

Sermon Note: Living the Future Now

Seventh Sunday After the Epiphany

Introduction

Loving our enemies may be one of the most difficult commands Jesus gives. It's not a suggestion or a nice ideal—it's a radical way of living that goes against our natural instincts. When someone wrongs us, our first instinct may be revenge, resentment, retribution—to fight back, shut them out, or let bitterness take root. But Jesus calls us to something deeper: a love that breaks cycles of hatred, resists the pull of vengeance, and chooses mercy over malice.

This doesn't mean tolerating harm. When we are being harmed, healthy boundaries are necessary and right. But when we are wronged in ways that wound our pride more than our well-being, Jesus invites us to respond in ways that reflect God's grace rather than human retribution.

This week, as we near the end of our sermon series, *Foundations & Futures*, we explore what it means to live out this countercultural love in real time. Jesus' words in Luke 6:27-38 challenge us to love beyond convenience, to give without expecting in return, and to embrace a mercy that reflects God's own character.

What would it look like if we actually lived this way? If instead of judging, condemning, or seeking payback, we chose love, generosity, and forgiveness? This isn't about ignoring injustice, tolerating harm, or allowing ourselves to be mistreated—it's about letting God's love be the defining force in how we respond to the world.

Illustration Video

Note: This clip contains depictions of wartime violence. Viewer discretion is advised.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=y2D2KQnrNfY>

In this scene from *Hacksaw Ridge* (2016), Desmond Doss risks his life to help a wounded enemy soldier, choosing mercy over vengeance even in the midst of war.

Why This Video?

Desmond Doss, a pacifist combat medic in *Hacksaw Ridge* (2016), refuses to carry a weapon, yet he enters battlefields to save lives—including those of enemy soldiers. In this scene, Doss comes across a wounded Japanese soldier and chooses to help him, even as war rages around them. His actions reflect Jesus' call to love our enemies—not just in words, but through radical, self-giving mercy. This moment challenges us to consider how love and grace might break cycles of hatred and retaliation in our own lives.

Video Discussion Questions

1. What stands out to you in this scene? How does Desmond Doss respond in a way that might seem unexpected?
2. How do you think Doss' actions reflect the idea of loving your enemies?
3. What would most people do in his situation? Why do you think he chose a different path?
4. Have you ever experienced a moment where you had the opportunity to show kindness to someone you viewed as an "enemy"? What was that like?
5. Jesus calls us to love our enemies, but what does that actually look like in everyday life? What are some practical ways we can live out this teaching?

Luke 6:27-38 (NRSVue)

²⁷“But I say to you who are listening: Love your enemies; do good to those who hate you; ²⁸bless those who curse you; pray for those who mistreat you. ²⁹If anyone strikes you on the cheek, offer the other also, and from anyone who takes away your coat do not withhold even your shirt. ³⁰Give to everyone who asks of you, and if anyone takes away what is yours, do not ask for it back again. ³¹Do to others as you would have them do to you.

³²“If you love those who love you, what credit is that to you? For even sinners love those who love them. ³³If you do good to those who do good to you, what credit is that to you? For even sinners do the same. ³⁴If you lend to those from whom you expect to receive payment, what credit is that to you? Even sinners lend to sinners, to receive as much again. ³⁵Instead, love your enemies, do good, and lend, expecting nothing in return. Your reward will be great, and you will be children of the Most High, for he himself is kind to the ungrateful and the wicked. ³⁶Be merciful, just as your Father is merciful.

³⁷“Do not judge, and you will not be judged; do not condemn, and you will not be condemned. Forgive, and you will be forgiven; ³⁸give, and it will be given to you. A good measure, pressed down, shaken together, running over, will be put into your lap, for the measure you give will be the measure you get back.”

Study Questions

1. In this continuation of the Sermon on the Plain, how does Jesus fill in the blank: An enemy is a person who _____.
2. How does Jesus teach us to behave toward enemies?
3. What might a contemporary Christian need to let go of to practice loving behavior toward enemies? What would a contemporary Christian be called to embrace?
4. What might you say to counter the objections of a disciple who struggles with this teaching?
5. What one loving action can you take in response to an enemy while safeguarding yourself from continued harm?

Additional (Optional) Questions

1. What part of this passage seemed the most challenging to you?
2. Are you already doing anything that Jesus calls his followers to do from this passage? What is the thing you're doing, and what's the impulse behind this action? How does doing this make you feel?
3. Can you remember a time when someone was unfair to you or caused you pain? Why do you think it can be difficult to be kind to those who have hurt us?
4. How often do you think people in your various social groups feel as if they're being judged? Can you think of specific ways you could show kindness or understanding instead of judging them? How do you think that might change your friendships?
5. Why do you think Jesus encourages us to give without expecting anything back?

Weekly Action

Think of someone in your life who is difficult to love—perhaps someone you disagree with, have been hurt by, or struggle to understand. Each day this week, pray for that person, asking God to help you see them with mercy and compassion. As you do, look for one small way to extend kindness toward them, whether through a silent prayer for their well-being, a kind thought instead of a critical one, or even a tangible act of generosity. Even if they never know about it, let your heart be shaped by love.

Prayer

God of love and compassion, we open our hearts to you. Please do your work in us so that we can become merciful as you are merciful. Amen.