]**, living and working through us by His Spirit.
 - We can all understand that this does not come easy. We must check our heart response.
- It can be said that when Jesus was begin crucified, the nails being driven into His hands and feet, and lifted up on the cross, He was praying for His persecutors.
 - **Luke 23:34**, “Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do.”
 - And what were they doing to him?? We can see variations of the 4 scenarios at the cross.
 - Mocking/Insulting Him. **[hitting Him in the face prior to his crucifixion]**
 - Casting lots to take his clothes.
 - He was made to carry His cross a particular distance, yet Jesus went to the ends of the earth to show His greatest love for us.
 - He paid the ultimate price and gave everything for everyone, knowing some would not accept.
- Jesus makes it very clear who we are to love... everyone.
 - The story of the Good Samaritan **[Luke 10]**
 - **Luke 10:30-37**, “A man was going down from Jerusalem to Jericho, and he fell among robbers, who stripped him and beat him and departed, leaving him half dead. Now by chance a priest was going down that road, and when he saw him he passed by on the other side. So likewise a Levite, when he came to the place and saw him, passed by on the other side. But a Samaritan, as he journeyed, came to where he was, and when he saw him, he had compassion. He went to him and bound up his wounds, pouring on oil and wine. Then he set him on his own animal and brought him to an inn and took care of him. And the next day he took out two denarii and gave them to the innkeeper, saying, ‘Take care of him, and whatever more you spend, I will repay you when I

come back.' Which of these three, do you think, proved to be a neighbor to the man who fell among the robbers?" He said, "The one who showed him mercy." And Jesus said to him, "You go, and do likewise."

- Does it matter who the man is that was robbed? No.
- The 'religious' couldn't spare their time or resources to show love to someone who needed it.
- Yet the one who showed mercy was the one who was seen as 'less than' by Jewish society.
- Where did such compassion come from??
 - To be able to look at anyone, in whatever situation they are in or what they do to you, and love them beyond what our time and resources may be.

Conclusion

Matthew 5:48, "You therefore must be perfect, as your heavenly Father is perfect."

- **QUOTE:** "Love must be the disciple's governing principle, not selfishness." [unknown]
- If you can abide by what Jesus taught us in this chapter alone, we would have a righteousness that the world needs. [from the [Beatitudes to the Issues of Life](#)]
 - Can you be humble, weep over your sin, be gentle, consistently hunger and thirst for righteousness, show mercy, be pure in heart and a peacemaker, knowing that you will be persecuted, be salt and light, release yourself of anger and lust, not allow anything in your marriage to disrupt the vision of God's love, service, and sacrifice, and be people of our word?
 - All in accordance with God's way, not our own watered down version
- As Jesus began His sermon with a list of ways in which we are to *be*, He then closes with another...to *be* perfect [mature].
 - He would not have told us to be this way if it were not doable.
- We understand that the law exists to reveal our sin.
 - Yet if we limit our growth to the law alone, we're no better than the Pharisees.
 - **Matthew 5:20**, "...unless your righteousness exceeds that of the scribes and Pharisees, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven."
 - They tried to find perfection by keeping the law, or their version of it to suit their needs.
 - Jesus taught us to look into the heart of the law and seek to rise above it to be just like our Father in Heaven.
- Let's look at the reason Jesus told the story of the Good Samaritan.
 - **Luke 10:25-28**, "And behold, a lawyer stood up to put him to the test, saying, "Teacher, what shall I do to inherit eternal life?" He said to him, "What is written in the Law? How do you read it?" And he answered, "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength and with all your mind, and your neighbor as yourself." And he said to him, "You have answered correctly; do this, and you will live."
 - See, if we only follow the law, as we interpret it, we'll be no better than the religious who ignored compassion for the sake of their status, time, and resources.

- But if we truly love the Lord with all of our heart, soul, and mind, then loving our neighbor, whoever they may be, will become second nature.
- What does this take? How is this accomplished? Wherever you are on the spectrum of righteousness... fairly new in your walk with Jesus, or have many years, everyone of us needs to start here every day:
 - **Luke 9:23**, "If anyone would come after me, let him *deny* himself and take up his cross *daily* and *follow* me."